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Thursday, April 21, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 21, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*Translation*]

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR CARLETON—GLOUCESTER

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Reform Party presented a motion to amend the Official Languages Act. As you know, I did not share the views expressed by Reform Party members, individually and collectively, as they spoke in this debate. Nor do I agree with the proposal of the Reform Party to split our official languages, in other words, that French should be the only official language in Quebec and English the only official language outside Quebec.

You can imagine I felt under attack, and as a member of the francophone minority outside Quebec, I found the Reform Party's comments insulting. Because of them, I felt as though I were becoming less and less a Canadian.

I intend to pursue the debate on official languages and stand up for the rights of French Canadians throughout Canada and for the rights of anglophones throughout Canada, whether we are talking about English-speaking minorities in Quebec or French-speaking minorities outside Quebec.

However, considering the great respect I have for this House, if I happened to offend this House—and I do mean this House—by my use of rather emotional terms, I withdraw anything I said that may have offended. However, with respect to minority languages, whether we are talking about French or English, I repeat that I will continue my efforts to defend these minorities.

The Speaker: I accept comments of the hon. member for Carleton—Gloucester.

Yesterday, I told the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster that if he withdrew that would be the end of it. So I will consider the hon. member's comments—

[*English*]

—as having concluded this point of order. There was a withdrawal of the statement categorically and the Chair accepts this withdrawal.

We will now go on to a point of order by the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I wonder when we might hear an apology from the Prime Minister, who last night criticized those on social assistance as doing nothing but sitting at home.

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member realizes fully that would not be a point of order. Perhaps he would take another avenue to put his views forward.

Mr. McClelland: Mr. Speaker, while I accept the heartfelt apology on behalf of members on this side of the House offended by the hon. member from Carleton—Gloucester, I wish to put on record that the Reform Party in no way opposes bilingualism in the federal service.

The Speaker: From time to time in the course of debate we are emotional and aggressive. It is to be taken for granted in the House of Commons. The matter of the point of order which was raised is closed. I would like to leave that where it is.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1010)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions, namely petitions Nos. 351-123, 351-131 and 351-134.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions and there is agreement that the

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House shall not sit on Friday, May 13, 1994 provided that it shall be deemed to have met and adjourned on that day for the purpose of Standing Order 28(2).

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, question No. 9 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 9—**Mr. Simmons:**

Has any action been taken by the Department of Environment to address the concerns raised by the Auditor General in his 1992 Report to Parliament that “the capability to respond effectively to a marine spill of any significant magnitude does not presently exist anywhere in Canada”, even though “each year, Canada can expect at least one major spill, and a catastrophic spill can be expected once every 15 years”, and, if so, (a) what was such action (b) are any specific environmental protection measures being developed to deal with potential spills of hazardous materials in relation to the Hibernia project?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): (a) The activities being undertaken to address the concerns raised are primarily the responsibility of the Minister of Transport. The Canadian Coast Guard has taken a number of steps in co-operation with the Department of Environment and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans during the last three years to improve Canada’s marine spill response capability.

Strategy: On June 26, 1991, the federal government announced a \$100 million green plan marine environmental emergencies response strategy to implement the most urgent and high priority recommendations put forward by the public review panel on tanker safety and marine spills response capabilities.

Prevention measures: All foreign flag tankers are now inspected on their first visit each year to a Canadian port. Inspections of all foreign vessels entering Canada (including 100 per cent of foreign flag tankers) have increased from 9.2 per cent in 1989 to 38 per cent in 1992.

Preparedness measures: The Coast Guard has spent over \$15 million since 1990 to acquire additional pollution countermeasures equipment.

Policy: The amendments to the Canada Shipping Act (Bill C-121) received royal assent June 23, 1993 and provide for tougher sentences for pollution offences, new shipping safety regulations and implementation of international conventions including OPRC 90 and salvage convention.

(b) The environmental protection measures to deal with potential spills from Hibernia are regulated by the federal government (lead is the Department of Natural Resources) through its participation in the Canada–Newfoundland Off-Shore Petroleum Board. The board ensures that appropriate contingency plans are in place to respond to any hazardous materials spills quickly and effectively.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The question as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary has been answered.

Mr. Harb: I ask, Madam Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADA–HUNGARY INCOME TAX CONVENTION ACT, 1994

Hon. Ethel Blondin–Andrew (for Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S–2, An Act to implement a convention between Canada and the Republic of Hungary, an agreement between Canada and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, an agreement between Canada and the Republic of Zimbabwe, a convention between Canada and the Argentine Republic and a protocol between Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to income taxes and to make related amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Debate.

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, the purpose of Bill S–2 is to implement reciprocal tax treaties—or conventions—between Canada and Hungary, Nigeria, Argentina and Zimbabwe that will eliminate double taxation on income tax. As well, this bill implements a protocol to revise the current tax convention between Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

(1015)

I would first like to comment on the desirability and the role of tax treaties. A tax treaty between countries is an important tool to provide the benefits of certainty and stability regarding

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tax regimes—benefits that concretely promote and facilitate international trade and investment.

Such certainty and stability is achieved because such treaties enshrine the basis, as well as the rate, of applicable taxes. This means that a treaty rate of tax cannot be increased unless the treaty itself is modified or terminated.

In fact, termination is a rare event, while revision of such treaties is a lengthy process requiring the concurrence of both governments. And in either case, taxpayers will normally receive considerable advance notice of the impending changes.

Another benefit of such tax treaties is that they also reduce annoyance in the operation of the national tax systems involved in several ways. First, they eliminate the necessity of paying tax on business profits in the source country if there is no permanent establishment in that country. As well, they provide a mechanism to settle problems encountered by taxpayers.

More importantly, tax treaties eliminate or alleviate double taxation in instances where international transactions are involved that may give rise to the same income being taxed by more than one country.

Let me expand on how this works. For the purpose of eliminating double taxation, the tax treaties establish two categories of rules. Firstly, in the case of a number of specified items of income, an exclusive right to tax is conferred on only one of the contracting states. In this way, the other contracting country accepts that it cannot tax this income, and double taxation is thus absolutely avoided.

Secondly, for other items of income, the right to tax is not an exclusive one. These provisions confer on the source country (or situs) a full or limited right to tax. In turn, under the treaty, the country of residence of the taxpayer must allow relief for the tax paid in the other country. Ultimately, this again ensures there is no double taxation.

I should remind this House that the treaties enacted by this bill are the latest within a long-standing process. The major reform of Canada's income tax legislation in 1971 required Canada to expand its network of double taxation conventions (tax treaties) with other countries. Since that time negotiations for the conclusion of new treaties or the revision of existing ones have been entered into with almost 75 countries.

In this bill, the four tax conventions under review follow the general pattern of the conventions previously approved by Parliament. The number of Canadian tax treaties in force now stands at 52. I would now like to briefly highlight if I may, the main elements of these new tax treaties covered by this bill. I will deal with the Protocol to the Netherlands Convention at the end of my remarks.

(1020)

These treaties provide generally that dividends may be taxed in the source country at a maximum rate of 15 per cent.

However, in the case of company dividends, the rate is often reduced if the company receiving the dividends holds an equity interest in the company paying the dividends.

Such a reduced rate has been set at 10 per cent for the countries covered here (except for Nigeria, where it will be 12.5 per cent).

Regarding interest paid by a resident of one country to that of another country, the rates set out in this bill are 10 per cent in the case of Hungary, 12.5 per cent for Argentina and Nigeria; and 15 per cent in the case of Zimbabwe.

There are, however, a number of exceptions. Interest paid on a bond or similar obligation of the national government, a political subdivision or local authority will be exempt from tax in the country in which it arises.

Also, these treaties (except that with Zimbabwe) contain a provision that will allow interest paid on loans or credits extended, guaranteed or insured by certain state entities (in Canada, for example, by the Export Development Corporation—EDC) to be taxable only in the country where the recipient of the interest payment resides.

These treaties also address the taxation of royalty payments. They provide for a general rate of source taxation of 10 per cent in the case of Hungary and Zimbabwe, 12.5 per cent in the case of Nigeria, and from 3 to 15 per cent in the case of Argentina, depending on the nature of the royalty.

Copyright royalties are exempt under the treaty with Hungary.

There are also a number of other matters dealt with in these tax treaties, such as capital gains. The treaty provisions dealing with capital gains reflect the standard Canadian position enabling the source country to tax profits from the sale of real estate, business assets and shares in real estate companies.

Second, non-discrimination. Under the conventions, discrimination on the basis of nationality is prohibited. This ensures nationals of one country equal treatment with nationals of the other country in the same circumstances. However, this does not prevent a country from providing fiscal incentives (for example, Canada's small business deduction) on the basis of the residence of the taxpayer.

Third, pensions. Canada has preserved its right to tax pensions paid to residents of the countries covered by this bill. In the cases of Argentina, Zimbabwe and Hungary, the maximum rate of tax applicable in the source country to periodic pension and annuity payments is 15 per cent. In the case of Nigeria, there

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is no stated maximum rate of tax applicable to periodic pension payments.

Finally, war veterans pensions are generally exempt from tax under the four treaties.

Fourth, double taxation relief. The treaties provide that in Canada, double taxation of foreign source income of Canadian residents is alleviated by way of a foreign tax credit, in accordance with the limitations provided for in the Canadian legislation.

In addition, dividends received by a company resident in Canada from the exempt surplus of foreign affiliates resident in a treaty country are exempt from tax in Canada. Reciprocally, relief from double taxation is granted in the other treaty country in accordance with the method recognized by that country.

(1025)

Let me turn now to a final undertaking enacted by this legislation. Bill S-2 will implement a protocol to the tax convention signed by Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1986. This protocol updates this existing treaty to take into consideration changes made to the respective laws and policies of the two countries.

For example, in Canada's 1992 federal budget, the government announced it was prepared, in tax treaty negotiations, to reciprocally reduce the withholding tax rate on direct dividends. This was seen as a valuable incentive to encourage direct international investment. And in the 1993 budget, the government affirmed its desire to negotiate, on a bilateral basis, exemptions from withholding taxes on payments made for the use of computer software.

I am pleased to say that the Netherlands is the first country with which we have signed such an agreement.

Under this bill, in cases where a dividend recipient holds 25 per cent or more of the capital, or 10 per cent or more of the voting rights, of the dividend-paying corporation, the withholding tax will be reduced to 5 per cent from the current 10 per cent. This reduction will take place over a five-year period starting from 1993. As regards interest payments, the protocol reduces the rate to 10 per cent from the current 15 per cent.

As well, the agreement eliminates the withholding tax on royalties for computer software and on interest paid to pension funds.

To conclude, on balance, the terms of the four tax conventions and the protocol provide some equitable solutions to the various problems of double taxation existing between Canada and these countries. Each of these countries hopes to implement the bilateral convention as soon as possible. Consequently, I commend this bill to the House and urge its speedy passage.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): I welcome this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois in this debate on Bill S-2, which, as the hon. member explained, proposes to implement income tax conventions between Canada and Hungary, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Argentina and the Netherlands.

The purpose of tax treaties is to avoid double taxation of business profits in the case of companies that have branches or affiliated companies in the other country. These treaties are useful and may, in certain cases, apply to trips by Quebec and Canadian performers who go abroad—or even athletes, including hockey players.

It is clear that tax treaties are not something new. They have always existed, and I have the impression they always will, especially in a world that is undergoing globalization.

(1030)

Tax treaties establish what is called reciprocal treatment between countries with respect to income tax. However, reciprocity is only possible when tax rates for Canadian businesses and businesses in the countries with which tax treaties are signed are more or less equivalent or at least comparable.

Madam Speaker, the first negative aspect I want to discuss today concerning tax treaties is that, because tax rates on business profits in Canada differ greatly from those in countries that are signatories to such treaties, the system has long been considered to be a standing invitation to tax avoidance by Canadian corporations with foreign affiliates.

In fact, countries considered tax havens, such as Barbados, Cyprus, Malta and Singapore, to name only a few, have signed tax treaties with Canada. The tax rate applied in these tax havens is much lower than in Canada. This means, as was pointed out by the Auditor General in his 1992 report, and I quote:

Income earned in countries that are tax havens—

—like the ones I just mentioned—

—and that are designated by order in council can enter Canada tax free, even if it was not taxed or only taxed at a very low rate.

Still according to the Auditor General, the Department of National Revenue is aware of a number of taxpayers who have used this scheme to be in a position to move \$500 million into Canada tax free. Quite frankly, this is outrageous. Earlier, I was amazed when I heard the presentation on Bill S-2, in which everything was sweetness and light, and I sat there wondering whether the members opposite were completely oblivious to the real world of tax treaties.

Madam Speaker, another reason, and this concerns the second negative aspect, why the Bloc Québécois has been asking for a review of all our tax treaties is to pinpoint cases where tax rates on business profits are comparable to those in Canada and preserve only those treaties. The point is that the foreign income of a Canadian corporation, which is tax exempt or taxed at a very low rate, when paid in the form of dividends to Canadian

shareholders, is eligible for the same federal tax credit as dividends paid by a Canadian company operating in Canada, whose income is taxed in Canada.

We have often raised the problem of tax inequities between individuals, Quebecers and Canadians, but here we are dealing with an unfair tax situation affecting corporations based in Canada who decide to invest in Canada, to create jobs in Canada, to generate profits and to be good corporate citizens. All the while, other corporations decide to set up foreign affiliates and, through their investments abroad, benefit from tax exemptions here in Canada. These exemptions are generous, if not more generous in fact, than those enjoyed by corporations striving to create and fuel economic growth.

These inequities clearly act as a disincentive to economic development here at home. There is no question that preferential treatment is given to foreign investments by Canadian residents.

If this is how we plan to develop the Quebec and Canadian economies and employment, then I think we have taken a wrong turn. This situation is clearly unacceptable.

The third aspect of the tax convention legislation that caught my eye is the fact that pursuant to this act, a Canadian-resident corporation can deduct interest on funds it borrows for the purpose of investing in a foreign affiliate. Here again, investments made in Quebec and in Canada are afforded unfair treatment, all because of tax conventions signed between Canada and various countries considered tax havens.

Corporations that invest in tax havens avoid taxation in two ways: first, they can deduct some of the interest on funds borrowed and second, they can bring their profits, which were either not taxed at all or taxed only sparingly abroad, back into the country.

(1035)

Mention is made of taxation rates that vary anywhere from 3 per cent to 10 per cent in some cases. These corporations are taxed little, if at all, abroad and enjoy tax-exempt status in Canada. The tax convention system is full of holes and has been for some time now.

According to the Auditor General, and I quote:

That deduction of interest reduces Canada's tax revenue and, at the same time, the related income.

It is precisely this related income which is tax exempt in Canada. Speaking of income related to this investment,

It may be received as a tax exempt dividend and may never appear in the Canadian tax base.

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In times of serious financial crisis such as we are now facing in Canada, the government should not be encouraging corporations to invest their money abroad. Instead, it should be creating incentives to promote investment here at home, to develop employment and to fuel economic growth. In almost all instances, tax conventions clearly do not help us to achieve this objective.

Allow me to describe some of the other problems associated with tax havens. Some Canadian companies use stratagems to avoid paying their fair share of tax in Canada such as upstream loans or revenue stripping, as these methods are called in business jargon. Let me explain.

For one thing, these schemes enable Canadian companies to avoid tax by transferring the losses of foreign subsidiaries to the Canadian parent. In other words, if a Canadian company has a foreign subsidiary, the losses incurred abroad are brought home to Canada and included in calculating the Canadian company's tax.

Secondly, they allow Canadian companies to avoid tax by sending the income of Canadian corporations abroad, which works the other way. Some Canadian companies make profits in Canada, export these profits to countries where they have a subsidiary and with which a tax convention has been signed, thus avoiding paying tax in Canada.

Thirdly, these stratagems enable Canadian companies to avoid Canadian tax by making the income of Canadian corporations exempt.

The history of tax conventions between Canada and the signatory countries is full of horror stories which we are unused to reading about in the Auditor General's reports and which enrage us. Let me tell you a few of them, taken from the Auditor General's report for 1992.

A Netherlands Antilles subsidiary of a Canadian company had assets of \$865 million and income of \$92 million not subject to the foreign income rules. Although the income of the foreign subsidiary has not been taxed at a rate that approximates Canadian rates, it can be transferred to the Canadian parent as tax-free dividends. The offshore income is not taxed on entering Canada, but it carries with it federal tax credits on dividends paid out to Canadian shareholders. The Canadian parent incurred the financing costs for its investment—

—it was still on Dutch territory—

—in the subsidiary and reported a tax loss of \$29 million.

With the huge financial problems we have, it is as if we suddenly decided to send \$29 million abroad, as if we deliberately drove capital away, as if with all the loopholes in the tax conventions, we deliberately caused a revenue shortfall for the federal government, when the situation could be corrected quite quickly and easily.

Let me give you another of these horror stories, again taken from the Auditor General's report:

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A Canadian company transferred \$318 million in investments to its Barbados subsidiary. In six months this \$318 million brought in revenues of \$37 million exempt from foreign income regulations.

(1040)

Even if the subsidiary's revenues were not taxed at a rate similar to the Canadian rate, namely 3 per cent, they can be transferred to the Canadian parent company as exempted dividends. Foreign income would then be tax-exempt on entering Canada, even if no, or practically no, taxes on this income were paid in Barbados. This net income is not subject to any taxes on entering Canada.

The Canadian parent company of this subsidiary also incurred financing charges for investing in its Barbadian subsidiary and reported—without generating any economic activity in Canada—fiscal losses in Canada. Again, we are losing millions of dollars in tax revenues when we do not need these tax losses. Everyone will agree that we really do not need them. With a \$507 billion debt and a deficit that will exceed \$40 billion, I think we should not hurt ourselves intentionally. Only masochists can present such tax convention proposals in a sentimental manner. As they say in my riding, no wonder things are not going well at the shop.

No exhaustive studies have been done on the 52 or 53 tax conventions now in effect between Canada and certain countries, but the Auditor General gave us a general idea of the tax losses they can result in. According to him, Canadian businesses that, in 1990, invested close to \$92 billion in non-resident companies with which they have a non-arm's length relationship may have benefited a great deal—he does not give the proportion as there are no exhaustive studies on this—but it probably led to tax losses such as I mentioned earlier.

As the Auditor General pointed out, some investments are probably quite legitimate and totally above suspicion, but others are not. They may be legal but they are not legitimate given the federal government's financial position. In 1990, for instance, \$5.2 billion was invested in businesses located in Barbados, a well-known tax haven. These investments in Barbados generated \$400 million in tax-free dividends.

Here is another example: \$10.9 billion was invested in businesses in Cyprus, Ireland, Liberia, the Netherlands and Switzerland, which are also considered tax havens. These investments brought in over \$200 million in tax-free dividends, so that Canadian shareholders could benefit from the tax exemption on dividends paid to Canadian residents.

We must realize that much if not most of these so-called investments in these tax havens are made so that Canadian parent companies can avoid Canadian taxes and contribute to the deterioration of public finances already damaged by several years of budget carelessness on the part of successive governments here in Ottawa.

We can reasonably conclude that, as the Auditor General pointed out, the Canadian government—again, they are proving us right by presenting Bill S-2, which renews and introduces similar tax conventions—intentionally deprives itself of hundreds of millions of dollars in annual tax revenues.

The problems related to tax conventions have been known for a long time, mostly by the people opposite. And I would like to point out how long this kind of inconsistency, how long the problem of tax avoidance under tax conventions has been known. You should not laugh because public finance management is far from rosy, as is the way you treat Canadians by maintaining such a shameless system and by cutting social programs by \$7.5 billion over the next three years.

(1045)

The problem of tax avoidance under conventions has been well-known for a long time. For example, in 1987, the Department of Finance announced that it would review the taxation of affiliated foreign corporations. These studies were never carried out.

In 1989, the public accounts committee stated that the Department of Finance should ensure that tax avoidance under tax agreements be closely monitored and that solutions be proposed. Again, that was in 1989 and we are still waiting.

In 1992, in his comments on the Auditor General's report, the Minister of Finance clearly indicated that he had no intention of tackling the problem, even though he was aware of it.

In December of the same year—and the hon. members opposite should listen carefully to this—Jean-Robert Gauthier, a veteran Liberal member of Parliament, who was then chairman of the public accounts committee, said that what really concerned the committee was that the Department of Finance had taken no steps to eliminate, where possible, the tax avoidance schemes used by foreign subsidiaries. Mr. Gauthier, who is still a member of the Liberal Party of Canada, added that, in his opinion, the problem was not a new one; it had simply resurfaced.

Not only does Bill S-2 renew such conventions without an appropriate review of the opportunities for tax avoidance in countries considered to be tax havens but, on top of that, nothing was done by the government since it came to office to try somehow to save even a part of the hundreds of millions of dollars which are lost because of tax avoidance schemes linked to these agreements.

The Minister of Finance was quite pleased with himself when he tabled his first budget—a budget which has since been disavowed by the Prime Minister of Canada. The finance minister then said that his budget included amendments which would enable the government to alleviate the problem related to tax conventions.

However, this was just another performance put on by the stand-up comic that the Minister of Finance is when it comes to our economic policy.

Sure, some changes were made, but not to avoid the loss of hundreds of millions annually, and not to avoid problems which exist and which we have been aware of since 1982.

The measures taken will definitely not solve the problem and I urge the government to review all of the 52 or 53 tax conventions signed with other countries. These countries are not all tax havens, but many are and they deliberately deprive us of tax revenues.

It is a thorough disgrace to maintain such a system without an adequate review, especially when you consider that the system has been criticized for a long time by the Auditor General, by the Liberals when they were in office, and even by the various finance ministers, who pledged to do something but never did. It is unacceptable and it is even a disgrace to tolerate such a flawed system, especially when you consider that the recent budget puts a heavier burden on people who should not have to bear that burden. Indeed, the unemployed will contribute \$5.5 billion through reduced benefits and fewer insurable weeks.

The government puts the burden on those who should not have to pay, since these people are already living in poverty because their government is unable to give them jobs to support their families and get their dignity back.

Neither was it necessary to take this other shameful measure, which consists in reducing by \$2.5 billion, over the next few years, established programs financing. Again, this is not where the government should have looked to find the money it needs.

Nor should it reduce, cut and even eliminate the tax credit for seniors. These people do not deserve such treatment. They should not have to pay for the financial problems of the Canadian government, considering that they have already contributed so much throughout their lives and that the government persists in tolerating tax avoidance through these tax conventions.

(1050)

The government also did not have the right to shift the burden of the deficit or to demonstrate such a lack of control and imagination in getting a handle on public finances. There was no need to make the provinces pay for the deficit by capping or freezing equalization payments, for instance. Canadian provinces have already lost \$ 1.5 billion.

Bill S-2 has nothing to do with the tax agreement reform we have been calling for since the beginning of the election campaign which saw us become the Official Opposition in this House.

Before endorsing any new tax agreements or renewing any existing ones, I call on my colleagues and on the government to

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embark on a complete, total, in-depth review of such agreements and of the countries which are party to them.

My colleagues and I have nothing against Hungary, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Argentina or the Netherlands, but in view of the financial burden Canadians and Quebecers must shoulder, one should not waste money on purpose or create a situation where we lose several hundred million dollars a year in tax revenue. What we need is to develop a sense of responsibility which has been totally lacking since this government came into power on October 25.

These people do not act responsibly. Not only do they shift the burden of the debt onto the shoulders of those who should not have to carry any more but, due to their incompetence, they cause Quebecers and Canadians to lose billions of dollars because of the uncertainty they create on financial markets. As we saw recently, not only did they take money away from people who did not deserve it, they did not even manage to please financial community, which found nothing in this government's first budget that would allow it to put its financial house in order and give some credibility to a government that is completely out of it.

As one of my colleagues said, not only has it failed to close the tax loopholes provided by these agreements, even though it is doing an about-face, having itself condemned this form of tax avoidance in the past, but it is doing nothing to get rid of shameful schemes such as family trusts.

As we said before, it is becoming increasingly clear that this government is starting to behave like the previous one, favouring its friends, and the businesses which pour thousands of dollars every year into the Liberal coffers. As long as the issues of party financing by the public and lobbying are not settled, in a true democratic manner, that is, we will keep on having this kind of inconsistency and tomfoolery which causes us to lose money when we are in no position to do so.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, we will vote against Bill S-2 not, as I said earlier, because we have something against these countries, but because we want the government to review tax agreements as a whole.

[English]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Reform Party to address Bill S-2 which in essence establishes conventions between Canada and a number of other countries so as to prevent income tax evasion and double taxation of workers from Canada, Hungary, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Argentina and the Netherlands while working abroad in these countries.

After listening to the hon. member for the Bloc Quebecois who just delivered his comments, perhaps a lot of us will be looking at how to enter into an arrangement with the Barbados and making a deal there since its taxation system is so favourable.

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My party supports Bill S-2 but would like to point out to members in both Houses, this House and the other place, that there are millions of Canadians who do not work abroad who could surely use a break from the high taxes they are forced to pay at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. Implementing tax conventions between Canada and countries like Hungary is noble, but what about implementing similar conventions between federal, provincial and municipal levels of government within our own borders, ensuring that the Canadian taxpayer is not overburdened with double taxation?

(1055)

For instance, the agreement between Hungary and Canada is 20 pages thick. I read it because my parents are Hungarian, I speak Hungarian, and I have a bit of a vested interest in Hungary and what happens there. If the principles in this agreement between Canada and Hungary were looked at and reviewed by this Liberal government, and it tried to negotiate and apply some of these principles with the provincial governments, what it would gain from that are the principles that would lead to removal of some of the interprovincial barriers to trade. That could save the country, our country, our economy and our taxpayers. The cost of doing business could be reduced by \$4 billion to \$5 billion.

One of the most common complaints about the goods and services tax that has been raised in finance meetings is the fact that when people purchase goods they are hit with a provincial sales tax of between 8 and 12 per cent and a GST of 7 per cent. In the eyes of most Canadians, this is seen as a double hit on their pocketbooks and has encouraged them to take billions of dollars in taxable revenue underground.

At a meeting in Vancouver either yesterday or today there is a presentation on the underground economy and the value of it. Why does one exist? It exists because this House and this government is continuing the practices of tax and spend and has not addressed the real issue of reduced spending, spending cuts, putting the money back into the taxpayers' hands so people would be willing to pay taxes on an equitable and fair basis and not go into the underground economy. It is becoming too expensive to be honest in this country. Even the finance minister has acknowledged that fact.

In the eyes of most Canadians the double taxation system with sales taxes, hidden taxes and income taxes is more than a double hit on their pocketbooks. It is a triple, quadruple whammy and it has encouraged them, as I said earlier, to deal in ways that they can save money.

According to *Canadian Business* magazine: "Canada now enjoys the dubious distinction of imposing one of the highest taxation rates among the group of seven industrialized countries".

I hope the government does not follow the practices of the previous Conservative government of always quoting the group of seven nations and how the United Nations said that this country is number one. We are no longer number one in anything except high spending on a per capita basis.

When will the government wake up and realize that the present system of tax and spend will no longer be tolerated by investors, lenders and consumers?

One of my constituents wrote in reply to a questionnaire that I sent out: "Only the federal government could find ways to make people pay for the privilege of living more simply and moderately".

For too long governments have forced people to live within their means and exercise fiscal restraint while politicians have lived in the world of guaranteed pensions and expensive junkets. While many Canadians are sitting around the kitchen table planning a budget, deciding what they need versus what they want, members of Parliament have travelled the globe, costing taxpayers millions of dollars. Parliamentary committees travel the country, justified on the basis that they are consulting with the people.

The cost of all these committee travels, combined with the junkets, is not in the millions of dollars, it is over a billion dollars. Yet the government will not look at ways and means of saving the taxpayers' money and getting input from taxpayers through householders or through visiting their constituencies every once in a while and finding out what they want.

It takes the Clerk of the House to look at ways and means of saving money for committees. It is a noble effort on the Clerk's part and the government should be looking and encouraging more effort on that basis.

How many trips have there been by members of Parliament, their spouses and their aides to Hungary, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Argentina, or Zimbabwe to hammer out the particulars of S-2?

(1100)

I was invited to go to Hungary as a parliamentarian. I speak Hungarian. It would have been a wonderful opportunity to visit the country where I was born, but I turned it down. I turned it down because there was nothing to be gained there. There is more to be gained here. If they want to do a deal with us they can come here.

By doing that I hope I have sent the message that we will co-operate with other countries but we have problems to solve at home without trying to solve other people's problems for them. They have a responsibility to work on that themselves, including Hungarians.

Bill S-2 is largely a housekeeping bill. The federal government should consider housekeeping measures in our income tax system. It should stop dusting around the edges. I encourage

government members to take their gloves off and start throwing things out, such as unnecessary programs.

The Liberals should start by throwing out the Income Tax Act with its over 2,500 pages. They should develop a new proportional simple tax based on equity and understanding. It should be geared to family size, the amount of income and the family's ability to pay taxes on that income.

It is our high taxation level that is responsible for people fleeing to countries like those mentioned in Bill S-2. That is why the government is forced to draw up these conventions.

We have a system of overseas tax credits. People who work outside Canada for extended periods it is believed ought not to pay full taxes since they do not consume their full share of government services. That virtually eliminates tax on 80 per cent of their total income if they have been out of the country for six months.

On that basis an engineer making \$70,000 would barely pay \$7,000 whereas that engineer working at home would pay \$23,000. When I questioned a certified accountant in my riding of Calgary Centre he told me about this and that it is a huge incentive. It makes it worthwhile for people to leave their families and work in Russia or Hungary for half the year to make this extra income.

The nature of this bill is technical and serves to provide a better understanding between Canada and foreign countries. Let me leave the government with some constructive questions that arise out of reviewing this bill, which I hope will lead to some improvements for Canada.

Bill S-2 is a good first step. But why are we only signing on with the countries mentioned in the bill and not some of the emerging markets we will be trading with in the future?

The reason for these conventions is that tax evasion exists in Canada due to our comparatively high level of taxation. Is the government willing to prevent this problem from occurring by bringing our tax level in line with other countries?

Is it realistic to expect these conventions to be workable when Canada's tax system is considerably more complicated than the countries we are signing conventions with?

Is our high taxation level responsible for people fleeing to these countries and is that why we need these conventions? My answer to that is yes.

In conclusion, it is Canada's high tax burden which must be addressed in order to attract investment in Canada and have a positive net cash flow of foreign investments to add to our gross national product.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

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Some hon. members: Question.

(1105)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-8, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act (force) as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have a ruling by Mr. Speaker on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act (force).

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): There is one motion in amendment on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-8, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act (force).

MOTION NO. 1 WILL BE DEBATED AND VOTED UPON.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-8 be amended in Clause 1 in the English version by replacing line 30, on page 2, with the following:

"grounds that the inmate or any other inmate of the".

She said: Madam Speaker, the amendment I am proposing this morning is very simple not only because it is short and self-explanatory, it is simple in every way. It proposes a simplification of the wording of the bill. In other words, I am suggesting we express what is clear in clear terms and that we state the two possibilities separately in both official languages. I am trying to give the legislative purpose of the bill a comparable, equivalent and similar form in the two official versions, French and English.

I am not questioning the content of the bill because I agree with it. I do not feel that these amendments to the Criminal Code will modify the state of the law. They simply give a structure to parameters the courts have already established around section 25 concerning the use of deadly force by policemen.

I am not convinced that all policemen will submit themselves to the five-step test imposed by the bill when faced with a life and death situation; on the other hand, I do not think this new legislation is changing anything much. Our consultations with

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the judiciary and police forces have shown us that the spirit of the bill is accepted almost unanimously. It is not the content which is questionable but the form.

This bill gives us the opportunity to discuss a very serious legislative problem, a problem in the drafting of legislation. For a few years now, federal bills have taken on a very specific style in each of the two official languages and I am not talking about their literary aspect. I invite members to read at random parts of federal legislation.

Earlier this week, during the debate on Bill C-7, I commented on this obscure new drafting technique. I will certainly come back to it some other time. Let me just say for now that any piece of legislation, particularly in the case of criminal law, must be easy for ordinary people to understand.

What concerns me in the case of Bill C-8 for which I am proposing an amendment, as for all federal legislation, is the fact that the French and English versions generally do not match. My amendment is very simple and proposes to make both texts identical, not only similar or comparable but absolutely identical.

The statutes of Canada are enforced all over the country and both versions are equally official. They are enacted, printed, and published in both official languages. According to the Official Languages Act, both versions are "equally authoritative".

(1110)

It must then be concluded that, where the English and French versions are diametrically opposed, two different laws must apply. Besides, the Official Languages Act itself illustrates that point perfectly as it includes its own contradictory clauses. Members of the House will understand what I mean merely by skimming through that act.

In Canada, we really have two official languages acts, just as we usually end up with two laws whenever we adopt a particular piece of legislation. No doubt, this situation is unique in the world, and we must make do with it, for better or for worse.

As I just said, even the Official Languages Act has two different official versions. Section 13 of the Act, which declares both versions equally authoritative, does not say it with the same meaning and effect in French and in English.

As one might expect, since the Official Languages Act has two official contradictory versions, so do all federal enactments.

For example, in the English version of Bill C-8, section 25(5) authorizing the use of deadly force against an inmate who is escaping reads as follows: "any of the inmates— poses a threat of death— to the peace officer or any other person—"

In the English version, the threat of death comes from all inmates and is directed against the peace officer concerned and any other person. In the French version, the peace officer can use deadly force against that inmate and any other inmate.

We understand that "all inmates" includes the inmate who is escaping. We also understand that, in spite of a different wording, the peace officer is justified in using deadly force whenever he is threatened by an inmate who is trying to escape.

But why must we say it differently in English and French? Why must we always complicate things and risk creating confusion? "Any of the inmates" does not mean "*ce détenu et tout autre détenu*". We must say clearly "*un détenu*" to translate "any of the inmates", or "this inmate and any other inmate" to really translate "*ce détenu ou tout autre détenu*". Let us stop complicating simple things.

That is the purpose of my amendment. As I said, it is simple and it is aimed at ensuring simplicity, and, if I may say so, at ensuring clarity and agreement between both official versions.

[English]

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, the member for Saint Hubert is proposing to amend the English version of Bill C-8 to bring the wording closer to the French version.

Legislative drafting takes place parallel in English and French. Each official version conforms to and reflects the genius, spirit and rules of each language. Neither version is the literal translation of the other nor is it meant to be. Therefore, formal discrepancies are inevitable.

The language in clause 1 as in other clauses is meant to be in plain language to the extent possible. The language in the French and English versions is used to express the intent of the legislation with the utmost clarity and precision, respecting grammatical rules and seeking to avoid undue repetitions and the use of more words than are necessary.

(1115)

The use of the words "any of the inmates" in line 30 is short and clear and easy to understand. To add the extra words in English, as proposed by the hon. member, just in order to achieve a literal English translation of the French, adds nothing of substance and serves only to detract from the current English plain language version and therefore cannot be supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Mahu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The question is on motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): In my opinion the nays have it. I declare the motion negatived.

(Motion No. 1 negatived.)

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Mr. Gagliano: Madam Speaker, there has been agreement by the three parties that we proceed now with third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Blondin-Andrew (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak on behalf of Bill C-8 at third reading. I hope this bill will receive support from all sides of the House.

Bill C-8 marks a significant advance forward from the anachronistic fleeing felon rule. In addition, it preserves the ability of the police to protect themselves and the public from serious harm or death. As well, this bill balances the ability of police officers to maintain the safety and security of the public while respecting the rights of Canadians.

Hon. members should know that Bill C-8 has the support of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police believes that Bill C-8 responds to the need for change in a way that provides police officers with the necessary tools to do their jobs in dangerous situations, while at the same time places on police officers the responsibility when using deadly force against fleeing suspects to do so in the circumstances which

would be permitted by the proposed new subsection 25(4) of the Criminal Code.

The Canadian Police Association expressed the view that the legislation is balanced and accords with commonly accepted police practice. It deals with the uncertainty caused by a decision of a court in Ontario that concluded that the present subsection is unconstitutional.

(1120)

Both the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association are comfortable with the wording in the proposed new subsection 25(4).

Bill C-8 also addresses the types of situations that arise when peace officers in federal penitentiaries use force to prevent potentially dangerous inmates from escaping custody.

With the proposed new subsection 25(5) of the Criminal Code, Bill C-8 strikes a sensible balance between individual rights and community needs and guarantees that peace officers in our penitentiaries will continue to enjoy the authority they need to carry out their responsibility for the protection of society.

Finally, the bill would also amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to provide express statutory authority for a protection officer to use disabling force against a fleeing foreign fishing vessel in order to arrest the master of the vessel. This amendment will ensure that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is able to maintain this deterrent to foreign vessels' fishing illegally inside Canada's fishing zones.

The amendment includes the authority to create regulations establishing the procedures governing the use of disabling force.

The government intends to develop these regulations so that they will be consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with recognized and reasonable international practice in the use of disabling force at sea.

This will include a guaranteed use of force to ensure that only the minimum level of force necessary to carry out an arrest is used.

I hope that hon. members will provide this bill with their support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford): I would like to state the position of the Official Opposition on Bill C-8, an Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

First of all, this bill would amend section 25(4) of the Criminal Code, which specifies the degree of force peace officers can use to apprehend a fleeing suspect or an inmate trying to escape from a penitentiary.

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Second, Bill C-8 would amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to provide express authority for an officer to use force to disable a foreign fishing vessel whose captain is trying to escape.

As members undoubtedly know, this far-reaching piece of legislation has been a very controversial issue in Canada for a number of years now.

I will start by addressing the first part of the bill. The use of force by police officers to arrest fleeing suspects involves a number of social issues.

Obviously, law enforcement is at stake. For the public's sake, criminal law must be enforced and offenders must be arrested and prosecuted.

I recognize that we need to provide police officers with the tools they need to do their work, to protect themselves and to protect the citizens. However, law enforcement goes beyond ordinary police work. According to a very basic principle, it is up to the legal system to try the accused and to sentence the guilty.

When police intervention causes death, as it does from time to time, that principle is encroached upon at the expense of society.

(1125)

Sometimes, it also goes against the will of the people who are asking for an overall reduction in the force used by police officers.

When less violent and objectionable police techniques can be efficiently used, it is in the interest of society to do so. There is always the possibility that an innocent individual, mistaken for a fleeing suspect, can be killed or harmed.

The population must also think about its own security. Two possible scenarios come to mind. On the one hand, dangerous criminals trying to avoid being arrested can put people at risk.

In such a case, there may be good reasons to risk causing grievous bodily harm to the offender, given the likelihood that he would inflict a lot of pain on people if he escapes.

On the other hand, when you are dealing with an offender who is not a public threat, or at least not a very serious one, public security would be more at stake if police officers were to use force to arrest the suspect, either by firing in the air or aiming at a fleeing car, instead of using less violent measures, at the risk of losing their suspect.

In the last few years, we have had to face another public policy issue following allegations that police forces are mistreating visible minorities.

When people are under the impression that the police are treating visible minority suspects differently, it can often create tense situations.

It is in the best interest of our society to reduce the use of force so as to avoid provoking anger among minorities and touching off a crisis.

So, we agree with the bill, which clarifies the criteria set for the use of force by peace officers against fleeing suspects, thus confirming the practice applied in the last few years.

Nonetheless, the use of the terms "imminent or future" in section 25(4) leads to abuse.

We would have liked the government to clarify these terms, which appear rather ambiguous to us.

The second part of my speech concerns changes to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. Indeed, according to the Criminal Code, peace officers are allowed to use force in arresting an escapee.

We support this principle in the context of the Criminal Code, but we consider this approach not to be convenient for the fisheries.

We feel there is a huge disproportion between the various aspects of Bill C-8 and the scope of these measures.

The situation is tense in the fishing industry and the use of force to disable a foreign fishing vessel could result in an escalation of violence.

Moreover, the bill does not provide for the use of necessary force to disable a Canadian vessel, on grounds that other measures exist to track down offenders in Canada. This is an outright negation of the very purpose of this bill.

The use of force to disable a vessel is not the most efficient means to put an end to foreign overfishing. In the past, the use of warning shots has not permitted officers to board delinquent foreign vessels to inspect them.

(1130)

Consequently, protection officers could be tempted to use more force, which could in turn lead to an escalation of violence.

Trying to show the international community how determined Canada is to put an end to illicit practices is a commendable objective. However, there are risks attached to it when the problem of unlawful fishing is not solved at the root.

Illegal fishing cannot be stopped without the help of foreign countries. Negotiations with the international community should continue since, as we all know, Canada cannot legislate in an international zone. Therefore, negotiations are the only recourse.

Madam Speaker, it is possible, through bilateral and multilateral agreements, to obtain the support of foreign governments in order to penalize shipowners who would chance to fish illegally in Canadian waters. Sanctions would have to be severe enough to deter offenders.

Although such cases are rare, we can put an end to this without jeopardizing the life of crew members. Disabling a vessel at sea is not as simple as it seems.

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Even though we have all the necessary means to identify offenders, the government should rely on the cooperation of foreign governments instead. The amendment to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act does not give the Canadian government the power to intervene in an international zone where agreements are not respected. The only way of settling the matter is to put in place, with other countries, a system of sanctions.

The addition of clause 8(1) could prompt the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to better equip its vessels so that they have enough striking power to intimidate foreign vessels. These investments are not a priority at this time considering the crying needs of the fishing industry.

Since I do not want to dwell on this, I will conclude by saying that the term "to disable" a vessel must be better defined and that the regulations must put some restrictions on the use of force in order to prevent abuse.

I hope the government will take these remarks into consideration. The use of force involves risks that cannot be taken lightly.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Madam Speaker, Reformers will support Bill C-8. We admit we had reservations as the bill seemed at first to be limiting the discretion of the police to do a difficult job. The bill was seen as circumscribing the law around the use of force for fleeing criminals. On hearing the various witnesses and delegations at the committee stage, we are satisfied that the bill responds in a reasonable manner to unfinished business of the charter argument and the ruling of the Lines case.

The bill also clarifies the use of deadly force against escaping prisoners from medium and maximum penitentiaries. Additionally it provides authority to disable foreign vessels fleeing from Canadian authorities.

The bill is a culmination of a process that started in 1979 in the Ouimet committee. In 1989 Ontario race relations and police task forces made observations on the topic. Over the years there has been concern from the Law Reform Commission and the subject was brought to a head by the Ontario Lines case in April 1993 wherein existing sections of the Criminal Code were declared unconstitutional.

The bill catches up to the court and to the manuals of practice and training of current police operations. We had concerns that there was not sufficient consultation at the front line level of peace officers. We still hold that to be true. The bill, although appearing inherently sound, still is a "top down, we know best" piece of work.

(1135)

It is interesting to note that the civil libertarians and the prisoners rights representatives we heard at committee stage opposed the bill. They want peace officer powers much more strictly circumscribed, as is presented here. Most interestingly it seems that Bloc members were very worried about the fleeing foreign vessel section as they may envision themselves in the future as being categorized as foreign vessels fleeing from Canadian authorities as they challenge sovereignty in disputed waters. The separatist agenda was coming through.

The basic premise of the bill relating to peace officer use of force in the three areas of fleeing criminals, escaping inmates and runaway foreign vessels is proportionality. We hope the bill will bring the right balance. On the one hand peace officers must have the capacity to do their job with authority and on the other the rights of individuals must be protected.

In closing I want to make a strong point to wake up the government. Reformers will vote for the bill as a housekeeping measure. However we hope the justice minister will soon bring forward more than just promises to tighten up the criminal justice system, for in so many other areas all proportionality has evaporated.

The public demands action in view of what it sees as the bleeding heart justice agenda of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

[*Translation*]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Gagliano: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions, and I think that you will find that there is unanimous consent to suspend the sitting of the House until two o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The sitting is therefore suspended until two o'clock this afternoon.

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(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11.37 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

ABORTION

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, life begins from the moment of conception and continues until natural death. It is demanded that this Parliament exercise its power, authority and jurisdiction to enact legislation to protect and safeguard the rights and the life of the child dans le ventre de sa mère, the child within the womb.

Be reminded that the preamble of the Canadian Constitution and entrenched charter of rights recognizes the supremacy of God. However, a nation such as ours that condones, facilitates and finances abortion is indeed a nation without a conscience, a pagan nation.

Enact legislation now to guarantee the right to life at all stages from the moment of conception until natural death.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AID

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, we learned about violent fires raging on Isabella Island in the Galapagos archipelago. Fire is threatening rare species of plants and flowers as well as the breeding sites of the giant tortoises. Ecuador does not have the equipment required to control these fires, which could ravage one of the most important parts of the world's natural heritage.

The government authorities in Ecuador are calling for help and hope that international aid will come quickly. In particular, they ask Canada to mobilize its Canadair water bombers, which all experts say is the only way to end the disaster.

We ask the government to accede to the appeal from the Ecuadoran government and to send water bombers immediately in order to save this wonderful fauna and flora from the ravages of fire.

* * *

[*English*]

WARFIELD POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, the residents of the village of Warfield have a great deal of pride in their community.

Warfield has a village council, a volunteer fire department, a community hall, a swimming pool, local schooling from kindergarten to grade seven and a variety of stores and services to look after the needs of local citizens. Warfield also has an annual parade in honour of family sports, this year held on June 11.

In short, the village of Warfield has everything necessary to justify its civic pride except one thing. The missing ingredient is an address. All mail sent to Warfield is addressed to the neighbouring town of Trail.

The postal codes for Warfield are unique. No change or new costs would be necessary except to have Canada Post recognize the rights of the citizens of Warfield to have their own name on their mail.

In conclusion, I would like to make it clear that people of Warfield are not looking for a post office or any change in service, only their own identity.

* * *

EVERGREEN FOUNDATION

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, this is Earth Week and on behalf of an organization that is very active in my riding of Rosedale I would like to introduce to the House an important environmental education initiative.

The schoolground naturalization program is a national program of the Evergreen Foundation designed to transform schoolgrounds into natural outdoor classrooms. Many schools across Canada are presently landscaped with asphalt and concrete playing fields and are surrounded by institutional fencing. They look more like parking lots or prisons than schools.

These areas provide little educational value, few community advantages and no environmental or health benefits. Schoolgrounds need to be changed. They must become learning grounds by adding natural areas.

We must better understand the importance of creating better learning environments for our children and work to change our schoolgrounds from bleak expanses of concrete to areas of environmental significance and educational value.

This program of the Evergreen Foundation is doing that. I urge other members to support this initiative in their areas.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, there is in this country a small number of people suffering from environmental illness, or 20th century disease.

This is a malady thought to have causes from working in contaminated sites or in areas where water and air have been contaminated. At the same time, we know that doctors and scientists have a great deal of difficulty in defining exact causes.

The laboratory centre for disease control at Health and Welfare Canada in 1990 recommended that environmental sensitivities need to be considered on a case by case basis with acknowledgement of disability and compassion for the individual case.

Today, four years after this statement, individuals such as Susan Andersen of Calgary are forced to go to centres in Dallas, Texas to live and be treated in special medical centres.

Unfortunately these individuals are not given any financial help by our health care system notwithstanding the fact that there are no facilities for treatment in Canada.

I call on the Minister of Health, along with her provincial counterparts, to find a solution whereby all Canadians are subject to a health care system which is truly universal and to show the compassion suggested by the health department toward these individuals and their families which they deserve in a country which declares to have a universal health care system.

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[Translation]

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, volunteerism is a well-established tradition in Canada. At this time when human and financial resources are limited, volunteers are even more essential in Canadian society.

(1405)

On the occasion of National Volunteer Week, I would like to point out the invaluable contribution of organizations like the United Way of Montreal. Thanks to the United Way, many volunteer organizations can develop and continue to provide services to the neediest people in our society.

[English]

I wish to take this opportunity to applaud all the volunteers in my riding of Saint-Denis. Organizations like Les Femmes D'ici et D'Ailleurs, the Park Extension Youth Organization, Moisson Montréal, La Maison des Grands Parents de Villeray, to name but a few, have helped to foster a community of caring and co-operation in Saint-Denis.

I ask all my fellow members to support and assist the volunteers in their ridings and encourage them to continue their efforts in helping those most in need.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Quebecois are increasingly concerned that MPs of the

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other parties are riding a wave of linguistic intolerance. Members from both the Reform and the Liberal parties have presented petitions calling for an end to official bilingualism.

I am shocked and dismayed at this continued use of double-talk by the Liberal Party of Canada. This attitude can only be described as hypocritical. They are saying one thing to their constituents and another when speaking in the House.

Members of the Bloc Quebecois do not support such intolerant and narrow-minded petitions.

Is the Bloc Quebecois the only remaining political party defending the use of both official languages in federal institutions? Is this the new Canada? Do the Liberals have any shame?

* * *

THE LATE FRANK A. GRIFFITHS

Mr. Paul E. Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give tribute to the late Frank A. Griffiths, born December 17, 1916, who left us April 7 at 77 years. He is survived by his wife Emily, two sons, two daughters and 15 grandchildren.

An accountant by training, he became a business leader in British Columbia. He built a broadcasting network of radio and TV stations, including from my riding CKNW, B.C.'s most listened to station. His Western International Communications Company included BCTV, 11 radio stations, 2 networks and satellite communications. He also purchased the Vancouver Canucks in 1974. He became vice-chairman of the NHL and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Mr. Griffiths worked for community charities and was awarded numerous citations. His companies also had their own charitable organizations: the CKNW Orphans Fund, BCTV Variety Club Telethon and the Canuck Foundation.

Mr. Griffiths was a builder, a British Columbian who led by example, leaving his community a better place for us all.

* * *

SKOPJE

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the European union's legal action in the European Court of Justice against the Greek government, because of its non-acceptance of the breakaway Yugoslav republic of Skopje's appropriating the name and symbols of Greek Macedonia, ignores the fact that European union member countries may have contributed to state succession problems in the Balkans by premature recognition of Skopje in conflict with classical international law rules on recognition of new states.

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FUNDY—ROYAL

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate three university athletes from my riding on their recent accomplishments.

John Ryan of Sussex, New Brunswick was named male athlete of the year at the University College of Cape Breton. Dennis Lackie of Smith Creek was named most valuable player at St. Thomas University for its soccer team. David Haley of Sussex corner was named top rebounder for the St. Thomas University men's basketball team.

I would like to join with the families, friends and fans of these young athletes in saluting their success. Their dedication and team work make all three of them positive role models for the youth of Fundy—Royal. On behalf of the people of Fundy—Royal I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

* * *

PERFORMING ARTS

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two acting troupes within my riding of Oxford. The Woodstock Little Theatre recently won the Western Ontario Drama League Festival in London. Another of the main competitors in this event was the Ingersoll Theatre of the Performing Arts.

Both groups gave very creditable performances and the Woodstock presentation will now move on to the provincial championships to be held this May in Cambridge, Ontario.

As an amateur actor myself, I know firsthand the amount of work that goes into these productions. There are always a large number of people behind the scenes who do a great amount of work with much less recognition than those who appear on stage. Together these little theatre people provide live theatre to enthusiastic audiences in many towns and cities across this land. They are to be applauded.

* * *

(1410)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Public Service Alliance of Canada almost unanimously approved the creation of a regional council for Quebec. We must applaud the vision and courage of this Canada-wide union which, unlike the traditional political parties, has recognized Quebec's distinctiveness.

The Bloc Québécois also salutes the courage shown by the Alliance, which democratically decided to adjust now to the inevitable changes that the political structures of Canada and Quebec will undergo in the near future.

Yesterday's events confirm that grassroots unionism is a powerful instrument for changing and restructuring realities to bring them in line with people's aspirations.

* * *

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, our refugee system is failing and the minister of immigration is doing nothing about it.

Our refugee determination system with its many levels and dangerous loopholes cannot distinguish genuine from illegitimate refugees. The UN estimates that 60 per cent of our refugees are bogus. Refugee claims are being heard in Canadian prisons. Thousands of real refugees are forced to languish in camps while economic migrants sneak in through the back door.

Through all this, lawyers win big. Canada spends more money on legal aid for immigrants than it gives to overseas refugee aid programs.

Despite the failure of our refugee system our minister of immigration travels abroad to teach European nations how to manage refugee policy. The minister refuses to sign a treaty with the U.S. that would stem the flow of bogus refugees.

I urge the minister to cancel his next European trip, quit trying to convince the U.S. to adopt our refugee policies and get to work in fixing our system.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West): Mr. Speaker, in this National Volunteer Week I applaud the vital contribution of volunteers in our communities.

Volunteering benefits both parties. It provides self-fulfilment for the volunteer. The volunteer performs numerous tasks that otherwise could not be done. Participation by volunteers in our society strengthens the interrelated fabric of our communities.

Over 13 million Canadians are involved in volunteer work either on their own or through an organization. Canadians contribute over one billion hours in time to voluntary organizations, the equivalent of 617,000 full time positions. Translated into a 1990 dollar equivalent, the collective value of this volunteer time is \$13.2 billion annually.

It is important to thank these selfless people who enrich and serve our country through their generous sharing of time and talents.

Bravo, fellow Canadians.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked and angered last night to hear United States Senator Kent Conrad suggest before a United States hearing that the United States should retarget its Minuteman missiles against Canada to deter us from our trade initiatives.

This attitude and threatening rhetoric by the Senator and some of his American colleagues is both out of line and unsubstantiated. The facts are that Canada has been proven four times to have been a fair trader, once by the U.S. General Accounting Office, once by the U.S. International Trade Commission, once by COSTA and most recently by an international audit.

Senator Conrad should look in the mirror and see where the real problem lies and that is with the use of the export enhancement program in which they subsidize prices in the international market, drain their supply short, and naturally when they are short stocked we are going to as fair traders move stock into that market.

Senator Conrad should be wise and refocus his policy.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, April 22, is Earth Day and although polling experts say that eight out of ten Canadians are deeply concerned about ecological issues the present public policy agenda has been completely taken over by economic concerns, the debt and the deficit, social programs and unemployment.

Although these issues are important their significance pales next to the long term significance of a healthy and sustainable environment.

(1415)

It is time we acknowledged it is not only the federal deficit that threatens future generations of Canadians. If we destroy the earth's ability to support our way of life there definitely will be fewer jobs and social programs. The economic issues that preoccupy public policy makers now will be completely irrelevant.

Therefore, on Earth Day I urge all Canadians who are concerned about the environment to continue to try to keep it at the top of the public agenda. It is only through constant attention that the environment will be placed high on the government's list of priorities.

Oral Questions

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, the city of Rossland, British Columbia has regularized direct democracy through the use of citizens initiatives.

Rossland has adopted a constitution that gives taxpayers the right to challenge council's decisions. It has energized community participation, protected the public process from interest groups, saved taxpayers money and surprise, it has not resulted in irresponsible decisions.

One hundred and fifty years ago politicians wondered aloud if lay people could be trusted to vote. A century ago they questioned whether women could handle the power of suffrage.

Today some politicians ask the question: Can the average citizen be trusted to make decisions between elections? Well history reveals and the experience in Rossland confirms that the answer is a resounding yes.

Let us put aside our private political agendas and get on with the agenda of the people by giving citizens a way to challenge and even initiate federal legislation.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last night in Toronto, the Prime Minister told his audience what he thought of the unemployed and people on welfare. To him, these are unproductive people who, and I quote, "sit around at home drinking beer". That is how the leader of this government referred to people who feel rejected and insecure because they have lost their jobs and have very little hope of finding new jobs in spite of all their efforts. Coming from anyone else, such comments would be unacceptable, and they are even more so, coming from the Prime Minister.

I want to ask the Prime Minister, who has discredited those who are suffering the most in Canada and Quebec, to withdraw his insulting remarks and specifically apologize in this House today to those he so offended.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition would read the whole speech, I also said that people on welfare and unemployment insurance have only one desire, and that is to have the dignity of work, and that they do not want to sit around doing nothing. Perhaps the term I used was unfortunate, but I did mention, and that was the theme of our election campaign, "the dignity of work". I said there were people who were at home doing nothing, and I could have said it differently. If this was offensive, I apologize. What I meant and what I said repeatedly during the election campaign

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and what I say when I travel across the country today, is that people want all governments and all members of this House to work together to create jobs. They are sick and tired of partisan squabbling. Instead of concentrating on the real issues which are about giving everyone dignity and jobs, they talk about independence, separation and constitutional problems, at a time when people want jobs. These people want to work. If I offended anyone, I apologize. The hon. member should have read the whole speech. It is a reflection of our election platform—dignity and work.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it was not a slip of the tongue, because the Prime Minister also said that he wanted to break the current attitude of the unemployed.

I think the Prime Minister would have gained in stature if he had simply apologized today. The case would have been closed, and we would have gone on to other matters.

How can he stand there and refuse to apologize and withdraw what he said, when in his election campaign, he promised the needy and the unemployed he would give them renewed hope and dignity? His reference to people sitting around drinking beer reflects prejudice and contempt.

(1420)

Should we be surprised that this government is so insensitive and so intent on attacking social programs—the Prime Minister's strategy to break the attitude of the unemployed?

What kind of message is being sent to potential employers who may want to hire these unemployed workers, when they are told they are lazy and good for nothing?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition had read the text or had been there, he would have known that I said Canada's workers are the best. I said that Canadians spend the most on training and giving people the advantage of a university education, and that we spend more than any other Western country on education in this country. I was very positive in what I said. I said I was an optimist who was confident in the skills of Canadian workers and in Canada's future.

However, these are difficult circumstances, because at a time when we want to take specific action to improve the situation in this country, we have an opposition that is intent on destroying a country that could provide long-term guarantees for all workers in Canada.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I may remind the Prime Minister that we were not the ones who said that the unemployed were people who sat around at home drinking beer, and that separation is not the issue here. What is the issue is respect for people, and beyond our social

programs, we must still respect the dignity of people who are suffering.

Instead of trying to enlist newspaper editors in his crusade against the needy, the Prime Minister should have, I believe—and today, I want to ask: Does he agree that he should have offered them a real job recovery program to restore the hope and dignity of the unemployed and the needy?

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are trying to do. We are proposing changes in Canada which are absolutely needed at this time to find jobs and give the people the dignity of work.

The Leader of the Opposition is always talking about jurisdiction and the Constitution, not caring at all about the real problems of people getting jobs.

I repeat what I said in a speech that the best workers in the world are the Canadian workers. They do not want to stay home. They are not happy when they do not work. They are not happy not being productive. They want all of us to work to make sure they get jobs and have the dignity of work. They do not want us to talk about the Constitution or jurisdiction. They want us to create jobs and this government will do that.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister of Canada be surprised at the criticism directed at a system that only results in unemployment and misery? How can he be surprised at this?

For two weeks now, the federal government has been in total disarray over the issue of social program reform. As a result, war has been declared between the provinces and the federal government.

To top it off, we learned today that the Minister of Human Resources put on quite a show, even though he did not write the script. He said: "We did not have a document to table because, quite frankly, I still do not have one in hand. I have not presented any proposals to Cabinet or to my caucus. I am not ready to do so yet."

That is what the Minister of Human Resources said. Can the Prime Minister confirm whether the moratorium his Minister of Finance referred to yesterday and that was agreed to by his ministers and the Quebec Minister of Finance is due to the improvisation to which the Minister of Human Resources Development admittedly resorted?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): I do not understand what the hon. member is saying. He is always saying that we must consult.

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(1425)

When the minister rises and, in all honesty, says to the people: "I cannot put any proposals on the table right now because I want to sit down with all my counterparts and explore different options in order to get the results that we all want", this is an approach that will benefit employment in the country and help people acquire the dignity that comes through employment. Now the member is getting all upset because the minister is holding consultations.

Would the member prefer it if the minister showed up with a clear, final plan and used the majority in this House to push it through in one week? We could do it, but that is not our style. Our style is to convince all provinces and all stakeholders that we must work together in the interest of creating jobs and giving workers some dignity.

I cannot understand why the member does not want us to hold consultations. We will have to make a note of that.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, are we to understand from the Prime Minister's wishy-washy answer that a moratorium has now been declared and negotiated, as his Minister of Finance indicated yesterday, between his ministers and the Quebec Minister of Finance? Has a moratorium been declared, yes or no, and is it due to the lack of preparedness on the part of his Minister of Human Resources Development who is doing a poor job?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development had called a meeting for Monday. Several governments said they were not ready yet and would like a few more weeks. The government agreed to a moratorium—if you want to call it that—to give them time to prepare. The Minister of Finance has done the same thing. There have been more consultations between the Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts in the last six months than ever before in Canada.

Since they have asked us for more time, we will give them more time, because we want everyone to work together to find a good solution. However, the system will have to change one day because if it does not, unemployment will continue to increase, people will grow discouraged and they will lose even more of their dignity.

All parliamentarians, whether federal or provincial, have a duty to work toward a common goal, that is creating jobs, enhancing productivity, increasing the country's wealth and building a better society than the one we have now.

*[English]***BOSNIA**

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The recent kidnapping of Canadian soldiers, the detention of other UN personnel and increased offensive action in and around Gorazde make it rather obvious that Serbian leaders have little appreciation or respect for the UN forces deployed in Bosnia or the will of the UN to take effective action.

The situation in Gorazde is at or even past the critical stage. Many people are dead, many more wounded and many are in imminent danger.

The Prime Minister has spoken with President Clinton and I understand cabinet met this morning. Has the government come to a decision as to whether to support the UN in its request for air strikes?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the description of the situation illustrated by the hon. member's question. Clearly the situation has evolved in a totally unacceptable way.

Efforts have been made to bring all the parties to the table to agree on a peace plan. Unfortunately, while the Croats and the Muslims have agreed and have signed an agreement in Washington, the Bosnian Serbs have not been willing to co-operate and participate in peace operations.

Requests have been made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to apply a solution similar to that applicable to Sarajevo and the other free areas in Bosnia.

Cabinet met this morning. It was decided that as we have done in the past on an undertaking by the Prime Minister, when there is an important decision of this nature to make, we will consult Parliament.

(1430)

This is why the House leader has been instructed to consult with his counterparts to agree to an emergency debate tonight on this very question.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, my supplemental is for the Minister of National Defence. However I want to acknowledge the co-operation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in agreeing to our request for this debate this evening.

The minister will be aware that the Canadian forces commander in Bosnia has now refused to deploy his forces into Serb controlled territory out of concern for the safety of his troops.

If air strikes are initiated, what further action will the government take to protect Canadian forces from possible retaliation?

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Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would rather not deal with this hypothetical situation in today's very emotionally charged context.

I think we have to acknowledge the fact that Lieutenant-Colonel Moore has taken the right decision to minimize the danger to his people in and around Visoko. However any further steps and any further anticipation of difficult action will have to be measured by him as the hours and the days go by. I do not think that we should prejudge anything he may do.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, if Canada agrees to NATO carrying out the air strikes, has the minister discussed with the United Nations the commitment of more UN troops, and is the government considering sending more Canadian troops to Bosnia?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, a request was made some time ago by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to have much larger contingents of troops in the area than the one that is currently there. Unfortunately so far very few countries have responded positively.

Although Canada at some point was wondering whether we were pursuing peacekeeping missions, we have agreed to commit the same level of troops, close to 2,000 soldiers, serving under the UN for another six months.

Clearly we believe that our own effort is taxing our troops substantially. Canada would like to see other countries respond more quickly to the UN secretary's request. Unfortunately this has not taken place.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from the Reform Party, I would like to put my question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We know that the final decision of the 16 NATO countries regarding air strikes is to be made tomorrow. I would like to know where negotiations stand, particularly with respect to Russia's position.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me to state the position of the Russian authorities. We read, as the hon. member probably did, the dispatches saying that the Russian authorities are ambivalent about the proposals that were made. On the one hand, the Russian authorities deplore the Serbs' lack of co-operation and think that the Bosnian Serbs should have responded to the invitation and joined the Croats and the Moslems in signing a peace agreement. On the other hand, they expressed certain reservations about the use of air strikes.

At this time, I can only say that discussions are going on between the various authorities who want this conflict to end as quickly as possible, and I think that we will have to wait for these discussions to be completed before we know the exact position of every power involved in this conflict.

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Mr. Speaker, what I would have liked to know is when NATO members decide whether or not to step up the air strikes, will the Russian representatives be consulted first, unlike what was done before? Could the minister tell us whether contacts were made between NATO and Russian leaders?

(1435)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): When I had a chance to speak with President Clinton yesterday, I raised this point with him. I asked him what was happening with Russia. He told me he would communicate with the Russians as he had placed a call at about the same time, and I will speak with him again tonight. He assured me that Mr. Yeltsin would be contacted before NATO makes a decision tomorrow morning.

* * *

[English]

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The government is about to undertake a thorough review of all social programs including the unemployment insurance system. At a time when the Prime Minister ought to be demonstrating compassion and understanding to unfortunate Canadians, he insults them with insensitive remarks.

I am reminded of last fall when he chastised Kim Campbell for her arrogant intellectualism in using the same beer drinking analogy.

A successful overhaul of the social safety system will require skilful and understanding leadership. On the basis of his remarks last evening, could the Prime Minister explain why Canadians should have any confidence that he is able to meet this challenge?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the member would take the time to read my speech she would see what I said.

In my speech I said that Canadian workers are the best in the world and are the best prepared. I also said that Canadian people do not want to stay home doing nothing; they want to work.

Perhaps I used one word there that I should not have used. I could have said something else. Sometimes in a speech one uses a word that perhaps in context is misplaced, but I clearly said that they want to work. I know this, since I have served in Parliament for a long time. Canadian people desire to work. A lot of people say: "Don't do anything". On the contrary we

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want to do something. Nobody likes to be on welfare. Nobody likes to be on employment insurance. They want jobs.

This is why we have created some programs and are trying to apply the resources of government to programs where the people who are unemployed will be productive. This is what we want to do. It is the program of the government.

Some people are arguing that we want to do it too fast. That is one of the problems, that we were too keen to solve the problem. Some of the provincial governments were afraid that we were moving too fast. Yesterday the premier of Ontario made a speech in which he said he wanted to work with us and find some solutions.

We will take the time that we need because we believe in the dignity of the people. Rather than refusing to do something, we are working on it. We hope the hon. member will support us in our endeavours.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, there is no dignity in being unemployed in the country and being accused by the Prime Minister of sitting home drinking beer. My supplementary question is for the Prime Minister as well.

Several provinces have expressed hesitation about the government's intentions concerning total wide open social reform. Is the Prime Minister's recklessness with words going to help or hinder this extremely sensitive process?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, something that pleases me today is that this is the first time a question has been asked by a member of the Reform Party about the unemployed people of Canada.

When they get up in the House they are always telling us: "Cut, cut, cut. Don't help them. Let them starve". It is not our way. Our way is to earn their respect and we are working hard on it. I am very pleased to see the Reform Party is now waking up to the reality the unemployed people want the government to help them.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. As part of the action plan on smuggling announced in February, the government included a \$3 million or so anti-smoking media campaign to inform and educate the public, particularly young people. Now, the word came out that after meeting with groups of young people, the minister has decided to terminate the ad campaign.

(1440)

Can the minister confirm in this House what she has already recognized publicly, namely that this anti-smoking campaign was cancelled because, by her own admission, it had no impact whatsoever on young people?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. I must first say that I have indeed inherited the ad campaign you may have seen recently. This campaign was launched by the previous government, and as I travelled across the country, I was confirmed in my personal opinion. When I first saw this ad campaign, I was not convinced that it suited the present situation, as it had been devised three or four years ago. Young people have confirmed that I was right all along.

I have asked my department to review all the ads—and that is what we are doing right now—to ensure that every dollar spent on publicity is spent as wisely as possible.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not realize that this prevention campaign was the very last thread of credibility she had in the eyes of the anti-tobacco lobby following the reduction by her government of consumer taxes on tobacco and that now she has none left whatsoever?

[English]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me advise members opposite that while I am reviewing all public relations and publicity I have many tools at my disposal.

I have said that we would look at new ads. Yes, we are going to continue doing some publicity, but it will have to be very tough, very targeted and very effective because we do not have a lot of dollars to spend foolishly. Any dollars that I spend I will spend very wisely.

As a result we are developing a new campaign which I am going to share with members of the anti-smoking lobby as well as provincial governments. We are working together on the campaign to make it as effective as possible.

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CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

For the first time in its 28-year history the Canada pension plan has been forced to dip into its contingency fund. Many Canadians believe that unless it is reformed it is only a matter of time before the Canada pension plan runs out of money.

What plans does the government have to preserve the Canada pension plan for the long term?

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Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is worrying unnecessarily. The plan is operating very much as expected. The CPP fund was established to meet the contingencies as outlined by the hon. member.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, in spite of the hon. member's reassuring words, many analysts suggest the aging of our population means that the Canada pension plan cannot survive as currently structured. The situation is so bad that many Canadians do not expect to collect CPP when they retire and think of CPP premiums as a tax on youth.

The CPP has now turned a corner. Premiums are no longer keeping up with payouts. Does the government have specific proposals for CPP reform?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should present some facts to the hon. member.

In the long term the fund intended to operate as "a pay as you go" with contributions and benefits more or less in balance. It was intended to hold two years of benefits as a buffer against fluctuations in the economy. The fund now has about three years worth of benefits.

(1445)

As legislated contribution rates increase and come into force, the plan's income and expenditures are projected to be more closely in balance. Reserves will grow from \$41 billion to nearly \$55 billion over the next 10 years.

I hope this answers the hon. member's question.

* * *

[Translation]

PURCHASE OF FLU VACCINE

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works. In response to the questions I asked him yesterday, the Minister of Public Works said that BioVac offered to sell its flu vaccine for \$1.85 a dose compared to \$1.69 for Connaught. By dividing the contract equally between Connaught and BioVac, the minister claims that the government will pay \$1.77 a dose.

Does the Minister of Public Works admit that the figures he advanced yesterday are inaccurate since, in the tendering process, BioVac bid \$1.70 a dose compared to \$1.46 for Connaught, and that by dividing the contract in two, the government will pay not \$1.77 a dose as the minister said yesterday, but \$1.85 a dose? Could he admit that his figures are inaccurate?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I wish to confirm to the

hon. member that the facts I have are quite different from the ones she has.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, does the minister admit that by awarding 100 per cent of the contract to BioVac, the only Canadian maker of flu vaccine, at \$1.70 a dose, he would have saved Canadian taxpayers more than \$600,000 and preserved high-tech jobs?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern with regard to the fiscal responsibility and capacity of the Government of Canada, but I find it passing strange that when it comes to human resources we are accused of not consulting with the provinces.

When two companies, BioVac and Connaught Laboratories get together, consult with provincial governments, territorial governments and the Government of Canada and agree to a blended price thereby providing jobs and economic opportunities in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, somehow the hon. member finds that to be despicable.

The hon. member should know that BioVac was charging \$1.85 a dose, Connaught, \$1.69 a dose. The blended price is \$1.77.

* * *

REFUGEES

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

According to recent news reports as many as 24,000 former refugee claimants whose claims were rejected after a hearing have not yet been removed from Canada. Since most of them are not allowed to work this will place an additional burden on the taxpayer.

Can the government advise the House how many people are in this category, when the removals will proceed, and can we be assured that these circumstances will not impair the integrity of Canada's refugee program?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend and colleague for Scarborough—Rouge River.

I can say to the hon. member and to the House that the number is lower than the 24,000 being thrown around by the media. Approximately 10,000 of those individuals, would be claimants have been refused but because of previous policy directives have not been removed. For instance the individuals from the People's Republic of China as well as other countries fall into that category. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government is

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actively pursuing a strategy of how to clarify that status in fairness to them and to the system.

An anticipated one-third of those individuals are no longer in this country and therefore are not a financial drain. There are also individuals in detention and in our prisons and there are some cases where the processing of a particular case has fallen between the cracks as sometimes happens with governments.

I ask the member to recognize that the government has moved on allowing work permits for refugee claimants while they wait for their cases. We have had approximately a 70 per cent take-up of claimants asking for work permits. As the Prime Minister said moments ago, not only could we give them the dignity of work but also lessen the load on our social service programs.

* * *

(1450)

WHEAT QUOTAS

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. Why is the minister even considering agreeing to quotas on durum wheat shipments to the United States?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we did not agree with the United States position in the recent trade talks which included a sub-cap on durum under the total cap on wheat that it had proposed. It is not our present intention to agree to such a sub-cap.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, U.S. Senator Kent Conrad suggested that the American solution is to nuke Canada. Mickey Cantor says that he is ready for a dust-up with Canada. These are fighting words.

Wheat farmers want government to face this challenge head on. They demand assurance that the government will not cave in to the Americans and allow wheat quotas. Will the minister give farmers the assurance that he will not agree to quotas?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated to the United States our position. We do not agree that its present position on a cap on wheat exports to the United States is acceptable to Canada.

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[Translation]

DRUGS

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, the daily *La Presse* said that according to the latest

U.S. government report on international narcotic control, Canada is a haven for laundering money from drug trafficking.

My question is for the Solicitor General. With the information at his disposal, can the Solicitor General confirm the finding of the U.S. government report as mentioned in *La Presse*?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have asked officials to provide me with any information they have to confirm this American government report. They tell me that they have not yet found any empirical evidence to confirm it.

Furthermore Canada is a member of the financial action task force of the G-7 industrial countries. I am told that Canada does meet the minimum requirements of that task force that is designed to look into the matter of money laundering as it concerns the major G-7 industrial countries.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert): Mr. Speaker, what does the Solicitor General intend to do to restore Canada's reputation in this area?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, we have been putting in place over a period of years a number of measures to deal with money laundering and we will continue to intensify our efforts.

I think that if you go by the report of the financial action task force of the G-7 countries, Canada's reputation is a solid one, but certainly we want to work to maintain that reputation and increase our efforts when it comes to money laundering.

* * *

MÉTIS SOCIETY

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

What is the minister doing about the criminal activity with respect to the tampering of minutes of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the House the other day, we expect by the end of the present month to receive a formal audit in final form with respect to the Métis society. I expect that we will by that time have information with respect to all such matters.

I do not intend to comment in advance of receiving the formal and final audit. As I said the other day, I deplore the fact that bits and pieces of information seem to be leaking into the media and

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are being referred to and quoted which I think is terribly unfair. As far as the Department of Justice is concerned we are investigating to ensure that that has not happened as a result of anyone who is working under our authority.

I will be able to respond to the hon. member's questions when I have the audit and I will be pleased to do it at that time.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister stonewalling because of the involvement or association of Marc LeClair, chief administrative officer of the Métis National Council, adviser to the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, a participant in the drafting of the Liberal red book and a member of the extraordinary Liberal aboriginal caucus?

(1455)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we are working to a time deadline that was established long ago in accordance with administrative procedures. This is not a matter of stonewalling. I am simply not in the position to respond to questions about a report that has not yet been delivered to me in final form.

I can tell the hon. member that once I have the report and it is in final form I will be pleased to respond to any questions he has about it.

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IRAQ

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West): Mr. Speaker, I rose in the House yesterday to describe the ecological and humanitarian disasters being perpetrated against Shia Muslims.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Will our government consider requesting UN peace observers to visit the southern Iraq marshes to report on the following: Measures being taken to stop the free flow of water to the marshes and effectively destroying their ecostructure; a blockade around the marshes which restricts the movement of food, people and medical care; the systematic torture and murder of women, children and the elderly.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I certainly share the view expressed by the hon. member about the terrible situation imposed on the people living in Iraq and the persistent violation of human rights by the authorities there.

The representative of Canada at the United Nations, particularly at the Human Rights Commission, has proposed resolutions to send monitors, particularly to that region of Iraq, to assist these people who are abused by the authorities. Unfortu-

nately, in order to achieve a remedy we need the co-operation of the authorities who have systematically refused UN missions or UN observers being sent there.

We will pursue this matter and hope that through perseverance the Iraqi authorities will accept the UN monitors.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, 400 employees of Q.N.S. & L., in Sept-Îles, have now been in lockout for two months. The federal legislation does not prevent the employer, a mining company, to hire scabs. Since nothing keeps the company from carrying on its operations, it refuses to negotiate with the employees, who want to negotiate and to go back to work.

Does the Prime Minister agree that the lack of federal anti-scab legislation is responsible for the deterioration of the negotiations between Q.N.S. & L. and the steelworkers union?

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I will take it under advisement and report to him as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, I would still like to ask a supplementary since I did not get a full answer. Will the government and the Prime Minister pledge to see what can be done to help these workers, given the fact that no anti-scab legislation exists?

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I will take the question under advisement and report to the hon. member as soon as possible.

* * *

FEDERAL GRANTS

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, according to page 23 of the red book of the election campaign:

An area where substantial savings can be realized is in grants to businesses. Over 700 federal and provincial programs currently deliver such grants, an overgrowth of bureaucracy that cannot possibly be justified.

My question is for the Minister of Industry or the parliamentary secretary. What is the Liberal government doing and what has it done to eliminate that overgrowth of bureaucracy?

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question because it gives us an opportunity to basically review the position that the Minister of Finance put forward in the budget.

(1500)

The hon. member should realize we have already begun the review within the Department of Industry and with the private sector. We will reduce and eliminate the paper burden. This is a very important exercise and the private sector has welcomed it. It is well under way. The committee will be reporting to the Minister of Finance by the end of June.

At the same time I remind the hon. member we are continuing to investigate ways in which we can access capital for small and medium sized businesses. The Prime Minister has said repeatedly that we believe the greatest hope for putting Canadians back to work rests with the 900,000 entrepreneurs in Canada who are trying very hard to get this country going again.

The hon. member mentioned tourism and that is another area we are working on.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we are not talking about loans here.

Budgetary expenditures show the government is planning to spend \$3.3 billion in grants to businesses in 1994–95 and a further \$3.1 billion in 1995–96. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has recommended there be no grants to businesses.

When the red book promised substantial savings can be realized in grants to businesses and when the CFIB itself does not want these grants, why is this government planning to spend billions of dollars this way in the next two years?

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member looks in the estimates book for the Department of Industry he will see there have been tremendous cutbacks in the department.

He will also notice from an analysis of the industry estimates we are very carefully targeting the taxpayers' money relating to industry. We are targeting it to the proven winners in our community that we think have the best chance of putting Canadians back to work in industries that are very important to keep us globally competitive.

* * *

TRADE

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. On January 1 the government signed the NAFTA promising an end to trade wars with the United States.

Business of the House

Barely four months since the signing of that agreement we have not just a scuffle but a full-fledged attack on our Canadian wheat farmers, Minutemen missiles and all. NAFTA seems to offer about as much protection as an umbrella would against an American missile. Do not look up.

NAFTA has failed the Canadian wheat farmer and the barley farmer. What specific assurances has the minister given to these farmers that their interests will be taken into consideration? What specifically can he tell us today?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I could give the hon. member a very long answer to that question.

Let me say very briefly that the wheat dispute with the United States is not under NAFTA. The Americans are pursuing what they believe to be their remedies under the GATT and not under NAFTA.

I would point out with regard to our stance in the Canada–U.S. discussions on wheat, we have taken positions that respect and guard the interests of Canadian grain farmers.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, during question period the Prime Minister said that Reformers have said to the unemployed, and I quote: "Do nothing. Let them starve". That is not true. I am asking the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: The hon. member and all of us from time to time have used the points of order for debate. I think we are probably getting into a little bit of debate.

Miss Grey: Mr. Speaker, you have often said in this House yourself about imputing motives. As far as I am concerned that is imputing motives.

(1505)

The Speaker: Order. We have dealt with the point order. I believe it is a point of debate and I trust that most hon. members will agree.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, could the Government House leader please tell us what is on the agenda for the next few days?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, first of all, after I present the statement of business for the

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coming week, I intend to ask the unanimous consent of the House to enable a special debate to take place this evening on the situation in Bosnia.

In that connection, I want to thank the Reform Party House leader for making a suggestion about having such a debate and suggesting a theme to be taken into account in the motion on which the debate will be based. It was a force of coincidence his request came at a time when we were giving thought to the same matter. I want to thank the Reform Party House leader for his constructive point in this regard.

This afternoon we will consider report stage and third reading of Bill C-6 regarding oil and gas. On Friday, Bill C-4 respecting the NAFTA side deals will be considered at the report and third reading stages. On Monday, the House will have before it second reading of Bill C-16 regarding certain land claims.

The business on Tuesday shall be Bill C-22 respecting Pearson airport which is at the second reading stage. After completing this bill we will call second reading of Bill C-21 regarding railway lands and Bill C-12 to update the Canada Business Corporations Act. This business will likely take us into Wednesday.

There are two bills the Minister of the Environment will be introducing on Monday that the House may wish to deal with next week as well. Finally, Thursday, April 28 shall be an opposition day.

As I said just before my statement, there have been consultations and I believe there will be consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, at 6 p.m. this day, the House shall consider a motion by the Minister of Foreign Affairs as follows:

That this House, taking note of the tragic events which have taken place in and around Gorazde, and NATO's agreement in February to a UN request for the use of air support to protect a safe area around Sarajevo, consider the request contained in the UN Secretary-General's April 18 letter to the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to extend arrangements similar to those in place to protect Sarajevo to the five other UN safe areas in Bosnia.

That, during debate on the said motion, the first four members to speak shall speak for not more than 15 minutes and any subsequent members shall speak for not more than 10 minutes; and

That, when no members rise to speak, but in any case not later than 10 p.m. the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

I would appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, if you would ask if there is consent for the motion I have read. If so, I would be prepared to put the motion and seek the unanimous consent of the House that this motion be adopted so that a debate on this matter of great interest and concern to members will begin at six o'clock this evening.

The Speaker: Is there consent for this motion to be put?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is there agreement that the motion be debated tonight at six o'clock under the terms prescribed in the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: So ordered.

(Motion agreed to.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

(1510)

[English]

CANADA OIL AND GAS OPERATIONS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act, the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and the National Energy Board Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Mahu): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. McLellan moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Madam Speaker, hon. members, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak before this House today during third reading of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act, the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, and the National Energy Board Act.

The main purpose of Bill C-6 is to give the National Energy Board the authority to regulate frontier oil and gas activity. It will not however affect offshore Newfoundland and Nova Scotia where petroleum management is shared under federal-provincial accords. Bill C-6 will ensure that the frontier regulatory process is more transparent as decisions will be taken by an experienced independent organization.

Essentially the National Energy Board's main responsibilities will be: protection of worker safety; maximizing resource conservation by ensuring good oil field practices; and protection of the environment.

I am very sensitive to concerns regarding protection of the fragile environment of the north and other frontier areas. Consistent with efforts to better integrate environmental considerations in policy decisions, a review of the proposed legislative changes was conducted co-operatively by Natural Resources Canada and the National Energy Board. It concluded there

would be no adverse environmental impacts as a result of the proposed amendments.

The government is also committed to real and meaningful consultations with all key stakeholders and views this as a critical feature of the legislative process. Wide-ranging consultations with interested parties have been held at all stages of the development of this proposed legislation. These included both provincial and territorial governments, native groups, industry, and environmental organizations.

Let me turn to some of the issues that were raised during second reading and committee consideration of Bill C-6.

Concern was expressed by some members of this House regarding the impact Bill C-6 may have on provincial jurisdiction over frontier resources.

[*Translation*]

This bill will have no impact on jurisdiction over offshore regions of Quebec and other frontier areas. It merely transfers to the National Energy Board regulatory powers which already belong to the federal government, and it does not affect any offshore frontier areas.

[*English*]

Further, there is nothing in the bill which would prejudice the outcome of any discussions with the territorial governments on the delegation of onshore responsibilities, or impact on discussions with other coastal provinces regarding future shared management arrangements.

(1515)

Some members also felt that in the exceptional circumstances of a future appeal the National Energy Board would somehow not be expert or independent enough to give industry a fair hearing. NEB decisions are not currently subject to outside review except by the courts and then only on questions of law or jurisdiction.

The oil and gas committee appeal process is being abolished under this legislation because the integrity of the NEB process, and therefore its independence and effectiveness, depends heavily on maintaining this principle.

The proposed amendments reflect our view that in the few instances this appeal function may be exercised it will be competently and objectively performed by the NEB.

The National Energy Board already has diverse regulatory responsibilities. These include the licensing of the export of oil, gas and electricity; the issuance of certificates for international pipelines; and the setting of just and reasonable tolls. The National Energy Board is well placed to take on the authority to regulate frontier oil and gas as proposed in the amendments.

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I am fully confident that for all its responsibilities the board will continue its mandate to regulate in the Canadian public interest fairly and effectively, taking into consideration the views of all interested parties.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, what the government of Canada wants to do with this bill is to give clear and specific operating rules to the industry.

[*English*]

Without these amendments the NEB will not be able to operate effectively and industry will continue to be faced with a time consuming approval process.

The National Energy Board was given additional staff and responsibilities for frontier oil and gas in 1991. Bill C-6 would finally give the board the legal authority to do its job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-6. However, since this legislation will now give the National Energy Board the official power to hear appeals and to give advice to ministers, we truly hope that the National Energy Board will hear our own appeal today and make sure that it does indeed give advice to government ministers, because they badly need it.

In recent years, the federal government has agreed to provide financial support to major energy projects, or energy megaprojects, as they are called. Together, these agreements represent an initial commitment of over \$3 billion. I must point out here, for the benefit of those who are listening to us, that one billion is a thousand millions. In the case of Hibernia, we are talking of 2,700 million dollars.

These projects require considerable public funds which the government, of course, gets from already overtaxed Canadians. As we know, the middle class is already on its knees because it is overtaxed. In fact, the Auditor General of Canada himself said that taxpayers have the right to expect public expenditures to be managed with caution.

Yet, what do we see? Again, the Auditor General had this to say: "We examined the energy megaprojects assisted and funded by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Our observations on the Hibernia, Lloydminster Bi-Provincial Upgrader and Regina NewGrade Upgrader projects point to some fundamental weaknesses."

Let me mention five weaknesses noted by the Auditor General. First, the lack of a comprehensive set of clear and measurable objectives. Second, an inadequate co-ordination of benefit monitoring. Third, deficiencies in monitoring environmental

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assessment recommendations and commitments. Fourth, continuing gaps in effectiveness measurement. That brings me to the fifth and final point, although we could have listed many others, but we will stop at five. The fifth point is limited and poor reporting to Parliament and the public in Part III of the Main Estimates.

(1520)

The Auditor General adds:

Another key problem we noted in the Hibernia and Bi-Provincial Upgrader agreements was the lack of a connection between performance and payment. Federal payments are based on project expenditures, and not on construction milestones or achievement of certain intended economic benefits that have been specifically identified with these projects. Even if the Department determined through its monitoring efforts that certain intended benefits were not being achieved, it would have no legal basis to stop payments to the projects.

Then, the Auditor General stresses that:

Without a direct connection between performance and payment, the payment is in the nature of a grant.

We are talking about billions of dollars that were given to companies involved in the Hibernia project and which are in fact grants. In other words, the Auditor General is telling us that the thousands of millions of dollars, all taxpayers' money, which were invested in these projects, supposedly to create jobs and create all kinds of industrial benefits, are meaningless since the government has no legal basis to guarantee the intended benefits.

Of course, following this statement by the Auditor General, the department took the following commitment:

The Department is devoting additional resources to the monitoring function, particularly with respect to industrial and employment benefits.

Jobs, jobs, jobs. This government was elected on the promise to create jobs. Therefore the least we should expect is that the taxpayers' hard-earned money which is invested in big projects helps create jobs at home. But such is not the case. In spite of all the promises made by the department I just mentioned, an Act to repeal the requirements concerning Canadian participation was enacted only a few months ago.

According to a document coming directly from the Minister of Natural Resources, this is what this bill does essentially:

The highlights of this bill are the elimination of the minimum 50 per cent Canadian participation as a condition to grant a licence for oil and gas production in frontier areas; the elimination of the need to obtain the minister's approval to transfer, in whole or in part, ownership rights under a licence contract to produce oil and gas in frontier areas; and the repeal of the present regulation under which certain individuals may hold production licences and of related requirements regarding the place of residence.

In short, not only is the federal government unable to legally guarantee definite spin-offs for the billions of dollars of taxpayers' money it invests in such ventures, it deliberately lifts the minimum requirements imposed on companies to which it gives money so that they can create jobs in Canada.

We recognize that, in the last few months, some improvements have been made regarding the management of this project, but they have not been as far-reaching as we would have liked. An in-depth assessment of the project should have taken place before work began, not after.

Where is all this leading us? The government goes and takes billions of dollars from already overtaxed Canadians and Quebecers. It gives money to big companies over which, as the Auditor General said, it has hardly any control. It allows them to create jobs elsewhere. Jobs, jobs, jobs for Korea, not for us. In the meantime, we can be sure that, no matter what we do, our horrendous \$500 billion debt will grow to \$600 billion in three years, if everything goes well, because otherwise it could be a lot worse. The truth is, as things stand today, we are on the verge of bankruptcy.

We can also be sure that unemployment rates will remain exactly the same and that young people will have no jobs. The only solution this government could find was to cut unemployment benefits and old age pensions; such was its choice.

(1525)

Of course, the unemployed, the people of modest means, those without voice or clout, would not accept this situation if they were not, first of all, made to feel guilty, to feel that they are the real problem in Canada.

The statements by the Prime Minister, last night on television and this morning in the newspapers, show that this policy is actively pursued.

I would like to quote today's *Le Droit* which carries a headline that reads: "Loafers cost \$500 billion: their attitude must be broken", which I hasten to say were perhaps not the words used by the Prime Minister. He said, according to the article: "Canadians have to break that mentality, because the country is \$500 billion in the hole. We cannot keep people sitting at home drinking beer".

I object to what the Prime Minister said today. I consider that a frightful statement. I remind the Prime Minister that the former Hyundai employees who lost their jobs are not beer-drinking loafers. They are out looking for work.

The fishers of Gaspé who can no longer go out and fish are not beer-drinking loafers, they are looking for work. The former employees of the CNR, the CPR or MIL Davie in Lauzon, that

cannot get government contracts to build ferries, are not sitting at home drinking beer and watching TV. They are looking for work.

Young people, among whom unemployment is sky high, who come out of school with two university degrees and go bankrupt even before they start their productive life are not beer drinkers and television addicts, they are looking for work.

I urge the prime minister to come and visit my riding of Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies on Monday morning and meet the people who come to me, hoping I can find them some work. I do not know what he would tell them, but if he were to tell them that they are beer-drinking loafers, I am sure they would have something to say to him.

It is known that Quebec provides almost 25 per cent of federal tax revenues in Canada and that, in most Canadian job creating reinvestments, benefits that Quebec is getting are not equal to the revenues that it provides, whether it is in research and development, in federal acquisitions, in army spending or in funds for agriculture and megaprojects.

In the case of Hibernia, although Quebecers will pay approximately \$800 million in federal taxes for that project, over and above the grants that will have to be given for each barrel of oil coming out of Hibernia if the international price is not high enough, the future of the MIL shipyards in Lauzon remains bleak and lay-offs are predicted for 1994.

Although Lauzon's shipyards are in fact the only one to have built drilling platforms in Canada, including 13 for Texas in the early 1980's, the federal government has stuffed the province of Newfoundland with contracts awarded without any bidding: the building of concrete bases, the building of the five super-modules. The other contracts were awarded to foreign firms, after the federal government had abolished the 25 per cent tariff on the importation of oil platforms that had been in place since 1983. And that is one of the fundamental reasons why things are going badly in this country, because billion of dollars are invested in the creation of jobs somewhere else, and the unemployed of this country, that have been created by the government, are being called beer drinkers and lazy bums who just watch television.

There was also the building of a large-capacity shipyard in Bull's Arm, which was paid for with a regional development fund of \$300 million. They agreed to go ahead with the modernization of the Marystown shipyard and a vast manpower training program for Newfoundland.

Therefore, if the Bloc Quebecois approves the passage of Bill C-6 at third reading, it becomes the duty of all members of this House to make sure that megaprojects like Hibernia really

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generate the spin-off benefits promised both by this government and its predecessor, because taxpayers of Quebec and Canada are entitled to expect such benefits.

As for the outrageous statements of Canada's Prime Minister, he may be sure that Quebecers will remember them during the next provincial election and the referendum which will surely be held in the months to come.

(1530)

[English]

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I will be the only speaker for the Reform Party on this matter and I shall be brief.

Bill C-6 is mostly housekeeping. As we stated earlier in the House, we will endorse its basic thrust which is to transfer regulatory authority over frontier oil and gas development from the political arena to an independent body, the National Energy Board. We believe that this action is also endorsed by most of the industry stakeholders.

This bill does have one glaring weakness which we were unable to remedy in committee. It gives the National Energy Board unlimited power to determine what is or is not a significant discovery or a commercial discovery and to make unilateral decisions affecting certain technical operations.

Aggrieved parties will be able to appeal a board decision only to the board itself so that a single quasi-judicial body becomes in effect judge, jury and executioner. Questions of law of course could be further appealed to the courts by any party willing to accept the cost and long delay of such actions. But questions of fact, technical decisions, could not be challenged.

Industry representatives have indicated to us that the National Energy Board as presently constituted functions well, has knowledgeable personnel and has a good track record.

Our concern is that we are looking at the board in a snapshot in time. We do not know what it will be like 10 or 15 years from now. Bill C-6 nevertheless gives it an extraordinary amount of power with no checks or balances.

Laws are like contracts. They should be written to deal with worst case scenarios, not under the assumption that all concerned parties will be forever noble, rational and fair.

In committee we attempted to rectify this problem with amendments to allow final appeals of board decisions to a second independent body, the oil and gas committee as defined in the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. Having failed to win this safeguard in committee, the Reform Party will not vexatiously continue to pursue a cause which is already lost.

Private Members' Business

Most of the bill and its intent are acceptable to us. We therefore support it, albeit somewhat grudgingly.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

[*Translation*]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I think you would find that there is unanimous consent to suspend the sitting of the House until 4.30 p.m. at which time we would proceed with Private Members' Business.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The House is suspended until 4.30 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3.34 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 4:30 p.m.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert) moved that Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act (excepted employment), be read the second time and referred to committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all the hon. members who have expressed support for this bill. Unfortunately, they could not all be listed in the Order Paper because there are too many of them. As we know, pursuant to our Standing Orders, no more than 20 names may appear on the list of seconders published in the Order Paper. Allow me then to extend my

thanks in this House to those members whose names are on the list as well as to all the others who, without being listed, support me nonetheless.

Bill C-218 is a bill to repeal paragraph 3(2)(c) of the Unemployment Insurance Act. It may sound technical but in fact, I am simply asking this House to repair a serious injustice done to nearly one million Canadians, of whom 650,000 are women.

(1635)

We all remember the omnibus reform of the unemployment insurance system. We are now starting to appreciate the extent of its social effects, some of which are plainly discriminatory.

The former Unemployment Insurance Act clearly excluded from entitlement to benefits any person working for his or her spouse or a company controlled by his or her spouse. The legislation was clear and simple, and openly discriminatory. No one would ever want of such a system today. In those days, a woman working for her husband was automatically excluded from contributing to the plan and receiving benefits. It was clearly stated in the act and regulations.

This act was challenged before the courts and tested under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Predictably enough, the courts moved to restore the entitlement. Because the Act applied only to spouses, and not to all people operating at arm's length, former paragraphs 3(2)(c) and 4(3)(d) of the Act were ruled invalid and ill-founded by the Human Rights Tribunal of the Federal Court—Appeal Division, the Tax Court of Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The present Act was enacted on October 23, 1990, and paragraph 3(2)(c) was amended to reflect the judicial decisions regarding its unconstitutionality. The Conservatives found a way to get round the problem in their legislation. From then on, women working for their husband were no longer the only ones excluded from benefits under the Act.

From now on, everyone not dealing at arm's length with their employer is excluded from benefits. In this way, legally, the law no longer seems discriminatory. Any employees not dealing at arm's length with their employer are no longer automatically entitled to benefits. Apparently, the employer's son, brother or junior partner, as well as the woman working for her husband, are now on an equal footing. They must all show a Revenue Canada official that they are "clean" because it is up to that official to determine if the employee is cheating or not.

The law is clear: if someone worked for an employer with whom he was not dealing at arm's length, he will have to prove that the job would have been given to an outsider under the same conditions.

Just read paragraph 3(2)(c) to convince yourself at first glance of the different way the Conservatives treated employees who were "guilty" of working for a relative or a spouse.

Private Members' Business

No other category of unemployed person has to prove to the satisfaction of the Minister of National Revenue that he is not trying to defraud unemployment insurance, but the law requires relatives and spouses to prove it.

At first, it may seem normal to pay particular attention to the cases of people whose job might give rise to obvious collusion by the employer.

In some quarters, people might think that fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters are potential cheaters. For many people, it is not a real job if the employer is a spouse or a relative. It is only a step from this view of the labour market to the conviction that people not dealing at arm's length are out to cheat the government, a step which the Conservatives gladly took by passing the new Unemployment Insurance Act.

Before, the law applied only to spouses. But no matter, since it was discriminatory, they had to go one better. By submerging the category of spouses in the whole category of those not dealing at arm's length with an employer, they thought that they had really solved the problem.

Since spouses were no longer the only ones excluded, the law was no longer discriminatory. It was not discriminatory because it automatically excluded from benefits anyone whom the Income Tax Act considered not to be dealing at arm's length, not just spouses.

The presumption of honesty in all these cases is now replaced with a presumption of fraud. It is now up to the employee to prove to the discretionary satisfaction of the income tax official that the labour contract has all the features of a job that the employer would have given to someone completely unrelated to him.

(1640)

In reviewing the claim, the official can conduct every investigation he deems appropriate at the employer's place of business. He can, in particular, check financial records, approach clients and suppliers, look at bank statements, examine work flow in the plant or office, and interview third parties. In short, the official can pursue his investigation as far as he considers necessary to form an opinion. In fact, that is exactly the way things are done.

These thugs' only goal is to demean recipients. The smallest doubt can lead to exclusion. They do not try to determine eligibility but to prove that a fraud has been committed.

I stress that investigations are conducted by the Source Deductions Division of Revenue Canada, Taxation. After the investigation is completed, Revenue Canada gives its opinion to the unemployment insurance people who then decide whether to pay or withhold benefits.

Withholding benefits triggers off a series of administrative and judicial appeals. First, a review application is filed with the Appeals Division of Revenue Canada. If the decision is upheld, a final appeal can be made to the Tax Court of Canada. Then, if the unemployed person still has strength, resources and a good deal of optimism, he or she may go to the Federal Court of Appeal as a last resort. The minister or the taxpayer can still appeal to the Supreme Court against the Federal Court's decision.

Meanwhile, the unemployed person—usually a woman—lives off her hopes while trying to understand why she is being singled out by the system.

Why is the employer's spouse or relative being penalized? How do we justify such actions? Why do we assume that a certain class of employees are cheaters? Why are we more distrustful of relatives than of strangers? Is it easier to cheat between relatives than between residents of a small village where they all know each other so well that they feel like family?

It is unacceptable for legislators to use distrust to enforce the law. That is exactly the effect of the current paragraph 3(2)(c).

Under the act, spouses and relatives are considered as suspects. The government tells them they are not like other citizens because they worked for a spouse or a relative. It then asks them to prove their honesty.

What democratically minded Canadian citizen can accept such an attack on fundamental values? Mr. Speaker, it may be that employees and employers who are married or related to each other cheat the UI system, just as perfect strangers may and do commit fraud, perhaps with even greater ease than within a family. But the criminal provisions of the act are explicit and punitive enough to cover all fraudulent claims.

What is objectionable in this case is that it is up to the unemployed to prove as soon as they file the claim that they did not commit fraud. No other class of beneficiaries must bear such a burden of proof. Not only could this person be liable to prosecution, to criminal prosecution, for breaking the law, but it would be assumed that from the outset of the application process, the person intended to commit fraud.

I would be just as stunned, but perhaps less motivated to ask for the repeal of paragraph 3(2)(c), if it applied to a wide range of wage earners. But, in point of fact, the legislation targets a clearly identifiable group. In my view, the primary effect of the legislation, whether intended or whether the result of social circumstances, is the systematic exclusion of women who work for their spouse.

There are 650,000 women in this situation, Mr. Speaker. If they were to lose their job, these wage earners who work in a business managed by their spouses, who work "in partnership" with them, so to speak, would currently be excluded because of

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their status from receiving unconditional unemployment insurance benefits.

(1645)

Women who fall into this particular category of wage earner account for the vast majority of excepted employment cases provided for in paragraph 3(2)(c). Furthermore, when we look at the persons designated by the cumulative provisions of the Income Tax Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act, we see that the group that is excluded the most is women who work with their spouses. There is no point denying this fact. The current law denies women the right to equality in the area of unemployment insurance.

Some will say to me that if the law is so discriminatory, then the courts will tear it to shreds as soon as the opportunity arises. Let the courts do their jobs then, they will tell me. My answer to them would be that it is incumbent upon legislators to amend their laws. The courts intervene only as a last resort to correct any injustices that may flow from the legislation. And, until such time as a final court of appeal rules on a fundamental issue, how many cases will have been abandoned for lack of resources or hope? To leave it up to the courts to make the law is to abdicate our own political and social responsibilities.

I would also say to these people that even if the courts did not find the legislation to be discriminatory from a legal standpoint, we should still intervene to point out the unfair aspects of the law from a human and political standpoint. And finally, unfortunately, even though the legislation institutionalizes this injustice, I do not think that the Canadian courts, using modern-day criteria, would find it discriminatory. Technically speaking, it is not discriminatory. However, given our social and demographic reality, the ramifications of the legislation would indeed be discriminatory. It is the main reason why we must act now and act fast. The courts will not do it.

In its 1990 reform, the now defunct Conservative government had managed to get around the gains made before the courts by women who work in partnership with their spouse. Indeed, several decisions had sent very clear messages to law-makers. The old act was invalid because it discriminated against spouses engaged in a working relationship. As a result of these decisions, women working for their spouse were entitled, albeit for a very short period of time, to premiums and benefits. But that was before the Tories' social conscience got the upper hand.

The break was short-lived. Through its 1990 amendments, the Mulroney government caught up with these women and sent them back to square one. It was done under the cover of an extremely confusing piece of legislation in which the amendment went nearly unnoticed. By putting spouses in a seemingly

larger group, those in a non-arm's length situation, the new legislation is probably true to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I believe that, as in a recent case the Supreme Court ruled on, the courts would be very reluctant to find paragraph 3(2)(c) invalid. I am referring to the Symes case on which the Supreme Court rendered its decision in December 1993.

It involved a lawyer who wanted to claim her child care expenses as operating expenses. We know that under the Income Tax Act, the maximum allowed for child care expenses is \$1,000. She wanted to claim the whole amount of her child care expenses, just as it can be done for entertainment expenses. After all, if golfing expenses are deductible, why should people not be allowed to claim child care expenses incurred as a result of their work?

Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dubé of the Supreme Court found that the legislation had to be analyzed according to its concrete results in today's context. Finding that it had been proved that child care expenses were nearly always borne by women, she concluded that in today's social context, the Income Tax Act must be interpreted and enforced in the light of the Charter. She ruled in favour of the lawyer because, in her case, the law would have discriminatory effects.

I share this opinion based on a progressive and context-sensitive approach to the legislation.

(1650)

I agree with Justice L'Heureux-Dubé, who said that when issues are examined in context, it becomes clear that certain so-called objective truths may apply only to the circumstances of a particular group in society, while the process may be entirely inadequate in the case of other groups.

Unfortunately, that was not the majority opinion in the Symes case. The courts are not likely to introduce contextual analysis of the law very soon. They will continue to abide strictly by the letter of the law, as they did in this case.

The Supreme Court therefore refused to examine the constitutional aspects of the appeal, after concluding briefly that the Income Tax Act contained its own system of reference. For tax purposes, the law treats all taxpayers the same.

In fact, any individual may deduct child care expenses, although in most cases today, these expenses are paid by women. I am convinced that the courts would react similarly when asked to rule on paragraph 3(2)(c) of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

I think it is useless to wait for a final decision from the Supreme Court and that we should act immediately to provide for fair treatment of women employed by their spouses and, in fact, for all Canadians employed by a family member.

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Women who work in partnership with their spouses, and who often contribute to our GDP while giving up a substantial share of their remuneration, should be treated with the respect they deserve as active members of the labour force.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do not need the additional minute.

[*English*]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak against this bill.

As I understand the bill presented by the hon. member the changes proposed to the Unemployment Insurance Act would revoke the arm's length provision that is used by unemployment insurance adjudicators to determine if spouses employed by their spouses are in fact in a true employer-employee relationship and therefore insurable and eligible to collect UI benefits should they be laid off. This is the intent of this bill.

Therefore, the net effect of the bill would be to allow all spouses employed by their spouses to become eligible to collect UI benefits without giving the government any means of determining if it is an employer-employee relationship and whether that relationship is in fact legitimate.

Unemployment insurance officials predict that this change would result in at least 2,000 illegitimate claims for unemployment insurance each year. Considering that the average benefit paid to each claimant in 1992 was \$6,613, we are talking about a minimum annual increase in UI payouts of about \$13 million.

If we used the figures from the hon. member's own office the payout could exceed \$26 million a year. If we consider the increase in UI claims from spouses when everyone finds out that the government has no means to investigate and control the possible abuse in the system, the number of claims will increase and the number of dollars paid out to illegitimate claimants will also increase.

That is the main point I am trying to make. If we approve this the number of claimants will dramatically increase because spouses will be able to put their own husband or wife on UI and we find this totally unacceptable. Not only will the costs be \$13 million or \$26 million, they will go way beyond that.

We oppose this bill because it opens up the Unemployment Insurance Act to more abuse and the wasting of more taxpayers' dollars when we should be tightening up the loopholes and saving employer and employee UI premiums for legitimate UI claims.

It would be helpful for everyone to have a bit of a history lesson on how this issue has developed.

(1655)

Prior to August 1988 all those employed by their spouses were not insurable under the UI act. In August 1988 the Federal Court of Appeal confirmed a decision by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that this section of the UI act was discriminatory on the grounds of family status.

In order to provide a test to ensure the validity of the employer-employee relationship the government included in Bill C-21 an arm's length relationship clause. Pursuant to section 3(2)(c) the employment of a person that is not at arm's length is not insurable unless the terms and conditions of employment are substantially similar to a non-arm's length employment contract. We feel that is sufficient. The possibility is there that if the claimant wishes to insure his or her spouse, they have the availability to do so.

Unemployment insurance relies on Revenue Canada to make the determination of the arm's length relationships between employers and their employee spouses. Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of Revenue Canada's decisions rule that an arm's length relationship does exist.

This favours the husband, wife, or spouse relationship and the spouse is therefore insurable in most cases. It would seem to be a very reasonable approach to handling these cases. Senior officials at the unemployment insurance office agree with this.

It is clear to all of us if this bill is approved it would result in the federal government having no control over UI claims filed by spouses. That control would virtually disappear. It would open up a loophole so wide that thousands of people could walk through it.

The likelihood is that when the general public realized the last element of benefit control had been removed from the UI act in regard to spousal employment, the number of illegitimate UI claims would increase. That is the point I am trying to make. Probably they would increase dramatically.

The potential for abuse is a greater concern for Canadian taxpayers than any other consideration. We are constantly receiving complaints about the raid on the public purse by UI abusers and fraud artists.

We believe the unemployment insurance program should be returned to a true insurance program based on sound financial principles. This private member's bill does nothing to move in this direction.

A broader concern we would like to raise is whether there can ever be a true arm's length working relationship between husbands and wives.

An employer who employs their spouse already has an added tax benefit because the income of the business is split by two wage earners living in the same household. Should an employer

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also be allowed to lay off their spouse whenever they want and then have that spouse collect unemployment insurance? We think not. I think it is obvious as to why that would not work.

We believe we should be looking for ways of tightening up the system rather than opening it up for more abuse.

The hon. member makes the point that this is discriminatory against women. I would like to remind the House that a spouse can be either a man or a woman.

Canadians want the UI system to be fair. The current system of having Revenue Canada determine if employers and their employee spouses are legitimate employer-employee relationships is fair. This section of the UI act is more than fair and for this reason we oppose it.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill introduced by my hon. colleague.

The proposal invites us to consider a topic most important to this House and indeed to the whole country: the financial integrity of the unemployment insurance program.

Every member of this House knows the vital importance of small business. Every member personally knows of families in their ridings who work long hours to be independent, to achieve family goals, to contribute to their community. Every one of us is very much aware how difficult, demanding and rewarding a family business can be.

(1700)

The unemployment insurance program has been extremely important to thousands of family businesses across this country. In thousands of offices, stores and plants when the business has run into a temporary slow period, revenue cannot support the employment of a family member and the person has been laid off, unemployment insurance has been there.

The family employee who has contributed along with the other employees of the company to the unemployment insurance account and qualifies for a claim has received temporary income from the unemployment insurance program. Many family business members have been able to receive help for training, help in searching for a job with another firm, help in seeking work elsewhere.

Along with millions of other Canadians, people who have been employed in a family firm have obtained their rightful benefits. Thousands of Canadians have also worked for small business corporations with which they have had close relationships. These men and women have also benefited from the unemployment insurance program.

Throughout Canada these two groups have received regularly their rightful benefits which they have earned as legitimate

employees of legitimate enterprises. They confirm that they are genuine participants in our unemployment insurance program and they obtain the temporary income while they seek new employment.

For hundreds of thousands of these Canadians the present Unemployment Insurance Act has been there in their time of need. That is the intent of the act.

My hon. friend who has introduced Bill C-218 is rightly concerned about the unemployment needs of family small businesses. Every member in this House I am sure shares her concern.

Every one of us knows family enterprises in our ridings which have experienced difficulties in recent years. A father, mother, sister, brother has faced unemployment when business has turned down. Regrettably there are too many families who have served the community for 10, 25 and even 50 years and suddenly are no longer in business.

The record shows that these families have been well served by the unemployment insurance program. For example, in the fiscal year 1992-93 family businesses filed tens of thousands of claims for unemployment insurance benefits. Of those, 15,000 cases were reviewed and 75 per cent were confirmed as qualifying for benefits.

This position of the vast majority of claims by employees of family businesses has been most satisfactory, from the viewpoint of the employer and employee who finance the program, and from the viewpoint of the administrators who have the fiduciary responsibility to collect and to disperse the funds.

All members of the House who are familiar with the purpose of the unemployment insurance fund understand that a balanced and fair approach must be maintained. They know that funds are to be dispersed to respond to lack of income because of temporary and involuntary unemployment and to expedite return to employment by claimants. This is the mandate of Human Resources Development Canada.

These are funds collected from employers and employees to alleviate temporary lack of employment by those who have contributed. Any other treatment of these premiums collected for specific purposes does not come within the scope of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

(1705)

The government has a responsibility to manage these funds with prudence and fairness, ensuring that to the greatest possible extent for those who have contributed, the misfortune of unemployment is alleviated. To act otherwise is to risk the integrity of the entire unemployment insurance program, to go beyond the bounds of responsibility, competence and the financial stability of the fund.

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This is not to say the Unemployment Insurance Act does not require examination, review and revision by the House. As the Minister of Human Resources Development has clearly pointed out, all our social programs do indeed require reform. This view has the support of Canadians. They require a comprehensive, forward looking, perhaps sweeping reform to ensure they all meet the needs of Canadians as they enter the 21st century.

Therefore, I feel it would be premature to look into the application of unemployment insurance to the isolated situations where the employer and the employee are not dealing with each other at arm's length.

We all share the concern of the member who has introduced this bill. Each one of us has in our own riding family businesses that have been in difficulty. We know employees of family businesses who have needed and obtained the benefits for which they have paid.

I suggest that this bill for all its intent of responding to the difficulties of family businesses is not quite what this House would consider an appropriate contribution to our legislation at this time.

I suggest that this question would be better considered as part of our general review and reform of our social programs which is now under way. I can assure the hon. member it will be.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, once again today I appreciate the opportunity of commenting, this time on unemployment insurance in support of Bill C-218, introduced by the hon. member for Saint-Hubert.

The purpose of this bill is to exclude from the definition of excepted employment, employment where the employer and employee are not dealing with each other at arm's length. That this bill was tabled shows that we on this side of the House are very much aware of what is happening in our ridings.

Every day, unemployment insurance claimants knock on the doors of our riding offices and ask for our help because they feel they are not being treated fairly by federal unemployment insurance authorities. In fact, these people are fed up with the way they are being treated.

They often feel powerless before the legislation and the almighty bureaucracy. The problems with unemployment insurance are many and complex. Unreasonable delays, erroneous decisions and unwarranted investigations often haunt the lives of claimants and make a mockery of their rights.

I am sure members opposite also see many people in their offices with problems concerning unemployment insurance. If they really want to stand up for the interests of these people, they certainly should support this bill.

Since this government came to power, however, the Liberals have chosen to forget the people at the bottom of the ladder. The break with the grass roots has been very quick and very obvious. The government's decisions and actions are a clear indication of this development.

We should realize that the purpose of the unemployment insurance system is to provide support, during a specific period, for claimants who are out of work. The objective is quite clear but unfortunately, the legislation, the way it is administered and the whole bureaucracy around it often obscure the actual purpose of this program. It is the applicants who suffer the consequences.

(1710)

Of course, the main problem of all these people is the lack of work. If our economy produced enough long-term jobs, all these problems with unemployment insurance would be less or go away, but such is not the case. In my riding, Laurentides, the unemployment rate is 18 per cent. If we add to this large percentage all those who are no longer looking because they are discouraged by the non-existent job market and all those who must rely on welfare, we come up with a frightful jobless rate of 30 per cent. I am very worried about this.

All these people are also very worried. The unemployed face great tension and uncertainty. Imagine that you are the head of a household with children and suddenly you lose your job. You now receive only 57 per cent of your former income, soon a mere 55 per cent, as the callous Liberals decided, to support your family. It is a great worry and concern for people who unwillingly become unemployed.

Unfortunately, some say that one gets used to unemployment and others will even say that for some it is a way of life. Far be it from me to make such tendentious allegations. No one in our society wants to collect unemployment insurance. No one gets up some fine morning and says, "Well, this morning I want to lose my job and become a paid unemployed person." No one sincerely or voluntarily desires such a situation. On the contrary, people do want to work. They want lasting, well-paid jobs. I do not think that receiving a reduced cheque every week, looking for work day after day and finding none is paradise for the unemployed people in my riding.

The people opposite do not understand what is going on out there and they stupidly bury their heads in the sand, unable to deliver the goods they promised so much during the election campaign. Their promises are turning into crumbs. Crumbs from the infrastructure program that will only create or maintain some 45,000 jobs to meet the needs of 1.5 million unemployed. A real joke, a real farce from the clowns opposite who increasingly arouse laughter and scepticism from everyone.

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In my riding, this miraculous Liberal program will solve nothing. It is a drop in the bucket, providing only insecure short-term jobs. That is what we get from the conjurers opposite.

What are you waiting for to come up with a real employment policy? What are you waiting for to create and establish new, intelligent, promising programs? What are you waiting for to give technical and financial aid and support to companies and to individuals who want to create new businesses? What are you waiting for to invest massively in research and development? Nothing, you are waiting, you are in neutral and, I even believe, in reverse in many respects.

But what is even more disappointing and heartbreaking from the Liberals is that not only have they forgotten about jobs, they are cutting unemployment insurance. They are taking from people whom they offer nothing, whom they are not giving a chance. The conjurers opposite reason backwards.

This whole everyday reality of the unemployed creates definite problems for them. One of these problems is related to the Unemployment Insurance Act and Bill C-218 would eliminate it by recognizing a 1989 Supreme Court decision that excluding spouses from unemployment insurance is discriminatory. Unfortunately, the insensitive Conservative government in 1990 made life more difficult for spouses. I can tell you that in my riding, where many people hire their spouses to meet the needs of the tourist season, we have hundreds of these problem cases due to paragraph 3(2)(c) of the Act. These spouses, mostly women, go through a real nightmare when they apply for benefits. To collect benefits, employees related by blood, marriage or adoption must convince the officer that their job is justified and that they are not cheating.

(1715)

So this employee carries the burden of proof, with all the inquiries that this provision implies. These inquiries have become almost systematic and impose unacceptable delays for people who often badly need these unemployment benefits.

Furthermore, since the burden of proof is theirs, we generally consider these people abusers of the system. Such an attitude is unacceptable in a democracy, a free world where everyone is presumed innocent until proven otherwise. Once again the main victims of that provision are women. We women can take a lot. Approximately 650,000 women would be in that category.

I therefore ask the members from the other side to approve this bill, I ask the women of this House to bring these facts to the attention of their male colleagues in order that we may redress this injustice done against women by repealing this provision of the legislation.

We must trust in ourselves, trust in others if we want them to trust us and the system.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise on such an important occasion to speak about unemployment insurance.

I recently spent two weeks in my riding. People are concerned about the high cost of unemployment insurance to Canada, not only to employees and employers but to the taxpayer. They are concerned about abuse of the system. I have seen some of that abuse firsthand.

Abuse of the UI system results in higher costs for employees, employers and our entire tax system. It results in higher costs of goods and services. Removing the safeguard that is in place regarding spouses paying each other has the potential for a tremendous abuse problem in the future. I see it rising very greatly if we remove this safeguard.

I recognize that if spouses are not allowed to collect benefits on an arm's length transaction they should not be expected to pay premiums either. We do have a problem here that needs to be addressed but let us address it directly and not try to do an end run on the problem. There are other people who have to pay premiums. Although I am a farmer I worked off the farm for some time. I had to pay premiums and never could collect. That needs to be addressed.

If spouses are not allowed to collect because they do not qualify under the arm's length test, let us introduce a bill to deal directly with the problem. This discriminatory practice should not be continued.

The government has promised to bring in a review of the entire unemployment insurance program. It is a welcome review, one for which the people of Canada have been waiting for a long time. Let us listen to what Canadians have to say in these hearings on this issue as well as others. I believe they are going to be telling us that they want to stop abuse of the system.

We have young people in Canada who have never seen either parent bring home a pay cheque or hold a real job other than one through unemployment insurance. I say that is a tragedy. A program that was started with very good intentions, to provide help for people in time of temporary crisis, has become a way of life for a lot of people. We see it continuing from generation to generation.

This practice has to be stopped not just for the taxpayers but for those very young people who are going to fall into that same cycle. It is not conducive to good self-worth and the sooner we end that practice, the better. I am concerned that by removing the safeguard that has been put in place to stop abuse in the case of spouses employing each other will just add to that further abuse. Therefore, I cannot support this bill. I encourage members in this House to vote it down. A new bill should be

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introduced to deal with the problem where spouses have to pay premiums when they are not allowed to collect.

(1720)

I believe there is good intent here but it is misdirected. I certainly do not want to encourage any more abuse of our unemployment insurance system than we have now. Let us have a good thorough airing of this problem and the hearings that are going to be conducted throughout the country through the unemployment insurance review. I suggest we wait for that to happen.

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today addresses a concern of every person who knows, understands and values the family business today.

The Unemployment Insurance Act stipulates that workers who are related to their employer are covered by unemployment insurance if they qualify as do other workers. They work under the same sort of employment contract as other workers who are not related to the employer. Their employment is insured and they pay premiums.

This means that if they become unemployed they will also be able to claim any benefits for which they are qualified. Factors such as rate of pay, conditions of employment, length, type and importance of their work will determine whether or not their employment is insurable. Clearly the basic question of providing equal coverage to family businesses has been dealt with in the existing legislation and the guidelines for administration of unemployment insurance provisions are set out.

In the last four years how have family businesses fared in participating in the benefits provided to alleviate involuntary temporary unemployment?

I am confident that a brief survey of the situation in the typical riding will reveal this scenario. Family businesses which have paid into the unemployment insurance account found they needed the benefits. They filed their claims for the husband, daughter, mother or son who had to be laid off. They demonstrated the legitimacy of the claims and they received the benefits to which they were entitled. The benefits for which they may qualify include a broad range of services designed to help them end their temporary involuntary unemployment.

Special benefits particularly relevant to a family business include the following: 15 weeks of maternity benefits in the period surrounding the birth of a child; 10 weeks of parental benefits available to natural or adoptive parents, either mother or father, or shared between them as they deem appropriate; and a flexible combination of regular, sickness, maternity, and parental benefits. More than one type of special benefit can be claimed within the same benefit period up to 30 weeks. In addition claimants may receive special benefits in combination with regular benefits.

We can well imagine the situation where a mother and father are operating a business together. One of them becomes ill. This immediately threatens the entire future of that business. Under unemployment insurance provisions today the person who is ill may claim benefits which can help maintain the income of that person and help to keep the family business alive.

Tens of thousands of legitimate businesses with legitimate claims for benefits for which the employer and the employee have paid are receiving those benefits. The responsible competent management of the unemployment insurance fund has produced billions of dollars in benefits. These benefits have helped to ensure the financial survival of countless numbers of families who are operating their own businesses.

Then there is the case of a family business experiencing a slowdown and which must let go perhaps a daughter or son who is an employee. For many of those persons unemployment insurance has provided benefits while starting a new business to meet a new need in the marketplace.

This is just one example of how flexible and versatile the Unemployment Insurance Act can be to provide real solutions to real problems.

(1725)

I suggest that each of us inquire among families we know that have benefited from the present act and learn their opinion. I believe that people who know the breadth and depth of the Unemployment Insurance Act will tell us that this act does serve well legitimate family business with a legitimate claim.

The anomalies which can eventually appear in any act are best dealt with in a comprehensive way in the context of all the social programs which the federal government provides.

I believe that in spite of the intentions of the hon. member who introduced this bill this proposal is not in the best interest of family businesses, of any people who participate in our unemployment insurance program or of all Canadians.

During the Easter recess I had the opportunity of holding three meetings in my riding in connection with the social security review. I had good attendance at these meetings and I had people from across the county and people who were involved in providing support services to our citizens. I can say that the recommendations I received were wide ranging and will add to the national debate that is occurring on this matter in Canada now.

I believe all of us as members of Parliament should consult our ridings to pass on their concerns to the minister. I and my staff have prepared a report of my meetings to pass on to the hon. Minister of Human Resources Development for his consideration in this process. After I have given the report to the minister I would be happy to share it with any interested members who

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would like to conduct such meetings on this very important review.

I believe the bill before us should also be considered within the social policy review. It is best for us to consult the people of Canada on this crucial issue, for it is their money we are working with.

There was discussion on unemployment insurance and how it might be improved. The general feeling is since it is an insurance plan perhaps those who are most likely to become uninsured should pay a higher premium than those who are employed in a more secure occupation, a sort of pay as much as you are likely to need plan.

There is also a great deal of concern, as the hon. member across the House pointed out, for abuses within the system. There are people who spend most of their time collecting unemployment benefits and not contributing to the plan. I do not suggest that family businesses are necessarily one of those.

Another thing that I have learned in my brief five months as an MP is that to a lot of our constituents we can fix anything. We are supposed to know everything and we are supposed to be able to fix anything that goes wrong. As you would know from your experience, Mr. Speaker, they do not always distinguish between federal plans, provincial plans, municipal plans or even private plans.

I have had many requests about problems with internal revenue, about problems with UI, about problems with the Canada pension plan and about problems with any number of other plans and services and benefits that I knew nothing about. I can honestly say the problem purported to be so serious and to which this amendment relates is one that is entirely new to me. No one has complained in this regard yet and I am sure there are lots of family businesses in the riding of Oxford as there are in other places.

I congratulate the member for bringing this bill forward, but I would ask her to bring it forward in the social policy review and be looked at along with other recommendations of concerned Canadians.

The Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the list of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I think you might find unanimous consent to suspend the sitting until 6 p.m. so that we can proceed pursuant to the arrangement arrived at earlier this day.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: We will suspend until six o'clock when we will resume debate.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 5.30 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 6.03 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): It being 6 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier this day the House will now proceed to a special debate.

SPECIAL DEBATE

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SITUATION IN BOSNIA

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs) moved:

"That this House, taking note of the tragic events which have taken place in and around Gorazde, and NATO's agreement in February to a UN request for the use of air support to protect a safe area around Sarajevo, consider the request contained in the UN Secretary General's April 18 letter to the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to extend arrangements similar to those in place to protect Sarajevo to the five other UN safe areas in Bosnia";

He said: Madam Speaker, the government promised at the beginning of its mandate to consult Parliament and Canadians on major foreign policy issues. As I said during the debate on the review of our foreign policy, Canadians care about their country's foreign policy. That is easy to understand when we look at all our peacekeepers overseas.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is probably the most dangerous theatre in which our troops currently operate.

The February slaughter in the Sarajevo marketplace prompted the international community to act with more strength and determination than before. Once again, the international community must take a firm and definite position on Bosnia after the totally unacceptable events that are taking place in Gorazde.

Our goal, I repeat, is still to achieve a lasting peace in Bosnia. All our efforts in Bosnia have always been aimed at promoting the negotiating process. We must never cause the conflict to escalate. Only a diplomatic solution can bring lasting peace to Bosnia. All the parties involved in the conflict, especially the Bosnian Serbs, must realize that there can be no military solutions. We must find a way to get the peace process moving again, because the continuation of hostilities in Bosnia threatens the stability of the entire region.

I must say that, despite all the efforts made by the UN, NATO and the European Union, as well as the specific initiatives of the Americans and the Russians, the situation is deteriorating rapidly.

Foreign Affairs

After the Serbs attacked the city of Gorazde and violated the various ceasefires negotiated in the last few days, the UN Secretary General formally called on NATO to take all necessary measures to protect the five safe areas in Bosnia, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac, Srebrenica and Sarajevo, by launching air strikes mostly against Serb forces, unfortunately.

The NATO Council discussed the issue yesterday and asked its military authorities to prepare various scenarios in response to the request of the UN Secretary General. Tomorrow the council will reach its decision on the UN Secretary General's request.

We will have to take position at this meeting of the NATO Council. Before making that decision, we feel it is important to hear what parliamentarians have to say about this request from the Secretary General.

We are giving an opportunity to government and opposition members to make suggestions. My colleague the Minister of Defence and myself will be listening to the speeches and, at 10 p.m. tonight, there will be a special Cabinet meeting so that our instructions can be given to those who will be representing us at NATO tomorrow.

I must say however that, in February, Canada did express reservations about using air power to protect Sarajevo. But in the end, we came to the conclusion that it was the only way to deal with a situation which was becoming critical. Canada's concerns were taken into consideration in making a decision at NATO in February. We also indicated very clearly that, in the event of a drastic change in the nature of UN operations in Bosnia, whereby our troops would no longer be involved in strictly peacekeeping activities, we might reconsider our military presence in Bosnia.

(1810)

I would like to point out that our representative to the NATO Council reiterated yesterday Canada's reservations about using air strikes. Air power alone cannot resolve the situation in Bosnia. We must make our decisions on the basis of our strategic objectives, which remain above all peace and negotiations.

However, in view of the daily flood of horrifying images from Bosnia, we must not overlook the fact that significant progress was nonetheless achieved, as evidenced for instance by the support of a Muslim Croat federation. NATO and the UN had advocated, in February, stepping up operations to protect Sarajevo and relieve the city from the hellish conditions under which it has been living for far too long. We did manage to quiet guns and mortars without resorting to NATO air strikes.

Unfortunately, the war mentality got the better in other regions of Bosnia. So, Gorazde was declared UN safe area. We have the duty to protect the populations which have taken refuge over there. However, last week's events in Gorazde show that for

the international community to step up operations entails risks. We must be fully aware of that.

If we take a firmer approach, as requested by the Secretary General of NATO and proposed to NATO, we must do it with our eyes wide open and accept the consequences of our decision.

[English]

We are also aware and must be aware that the conflict has evolved. The progress made in Bosnia is compromised by a totally uncontrollable Bosnian Serb army. We must recognize the very positive role that the Russians have played in seeking a negotiated solution to this bloody conflict. We must therefore attach more weight to the observations of the Russians in recent days about the intransigence of the Bosnian Serbs as a primary contribution to the current impasse.

In this context it will be wise to take into consideration the Russian position in any eventual action taken by NATO. This is certainly something that we will be speaking about with our friends and allies in NATO tomorrow. If we want to end this conflict, certainly we have to tell the Bosnian Serbs unequivocally that what they are doing is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

As we said in regard to Sarajevo, if they do not respect the ceasefire, if they do not respect the safe areas, they will risk the consequence of air strikes. As we also said in Sarajevo, we were ready to do it. Fortunately common sense prevailed and it was not necessary to use air strikes.

We are going to be ready if need be to follow the same logic, the same strategy, in regard to the other areas where there are populations that are hostage to belligerents who resist the request of everyone to come to the table to sign a peace agreement.

We obviously have to realize that the original mandate of the Canadian troops sent there to serve as peacekeepers and to help in the delivery of humanitarian aid is singularly compromised at the moment.

(1815)

The mandate in Bosnia of peacekeeping missions does not work and cannot work unless all parties agree to a peaceful solution to the conflicts. The only ones resisting so far are the Bosnian Serbs and we are determined to make sure that they understand they cannot perpetrate a war that all the other parties want to stop.

Therefore, I believe that we have to make tough decisions in the name of peace and security. We will have to consult with our allies and design the appropriate recourse necessary to assist those who have the responsibility to implement peace in this area of the world.

Canada has served brilliantly in the past on many UN peacekeeping missions. It has been a proud participant in NATO and has been ready to serve whenever asked in any type of capacity. If we can no longer serve under the UN on peacekeeping

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missions we might be asked to serve, and we will have to give a response in this regard, under NATO to carry on very vigorous actions to clearly establish good sense in the minds of the Bosnian Serbs.

Hopefully air strikes will not be necessary but we have to say tonight that if necessary there will be air strikes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, first I would like to say that the government is to be commended for agreeing that this was an appropriate time to have a debate that will give all parliamentarians who wish to do so an opportunity to speak and, above all, to express the views of the opposition for the benefit of the government.

After listening to the speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which I felt was a very responsible and very balanced presentation, I think we can reasonably expect that the House will unanimously approve this very serious decision the government must make. I believe it is very important to be able to proceed on the basis of a consensus of all political affiliations in this House.

It is clear that the peacekeeping mission, as it has been defined thus far, has failed. First, because there is no peace. There is a war and even a regular slaughter of civilians. On television we see children killed and dismembered by shells. We see women dying, women who have been raped. We see a country that is a bloody battlefield, where 200,000 people have been killed in the past two years.

Today, 28 people were killed in Gorazde. They did not die in battle but in the hospital, because the Serbs opted for the unthinkable strategy of attacking hospitals. Yesterday, a rocket launcher fired on the hospital, people in the emergency ward were killed and operating rooms were destroyed. Today, there was another attack on the hospital. It was not an accident but a deliberate decision to attack the hospitals. It is impossible to go out and help the wounded because they fire at the medical teams.

There is no peace, and there is no will to make peace. There has been a lot of talk about negotiations. However, so far all negotiations have been marred by the bad faith of the Serbs. The violation of the cease-fire around Gorazde is a case in point. The cease-fires that were agreed on have been systematically violated. They were never even enforced. They were violated before the ink was dry.

Speaking of violations, I am told that in the past three months, the Serbs violated at least 57 agreements on Gorazde and Sarajevo.

(1820)

Furthermore, the peace talks are going nowhere. In fact, they are yielding no positive results because the Serbs refuse to join the Croats and the Muslims of Bosnia in their will for peace. We know that Croats and Muslims have signed an agreement but the Serbs refused to be part of it. In fact, we should be talking about

Serb duplicity. They see the negotiations as an opportunity to lull the West while intensifying their efforts. Their strategy is obvious. The Serbs pretend they are negotiating but in reality they are using that time to occupy more land and get into a strategic position for the events to come.

This acknowledgement of failure leads us to believe that, given the current situation, the presence of the peacekeepers in Bosnia could even be prolonging the conflict. Instructions are not clear. The military do not know what to do. They cannot defend themselves. They could very well become helpless hostages if the Serbs get a notion to act along those lines. We absolutely must make a decision.

We talk about our soldiers' safety in case of air attacks, but we must also talk about their safety as things stand right now. Our troops are in danger. The safety of Canadian soldiers is being threatened at this very moment. These soldiers cannot defend themselves; they must watch helplessly as hostilities take place with extreme speed and intensity.

To conclude on the diplomatic aspect of the question, I think most of all that the credibility of western democracies and of the United Nations is at stake here. What is left of Canada's credibility as a peacekeeping country, as a country that is consistent in its policies and able to act in a coherent fashion? What will be left of the credibility of the British, the French, the Americans and the United Nations if we do nothing? It is because they knew how to play on our wish for peace and our pacifism that the Serbs have succeeded in occupying most of Bosnia and that they might be right now taking actions that look an awful lot like ethnic cleansing.

In other words, the situation has reached a critical level. We must redefine Canada's mission. We must do so either by redirecting our peacekeepers' mission in that country or by withdrawing our troops altogether. But is that possible? The fact is that we have no choice, since the alternative is not an option, in practice or in principle.

If we were to withdraw, what would it mean? It would mean, first of all, the end of humanitarian aid. Let us not forget that together with peacekeeping, even if we have failed at that, we are engaged in other operations such as protecting food convoys and supplying a minimum of water and sanitation, as well as drugs to save a few lives, where possible. In that respect, a lot has been achieved. It must go on.

Second, the credibility of peacekeeping missions and the UN would be definitely jeopardized if we were to withdraw today. What would the world think of a total abdication by the UN and by NATO countries, if we were to withdraw now? Moreover, we would be abandoning the Bosnians. Try to imagine what would happen to them if we were to withdraw. All the more so as we have disarmed them. It is not well known that the embargo we declared against Bosnians has been so effective that they have no arms and are finding it increasingly difficult to counter Serb attacks. And finally, we would open the country to possible territorial expansion.

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We are dealing with a powder keg, with the Balkans, where several of the great wars started. We can already see the emergence of a threat from Iran. The Muslims' religious solidarity could come into play, as recent statements from Iran lead us to believe. To leave would allow the conflict to degenerate.

Therefore, we must redefine the UN's mission. I think that we will all agree to answer the Secretary General's call and endorse President Clinton's proposal to apply the approach followed in Sarajevo to the six safe areas remaining in Bosnia. That means the use of air strikes, this time offensive ones preceded by an ultimatum. Let us not mince words. We are talking about a real ultimatum. The Serbs must know that if they do not comply with the specific request to free the six safe areas and surrender all their heavy armament, they will in effect decide to become the targets of air strikes.

(1825)

These air strikes, if unfortunately it came to this, must have a significant effect. The time for half-measures has passed. Strikes must target strategic positions. This would at least ensure the safety of our troops, in the event retaliatory strikes were subsequently launched against them. Heavy Serb weaponry must be destroyed if the Serbs do not respond to the ultimatums.

Of course, we must protect ourselves. We must have the support of the Russians. I do not know if this will be possible, as the wire reports do not give us a clear picture of the situation in Russia. We do know that the United Nations Security Council will be meeting this evening in New York and that the Russians will be in attendance. They have the power to veto the Council's decisions. We have to get beyond the Security Council and hope that Russia will allow itself to be convinced by Western diplomacy to set aside its sympathy for the Serbs, considering how harshly it has been treated by the Serbs. Russian honour is at stake because the Russians vouched for the fact that the Serbs would respect the treaties and ceasefires, when in fact the Serbs violated them anyway. One must hope that the Russians will join the ranks of those who want peace to be restored to that area of the world.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the safety of our troops. We realize that this situation is extremely difficult for them. Our soldiers have already been taken hostage. Fortunately, they were freed. This time, we must ensure that the military backup is in place so that our soldiers cannot be taken hostage as easily as before.

There is also the matter of additional troops that could be required. A number of military experts, including General MacKenzie, have indicated that ground support is needed to ensure the effectiveness of air strikes. Should additional troops

be needed, and I do not know if they will as this will be for the military to decide, I do not think that Canada ought to be asked to supply them.

Canada's effort has already been substantial. Its troops account for 8 per cent of the forces in place, whereas it accounts for only 3 per cent of NATO's budget. Some countries still have not sent any troops yet to this area of the world. Some have not sent the numbers they should have. I think we should urge our allies and friends in NATO to match Canada's effort. I have no doubt that we would then have enough troops on the ground to sustain the attacks.

[English]

In conclusion, the Bloc will support the implementation of the plan proposed by the American president and strongly advises the government to answer favourably to the call of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

This is a case where we have to be united. This is a case where we have to fulfil a duty of international solidarity because humanitarianism calls for it and it is the kind of responsibility we have to show when the rights and democracy of people are directly threatened.

I can assure the government that we will support any initiative which will be taken in the direction of my comments.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Madam Speaker, I want to again acknowledge and thank the government for agreeing to this debate this evening. Also, I want to register our great satisfaction that the cabinet will not meet to decide on this issue until after this debate has been concluded. This is a situation which Canadians should be involved in and it is a situation which should not result from partisan politics.

The situation in Bosnia has become very serious and a decision soon to be taken will have great impact on the Canadian forces committed to the United Nations efforts in Bosnia. It will also have tremendous impact on Bosnian citizens who are in grave danger.

Once again I would remind all that none of the antagonists in Bosnia can claim clean hands in this terrible confrontation. All have been involved in actions for which they could only expect world condemnation. However, it would seem that at this time it is the Bosnian Serbs who are responsible for the escalation and the continuation of the war in Bosnia.

Madam Speaker, you may remember that in my previous submission on Bosnia during the debates here on January 25, I suggested that Canada should take a lead role, and I quote: "by hosting a conference here in Ottawa in early February before that Geneva meeting to include all countries with forces in the former Yugoslavia. At this conference Canada should urge that the UN issue a clear and unequivocal ultimatum to the bel-

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lige-rents: either accept moves to achieve an enforceable, peaceful solution or accept the withdrawal of UN forces”.

(1830)

That advice was overlooked or ignored. Now some three months later we find ourselves in an even more critical situation. We have had Canadian forces held hostage, detained and interfered with along with other UN personnel. We have had intense bombardment of a UN declared safe zone at Gorazde resulting in many casualties killed and wounded.

It has become obvious that at least one of the protagonists in Bosnia has little appreciation for our purpose in being there or respect for the will of the United Nations to effect a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

At the end of March Canada agreed to extend the commitment of Canadian forces in Bosnia for a further six months, taking us through to the end of September. But when that commitment was made there appeared to be light at the end of the tunnel and very good prospects of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

That has now changed and in light of that Canada should reassess the situation and reconsider our options. A withdrawal of Canadian forces is one option. Canadians are not ones to cut and run when the going gets tough and we have proven that to everyone's satisfaction. But in Bosnia right now we are relegated to being mere observers of atrocities, bloodshed and cruelty. If the Bosnian Serbs cannot somehow be convinced that they have to change their ways, is there any point in Canadians remaining involved, particularly when there seems to be every prospect that some will be placed in great danger and perhaps killed or wounded?

Even President Yeltsin has agreed that the Serbs have violated their agreement. President Clinton said in a news conference that consultations are still going on and that while he cannot commit President Yeltsin to a course until he sees the U.S. proposal in writing, he can say that in general President Yeltsin agreed that the present understanding for air power was ineffective and that the Serbs plainly violated their agreement and overreached in Gorazde. But he feels, as everyone does, that over the long run NATO air power alone will not settle this conflict. It will have to be settled by negotiations.

Without in any way suggesting that my council is as informed as either president, I agree with these assessments. Air power alone will not resolve the war in Bosnia. But the judicious use and firm application of air power may convince the Bosnian Serbs that their best interests lie in coming to the conference table to negotiate in good faith.

As a result I would advocate that Canada should agree to the UN request for NATO air strikes on the condition that such strikes are called for by the commanders on the ground. It is important that when the air strikes are put in that they are put in with the knowledge and consent of the people who will be directly affected by any retaliation that may take place.

Obviously air strikes are a weapon that can be used to great effect. The present proposal is for these air strikes to be applied directly in support of the enclaves or the one enclave at Gorazde. However, they could also be applied to the logistics chain, to the supply deserts, to the ammunition dumps, to the roads and rail bridges that are providing the transport link for the Serbs to be resupplied. That I do not think is what we are considering at this moment, but it is another aspect that air power could bring to the situation if it is necessary.

I think we should also consider the UN embargo on the provision of weapons to the Bosnian Muslims. When Vice-President Ganic was here two days ago in conversation he said that he thought that the UN was to a large extent responsible for the situation in Bosnia as a result of that embargo. He felt very strongly and spoke very eloquently that because of the disparity in the weapons capability between the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims that there was no way a reconciliation could be reached. He advocated very strongly that we drop this embargo and allow the Muslims to be armed adequately.

(1835)

In response to my question would this involve an increase in hostilities, he admitted that at the outset this could very well be the case but he was convinced that for a long term resolution of the conflict in Bosnia this was the only option that would give a real hope of that happening.

In conclusion, I want to commend the government for their position. I want to say that the Reform Party will be supporting them again. I think this is a decision that should be not taken along political lines but in the interests of Canadians. I think it would be unwelcome in the broad Canadian public right now for Canadians to withdraw their forces. I think we should stay there and attempt to see that a peaceful resolution is reached.

However, I do think that it should be made plain that if we are there only to observe atrocities and further bloodshed that we will have to reconsider that option when the time comes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, in September 1992, the UN Security Council broadened the mandate and increased the size of UNPROFOR to provide protection to humanitarian assistance convoys in Bosnia-Herzegovina, under the supervision of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Canada agreed to send about 1,200 more troops and, by November 5, 1992, the second battalion group had been

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deployed. In December 1992, the UN Security Council established a deterrent presence in the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. A company of the Second Canadian Battalion carried out this operation from January until March of last year.

When these troops were relieved last autumn, the participation of Canadian forces in UNPROFOR was reviewed and increased to about 2,000 soldiers divided in two smaller battalion groups. Currently, almost 2,000 Canadian troops are supporting UNPROFOR efforts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[*English*]

We have taken a number of steps in the last couple of years. I believe the ones I have just mentioned outlined Canada's commitment to peace and stability in the former republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina of the former republic of Yugoslavia. It has been a great challenge to thousands of Canadians, friends and families of those who have been affected and those who have served in this particular theatre.

We believe that the contributions that we have made in the past two years in the former republic of Yugoslavia, both in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, have been significant. The Canadian forces have made a difference. They have saved lives. They have helped foster what peace there is in that region and have contributed effectively to the humanitarian effort.

We are talking this evening about the massive deterioration of the situation in Bosnia. Bosnian Serb forces have been unrelenting in their attacks on Gorazde which is a designated United Nations safe area. On numerous occasions UNPROFOR officials have attempted to persuade Bosnian Serbs to halt their aggressive activities. So far these attempts have been unsuccessful and Bosnian Serbs remain. They have detained UN officials and impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In this environment it is becoming increasingly difficult for UNPROFOR to fulfil its objectives. The international community and in particular NATO countries, the European union and Russia were faced with a fundamental dilemma of how to encourage co-operation without either escalating or widening the conflict.

Taking into consideration all of the factors before him the UN Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has concluded that stronger military action is required.

The House will recall that in February of this year NATO agreed to provide air support to protect the UN safe area of Sarajevo. Three days ago Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote to Manfred Woerner, the Secretary General of NATO, requesting

that the arrangement be made to protect the Sarajevo safe area and be extended to the five other UN safe areas in and around Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa, Tuzla and the Bihac pocket area.

(1840)

Yesterday the NATO Council discussed this request and asked NATO military authorities to develop an operational plan. The operational plan that is being developed will cover such areas as command and control arrangements, selection of targets and the safety of UN personnel.

In any agreement that Canada would have to the UN Secretary-General's proposal we would have to be assured that the command and control of such air strikes meet Canadian expectations and normal NATO requirements for effectiveness and safety. My military officials have been in touch with those of other NATO countries to ensure that if such strikes were permitted our concerns will indeed be addressed.

The plan of the Secretary-General will define the size of the exclusion zones in and around each safe area and will specify how and under which condition air strikes will be used. Some members of the House will say that the government has in the past been opposed to air strikes and will wonder why we have not flatly opposed the UN Secretary-General's latest request.

I would just like to better explain our position. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has enlightened us this evening on his position.

We have supported the use of air strikes for the protection of UN troops. We said that we would consider other requests as long as they took into consideration a number of factors, these factors being that air strikes contributed to the overall peace process, would not clearly associate the UN with one side, would not make it impossible for UN forces to assist in the delivery of humanitarian aid and would not expose UN personnel to unacceptable risks.

There has been much discussion of the American plan posed by President Clinton yesterday. It was a much more comprehensive plan which goes beyond Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's request and this plan not only includes the extension of air support projecting Sarajevo to other safe areas but also calls for tighter sanctions aimed at limiting the ability of Serbia and Bosnia to wage war and for a high level meeting between the United States, Europe, Russia and the United Nations.

Tomorrow morning, as my colleague, the secretary of state for foreign affairs has said, the NATO Council will meet to consider the operational plan that is being developed by military authorities and to discuss President Clinton's proposal.

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Of course, any decision NATO takes will have an impact on UNPROFOR and more specifically we will have to look closely at whether all of these proposals will change the nature of the UNPROFOR mission. In addition, we will have to look at the operational plan to determine its military viability and its impact on the safety of UN personnel.

We have known from the start that deploying forces in the former Yugoslavia meant exposing our personnel to some risk. This concern has been with us since the beginning of the mission and the situation in Srebrenica as well as the incident last week involving 16 members of the Canadian forces when they were detained by Bosnian Serbs reminded us that the risks were very real.

I would like to pay particular tribute at this point to those 16 individuals and to the other United Nations observer, a Canadian, being detained.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Collenette: A member of our force is in Gorazde today as it is being shelled to pieces. A Canadian is there and we pray for his return.

The decision tomorrow will not be taken lightly but as my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has said, too often in the past nations have turned a blind eye to wanton aggression. Too often we have accepted unconscionable atrocities being committed. They are being committed in other places around the world and that should give us equal cause for condemnation.

When we see this kind of situation happening in Europe in 1994, in the heart of western civilization, if you will, when we see people who are ethnoculturally the same but who are essentially divided along religious lines doing unspeakable things to each other, when we see one faction wantonly thumbing its nose at the international community, the time has come to act.

We cannot stand by as we did not stand by—others did not stand by—earlier in this century because if we do, we will only encourage the aggressor more. We will allow more and more atrocities to occur, more and more rights to be abused.

(1845)

More and more we will see the end of civility in a part of the world where civility has been very much the norm for the past 50 years, in a relatively peaceful situation, notwithstanding the enmities in the history of the past.

As we go forward this evening in cabinet and make a final decision, we will weigh the remarks of hon. members opposite and those on the government side of the House.

We certainly appreciate the valuable contributions made by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member from Saanich—Gulf Islands, the critic for the Reform Party. When we stand here tonight discussing this issue we stand here not as

Liberals or as Reformers or as members of the Bloc Quebecois or other political parties. We stand here as Canadians.

Canadians are serving with resolve and determination. They have our total support. They will be pleased to know members of the House of Commons are thinking about them and are trying to ensure the world community brings about some course of action that will help them return safely home when this mandate is completed but equally important, brings lasting peace to the former republic of Yugoslavia.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg): Madam Speaker, this is the second time in this 35th Parliament that I rise to speak on the issue of Bosnia and peacekeeping missions. When the first debate took place, the parties in this House were unanimously in favour of letting Canadian troops participate in a peacekeeping mission which was nevertheless very different from previous exercises to which Canadians had taken part in.

Unfortunately, the situation has changed. Reform Party members, as well as the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, have spoken at length on the evolution of the conflict and the diplomatic means used. We can now see what the situation is. You all sadly remember how the horrors of Sarajevo shocked the world. At that time, NATO had decided, following an ultimatum, to use air strikes in order to free the area surrounding Sarajevo.

Later, every diplomatic effort was made by western nations, and even by Russia which, through negotiation, managed to convince Bosnian Serbs to agree to a ceasefire and to agreements signed by Croats and Bosnian Muslims. At that point, it looked like a solution was in sight, but Bosnian Serbs once again failed to live up to their word. In so doing, they ridiculed UN members and betrayed the trust of Russia, which had negotiated with them.

In my opinion, this is no longer a situation where nations try to arrive at a negotiated solution but, rather, an attack on the very existence of humanity, its values and its evolution. How can we tolerate any longer a situation which the whole world condemns? Clearly, diplomacy has failed somewhere when belligerents decide to bomb hospitals, as they did in Gorazde and in Sarajevo before. Nothing will bring back to life those who were killed in this conflict, and nothing justifies such barbaric acts.

My preamble gives you an idea of the position suggested by the Bloc Quebecois. Indeed, we believe that Canada must support the proposal put forward by the U.S. President, Mr. Clinton, and that support must be unequivocal. The idea is to define six safe areas, as NATO did, and to pattern this exercise on the Sarajevo experience. In other words, an ultimatum must be given, but it should have a very short deadline. If this

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ultimatum is not observed, then we should resort to strategic and intensive air strikes.

(1850)

Clearly, some people will say that there is an escalation and that this form of intervention is radically different from those formerly endorsed by Canada.

However, the massacre must cease. All the people in the field said and keep saying that inaction cannot be tolerated any longer considering the horror of the situation. UN troops are sick of helplessly watching the slaughter of often unarmed civilians.

They have performed brilliantly, despite the paucity of their resources and the often confusing directions they received. They saved thousands of lives and I can say, because I heard it from people who were there, that they are even willing to put their lives in danger to stop this bloody massacre.

I met with a few Bosnian Muslims now residing in Canada, who may have been in touch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence. They were describing the situation in Sarajevo, and now in Gorazde, as something that should be unacceptable to countries which consider themselves civilized, and they were shocked that Canada, where they live and wish to remain, could watch this without reacting more strongly.

All the parties involved, that is western countries, the European Community, Russia and the United States, should decide as one to intervene in the most forceful way. Since they have gone back on their word so many times, the Bosnian Serbs can no longer make other countries believe that they are willing to carry out diplomatic negotiations in good faith.

Obviously, this decision will not be taken lightly. However, under the circumstances, I think that it is the only humanitarian solution possible. We have also said that the safety of Canadian and other peacekeepers is of primary importance to us, but given the slaughter that is taking place, this action can only be beneficial and worthwhile.

There is no question that procrastination, coupled with a lack of clear decisions and strategies, has prolonged this barbaric conflict and at times further endangered the lives of peacekeepers. You cannot put a price on a human life, as all of our brave soldiers have so clearly shown us. They want to put an end to this conflict, even if it means risking their lives. They realize that their profession and training places them in situations which can at times be dangerous. However, they are trained for combat and they are prepared to face the consequences.

In my view, the safety of our peacekeepers must be our top priority. This issue is of even greater concern to me since the majority of our peacekeeping troops hail from my riding. I have

met with several of them who have returned from Bosnia and, without necessarily speaking on their behalf, I would like to pass along this message from our courageous soldiers: Let us act in a clear-sighted and circumspect manner, but let us act now to end the slaughter.

In conclusion, I believe there is no other solution but to designate these enclaves as safe areas. If the Bosnian Serbs violate these designations, a firm, unwavering ultimatum should be issued to them, so that we can finally put an end to this shameful episode in the history of humanity. When we reach the point where hospitals are being bombed and civilians and children are being murdered, I think we must make some decisions which may at times seem difficult.

Having become involved in this unfortunate conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the UN can no longer act as a mere observer. It must make some decisions which ultimately may give rise to debate. Peacekeepers have already saved many lives, but I believe that if we support this course of action, they will ultimately be able to save even more human beings.

[English]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, this is a very serious debate this evening.

I have listened to five speakers, all of whom have spoken without regard for their affiliation to any party. As a Canadian I am very proud to stand tonight and say they have all spoken as Canadians in the best interests of this country. I am very honoured to join that nature of the debate this evening on such a serious subject.

(1855)

I want to approach this debate from a slightly different perspective. I want to look at what is in our national interest. After all, this is what we are talking about as Canadians.

What is in our national interest in the debate this evening is peace and security in the world and a total abhorrence of the genocide we see in front of us. But for every national aim and every national wish, there has to be a risk.

What is at risk? It is not our reputation as peacekeepers that is at risk. We demonstrated in the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 that we can peacekeep, but we can also leave when people really want to fight. We have created the precedent for doing both in the same operation.

However we do have a risk. It is the close to 2,000 Canadians who are involved in this operation. It has to be very clear to Canadians that in this goal and national aim of peace and security and the abhorrence of genocide, our peacekeepers are at risk.

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Having said that I want to look at this operation as one which I suppose could be described as typically escalatory. The question I ask in an operation that takes that trend is: Where does it stop?

We started with a handful of officers and non-commissioned members in September 1991 to support the European Community monitoring mission to cease fire on the borders and to provide humanitarian assistance.

In February 1992 we sent a 1,200 member battalion group. In June 1992 we dispatched part of that battalion group to open the Sarajevo airport. Canadians will remember that; it was a very tense time in this operation. In September 1992 we sent another 1,200 troops.

Well, the history of the 57 ceasefires and the use that the Bosnian Serbs have made of these sham ceasefires add to the escalation we see in front of us. In every escalation there is a quagmire. That is where we are now. We are at a quagmire.

What options are open to us? There are three basic options. In one way or another they have been described here this evening.

The first option is to declare we have lost the battle, that there is no further use for us to remain in the present position doing the present things we are doing. We would get out. The consequence is that it would give a certain signal to the Bosnian Serbs. It would put at risk thousands of civilian lives, most of them Muslims. It would put at risk other Muslim populations in the eastern part of Bosnia that we would be concerned about.

It would also give a signal to other aggressors that may want to do the same thing. The history of genocide and our view as Canadians on this kind of atrocity is very clear. Our actions have always been the same.

The second option is to stay the course of what is happening. I am not sure what good that would do us. We are providing humanitarian aid and suggesting air strikes. Unless something changes from what is happening now, I believe any chance of a peace will be totally bogged down. The government which is Muslim Bosnian, as I see it, will perhaps get the wrong signal and expect that sooner or later we may want to come down on its side. I do not have to tell anybody in the House that our troops were not sent there for that reason. Neither are they equipped to do so.

(1900)

It would also give the wrong signal to the Serbs that we are going to stay there. They will continue to have their little games of ceasefires, and every time there is a ceasefire they will strengthen their position. This has been the history. Why would we expect anything different?

The third option relates to the option that is now being proposed by this motion and the option that seems to be getting total support in the House this evening, that is to have our troops

that are vulnerable put in a safe area and to consider more seriously the use of air strikes.

In considering that option we have to remember that the Secretary-General of the United Nations under UN resolutions 824 and 836 authorized NATO to execute air strikes last Sunday. It has been four days since we have looked at that.

What message are we sending to the Serbs? What are they saying? To balance that, again history will show that air strikes without follow-on action with ground troops sometimes have the effect of strengthening the resolve of those people who are being struck with the air power.

The history of air power in the mountainous country in which we are involved in this operation has not been terribly successful. There are some difficulties with air strikes. They have been successful, but there are difficulties and we have to consider them.

There is another area that has not been discussed in any detail this evening. I want to bring it to the attention of the House. I request that the Minister of Foreign Affairs take into consideration that we have a three-organization naval blockade in the Adriatic Sea: the Western European Union Task Force, the Standing Naval Force Atlantic of which a Canadian commodore just relinquished command on April 14, and the Standing Naval Forces Mediterranean, all under the command of COMNAV-SOUTH. We need to look at that to see how it relates to the action that will stem from the discussions that will take place tomorrow.

It is with a certain amount of hesitation, I would have to admit, that I would be in favour of air strikes. It would be on the condition that there would be a summit involving the Russians, all NATO forces and all United Nations forces. Whatever we do in our negotiations tomorrow I know I do not have to remind the House in my presentation this evening that the peacekeepers we have there now are at risk. Any further involvement we may undertake as a result of the action that will be contemplated in the next few days will have to be seen as escalatory. We have to bear that in consideration.

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House tonight to speak on this very important issue. Certainly most of us in the House tonight would be doing more pleasant duties; I had no idea when I was elected some six short months ago that we would be here tonight as members of Parliament in the House making such a serious decision on such a serious issue.

Back in January I made my maiden speech on the topic of our role in Bosnia for two reasons. The first one was my personal history which goes back to that part of the world. My heritage is from that area and certainly I have concern for what is going on there.

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(1905)

Second, the important thing that we have not talked about very much in these debates is the history of the area. The history of this area will tell us that for the past 500 years we have had these types of flare-ups. We have had wars. We have had people murdering or massacring each other. There have been no good guys and there have been no bad guys in this particular area. It has been a fact of life that this has been a very volatile area of the world.

I had hoped when I gave that maiden speech back in January that there would not be a need for the type of debate that we hold tonight. Unfortunately that has not been the fact.

My concern tonight really is twofold. First and foremost I am very concerned for the safety of our Canadian people there. We as Canadians have a priority and we must protect. We must not allow some of the things that have gone on in that area to happen to our Canadian troops. Safety has to be a top priority.

Second, my concern is for the innocent victims, the innocent people. We have seen thousands of people who have been victims of this war.

I do not believe that we can ask the United Nations to keep peace in a part of the world where there simply is no peace to keep. I am not a supporter of violence. In fact I hate violence and I hate what it does to innocent people. We have drawn lines in the sand in this part of the world for some two years now. We keep backing up and keep drawing new lines in the sand. I believe we are at a point where we can no longer draw lines in the sand.

Threats and ultimatums simply have not worked. I believe that we must take a firmer stand, but I say this with mixed emotions. As I mentioned before I have relatives in this part of the world and I am obviously very concerned for their safety.

I do not believe we have any other option at this point in time. As a world community I believe that we have the obligation to protect innocent people wherever they are. Thousands of lives have been lost already and tens of thousands more are in immediate direct jeopardy.

About 20 minutes ago I received a letter from one of my constituents that I would like to quote at this time. She states: "As a wife of a peacekeeper who served in Croatia, I know what it is like to worry that my husband may not make it back to me. My husband served as a peacekeeper proudly for both his country and the United Nations. Every patrol he went out on he never knew if it would be his last one. I believe that the Serbians must be forced by whatever means to respect the safe zones established by the United Nations. However, for the sake of our soldiers let us be very clear in what we are doing. This is no longer peacekeeping. The soldiers who now operate under the

United Nations umbrella must be given a new, clear enforceable mandate or alternatively, they should be pulled out altogether and NATO should step in.

Dennis just told me a few minutes ago that he would be glad and have no problems throwing his combats on and going back. As his wife, and mother of his child, all I ask is that if you send him or his colleagues over, make his mandate clear and give him the resources and backing to make it back again".

As I mentioned before it is with mixed emotions that I stand in the House tonight. I support the idea of air strikes, not because I want to see punishment inflicted on anyone but because I want to see this horrific war stopped and stopped now.

I believe that the only option we have and the one we must choose is to pull back all Canadians to safe areas and then proceed with any and all efforts required to stop this bloodshed. Then and only then can we talk about peacekeeping and then and only then can our peacekeepers do the job for which we have become known throughout the world.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and the government for providing all members of Parliament with this opportunity of sharing our views to assist the government in making this difficult decision later tonight. I also want to thank the government for holding off on its cabinet decision until after it has heard input from members of Parliament.

(1910)

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, we support this initiative. Our effort is to make the support unanimous on this very critical issue.

I wish to pay tribute to the extraordinary and outstanding effort of our peacekeeping troops who have been serving in the area. Their contribution to the safety and security of innocent people has been nothing short of extraordinary. All of our hearts, our thoughts, our prayers go out to not only them but of course to their families back home as well.

It is fair to say that none of the parties involved are totally free of criticism, some by a long shot. The time has come in terms of the Serbian issue that we simply cannot allow a war to perpetuate that literally all now want stopped. This is now calling upon extraordinary measures to stop the brutality, the savagery, the horror, the unbelievable level of suffering particularly for the innocent civilians in the region.

There have been tens of thousands killed in this conflict. Tens of thousands have fled the area as refugees. Thousands of women have been systematically raped as an instrument of war. We hear of ethnic cleansing, the concentration camps, the massacres, the destruction of holy buildings.

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It has come to a point where we as Canadians can no longer stand passively by and say that this can continue. We have to stand up and be counted. With the United Nations now calling for support for air strikes, it is only right and proper we lend our support as a country to this initiative.

We must take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the safety of our troops in these areas. If the mandate changes and ground support is required to back up the air strikes in order to bring peace and a negotiated settlement eventually, then obviously the mandate for our troops has to be changed. It will be up to us to give them the equipment and support to allow them to do the job that must be done.

What turned the situation for us in the last few days was when we witnessed the television reports of the bombardment and shelling of homes, hospitals and churches which symbolized the ultimate in the savagery which has occurred in this region. For us now to stand passively by and allow this to continue is something none of us are prepared to tolerate any longer.

I applaud the government for its initiative. I appreciate that the government has solicited our views prior to cabinet making this very difficult decision. Let us only hope and pray we do not have to revisit this again in a few weeks when the situation may have even escalated beyond these unimaginable levels.

I am now going to allow my colleague from Regina to complete this time sequence.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity of participating in this debate. I also thank the government, the Official Opposition and the Reform Party for allowing us to participate in this most important debate.

Earlier today I spoke to a constituent, a mother whose son had just returned from serving in the former Yugoslavia. Her major point to me as her son related his experience to her was that we are no longer capable of playing a peacekeeper role. When the major parties are not in acceptance of our position and do not abide by ceasefires then we cannot play the role of the peacekeeper.

Our forces are not equipped to play the role of the peacemaker. Yet what has been requested of NATO is to change the UN role from one of peacekeeping to one of peacemaking. It seems the Serb forces have forced the United Nations and the world community into that position.

What has been going on has been a farce. We have now reached the point where a serious decision will have to be made. I appreciate that the cabinet will be meeting after this debate and I am certain that the cabinet will take into very serious consideration all the implications that are involved.

(1915)

Some suggest that this might be the opening to a new Vietnam type war. I have been in Bosnia as I have been in Croatia and I followed the events very closely over the years. I know the terrain in Bosnia is not conducive to the type of warfare that we think of. Certainly it is not like the deserts in the war in the Middle East. We remember as well the few handfuls of partisans who were able to hold down many German divisions during the second world war.

We cannot allow the rape and the killing to continue. I have been to the front and I have seen hospitals that have been attacked by scatter bombs. I have seen attacks on churches, I have seen attacks on civilians and the total disregard for innocent people, the total immorality.

As someone suggested to me, it is the devil's banquet that is going on there. We cannot tolerate it. We cannot just sit in front of our television sets and do nothing. I think air strikes have to be used.

Now the question is what happens to our Canadian forces? They are not equipped. They are out there almost as hostages. I believe what has to be done immediately is before the air strikes, the UN troops who are out there and ill-equipped to protect themselves have to be removed and moved into secure areas.

The other suggestion I would make is that under article 51 of the United Nations the state has the right to protect itself. We have a state here. We have the federation between the Croatians and the Muslim Bosnians. We have as well a co-confederation between this new state of Bosnia and Croatia. Why not lift the arms embargo and allow the Muslims and the Croatians to protect their own homes and their own cities? Surely that would make a lot of sense.

The blood of Canadian boys need not necessarily be spilled on the fields in Bosnia. Allow the Bosnian Muslims and Croats to protect their homes, to protect their villages. Use them as the ground troops, the ground forces necessary to protect the safe havens. Back them up with air power. That combination will create a level playing field.

I believe the Serbs will negotiate in good faith if there is a level playing field. They inherited the third largest or the fourth largest and most powerful army in Europe at the end of the cold war, the army of Yugoslavia. They inherited all that fire power. They are using that fire power against the Muslims and the Croats. It is not a level playing field.

The embargo on arms has helped the Serbs and has put the Croats and the Muslims at a disadvantage. Take away that disadvantage, allow a level playing field, allow the Muslim and the Croatian armies to protect their cities. Back them up with air power. In that way I believe we can be effective and we can see

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an end to this conflict because it will force the Serb forces to negotiate in good faith.

I believe there are some possibilities that should be explored which might prevent a full scale blood bath. In fact it is already there. We cannot prevent it, it is already occurring. However, perhaps we can bring it to a more speedy end if we lift the embargo and back up Muslim and Croat forces with air power. I believe some good will come out of that.

Ms. Susan Whelan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on a very serious issue, the Canadian position on Bosnia.

Our policy has been consistent. In our foreign policy handbook issued in May of 1993 we warned: "The Yugoslav question will take years to resolve. Canada must be prepared to commit resources and time to help rebuild new states and societies in this region".

(1920)

Before we can help rebuild we must first help to resolve this terrible tragic situation in Bosnia.

The issue before us tonight is the use of air support to protect safe areas in the former republic of Yugoslavia, a very delicate question and an issue that is fundamentally different for Canada than it is for that of the United States; as already mentioned, different since we are the ones with peacekeeping troops on the ground. If the United States administration had followed through on the Vance-Owen plan and committed U.S. ground troops as part of the UN force we may not be facing the question we are facing tonight.

On May 2, 1993 the U.S. pledged 25,000 troops. To this day the U.S. has no troops in the former republic of Yugoslavia.

Our troops have undertaken tremendously difficult UN assignments. In June 1992 they were deployed to Sarajevo to reopen and secure the airport so that the airlift of relief supplies could begin. In January and February of 1993 more Canadian troops were deployed temporarily to the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia to monitor developments in the border areas with Serbia. In April 1993 more Canadian troops were sent to Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia to ensure the presence of UN protection force in the besieged city.

We must insist that if they go forward with air strikes the same country that is so eager to do so will also bring ground troops to help. We must ensure that our strategy is sound to protect our Canadian peacekeepers in a very volatile situation.

It will be very difficult to suggest the removal of our troops with the knowledge of the brutality being suffered and the great need for humanitarian assistance.

We went to the former Yugoslavia to promote a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and to provide relief to its victims, innocent victims we know have endured unbelievable brutality and senseless death. We know that women have been raped, innocent children killed and both men and women senselessly tortured. In this day and age it is not tolerable to have this situation continuing.

We then face the question of how to resolve it. What is the next step? We must formulate a strategic plan, a plan that goes beyond one day, a plan that goes into the future, a plan that includes a settlement that can bring lasting peace to the region. The settlement must include the NATO forces, the Russians, the Serbs, the Bosnians, the Muslims and all other involved parties so we can end the history of hate that began over 1,000 years ago.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, the people of Quebec and Canada have agreed to send troops to the former Yugoslavia to keep the peace. Our troops are part of a 23,000 member UN force which has been making commendable efforts for months to restore peace to that European country. With dignity, courage and efficiency, our soldiers have carried out their mandate, a narrow and demanding mandate that they have managed to carry out effectively.

Our troops have saved lives. They have provided medical treatment. They have helped people escape the combat zone.

(1925)

After many months of hard work, an agreement was finally reached just recently, under which Bosnian Serbs accepted that six safe areas be defined. Sarajevo and Gorazde were among these areas.

We are forced to recognize that the Bosnian Serbs did not live up to their word, as this has been the case all too often over the past few months, and hostilities resumed. The city of Gorazde is currently under Bosnian Serb fire, its unarmed and defenceless population subjected to mortar shelling day in and day out. Blind fire is killing civilians, women and children. Just today, 28 people were killed in the shelling of a hospital.

We are facing a difficult situation. Will we look on helplessly, as brutal force, ill intent and duplicity triumph? Will we keep on worrying about what happens to our troops in the field? On the other hand, should we not help those who are proposing concerted, effective actions to force Bosnian Serbs to abide by the agreements concluded, to stop shelling and remove their guns from around guaranteed safe areas? I think we should. I think that the nations involved in the operations must send a clear message, an ultimatum, to the people who are shelling defenceless people, shelling civilians and children, shelling hospitals.

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The ultimatum must be clear and have a short deadline. It seems that is the only language which the soldiers operating under the colours of the Bosnian Serbs understand.

We must issue this ultimatum and if they do not comply, we must, as suggested, strike effectively and rapidly so that the weapons shooting civilians and defenceless people are destroyed and that the troops in the field are no longer subject to the bad faith of the Bosnian Serbs, who as we have seen believe that they do not have to keep their word.

We must issue this ultimatum and use the necessary force if the Bosnian Serbs do not comply, because it is a humanitarian duty. We are witnessing barbaric acts. We are witnessing frightful things. For a long time, we had not seen people in Europe being subjected to mortar fire, random shooting and bombing.

Canadians do not accept violence in their own country. Increasingly, they call for action, and I believe that they have the same attitude to situations of violence abroad directed against defenceless people.

Therefore it is a humanitarian duty to intervene. It also takes the lessons of history into account.

(1930)

If the League of Nations, a few years prior to 1939, had taken the necessary steps to stop Hitlerian madness in Germany, many millions of people might not have died in World War II.

History teaches us that if we do not do anything to stop massacres, injustice and unspeakable violence against civilians, against defenceless populations—if we witness all these horrible scenes without reacting—we will pay dearly for our inaction several years later. That is also what the news teaches us.

Staggering events are now occurring in Rwanda, Africa. We see people being slaughtered and ask ourselves whether we could have done something in the first hours of the crisis. I think the answer is yes. So I think we should intervene. We have a duty to intervene in the face of growing violence, of the return to Europe of barbarities it had not seen in 50 years.

It is with regret but also with a sense of duty that I think Canada should agree to implement the program proposed by the UN to NATO and, if the ultimatum is rejected by the Bosnian Serbs, to launch the air strikes required to make them live up to their word. In all honesty, I think it is our duty to show solidarity with our fellow human beings.

[*English*]

Ms. Roseanne Skoke (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, I rise in this House proud to be a Canadian, a Canadian with family residing in Croatia.

In resolving the issue before the House, the decision that we must make as a government is to determine what is in the best interests of our country Canada. When so doing we must consider what is in the interest of peace and security of the world.

On January 26 on debate in this honourable House I stated it is my position that Canada should withdraw its peacekeeping military forces from both Croatia and Bosnia. Bring the soldiers home. At that time my conclusion to withdraw the Canadian troops from the former Yugoslavia was predicated on the fact that there is no need for peacekeeping since there is no peace to keep.

However, due to the constantly changing circumstances on the ground it becomes extremely difficult and possibly meaningless to hold a fixed position among aspects of the wars in former Yugoslavia.

Today the original Canadian mandate to serve as peacekeepers and to deliver aid continues to be seriously compromised. The resistance of Bosnian Serbs to make peace has dictated the need for an urgent and a new direction for the role of Canada in defence and foreign affairs.

There is still no peace to keep and the war continues. As a nation of conscience we cannot tolerate the slaughter of innocent victims of genocide. We cannot trust the Serbs to negotiate peace. We cannot compromise our credibility as a nation.

This is the most difficult foreign policy question of our time. Since the end of World War II Canada has proudly stood as a leader in world affairs, stepping forward whenever international peace and security were threatened. However, the cold war has passed and the world we face today is much more complex.

The anticipated peace has given way to a resurgence and deep rooted and often brutal ethnic conflict. The situation in the former Yugoslavia is the most striking example of this problem.

(1935)

The position the Canadian government will take on this very important issue will undoubtedly have profound implications on, first, the safety of Canada's armed forces; second, the practice of future peacekeeping; third, the evolution of the United Nations and its future mandate; fourth, the role of NATO; and, fifth and most important, the future of democracy in the western world and peace and security in our world.

It is my position that Canada has no alternative but to support NATO's demand for air strikes. It is in the best interest of Canadians. It is in the best interest of the people of the former Yugoslavia. However in the negotiations with NATO I ask our government to consider carefully the role of Russia.

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NATO must take into consideration the position of Russia and consider carefully the consequences of Russia's position and the impact it will have on the resolution of the conflict. Russia at this time is the key to peace in this conflict. I trust that every effort will be made to ensure that Russia supports NATO's position regarding air strikes.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of National Defence for their immediate attention to this urgent matter. I pray the decisions made by our government will bring lasting peace to former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Madam Speaker, one of the greatest tragedies of our time has been the destruction of the dream of world peace by surging ethnic and national conflicts.

Naive as the vision may have been, when the iron curtain collapsed people around the world believed that in a history plagued with war and atrocities mankind would finally be on the path to a peaceful coexistence. Of course that has not proven to be the case.

Eighty years ago the world was plunged into World War I by events which took place in the same unfortunate lands that we are discussing tonight. The firestorm that resulted produced one of the saddest chapters in human history. We must ensure that we do not become entangled in that same web.

The difference today is that this civil war is being played out in real time for millions of television viewers. Almost every day grisly images of mangled children and slaughtered civilians are brought to our screens and in the newspapers. I picked up a copy of the *Globe and Mail* in which the mayor of Gorazde was reported as saying that Gorazde looked like a slaughterhouse. There were reports of scores of injured and dead lying as they fell amid the debris. An amateur radio operator yesterday was heard saying: "Wounded people are lying everywhere. The situation is desperate". Stories of atrocities abound and the term ethnic cleansing, despised by all civilized people since the days of Hitler, has re-entered our vocabulary.

The root cause of this age old conflict is ethnic intolerance and greed. This conflict reaches back into time across the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Turkish Empire and beyond. These are old quarrels being reignited; new battles over old grievances and old hatreds. The fighting has been bitter and indiscriminate.

Two years ago the United Nations dispatched a peacekeeping force into this savage war zone when the Red Cross and other humanitarian agencies were prevented from bringing relief to civilians. For the first time UN forces were deployed during a conflict to ease the plight of innocents. This too was accompa-

nied with television images and the terrible price being paid by the non-combatants: children maimed, orphans abandoned by their care givers, women brutally and systematically raped, marketplaces shelled, and old people lying in twisted heaps. Civilized people could not stand by and let this misery and indiscriminate slaughter continue.

Another article in the paper quoted the Bosnian prime minister in an interview saying: "NATO must take immediate and decisive action to prevent a mass slaughter in Gorazde".

(1940)

UN peacekeepers have done their best to bring food and medical supplies to these people, to provide some of the very basic things that human beings need to survive. They have done their jobs valiantly and in the face of great adversity. They have been blockaded and besieged. They have been threatened with deadly force, captured and held hostage, terrorized, shot at and shelled. They have performed with exceptional dedication, bringing hope to the victims of this war.

At every turn attempts to find a peaceful settlement have been thwarted by the Serbs. The lies, the deceit and the irresponsible actions of these people are an affront to civilized humanity. Truces have been declared, only to be broken within hours if not minutes. Ceasefires have been agreed to, only to be kept until the military manoeuvres were completed and then violated.

For peacekeeping to function there must be a wish for peace. For peace to be possible there must be some recognition by the combatants that war is a last resort, that the inhuman acts occasioned by war are repugnant, and that all other means must be exhausted before the final option of war is exercised. That does not exist in Bosnia.

We have at least one combatant in the struggle, Serbia, which sees that war as a means to achieve its national objectives. While no one has clean hands in this conflict, perhaps finally the other two protagonists, the Croats and the Muslims, have come to realize that continued arms struggle only brings disaster to their own people and that in the end nothing is really gained. The Serbs on the other hand are prosecuting a war of aggression that aims to subjugate and eliminate the other ethnic groups.

It is understandable in the face of all the horrible facts of this conflict and its capacity to seemingly go on forever that civilized nations are considering more drastic measures to put an end to it and that urgent calls are heard to bring more military force to bear.

The arrogant manner in which the Serbian leadership has conducted themselves, almost as if they hold themselves beyond accountability for their actions, and the utter disdain they obviously have for the United Nations demonstrate clearly their rather primeval attitude, like a bully with a chip on his shoulder. Serbian leaders have dared the UN to take action to stop them.

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No matter what our feelings, we must exercise wisdom and restraint. We must consider very carefully where we cross the line between humanitarian relief for the innocent civilians and becoming combatants ourselves. We must not justify the bully's actions by adopting his methods.

The use of air strikes around Sarajevo succeeded because it demonstrated the resolve of the UN to protect safe havens it had created. It was great for the people of that city, but it took the UN down a path of intervention in a civil war that could be dangerous. This was demonstrated when a British Harrier was shot down over Gorazde. The spiral of action and reaction can be very dangerous.

The request before NATO now is to expand the use of air strikes to cover other safe havens. This draws the UN and NATO even further into the web. When did we cross the line, becoming participants in this conflict rather than neutrals? We must ask ourselves whether we are inviting reprisals against our peacekeepers on the ground. At the very least there must be co-ordination between the Canadian forces and NATO to ensure that our troops, Canadian troops, are as safe as possible from reprisals.

Will these actions improve the ability of our troops to deliver aid or impair them? What will our response be if Canadian peacekeepers are attacked and suffer casualties? Is this the right action to take?

(1945)

Already the Canadian military is facing difficulties in sustaining operations at existing levels. If we agree to these air strikes we will be by extension committing ourselves to expanded troop commitments if the call goes out for them.

Indeed many questions are before the House. Can we, on the other hand, ignore the suffering brought on by the Serbian aggressors against the enclaves and the safe havens? The shelling of the hospitals, the careless endangering of innocent civilians is unacceptable.

The Serbs have shown a blatant disregard for international protest and concerns. They have repeatedly rebuffed the attempts of peace envoys, international delegations and truce negotiators to try to resolve this conflict. Almost at every step United Nations protection forces are hampered in their efforts to provide aid.

Even Russia, which has shown great reluctance to join the international chorus of protest, has angrily condemned recent actions by the Serbs.

I support the actions that we would take in support of these air strikes and I would ask every Canadian tonight at home as they are going to bed thinking of how safe we are in our country to spend a few moments and think about our Canadian peacekeep-

ers who are doing a tremendous job for the entire world and say a few words for them.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the minister of defence and veterans affairs for bringing this resolution forward tonight to be debated and to say to Canadians that we again in this House are seeing democracy working.

We also see the laying aside of partisan politics as we debate the very important issue that hopefully will resolve some terrible situations that abound in the world. I want to congratulate our colleagues who have spoken earlier on this matter.

Originally today I was going to go to my riding. The finance committee is meeting there tomorrow morning. I was going to appear before that but when I saw that this situation was coming here tonight, the resolution and the emergency debate, I felt that having served some time involved with matters of defence with a lot of great people on all sides of this House, I should be here to take part in this very important issue that we are dealing with.

We watch with horror the situation that has developed in Bosnia over the past number of years and this is now truly a global village because every night the true extent of what is happening around the world is brought into our homes. It shows us just how thin the veneer of civilization is. The basic humanity in civilization which we all take for granted has been stripped away and we are left with the barbarous acts perpetrated on people by their fellow human beings.

Unfortunately the horror of these events in what was once known as the cockpit of Europe, an area of conflict through the centuries, shows that we must always be vigilant to ensure that we remain at the level that we think we have attained. Reality dictates that our society must always remain on guard to see that the things we hold as basic rights of humanity and citizenship remain in tact.

When communism died we felt that a better world would take its place. I and others were told the other day by the vice-president of Bosnia that when that happened there was a vacuum left, that perhaps something else could have happened. Perhaps democracy and those who know democracy could have been in these places to fill that vacuum by teaching people the ways of democracy. That did not happen. Ancient hatreds and ethnic conflicts have come to the forefront and have led us to these situations.

(1950)

Canada has for many years enjoyed an enviable reputation as a peacekeeper. Of course we all are concerned for the safety of our troops wherever they may be. What we always have to remember also is that Canada, which has gained this reputation as a peacekeeper, has the capabilities and has been involved in other types of military actions. We stood second to no one in this in two world wars and in the Korean war. We never backed away from anything. We are not a military country. That is not what

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we were built on. When we were asked to go, no one ever reneged on that.

Canadians do not go around bragging very much about their military prowess. Any time Canadians were asked to be part of a conflict that was in the interests of the world, we were there. Now we are saying should we in other nations change our role from peacekeeping to that other mode. This would entail a new set of priorities and actions.

We surely cannot tolerate scenes any more like those we saw a few days ago when Canadians were held hostage, which has been mentioned here tonight. We have a saying on the east coast and it is time to use that saying. We either have to fish or cut bait. We have come to that situation in the country we are talking about here tonight. As unpalatable as it may be, if we are going to be involved we may have to become involved in a different manner, one which may see young men and women from Canada involved in these military operations which I speak about. That may be the choice facing this House.

The request for more air strikes according to military experts should be supported by more people on the ground. According to people who have long military careers this is the way these things are most effective.

Are members of the United Nations, members of NATO prepared to do this? The topic has been debated here this evening on what happened after the bombings, after the air strikes at Sarajevo. We did not really go into it because they were successful. It is hoped that if this has to take place, if we have to go to the line, to the limit, cooler heads will prevail and those people involved once again will know that the United Nations and NATO mean business and we are not going to see these atrocities go any further.

I say to all members of the House right here tonight that we stand on the threshold at a pivotal time in our history, the history of the world. What the United Nations and we the representatives of the people here in Canada decide over the next few days, indeed probably over the next few hours, will set a tone for world affairs for years and decades to come.

I fully agree with the proposal put forward by the ministers and from what I hear in the House tonight everyone else does also. I believe we have to show these people, as someone said earlier, who are thumbing their noses at the rest of the world that the allied countries in the United Nations and in NATO mean business, that we are there to stop these atrocities.

If air strikes have to be used, then we must be prepared to go along with that. I am sure that tomorrow morning at the NATO meetings a lot of negotiating, a lot of thought will go into the final decision.

(1955)

Madam Speaker and members of the House, I speak to those involved in the negotiations and those on the ground, in the air and on the sea in that country. I hope that by our decision here tonight we will help to bring this terrible conflict to an end.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): I rise this evening as member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, which is represented in Bosnia by militiamen of the Fusiliers du Saint-Laurent, and I also speak on behalf of one of the 15 Canadians who were held as hostages last week.

These developments influence our action somewhat because this conflict is not a black and white issue. It is a grey area and the decision to be made is complex and difficult. However, we must take our responsibilities and do what is necessary.

I would like to quote a comment I made in my speech on the same issue, on January 25, 1994. I said: "It is important for our operations to contribute directly to resolving the crisis and above all to avoid perpetuating the current imbroglio."

In fact, one wonders whether the intervention in Sarajevo was strong enough. We targeted only one of the safe areas and since then the problem has spread to another of those areas, and this could go on and on.

We realize that a more comprehensive solution is necessary. Also, we must not lose sight of the objective of the intervention, which is to ensure peace in Bosnia.

Names such as Bihac, Gorazde, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Tuzla, and Zepa are not part of our daily vocabulary. Yet, these names have become synonymous with dying children, and adults running in the streets to stay alive. All these images trigger a common reaction.

It is important to adopt a position which will lead to a complete and permanent solution. To that end, certain essential elements must be taken into account. The first one is the need of a consensus among nations. I think that if we act without first enlisting Russia's support regarding a possible intervention, we will repeat the mistake made in World War One, something which would be very costly.

So it is very important to make representations within the Security Council and at the UN and ensure that the Russians will be at the table and will take part in the process. I think they have realized that the behaviour of the Bosnian Serbs is unacceptable. I think they see a certain betrayal of their commitments as a result of this situation, and we can only hope that they will join in the consensus that seems to be developing here.

It seems that another important point is that we should send a clear message to the Bosnian Serbs because so far, commitments and promises have meant absolutely nothing to them, since there was not always a concerted effort to enforce these agreements.

Foreign Affairs

We have seen a kind of behaviour that in some cases does not even observe the normal rules of war. When we see pictures of people shooting at hospitals, and when we see shells going through hospital walls, I think we have reached the point that something has to be done to deal with the situation once and for all.

In the circumstances, I was referring to a consensus in public opinion, a clear message to the Bosnians—but I think it is also important to have diplomatic initiatives by the major powers to have a clear indication of where we are going and of the main participants in this process. The point is that if we merely resort to air strikes without providing for the next phase, we will only move the problem somewhere else, and we must avoid escalating the conflict.

(2000)

These are all very important considerations. I think we must act responsibly on this conflict, but I am also concerned about the security of our troops. I think it is important to minimize the risk to the safety of our troops, although as the Minister of Foreign Affairs said on April 14, and I quote: “It is inherent in their responsibilities and their duty as soldiers to risk their lives”. We agree with this statement, that to take risks in a war situation is part and parcel of a soldier’s job, role and commitment; on the other hand, we must do our utmost to avoid casualties.

In my view, if we are to put the odds on our side, we must take part in strategic planning, avoid a situation where Canadian and Quebec soldiers would become the pawns of unacceptable decisions, the victims of errors that could have been avoided. To this aim, the choice of strategic targets must contain certain minimum guarantees so that we do not pick targets which should not be attacked and would not help solve the crisis, in any case.

When dealing with a problem such as this one, we know that it is dangerous to intervene, and that some soldiers’ lives will be on the line. On the other hand, I think that there is a lesson to be learned from last week’s hostage-taking, which ended well, but could have gone terribly wrong. Admittedly, this incident was to some extent the result of the UN’s procrastination. If we let things drag on, we will face other similar situations, other times when our soldiers’ lives will really be threatened. It would be unexcusable if it were to happen by pure negligence, for the simple reason that we did not act responsibly.

I think that it is important that the consensus reached by the Parliament be taken into consideration by the Cabinet and that, with the same caution we feel in this House, it makes sure that

any action taken will be decisive and will protect the lives of our troops as much as possible.

Finally, I would like to thank the Canadian peacekeepers, especially those from my riding who volunteered for these peacekeeping missions all over the world. I think that we can never thank them enough. They are aware of the inherent dangers of their job, but I believe that they have the right to expect sound policy direction that gives due regard to the importance of human lives, and to the importance of solving this crisis, which is the result of many years of ethnic hatred. It is important to find a political solution which will put an end, once and for all, to this devastating conflict.

[English]

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, as we stand in the House tonight we have a lot to be thankful for. We have freedom of speech, a free country. We have food in Canada. We have running water. We have toilets. We have hospitals with good medical people. Tonight we are going to talk about people who have very few if any of those things.

I want to compliment the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and the government for bringing this business before the House tonight. I also want to compliment the other parties for agreeing with it and for participating the way they have. Foreign affairs of this nature should not be partisan. We as Canadians should be pulling together on issues like this where great humanitarian values are involved.

(2005)

The situation in the former Yugoslavia is something we never thought we would see in the 20th century, certainly not in the middle of Europe. But it is there and we have to face up to it.

We are dealing with a Serbian group who cannot keep agreements. They are people who hold Canadian peacekeepers hostage. That is something this country cannot stand for under any conditions. The world cannot stand by and allow this to continue.

Over the years foreign affairs have been very much a contest among parties in this House but this one certainly should not. We have to ask ourselves: What price do we pay for freedom? What price do we pay to promote decency in the world? What price do we pay for respect? The answer of course is that no amount of money will buy them. They have to be earned and Canadians have been earning these qualities over the years.

We must look at history from where we stand tonight. Henry Ford once said that history is a lot of bunk. That is one of the most horrible contributions that could possibly be given to the record of the human race.

Foreign Affairs

Tonight we must take into consideration why during the thirties the League of Nations failed. It failed because nobody would support it. Nobody would stand up for the causes of freedom and for the rights of people in other countries. There was no unity within the world to promote those qualities.

World War II did not just happen; we drifted into it because we did not do anything. We know what happened in World War I. It was a Serb who shot a prince and from there we went into international conflict in very short order.

Today there are over 60 hotspots in the world. More than 20 of them are active conflicts today. This is a time to learn from history, not to call it a lot of bunk, not to fall into the same old rut we have fallen into before as a society.

Canadians have participated all around the world. The Canadian forces have made their mark and made their name and they have taken the qualities of Canadian nationhood with them. We thank them for that.

Tonight the Muslims, the Croatians and the Serbs are in turmoil. Let us ask why. They are in turmoil because of that old-fashioned, centuries old term hatred. We talk about all the diseases. No other disease creates so many problems for humanity as hatred. No aggressor can be allowed to get away with what is going on in Bosnia tonight, or tomorrow, or yesterday.

Human rights and the decency of mankind is important to Canada and to every free civilized nation. We cannot stand by and allow slaughter to go on. We cannot stand by and allow rape to occur in that country.

Peacekeeping versus peacemaking. If we are going to ask our Canadian forces to go abroad into these difficult situations, then I say with all sincerity it is up to this Parliament of Canada to provide them with the right equipment to do so and the good training which they have had over the years.

(2010)

Let us get out there and support them in real terms and not just with rhetoric from time to time. Our military community in Canada has led the way on many great days for this nation over the years of Canadian history and it will continue to do so in the future. We in this Parliament and Canadians from every part of this nation must give them our utmost support.

As we stand here tonight we can look upon this as a test case. Do we allow the UN to become weakened? Do we allow the western world to become divided? Do we not stand up and be counted? Do we drift and send a message out there to the despots and dictators of this world that there is not enough cohesiveness in today's world among the nations of the free world to put a stop to some of these atrocities?

If we allow that message to go out there we will not have more than 20 hot spots around this world, we will have many, many more because they will feel they will get away with it.

We have to stand up and be counted as a nation and Europe itself must stand up and be counted as a group of nations. I think it is a fair criticism tonight that many Europeans did not come forward soon enough and that Canada has played a role in every UN operation since day one. We need not be ashamed of our record in any way whatsoever. We must be proud of it, but if we are going there we want every nation pulling their weight.

Yes, NATO in this case is a UN support and it should not be looked upon by any nations as anything else but a support to the UN today. Yes, Russia should come on board with the rest of the free world on this one because this too can affect it. You cannot close your eyes and hope that it is going to go away. We cannot send our troops lightly armed into a peacekeeping operation that virtually becomes the middle of a war zone.

We have to make certain to take every measure for their safety. NATO will do its part.

Hatred is older than the hills but it is creating and will continue to create problems for mankind. It is the way we handle these that counts. We have to handle the bullies and the cowards of this world in the only way that they understand.

Canada is respected around the world. We cannot lose that respect because many have paid a big price to earn it. They have paid a big price to pave the way for nationhood in this country and it is that price that I guess we are going to have to continue to pay. Let us never fail to support those soldiers out there in the field and those who are in training. This Parliament must resolve to support them. Our Canadian soldiers will do their jobs but we as the Canadian representatives in the Parliament of Canada must do ours by supporting them in real terms.

Canada has been a nation that has played a major part in the founding of the United Nations. Canada has played a major role in the founding of NATO.

Madam Speaker, you are giving me my signal. I will give you my closing remarks. Today, these two institutions are serving mankind well. Let us remain as a team. Let us, as a responsible nation in the free world, pull the other countries together and work with them to bring peace to those troubled spots and to bring decency and respect and decent living again to those poor people in the former Yugoslavia.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your patience.

(2015)

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate tonight although I must say I do so with minimal enthusiasm. This is the end of a rather long personal road for me.

Foreign Affairs

I have always opposed the intervention by Canada or Canada's allies in other people's wars but as of this time I have had to change my outlook. Enough is enough.

Time after time in my lifetime the western world has stood by compromised, temporized and allowed large numbers of people to be butchered. We have the situation now in Gorazde in which thousands of people are in imminent danger of death unless somebody moves in from outside and helps them.

At this stage there is only one way that can be done and that is with air strikes. There is no possibility on earth of getting ground troops from anywhere into that area in time to help those people.

I am not talking geopolitics here. I am talking humanitarian efforts because those people will die en masse. There is no question about it if the world does not do something. It has been said many times here tonight that air strikes alone cannot solve the problems in Bosnia. That is true but if they are executed immediately they can save the people of Gorazde and that is what counts.

There is no time for an ultimatum. There is no time for further discussions. The necessary mechanics are already in place. Warnings are not an option. Warnings have been given again and again and they are no longer taken seriously. Air strikes have to be not only immediate but unrelenting. Anything that moves, tanks, field artillery, has to be taken out. Bridges have to be taken down. Any kind of ammunition or field depot, anything that helps the Serbian war effort, should be fair game in the Gorazde area.

If that is done, if you punish them hard enough and fast enough they, being normal human beings in some ways, will have a self-protective instinct. They will move back. The problem with this scenario is that there is also no time to pull out our troops. If we are going to save Gorazde it has to be done now. Our people cannot be taken to safe haven before the air strikes are made.

Our field commanders on the ground must have the freedom to do whatever they deem necessary to get our people out of harm's way. If air strikes are executed we have to face as a country and as a Parliament the fact there probably will be Canadian casualties. It is inevitable and this is a responsibility that the government with the support of apparently almost everyone on the opposition side has to face up to.

We have all been briefed at great length on the inhospitable terrain in that country for movement of troops, for normal military manoeuvring. Even if we had large numbers of troops in there we would still need the air strikes.

A lot of people I have spoken to who are military people would agree that it does not necessarily follow that if we escalate the war we must have hundreds of thousands of foreign troops in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Muslims are there already. They have been effectively disarmed by the embargo that we have imposed supposedly against all of Yugoslavia. This has really had a serious effect only on the people of Bosnia. They are the victims of this. The Serbs one way or another have continued to get arms. I presume they are able to make them because they have a certain amount of industry intact. They have not had the war rolling back and forth across their part of the country for two years. They are getting them from elsewhere, they have to be.

(2020)

Let us lift the embargo. I think this is what the Bosnia Muslims want. It would mean that we could help these people without committing large numbers of western troops. Give them a chance to die with dignity. They are dying anyway and they will continue to die by the tens, perhaps the hundreds of thousands if we do not give them the chance to help themselves.

I would urge, I would beg the government to take this to the UN, take off the embargo. Give these poor devils a chance.

I notice that on this I am in complete agreement with the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I doubt if there is anyone in North America with whom I have larger degrees of political differences and I heartily concur with this. Let the Bosnian Muslims have a chance to defend themselves.

First and foremost save the people of Gorazde. Stop making idle threats. Stop giving ultimatums. Make the air strikes and make them before it is too late.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, tonight members of Parliament have been asked to comment on a very important and sensitive matter affecting the entire world.

The aggressions in Bosnia—Hercegovina continue to escalate and now the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has asked Canada and others to consider, and the operative word according to the minister is consider, the advisability of further air strikes.

I think all members are very grateful that the government has reserved this decision until it consulted with the House. Tomorrow decisions will be made.

Why are we doing this? An Ottawa *Citizen* headline reads: "Make Serbs Pay Price Says U.S.". We have read these headlines for months and months and the issues here are issues of credibility in terms of making our decision, credibility of the UN and whether it has taken appropriate action on a timely basis; credibility of NATO and our NATO allies and whether peacekeeping versus peacemaking has been properly addressed here.

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Many members have said often in this House that we have no peace in Bosnia and therefore how can we be peacekeepers. Our Canadian troops are trained and equipped as peacekeepers, not peacemakers.

As the minister mentioned earlier in the House, on April 18 the UN Secretary-General wrote to Manfred Woerner, the Secretary General of NATO, requesting that the arrangement to protect Sarajevo, a safe area, be extended to five additional areas, being Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa, Tuzla and Bihac.

Gorazde, which is the area in which this aggression is now taking place, is very close to the Serbian border, only a matter of 15 or 20 kilometres. Where are the Canadian troops? I want to raise this because the previous speaker possibly raised some concerns beyond the level which they should be at this time.

(2025)

Canadian troops are near the Croatian town of Gradacac. The Princess Patricia Calgary Light Infantry is there. We also have troops in the Bosnian town of Visoko, some 30 kilometres northwest of Sarajevo. Right now our Canadian troops are not in grave danger as a result of the present aggressions in and around Gorazde. We do however have one officer, Major Stogran, in the Gorazde area. His movements at this time are restricted.

Canadians have serious fears. Those fears have been growing over the weeks and months. We all remember when some of our Canadian peacekeepers were lined up in a mock firing squad fashion. We also know the Serbs took some of our brave Canadian peacekeepers hostage.

The Bosnian Serbs have not shown any signs of good faith at any point during this period of aggression, despite the international efforts to stop these atrocities against innocent people. The Serbs have in fact demonstrated solely a thirst to kill.

Before I came into the House this evening I asked for the latest reports and they indicate that the Serbs have taken Gorazde. Gorazde has fallen. There is house to house combat. I am sorry to say that tomorrow we will likely read more statistics about the carnage, atrocities and death of innocent people in that Bosnian city.

Our fears as Canadians are also prompted by the fact that we know what air strikes can do. There were air strikes in Sarajevo, but the difference there was that there were ground troops to support the air strikes. The situation in Gorazde is not as secure. There is not the same kind of protection of ground troops, of those people.

There have been many estimates of how many people have died in this conflict. Now I am told that the number is somewhere over 100,000 people who have lost their lives.

Tonight I asked defence officials how many people were in Gorazde, how many Muslims were there in this so-called safe area? We do not know how many people are there. All we know is people have been going to safe areas in droves and no one can possibly keep track. Estimates have been that in the range of 45,000 Muslims may be in Gorazde, but nobody knows.

What now? The UN, the Americans and most other partners in the UN coalition have basically said that we need the right to go forward with these strikes. How would they happen? They have the ability. There are over 100 fighter aircraft ready to take part in these strikes. They are in Italy. They are on aircraft carriers, et cetera.

I have taken the time to consult with as many of my colleagues as I could to find out what the sense was. There was unanimity among all members and all parties, a serious concern for the safety of our courageous troops in Bosnia.

I asked the minister's staff if I could have a copy of his speech. I want to repeat the minister's concern about Canadian troops because it is very important. Earlier today when he commenced his speech he said: "We have known from the start that deploying forces in the former Yugoslavia meant exposing our personnel to some risk. This concern has been with us since the beginning of the mission. The situation in Srebrenica, as well as the incident last week when 16 members of the Canadian forces were detained by Bosnian Serbs, reminded us that the risks were real". He also said: "As the UN and NATO contemplate more vigorous action the safety of our troops will continue to be a key consideration for the Canadian government".

It is critically important for Canadians to understand that the government, the Official Opposition and the Reform Party have all stated a sincere interest in protecting the interests of our Canadian troops.

(2030)

It is time to stop the senseless slaughter and the atrocities. We do not need another Vietnam in our world. We need peace and stability. We need international co-operation. We need Canada to stand together with pride and with resolve with its UN partners. We need to support our allies and accept the resolution of the Secretary-General to consider air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Péloquin (Brome—Missisquoi): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to take part in the special debate on the situation in Bosnia not only as the member for Brome—Missisquoi, but also and most of all, as a human being. It is impossible not to be outraged when one sees atrocities like those that have been perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia during the last few months. We all agree that the situation cannot go on and that we must take steps to put an end to those horrors.

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How then can we explain why Canada and the international community have let that conflict deteriorate to the point where Bosnia is now the scene of such savage and barbaric acts? The present situation did not appear overnight in Bosnia. It has evolved steadily since the beginning of the conflict while the international community merely observed from a distance.

In the beginning, we were puzzled by the situation in the former Yugoslavia, but there was no cause to send in troops yet. Later on, rumours of ethnic cleansing made the conflict much more disturbing. But there again, we preferred diplomatic disincentives and negotiations. Afterwards, the bombing of Sarajevo raised the confrontation to an unacceptable level of unwarranted violence but still the UN forces refrained from launching a massive intervention.

The international community's hesitation and procrastination are the reason why we have reached a situation which is totally unacceptable in a so-called civilized world. In fact, I find the recent actions of the Serbian forces particularly revolting. How can we let these people bomb residential areas and hospitals? How can we still claim to try to solve this conflict by sending in peacekeeping forces and advocating negotiations? After all, Serbs showed long ago what little respect they have for the agreements they sign. In fact, as the leader of the opposition said earlier, they failed to keep their word 57 times in less than a month. I cannot see how we would still want to negotiate with such hypocrites.

Peacekeeping troops in Bosnia are no longer safe. The UN Security Council must order air strikes on Serbian strongholds. It must also send ground troops to help our peacekeepers in their efforts to establish peace in that country. We can no longer be content with observing from a distance without reacting. Serbs have had every possible opportunity to prove their good faith, and each time they turned around to attack civilian populations even more viciously. The lives of hundreds of young children and old people have been needlessly sacrificed.

Canada's position must be very clear. We must let the whole world know that our country is prepared to take the necessary measures to put an end to that conflict. So far, peacekeeping forces may have managed to save lives, but their current mandate is too restrictive to allow them to continue to do so effectively. Indeed, the attitude displayed by Serbian forces compels us to consider large-scale operations. We can no longer give Serbs the benefit of the doubt, for too many human lives have already been sacrificed because of our excessive tolerance.

(2035)

The destruction of Sarajevo was not enough to convince us of the need for a strong military intervention. Today, it is the city of Gorazde that is paying the price.

The American and Russian presidents have agreed to hold a summit on this issue in the next month. How many schools and hospitals will Serbian troops destroy during that period? Yesterday again, 28 people died after the hospital in Gorazde was bombed. We must therefore immediately put pressure on those countries, because it is urgent for the innocent victims of this conflict.

We just learned from a press report that one of the 10 speakers invited to address the opening of a Security Council session confirmed that the Bosnian Serb offensive in Gorazde is now going from house to house. That is horrible.

In closing, I would like to remind the government that, beyond our political differences, we as parliamentarians of a peaceful country must show a powerful solidarity in this House when the time comes to save human lives.

I am convinced that the people of Quebec and Canada will support us without reservation in our effort. It is no longer time for discussion; we must now act by hammering the Serbian positions and forcing them if necessary to honestly negotiate an agreement that will end this conflict which has already gone on too long.

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Madam Speaker, I rise with some sadness this evening after hearing the news as members of the caucus and of the House of Commons. Events have taken place in a part of the world where people for the first time know the inhuman deeds of the belligerents.

[English]

I must confess to the House that I was not one of those who spoke in the previous debate with respect to the question of our troops in Bosnia but I feel compelled for a variety of reasons to put forward the best I can, as eloquently as I can, in as very quick a time as I can, since many of the members in the House of Commons will know that very few of us had a chance really to prepare for lofty speeches. Madam Speaker, what you see is what you get. It is the heart feeling, the mind feeling and the reaction to what has taken place in a part of the world which none of us in contemporary times will forget.

At the age of 16 I had the privilege of visiting Yugoslavia with my godparents. I do not think it is important to suggest what their background or their ethnic background may have been. The reality is that those are villages and places that I once saw. I see the people in those places living in such insufferable conditions of inhumanity. This would not be the case if it were not for Serbian aggression.

It seems to me that the arguments that have been put forward suggest that we may not want to attack the Serbs because there is some historical reticence on our behalf, that the Balkans has always been a hot place on this planet, that every time there has been a war it has always been very difficult and thousands if not

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millions of people have suffered. That historical excuse this evening is simply not acceptable.

It has been suggested that the Wehrmacht army of the second world war, the Nazis, as they invaded Yugoslavia or what was then considered Serbia was not able to completely rid itself of the opposition, that is the Serbian army. I must confess the Nazis were the aggressors and not the Serbs.

(2040)

In April 1994 the Serbian army in Bosnia is indeed the aggressor. They are indeed the belligerents. There may be other options. I believe there is only one option at our disposal as a country. That is to provide some kind of sanity to the very difficult and senseless thing which is happening right now in Gorazde.

Several weeks ago I had the opportunity along with many members of the House of Commons of seeing the very moving film "Schindler's List". That movie depicted an atrocity which took place because good people stood by and did nothing, all those except Oscar Schindler. Perhaps there are several Oscar Schindlers in Canada this evening. Perhaps there are Oscar Schindlers around the world. Ultimately however the difficulty this issue presents us cannot be ignored and cannot be taken in isolation of what has happened historically.

In 1941 we knew full well what was happening in Warsaw. We saw the ghettoization of the Jewish people. We saw them confined to an area where they would not be harmed, but at least they were in a place where they would not affect anyone else. It is interesting how history has so many parallels.

We have an obligation not to posterity, not to history but to humanity in our time. Evil does prevail when good people stand by and do nothing.

We may be on the cusp of a very difficult if not explosive situation if we do not take into context that it is the Muslim people, particularly the Bosnian Muslim people who are the victims of this outrage.

We can talk about the UN not performing up to scratch. We can talk about the United Nations not having done its homework in terms of protecting these people, removing arms as so many colleagues have talked of and leaving these people defenceless in the promise they would be given a safe haven. That is fine and I accept those. That is there for the record, but we now have a chance to act.

We realize the Canadian troops may be in some difficulty. But let us think about the Muslim blood which has been shed in that part of the world. Those people have shown such patience in the face of such outrageous angst and hatred. They find themselves in the position of seeing more of the people who share their fate decimated.

We can make the parallels with Kuwait and say: "We shouldn't do in Sarajevo, we shouldn't do in Bosnia, we shouldn't do in Gorazde what we did in Iraq". There is no such thing as bad publicity in this case. We know the situation and the suffering is very real. We have an obligation to address that suffering and put aside the platitudes and the rhetoric.

I am a peaceful person but on this situation as a peaceful member of this government I am so moved as to ensure that dignity and respect for people's lives is well represented by this country, Canada. We have an obligation. It is my hope we live up to it.

[*Translation*]

We must not forget the lessons of history. We must act for some fundamental reasons and these are to save lives when possible. We have already invested time and weapons; we have supported the United Nations. More must be done to protect these people.

[*English*]

If I were standing here this evening with the many friends of the Muslim community they would say to me: "God be with you, inch'allah". I say to the ministers this evening, your decision is is going to be a difficult one. Whatever decision you make, I as a member of Parliament representing thousands of people, support you in the test you now have to confront.

(2045)

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I want to concur with colleagues on both sides of the House that this is not an occasion one looks forward to. We know that events have transpired not only over the past few hours but, as we have been made aware tonight, over many weeks. In fact if we look back far enough, it has been over years and decades. We are dealing with an area of the world that has been the stage for much suffering, much violence and much international tension.

I want to thank members of the other two parties, the Liberal Party and the Bloc, for co-operating and allowing all members to speak in this debate before serious decisions are made in the upcoming hours. It brings credibility and strength to Parliament to know that representatives of the people can take part in a debate on a situation that affects all nations of the world. Several hundreds of Canadian peacekeepers are directly affected by the violence in the former Yugoslavia.

I also want to thank the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs whom I respect for being patient. They have been sitting here and listening to our concerns. I am pleased they have expressed to us that they will take these thoughts and expressions into consideration as they deliberate in cabinet and make decisions regarding air strikes that may be under way in the very near future.

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I was wondering as I sat here what Canadians were thinking about tonight as they sense there are difficult decisions to be made by our government and by other members of the United Nations with regard to the former Yugoslavia. I am sure they have watched the television newscasts at night and have been angered, shocked and hurt as they saw the violence, the ruthlessness and the needless bloodshed of innocent people in the former Yugoslavia. They have seen the unfairness of one side in a dispute that seems to have no lack of arms and another side that seems to be unable to defend itself and no mercy being shown.

I am sure Canadians tonight are very concerned about Canadian troops currently serving in a peacekeeping role, what may seem like an impossible role in the former Yugoslavia. We certainly join with other members tonight in expressing concern for our Canadian peacekeepers in this troubled area. We also want to see wise decisions made that have their best interests at heart.

With regard to the NATO air strikes, we have to consider what options are available. We could probably consider three options. As Canadians we could say: "Let us go with NATO air strikes, withdraw our troops, get them out of the country and see what happens". This would likely mean a greater chance of preventing the injury or killing of Canadian peacekeepers. It may add to the cost in human lives and suffering in the Bosnian Muslim community.

We could say that we disagree with NATO air strikes on the whole. Then we would have the problem of seeing ongoing violence and the ongoing slaying of innocent people. We also would have to realize that we have not solved the problem of what we are going to do with our peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia.

Another option would be to support NATO air strikes but perhaps initiate a circling of the wagons. In other words we could support air strikes but do all we could to protect our own peacekeepers serving in the dangerous area around Gorazde and in other areas where there is potential violence and danger to Canadians. We want to prevent, if we can, the chances of further kidnappings of Canadian peacekeepers in the area.

I sensed from other members in the House, and I share the opinion, that the third alternative is perhaps the best alternative. Yes, if it is the decision of our fellow United Nation members and if we have full input into the decision making process, we should support air strikes as a means to bring an end to foolish and senseless bloodshed.

(2050)

Also, we need to take whatever steps we can to make sure that our own peacekeepers have the most available and complete means of protection possible to them. We have to facilitate their protection. We have to facilitate a plan and a program for peace

in this war-torn area. I do not believe that we should abandon our Canadian peacekeepers at any price because the United Nations and NATO make the decision that we must initiate air strikes in this war zone.

It is important that we consult with our United Nations partners and our NATO partners to make sure that if we escalate the military action in this region, we do not bear an unfair brunt of the load. As members know, Canada has an excellent peacekeeping reputation. We have put many of our peacekeepers into several hot spots over the past few decades. We are proud of the reputation that Canadian peacekeepers have built for themselves and the tradition they have earned.

It is important that if we are going to continue to be involved in this war-torn area, other nations that may also support air strikes but that do not have the possibility of paying a human price for support of that action be prepared to get involved in the conflict and be prepared to be an instrument for peace and an end to the foolish and senseless slaying of human lives.

We have to be realistic and realize that there is a danger that some Canadian peacekeepers will be hurt or killed regardless of what steps we take. There is no guarantee whether we commit to air strikes or not that we will not see the potential danger for some of our troops in this area.

We also have to be concerned about the long term situation in that region and realize that we are seeing mass murder of innocent people who are unable to protect themselves. It is incumbent upon us as citizens of the world to be part of the solution and propose steps we can take to ensure that the defenceless Bosnians have some capacity to defend themselves and that we impose some pressure on the aggressing Serbs to convince them to come to their senses and cease to continue this needless slaughter.

With our international status and a good conscience, we must not totally abandon innocent Bosnian citizens. We could look back and probably see a lot of mistakes that all parties including Canada perhaps may have made. We can second guess ourselves but we have come to the point where second guessing is not going to provide solutions. We have come to a point of reality where we must make hard decisions.

While we possibly have not put forward guidelines and, as someone mentioned previously, drawn lines not just in the sand but lines written in stone, if we made more direct moves as a result of bad decisions made by the aggressors in that area, we would not have reached the point that we have reached tonight. It has happened and therefore we have to press on to try to improve the world situation.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali originally called for a controlled strike solely on artillery posts, tanks and mortar positions. We understand that President Clinton has indicated that the strike could incorporate elements of retaliation against Serb

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aggression and we understand that NATO officials perhaps have even suggested a stronger agenda.

If we are going to act we need to be decisive and we need to make these actions make a difference. The last thing we want to do is just scratch a festering wound and aggravate it rather than perhaps do some deeper cutting in the situation, make a difference, provide a clean cut that is possible to heal and bring peace to a very hurting part of the world.

These are the thoughts that are going through Canadians' minds tonight as they have been hearing the newscasts and contemplating what the situation is in this area and what our response should be. I believe they do want us to protect our troops. I believe they do want us to help the innocent Bosnians. I do believe they want to promote peace through proactive strikes with the least bloodshed possible.

(2055)

While bombing may be our only remaining option, let us only agree to the NATO strikes if we can establish the resolve and dedication to a real and defined plan. We must also consider a contingency plan in case no heed is taken of our action and the violence continues.

When we step into the water we have to be prepared to get wet. We have to be prepared to ford through some fairly deep waters if we are going to accomplish the goal we intend to achieve.

Again I thank government members for this opportunity to speak. I thank them for their respect for Parliament in allowing Parliament to have a part in the decision making process. I wish them wisdom and Godspeed in the difficult decisions that lie before them.

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening on this important debate. I thank the last speaker, my friend opposite, for his comments as well. It is significant that our leadership has allowed us this opportunity.

Only this afternoon I participated in a panel discussion with three other members of Parliament. The discussion was on reforms to Parliament and the nature of Parliament itself. There is much criticism of the quality of debate and the usefulness of this kind of debate. I came back here to find that members of Parliament from all parties were co-operating and participating in assisting the leadership of our government in making what is a difficult and in many ways terrible decision.

Like many Canadians I am not very knowledgeable in this area. My interests primarily are at home, as you often hear me say, right there in Windsor. Quite frankly this question, while it is not one I am particularly well versed on, is one I felt prompted to speak to tonight because of calls and reactions from my

constituents and because of my strong personal reaction to some of these calls.

Like many Canadians I find the ethnic fighting in Bosnia and the massacre of innocents who cared nothing for power or politics or the stakes of the game to be abhorrent. Like many Canadians I want it to stop. We have an obligation to be part of the solution. I truly trust our leadership to take the right steps to accomplish this.

However I also worry about our troops there. Only two weeks ago Ryan Hendy, a grade 13 student at St. Anne's High School in Tecumseh, Ontario in my riding, an 18 year old lad who is a friend of mine and whose parents are friends of mine, came to me. He is a member of the Essex-Kent Scottish Reserves. He told me he had been asked to go to the former Yugoslavia. His youth and his patriotism moved me to think a little more about our troops there.

Canadians in Windsor—St. Clair and everywhere in this country have taken pride in their armed forces, pride in those young people stationed in Bosnia and elsewhere in the Balkans during this conflict. Canadians watched in fear as our young military men were held as hostages last week and breathed a sigh of relief when they were released.

These anxieties are not distant. All of us in this House know we have constituents who are somehow connected with people in Bosnia. Many of us have friends or even family who are connected there. We have constituents whose children are serving there with the Canadian forces. We have constituents who are members of the forces serving there. We have constituents of Bosnian, Serb, Croatian and Muslim descent who have relatives still living in that country.

Madam Speaker, one of your own constituents sent us a letter today. Marina Gavanski Zissis is her name. She is a Canadian of Serbian descent. She warns us of the danger of these air strikes. Her greatest concern is for the Canadians on the ground. I quote from her letter: "But much more important is the safety of the Canadians already in Bosnia".

To my mind Mrs. Zissis makes a great point. We cannot ever forget the safety of these people and the situation in which they might be placed by remaining on the ground during an air strike. The American forces will be undertaking this air strike. In my opinion, for what it is worth, they do not have a good record when it comes to casualties by friendly fire.

(2100)

We must consider these figures: 15 to 20 per cent of U.S. casualties in the Vietnam war fell from friendly fire and 16 per cent of U.S. casualties in the recent gulf war fell from friendly fire. On April 14, 1994, two U.S. helicopters were shot down by American jets, killing 26 military and civilian personnel.

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This time it will be our troops and innocent Bosnian civilians on the ground. It is not a textbook battleground. It is not a desert where we can see the good guys on one side and the bad guys on the other. The fighting is taking place in and around urban enclaves containing thousands of civilians and our Canadian troops.

I am not a military expert. I am not even very knowledgeable about these matters, but I am a very concerned citizen and member of the House. I know we must stand with our allies. I know if we and our allies walk away we leave thousands of innocent people to a slaughter.

I have faith in our leadership. I have faith in the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister. I am satisfied that they will guide us well and ably in this decision, but I remind them to remember that it is our people on the ground and to take care of them too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by stressing how important it is for us to have this debate this evening. It is an opportunity for members of all parties to express their indignation about the intolerable situation that exists today in Bosnia, and it is also an opportunity for parliamentarians to show the minister and the government that we are all united in a cause that goes beyond partisan interests and our differences on other issues, because I believe that all parliamentarians here today share a desire to see all parts of the world at peace and to put an end to the slaughter in Bosnia.

There are certain facts we should remember. There have been many ceasefires in that region. Ceasefires that were never observed by the Bosnian Serbs who, today, continue to attack civilian targets. Ceasefires which in some ways have allowed the Bosnian Serbs to continue their offensive before the ink was dry on the documents they had signed, in a hypocritical fashion.

Today, we must do better than ceasefires where one party is acting in bad faith and the other has been disarmed. We must send a clear message. In this respect, the Sarajevo strategy which apparently will be proposed by President Clinton is the only strategy we feel is realistic as a means to put an end to this conflict. The strategy is to send a clear ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, with the shortest possible grace period, after which we, that is NATO and the UN must intervene and target the heavy artillery of the Serbs, an ultimatum, as we were saying, that would mean all cities and enclaves recognized as safe areas would have to be respected as such.

We would also have to demand guarantees for the peacekeepers. It is true that so far, Canada has intervened more frequently than other countries. I think we must remind other countries that

although air strikes are necessary—in fact, we will support them—the fact remains that Canadian and Quebec soldiers are in position at the present time. If these air strikes are to be accompanied by additional ground troops, the other countries will have to participate, because Canada has already done more than its share in this respect.

It is also true that air strikes may put our soldiers at risk, which is a real possibility, although the present situation is not any better, since our soldiers are in danger at the present time. Last week's hostage taking is a case in point. Besides, we cannot remain silent and powerless in the face of this situation.

(2105)

We have even more reason to be concerned about the tragic events in Bosnia given that this region of the world has historically been the site of war. Ethnic conflicts between different countries have today moved into another realm, namely that of religious wars. We must not lose sight of the rise of Islamic extremism, not only in Bosnia, of course, but also in the former Soviet republics of Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. The zone in question extends to China, stretching from Europe all the way to Asia and including the Middle East.

When I refer to the rise of extremism, I am not talking only about Islamic extremism. Right-wing extremists are also making their presence felt in France, Germany, Italy and Russia. I mention Russia because we all realize that Russia has a unique role to play in this conflict, since the Serbs and the Russians share Slavic roots and throughout history, alliances have been forged and in turn broken in this region. The situation is all the more serious given that right-wing fascist forces in Russia are now challenging President Yeltsin.

Nor should we forget that World War I began in this region, only to spread to the entire world. We should also remember the mistakes that were made by western democracies in the 1930s, mistakes which led to the rise of nazism and fascism. These democracies remained silent, at times motivated by pacifism, albeit blind pacifism. We made the mistake of letting Hitler invade parts of the world, triggering off a world war. We cannot afford to let the Serbs start a world war today.

While the cold war may be over, there are regional conflicts in some parts of the world that have the potential to start a worldwide conflict and this conflict in particular appears to be more serious and dangerous than any other around the world right now. That is why the UN and NATO must define their roles further. Of course, they must be discussion forums to instill a spirit of peace worldwide. But they could go further, especially when it is obvious that negotiations are going nowhere, that some of the parties are talking for the sake of talking and hypocritically failing to act on their promises and commitments.

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It must also be noted that Russia has a major role to play in this conflict. Of course NATO can send out a unit, but this unit will be made stronger by the support of Russia, and vice versa. If Russia does not take a clear stand, get involved and play its role with the Bosnian Serbs, it is obvious that NATO's position and that of the UN will not be as strong as they could be.

We must—and it may sound paradoxical—impose peace. But we must also plan ahead and look toward the reconstruction effort that will be needed in that part of the world. For me, imposing peace means ensuring it of course, but more importantly, once that is done, democracy will have to be brought to that part of the world because these people have not known democracy, never have or at least not for a very long time. They used to live in dictatorial regimes, particularly in the U.S.S.R. and in Yugoslavia as well.

We must also be aware that peace can only be maintained through coherent economic development and, to that end, our international organizations will have to become more than mere discussion and diplomacy forums in the future, their role will have to expand beyond that of policing the world, to include making sure we do not have to maintain forces wherever military intervention is requested.

We have not reached that point yet, but any military intervention, even short-lived or immediate, cannot be carried out without thinking of its long term effects.

(2110)

The fact remains that for the time being, no plan can be made for the future if a country such as Canada, as a western democracy, does not impose peace. Such is the situation, peace cannot be achieved without us imposing it.

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I speak to this issue deeply troubled because I have listened to the debate this evening and the one thing that is very clear is there is no easy solution. Whatever way we go in this situation there will continue to be killing. There will continue to be strife in Yugoslavia and we will continue to be at risk with not only our soldiers but soldiers from other countries of the world.

I would like to look at a couple of points and express in my way how I feel about this dilemma. I am actually opposed to an air strike, certainly an air strike that is not tied to a strong show of ground forces. An air strike in Bosnia at this time might knock out some hardware but it will not knock out the Serbian troops gathered around the enclave.

I think the example of history tells us that the more an invading force is injured, the more likely it is to resort to atrocities when it finally does conquer. If the Bosnian Serbs suffer casualties from our air strikes there will be no doubt they

will take their anger out on the Muslim civilians as soon as they occupy the city.

The other side of that equation is if we do not have an air strike what is the consequence of that? What we face then is sending a message to the Bosnian Serbs and any other peoples around the world who would like to resort, shall we say, to a military venture that we are helpless and they are able to do whatever they wish. We could expect to see this type of action spread around the world and certainly our chances of preserving the other five enclaves in the former Yugoslavia would be just about impossible.

Therefore, I do not envy the decision that is facing our ministers this night, nor the decision facing the other members of NATO as they wrestle with this very difficult decision.

Where do we go from here? Regardless of whether we have air strikes in Bosnia we are facing civil war. Again as an example of history, wherever you look in history, the absolute lesson is that you cannot intervene successfully in a civil war. The combatants in a civil war will fight it out.

I give the example of Afghanistan where the Soviet Union at the height of its power tried to intervene and it was a complete failure. It had to pull out. The classic example is Vietnam which really was a civil war all along. Again, one of the most powerful nations in the world failed to really effect any kind of outcome there.

There are many examples, Sri Lanka for one. What would we do in Sri Lanka? We cannot change the course of history in Sri Lanka. These are ethnic hatreds which we fought over. Rwanda is another one. What can we do there? What we are looking at here is a situation that is increasingly going to face the democracies of this world as the countries of the world resort to more and more tribalism and more and more ethnic fighting.

I would like to say something with respect to our 2,000 soldiers in the former Yugoslavia. I remind the government of Hong Kong and what happened there when we sent troops just before the Japanese declaration of war in 1941. Our Canadian troops fought bravely. When we look back on that incident we realize that they not only did not affect the outcome of the war, they did not affect the outcome of Japanese intentions. If anything, it cost more casualties. If there had not been a fight for Hong Kong there would have been fewer deaths in that area. We have to ask ourselves about that.

(2115)

I strongly believe that the tradition of the Canadian troops is to be brave, to help the disadvantaged and to intervene but always as peacekeepers. I do not see us as a nation of combatants. I really do caution our government if it feels it is drawn into a situation where our troops may have to join with other NATO troops in a role that goes far beyond peacekeeping.

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Finally, I would like to direct a comment toward the question of ethnic hatred. One thing that we should be very clear about is what is happening in Yugoslavia and we can take this to Afghanistan, Vietnam and many, many other countries is that we are not dealing with something that has anything to do with race, colour or visible minorities and we are not dealing with anything that necessarily has anything to do with religion. Muslims and Christians world-wide in many countries coexist most happily and indeed there is much in their religions that teaches them that they ought to cohabit.

What is happening in Yugoslavia is a return to the wrongs of the past. I think if you look at most ethnic fighting you will find it is because the people in the present are looking to the past and they are deriving the hatreds of the past. Instead of looking to the future or looking to the present and seeing what can unite them today, they look to the wrongs of long ago, sometimes even centuries ago.

What I would like to say in this debate is that I hope all of us worldwide, but most especially this country, take heed of that fact and remember not to look to the past for what went wrong and the wrongs we did to one another in the past, but to look to the future and what can unite us.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Madam Speaker, I am struck tonight by the relative brevity and great relevance of the remarks to this issue and what appears to be a growing concern in this House on both sides as to where our government should take us over the next few hours in dealing with this very difficult issue of the request for the possible use of air strikes in and around Gorazde and other places in Bosnia.

The views expressed here tonight I am very sure will provide great strength to the members of the cabinet, our government, when they make their decision, a very difficult decision but one that they are charged with and one which will bind inevitably all of us as Canadians, those who pay taxes, those who wear military uniforms, those who have relatives abroad and Canadians in all walks of life.

What we see here tonight is a Parliament at work expressing the views of Canadians for the benefit of a government which shortly must act. As I understand it there are a number of other countries in this world which are waiting for Canada to make up its mind. We are on the verge of that now as we speak.

I think most of the issues that one would have wanted to deal with here tonight have been dealt with extremely well by my colleagues. There are only two that I will refer to. It is the often heard statement that we should not get involved in this kind of a war because we cannot win it. We would prefer to be involved in a peace. Let us not turn this into another Vietnam.

In this particular case I do not think the intention is to get involved in a war. No one intends to invade Bosnia. What we are dealing with is not even the whole country of Bosnia. What we are dealing with is five safe havens, five places where the world, through the United Nations, told Bosnians, principally Bosnian Muslims, that they had safe haven. At the time we were developing that thesis we also, maybe for good reason, imposed an arms embargo. We said they may not have the arms to protect themselves, we will stop arms from getting to them but we will also put some blue helmets on the ground and have some safe havens. In the end I think we had five safe havens.

(2120)

We created them. We set up the arms embargo and now the people there numbering in the tens of thousands—in this particular case tonight as we speak it is Gorazde—of men, women and children without weapons to defend themselves. We are watching and some of us are saying we should not be there. I say we are there and we must stay there to finish our commitment.

We cannot walk away and leave those men, women and children to the guns that are advancing. References have been made in this House tonight to other incidents in history in which maybe we should have been there but we were not. Suffice it to say that we are there because, although we might rather not be, we wanted to be there and we have a job to do. I say we must finish and deliver on our commitment.

The second thing I want to say is that there are millions of people all over the world watching what is happening in Bosnia with a slightly different perspective than that of most Canadians. One cannot help but notice that the majority of the people in Gorazde and in the safe havens are Muslims, people of the Muslim faith. They have lots of brothers and sisters here in Canada and they are also looking at the world. They are looking to see if other countries of the world, those that have the money, the guns, the resources, the morality, the guts, the principles, are willing to stand by and protect the lives of those tens of thousands of people.

The fact that they are of the Muslim faith is very relevant to the whole world. There are millions of people all over the world who will be watching to see how we Canadians stand up for the principles, the morality which we have espoused since the beginning of this country.

I want to close and mention the bad words air strike. This is a mechanism, this is a method by which we are informed by the experts, by the people who know about these things, that we may be able to fulfil our commitment. It will not achieve it by itself. It may enable us to accomplish those very limited goals of protecting the safe havens.

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We do not want to micro-manage what happens there on a minute by minute basis or even on a day by day basis. We are asked to say yes to the use of that instrument and I am prepared to say yes.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, as I rise to support the motion before us that air support to protect the five safe areas in Bosnia be endorsed by Canada, I recall a lesson I learned as a boy which strikes to the heart of my feelings about the issue before us.

My mother used to tell me and my brothers and sisters you do not achieve through war that which you can achieve through peace. She added there are also times when you must wage war to achieve that peace. That is a lesson that I have continued to pass on to my four sons.

(2125)

Canada has never been an aggressive nation. We certainly would prefer to see the conflict in the former nation of Yugoslavia resolved by peaceful means, but the aggressors have continued their crimes against humanity.

Canada is a nation marked by unyielding compassion and a deeply ingrained commitment to human rights, to peace and to the promotion of freedom and democracy worldwide. I realize the House encompasses a remarkably broad range of ideologies and personal convictions, but tonight I am witnessing the unity of hearts and minds. The palpable unanimity of views we have seen emerging tonight speaks volumes about the need for Canada to endorse the use of air support in defined safe areas in Bosnia.

At this juncture I would like to commend and to pay tribute to the brave Canadian troops who are there to continue to serve the cause of peace. Throughout its history Canada has made the right decision at the most difficult times.

For the Croats and Muslims in Gorazde and in the former Yugoslavia these are the most difficult of times. Indeed these are also the most difficult of times for all peace loving people in the world.

It is always agonizing to support a military manoeuvre which may fan the flames of a war we have sought to extinguish, but we cannot long endure the blatant disregard of human life, of human dignity, practised daily by the Bosnian Serbs.

At a time when barriers to freedom have been torn down, at a time when the Berlin wall has been levelled and the iron curtain folded, it pains us to see the savagery of war perpetrated by the Serbs in that part of the world.

The eyes of the world cannot be blind to the atrocities taking place in that area. Our unequivocal support tonight for the United Nation's request to extend air support in safe areas in Bosnia would send a clear signal to the aggressors.

Many of history's great minds have shared their thoughts with mankind on the subjects of war and peace. Two weeks ago I was at the United Nations in New York participating in a forum of human development. At a nearby book store a volume titled *Peace in 100 Languages* caught my eye and I bought one. The book reminds me that peace is a universal sentiment. It can be expressed in different languages, but the sentiment is nevertheless the same: human understanding.

I am reminded tonight of the words of the great U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who once said: "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries is in danger".

I am reminded tonight of the words of Aristotle: "Peace is more difficult than war".

I am reminded tonight of the words of Albert Einstein: "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding".

Lastly I am reminded tonight of Mahatma Gandhi who once said: "It is possible to live in peace".

It is our hope. We do not want to wage war to achieve peace, but there are difficult times when we have to wage war to achieve peace.

(2130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I think all Canadians, and certainly all those participating in this debate, share a feeling of revulsion towards this horrible slaughter occurring almost in front of us, since we see the same scenario every night on TV: massacres, a total lack of respect for human life, inexplicable violence.

Looking at all this, we wonder what makes people resort to such cruelty. As a man, I noticed that it is mostly the doing of men. In fact, almost all the people waging war in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda are men. When we look back, we see that all wars have been fought by men.

[*English*]

In Bosnia not only are the Bosnians hostages to the violence, but so too are the Canadian soldiers, soldiers from other nations and indeed the whole world at large. All of us cannot be innocent of this conflict. No matter where we live, we cannot help but be impacted by the tremendous tragedy taking place.

Canadians should be proud that Canada in its time-honoured tradition has continued to do its part. In fact it has done much more than its share in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia.

Tonight our thoughts must go to the Canadian soldiers on the ground in Bosnia, to their families here at home, including their children who must be living very anxious hours.

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I think I translate the feelings of most Canadians. We have a great friendship and a tremendous regard and respect for our neighbours to the south, the Americans. At the same time I sense from many Canadians that they do not think the Americans have played their part in Bosnia. They think that somehow the Americans have played a cosy game, that resorting to air strikes mostly by American pressure and with American war planes will be part of the American agenda because it is partly a political agenda: Let us not send ground troops there, so let us carry out bombing raids.

I wonder if it is normal that the smaller of the two North American partners has had troops on the ground for many, many months whereas the far more powerful and important partner has managed to escape the responsibility of sending ground troops for so many months. Is it also normal that many countries have managed to cosily stand aside finding excuses not to take part in the United Nations peacekeeping effort?

The great majority of us, perhaps all of us simply dread an escalation of the war. We dread another bombing raid. We wonder about the possible failure of bombing raids. Would failure leave not only the Bosnians and their families but all our troops even more vulnerable than they are today?

(2135)

It is with a sense of a tremendous tearing apart of our minds and hearts that we face this terrible decision. What do we do? I think certainly it is essential for us to make sure that no decision is taken without the Russians having their say and being involved. Even if I happen to be completely opposed to the idea of an air strike, seeing this I realize that decisions like this cannot be black and white.

I listened very carefully to our two leading ministers on this issue, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, this afternoon in caucus and I was struck by their sense of caution, of wisdom, of realizing that there is no easy solution.

I know that tonight the Prime Minister and our two ministers must be thinking through this terrible dilemma that faces all of us. In their case they are the people who have the decision to make. Who am I to say that it should be one way or another without the proper facts at my command, without the responsibility to answer for whatever I say?

I trust our leadership. I think it has been wise. It has been cautious so far. It has been extremely human in its approach. Whatever the decision may be, and if it has to be bombing raids after much thought, sad as I would be, I would understand that it was made with a feeling that it may be the last resort to try and stop the Serbians.

If this is what our leaders decide, I hope at the same time they will add some caveats to the Canadian position asking others,

especially the United States, to do their share; asking President Clinton for more than bombing raids and sending troops there. If we can send 2,000 troops surely he can send 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 or 10,000.

I hope that our leaders convince the rest of the nations that are not participating in the issue on Bosnia to do their fair share.

Finally, we must draw lessons from all of this. What of the United Nations strategy? What happens in the future? What are the lessons to be drawn from Somalia, from Rwanda and today from Bosnia and tomorrow maybe from many other places? Can we police the world? Can we keep the peace all over the world? What should be our strategy for the future?

[Translation]

Tonight I must say, as a man, that I feel very sad thinking that it is men like me who have carried out practically endless slaughters in many parts of the world, be it in Africa, in Northern Ireland or today in Yugoslavia.

I notice that the innocent victims of these acts of violence are invariably women and children. So tonight we should look mostly at the innocent people and pray that our leaders will make wise decisions, as they did in the past, to keep our troops safe and save the lives of innocent people.

[English]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Madam Speaker, this debate is a difficult one for many of us and I would like to briefly in the few minutes I have remind Canadians that the House has been asked to consider a request contained in the UN Secretary General's April 18 letter to the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to extend arrangements similar to those in place to protect Sarajevo and five other UN safe areas in Bosnia.

(2140)

NATO had previously agreed to provide air-ground support only for self defence of our forces, NATO forces and the United Nations protection force, in order to facilitate certain things such as rotation of UNPROFOR troops and to protect Sarajevo which as we know was designated as an exclusion zone as of last February.

An exclusion zone differs from a safe haven because in the latter case, safe haven, the Bosnian-Serb forces in an exclusion zone are required to withdraw their heavy weapons beyond 30 kilometres or to hand them over to UNPROFOR, UN forces.

I understand from what I hear and know of the situation today that President Clinton has apparently suggested that all the safe havens become exclusion zones, that sanctions be reinforced and that a summit meeting be called.

Foreign Affairs

NATO is to meet tomorrow to consider what to do. If we agree with the proposal, it would demonstrate to the Bosnian Serbs and others who have questioned the UN's credibility that the international community is serious about backing its words with actions. It could possibly, as it did in Sarajevo, deter attacks on other safe havens.

If we do not agree, we could be accused of doing nothing to prevent ethnic cleansing, aggression. We could even be accused of genocide. If we do not agree, the action may be too little, too late and it would not prevent the Bosnian Serbs from continuing with their inhumane actions against other human beings.

If we did not agree, it would put our forces at risk. It would possibly create a situation that would be untenable for many people in the former Yugoslavia. I find it very difficult nevertheless to support air attacks because as we know in any type of initiative of that nature, it has two consequences.

First, any air attack that is not supported by good ground support in my view is not very effective. Second, it would change our role in the UN forces from a peacekeeping to a peacemaking role and I am not sure that Canadians today would endorse that kind of initiative.

[Translation]

Keep in mind some of the reasons for which we sent our troops to Bosnia under the United Nations flag. First, to support peacekeeping in that region of the world and, second, for humanitarian reasons. Everyone will recall the difficulties we had in bringing humanitarian support to Sarajevo. I do not need to remind Canadians of the difficulties UN forces had to overcome in this conflict.

We must remember that Canada has in the past expressed serious reservations about the use of air strikes. In our opinion, the problem cannot be solved by air strikes; we look instead to a negotiated solution. Let us not forget that the international community must consider the effect this decision will have on

the peace process. In the end, a lasting peace can only be a negotiated peace, unless the international community is ready to impose peace by force.

At this time, UN forces in the field are neither equipped nor in a position to enforce peace. Whatever decision the international community will reach tomorrow must be credible in my eyes and in those of the Canadian and international communities. We should not make statements that cannot be backed up. Whatever the decision, air strikes do not, in my opinion, meet these two criteria for making peace unless we go all the way.

I do not think the Americans, who do not have any military troops in the field at this time, can tell us once again to go there while they stay home. So the Americans' contribution to the land forces is an important consideration. I think that Russia should be ready to participate and that it should have an important role to play in this conflict. If I understood Mr. Yeltsin correctly, he is ready to accept a summit meeting and that is very positive.

I for one think that Canada must support Mr. Clinton's and Mr. Yeltsin's proposal for a summit meeting where we will be certainly present. I am among those who approve a negotiated position. I can honestly say I am against violence and air strikes.

I don't think we would accomplish much with such measures. I agree with those who are totally convinced that negotiation is the way to go and that we must draw these people to the negotiating table because otherwise we are heading straight for a disaster; history will repeat itself. I say so with great sorrow and hesitation since I know my opinion is contrary to that of many colleagues in this House. Air strikes are not the solution to this problem; we will have to negotiate and not use force.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): As there are no more speakers, pursuant to the order adopted earlier this day, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9.48 p.m.)

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