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Monday, September 19, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 19, 1994

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that in accordance with the representation made by the government under the provisions of Standing Order 55(1) I have caused to be published a special order paper giving notice of introduction of government bills. I now lay the relevant document upon the table.

[*Translation*]

My dear colleagues, I have the honour to lay on the table a copy of the reprint of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, dated September 1994, which includes all amendments to the Standing Orders since the beginning of the session.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FULL EMPLOYMENT ACT

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon) moved that Bill C-209, an act to provide for full employment in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, today I rise in this Parliament to speak to what I believe is one of the biggest issues facing each one of us here and one of the greatest responsibilities, jobs and job creation.

We are still in double digit unemployment. There are still far too many people unemployed. It is time this government took direct action and accountability for unemployment levels.

Bill C-209, an act to provide for full employment in Canada, will ensure that the government is as accountable for job creation as it is for deficit reduction.

A full employment strategy means that all of the federal government's activities, managing interest rates and the dollar, dealing with trading partners, investing in new businesses and innovation, helping workers retrain, and every other aspect of

federal economic and social policy are guided by the objective of achieving full employment.

Full employment does not mean an unemployment rate of zero per cent. Economists estimate that it is generally considered between 3 and 4 per cent. It does mean that there is no permanent structural unemployment and that it is a set of precepts by which other policies should be guided. Full employment also does not mean that the government guarantees everyone a job. It means that the number of jobs available in public and private sectors is very close to the number of people active in the workforce.

The objectives of a full employment policy have been proven over and over again in other countries to work very well in concert with proper labour market policies.

A full employment economic strategy will build social justice with unemployment and underemployment reduced. The devastation of poverty and a lack of choices and opportunities are tragedies that characterize our present economic system, one that is clearly in failure.

[*Translation*]

I would like to explain, first of all, that this bill requires the minister to prepare a draft plan for the achievement of full employment in Canada and lay it before Parliament.

(1105)

The draft plan would then be reviewed by a standing committee of the House of Commons. The minister would consider the report and recommendations of the committee in the preparation of a final plan. The plan would be reviewed annually against the targets for achieving full employment, and the report on any adjustments necessary to meet the targets of the plan would be prepared within six months of the end of the year and laid before Parliament.

I have quite a few recommendations on how this objective should be achieved—in fact, there are 22—but I will just describe a few. For instance, an environmental awareness program that would promote the goal of sustainable development through new environmental technologies, sewage treatment facilities and energy efficiency programs.

It is therefore necessary to have an investment policy that includes the right to review and regulate foreign investment in Canada, a national investment fund that operates at arms-length from the government and an elimination of corporations' rights to deduct interest expenses from taxable income.

Private Members' Business

A national policy on education that includes a national council on education which would examine all issues relevant to education.

An important ingredient of this plan is strengthened support to existing social programs such as health care and the creation of new social programs such as a national child care program.

It is also necessary to have comprehensive adjustment measures for workers such as the establishment of a mandatory job vacancy registry and job matching system through Canada Employment Centres and the establishment of adjustment committees for employees in positions where significant lay-offs are anticipated, to facilitate counselling, re-training and employment services for workers who are or may be laid off.

It is necessary as well to provide for examination of the impact of all federal fiscal policies on employment, including the mandate of the Bank of Canada.

These examples are all in the bill, and I think it is very important for a committee to consider the ways in which this part of the bill can be implemented.

[English]

One of the most important aspects of this bill is it will ensure that the government reports unemployment targets to the House of Commons as it now does with deficit reduction targets. By law the plan would be reviewed annually against targets for achieving full employment with adjustments required to meeting the targets of the plan to be reviewed within six months of the end of the year.

The point of this bill is that the government must be as accountable for the reduction of unemployment as it is for the reduction of the debt and the deficit.

There is a clear linkage between the policies of the government and the ability of our economy not to have a jobless recovery but to have a real recovery with jobs. Canadians who are now underemployed or unemployed would have work.

When I speak of labour market policies there are a number that must be taken into account. For example, in recent statistics we see the largest increase in the number of jobs has been in part time jobs. Many people may wish to work part time but others work part time because they have no option. There must be policies in place to ensure that part time workers receive benefits and that they receive full recognition for part time work. Saskatchewan has brought in benefits for part time workers. The federal government and other provinces should follow that model.

(1110)

Other adequate labour market policies are absolutely necessary. I would like to mention some of the recommendations which have come out of the labour movement. In particular, the Canadian Labour Congress addressed the issue not only of job

creation but of the need to ensure that the existing work is more equitably spread. Many people work many hours of overtime while others rest without employment at all.

I would like to mention some of the recommendations of the Canadian Labour Congress. It specifically addresses the issue of how we attain full employment and the labour market policies which the government can put in place to facilitate that.

For example, there is the reduction of standard weekly hours to less than 40 hours per week. In the past there was a huge battle about limiting work hours. There is a requirement for employers to keep a log of all hours worked and more stringent limits on overtime, both weekly and annually.

We know many employers would rather pay overtime than to create a new job and take on a new employee because there is less book work and less hassle for the employer. We have to facilitate making it possible for the employer to do that. In some recent collective agreements, for example in automotive manufacturing, a whole new shift with a number of new employees has been employed and other employees have reduced their overtime.

The government should take the initiative in looking at those kinds of issues. Clearly in doing this we have to look at not simply reducing pay to workers. When looking at the work week and reductions in overtime and the accompanying labour market policies we must also ensure that benefits and other recompense are respected. Many kinds of these ideas are there. They can be acted upon by a government that really wants to deal with the issue and not simply speak about it.

I would like to speak briefly about the Minister of Human Resources Development's ongoing social policy review. It relates very closely to this plan for full employment. The goal of the review should be to make social programs more efficient but also more equitable. Accordingly the Minister of Human Resources Development in the context of his social policy review must consider adopting a comprehensive policy of full employment.

Lower unemployment means a lower deficit. The two are inextricably linked. That is the purpose of this bill: to say that the government of the day must give equal emphasis to reducing unemployment as to reducing the deficit because they are inextricably linked.

We do not need to cripple our social programs and marginalize the unemployed to reduce the deficit. That is like chopping up the furniture to heat the home. Let us start dealing with the fundamental structural problems of the bad economic policies we have seen pursued in this country.

Let us also get rid of the myth that unemployment is free. It is impossible to reduce a budget deficit when there is widespread unemployment. Official direct costs of unemployment to government were \$47.5 billion in 1993.

Private Members' Business

(1115)

The Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives estimates the direct costs of unemployment at \$109 billion for 1993 if we include unemployment insurance costs, lost salaries, additional UI premiums paid by employed workers, lost profits and lost tax revenues. Unemployment is not free: it is not free financially, it is not free in human terms, it is not free to communities and to families.

If every unemployed worker had a job tomorrow, the federal government would collect some \$5.5 billion more in taxes. It would spend at least \$16 billion less in income support. High unemployment is a human tragedy, the federal government's most wasteful expense and its biggest unnecessary tax loss.

Official unemployment is now at 10.3 per cent. Youth unemployment is at 16.4 per cent. More than one worker in four is now forced to draw unemployment insurance benefits at some time in the year and one in three exhaust these benefits before finding other jobs.

Most recent statistics indicate that 42 per cent of workers are employed part time. Many of those are only employed seasonally. Only 20 per cent of working women hold full time, permanent jobs that pay more than \$30,000 per year. Taken as a whole, only 31 per cent of all workers have full time, year round jobs that pay more than \$30,000 a year.

The 25-year trend of increased participation of women in the labour force has been reversed, especially for young women. More women have been pushed into part time jobs and outnumber men in these positions by almost three to one.

The current government has continued to pursue the policies of the past, in particular, those introduced by the former Conservative government. These policies do not come to grips with permanent, structural unemployment.

In this bill, I outline a number of ways that might be considered. There are many others: the labour market policies that I spoke to earlier; the kind of recommendations of labour bodies and other groups to working toward this objective.

A clear commitment to full employment and to a strategy of full employment; building partnerships, setting goals and meeting them, putting tools in the hands of working people, protecting our environmental capital and understanding and rising to the challenges posed by the world economy; these should be the cornerstone of an economic policy.

This bill would be one step toward that cornerstone. I urge the support of this House.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege for me to take part in the debate on this extremely important issue. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for her work over a number of years. I think she has a well earned reputation of striving to better the lives of working Canadians.

I paid attention to her comments. As a government, since the October 25 election, we have worked extremely hard in the past 11 months to bring positive change to the lives of Canadians.

No one in the House has a monopoly on the concerns of the number one priority in this country, which is job creation. That priority of jobs, of achieving employment growth, of ensuring meaningful, well paying jobs for all Canadians, is something that all of us, regardless of which side of the House we sit on, should be concentrating on.

No hon. member, no one party in this House has exclusive interest in improving our economy. The government has truly created an environment where job creation can take place. We are committed to reducing unemployment and opening up the labour force to those individuals who want to participate in it.

(1120)

The government has taken and is taking steps at this very moment to ensure that Canadian workers from coast to coast have an opportunity to participate in rewarding and lasting employment. From the very beginning of its term in office it has been implementing a well laid out plan to promote economic growth and establish long term, rewarding jobs for Canadians. It has to be done in an orderly step by step fashion.

We started rebuilding at the foundation. We have launched an infrastructure program in co-operation with the provinces that is addressing local needs. This infrastructure program is successful because it focuses on the local needs of the community. It speaks to the issue of effective partnerships, a model for all governments to follow.

The \$6 billion national program showed to Canadians that different levels of government, when they are focusing on the big picture which is to provide opportunity, to restore hope and improve the quality of life for Canadians, can work. Government can be a force for positive change and by facilitating the process of change and the process of building communities we can return to Canadians the feeling that something is getting done for their communities and for future generations.

We are, through the infrastructure program, investing in our future. We are building our roads. We are building better communities. We are investing in those things that Canadians have called for and most of all—I underline this point—we are doing it in partnership.

Private Members' Business

For example, we are working hand in hand with the Government of Saskatchewan to upgrade the province's rural roads over the next two years. This federal-provincial partnership will invest \$30 million and will create more than 500 full time jobs. That is not all.

The spinoff from this project will result in hundreds of additional jobs for Saskatchewan. Residents in the construction, technical and professional trades will have opportunities to work instead of sitting in the unemployment lines.

Those of us who represent the province of Ontario will understand the hurt and pain the residents have gone through in the recessionary years when their so-called Canadian dream slipped away. They question the future and what kind of future their children will have. We have established an infrastructure program in co-operation with the province of Ontario known as the Canada-Ontario Infrastructure Works. We estimate it will create approximately 37,000 direct and indirect jobs.

(1125)

These are facts and figures. They speak to the commitment the government has toward bringing back jobs, creating economic growth and, more important, giving back confidence to the people of Canada, confidence that was shaken during our recession.

I can talk about other projects in the regions of York or Waterloo where investments have been made so that we can once again regain the strength required at the local and community levels to drive the economy and give confidence to the people so that we can push forward.

These are fine examples of how partnerships can work, how we can foster a strong and productive partnership together. The government expects to create approximately 90,000 jobs for Canadians both on site in construction and off site in providing supply and services. Beyond that several thousand of more jobs will be created indirectly from the program's impact.

That is not all. One starts by building the foundation. We addressed infrastructure. We then moved forward to strategic initiatives with the provinces. There again the theme is of partnership and regional concerns, bringing about the type of co-operation that is required if we are going to introduce a new way to govern.

We have allocated \$800 million strategic initiative funds for the next four years. This investment will enable us to build a Canada that is consciously job oriented and reflects a prosperous, enterprising society.

The minister has already announced a number of projects under the strategic initiative programs. They include job link with the province of Ontario, a \$50 million investment to help

thousands of welfare recipients get employed. Is this not what governments should be doing, providing opportunities to people that historically have been trapped by the same system that should be helping them?

We will be operating in 10 to 12 communities and job link is transforming existing programs into one co-ordinated system to help people move away from welfare into work. We want to get people off the welfare rolls and on to the payrolls of this nation. This is what people are asking for.

We were all campaigning for the October 25 election. Every door we knocked on people were saying: "Give us hope. Give us a job so that we can look to the future with confidence". This example of job link with the province of Ontario speaks to that. It speaks to the understanding of a fundamental principle that government's role is to provide opportunities for people and the individual's role is to make the most out of those opportunities.

If I may review, the government is moving into a social security review that will once again give to many Canadians the tools required so that they can compete locally, nationally and globally. We are working very hard to make sure that the dream of a job is realized from coast to coast to coast.

(1130)

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Madam Speaker, I would like to mention, although this will be underlined further this afternoon, that we are sitting today for the first time minus one of our colleagues.

I was very pleased to start off the session with a debate on full employment. However, the debate taking place in the context of this particular bill, my pleasure turned to displeasure, to bitter disappointment as regards the nature of the provisions put forward by the New Democratic Party.

A full employment policy, as anyone who has looked into the subject would know and as far as I am concerned, includes basically two main components: so-called macroeconomic policies concerning employment and policies at the regional and local level which, because of the ownership of the local and regional players, allow maximum job-creation benefits to be derived from national policy, whatever the nation, at the regional level as well as from a more local and regional policy.

I would like to mention in passing, as time is short—but I hope we can come back to it later on—that Diane Bellemare and Lise Poulin-Simon, two university professors have looked into these matters extensively since the 80s in Quebec. They have worked so hard in fact that they influenced not only the central labour bodies, which they criticized in a way, but also management, which was also criticized, and governments to such a

point that in Quebec, we now have some essential tools such as the following.

I will not address macro-economic policy, as it is Ottawa's responsibility. And in Ottawa, contrary to the government member's claims, concern for employment is not obvious to say the least. An infrastructure program was introduced. Fine, but we must also consider all that was not, and we will come back to this repeatedly over the course of the session. In spite of all the idle talk and the campaign promises, this government cannot be said to be concerned with employment.

At the other level however—and it may be fitting to mention this here—the second component I referred to earlier is basically an involvement policy. Such a policy can, especially in Quebec but in other provinces also, as we will see, be developed at the local or provincial level.

Let me read you two sentences. On what basis do Mrs. Bellemare and Poulin contend that micro-economic employment policy should come under provincial jurisdiction? First, provincial governments are at a definite advantage for political considerations when it comes to implementing such a policy.

(1135)

In fact, the constitutional division of powers—and as far as I know the Constitution has not been changed, but, of course, it is convenient to forget this—gives the provinces considerable jurisdiction with respect to work and labour relations, education and training, and development of resources. And I would point out that it is Diane Bellemare and Lise Poulin-Simon who are saying this, not the Bloc.

Secondly, there are cultural, linguistic and ideological considerations—to which, it seems to me, the sponsor of this bill could have been sensitive—which put the provincial governments in a better position than the federal government to implement a micro-economic employment policy effectively.

It seems to me that what we are seeing here is the complete failure of the federal policy to achieve what one would expect of a full employment policy, that is economic, financial and budgetary policies at the macro-economic level from the government of the country. And having failed in that, it now wants to become involved directly and with all the necessary control over what is, in this Constitution—but I will say more—the very nature of a full employment policy, something which should be left to the provinces and to the regional and local levels.

I would add that the current globalization of markets, which has not waited for the FTA or NAFTA, is forcing all countries to give the best of themselves to achieve an employment policy. In fact, it is at the level of the people, businesses, unions, groups in each of the municipalities, in collaboration with the level of government most closely concerned and with the closest access

Private Members' Business

to the constitutional powers that the project and the implementation can be carried out.

That is where it becomes easier when we know that we in Canada have not even been able during all these years to agree on manpower training, which is absolutely essential, and when the NDP bill does not refer in any way to what the provinces do better. That is true in any country. Why do at the federal level what would be done better at the regional and community level? Why? Because of a lack of confidence in the ability of our communities, our regions and, in the case of the Canadian Constitution, our provinces?

There is plenty of goodwill and good intentions that I share. I, however, think that the means used are totally inadequate and cannot work in Canada under the current Constitution. But there is more than that. In Canada—and I think this will last for a long time given Canada's current geography—it is impossible for a full employment policy to be "controlled, implemented and developed from Ottawa". The federal government must have employment-conscious fiscal, budgetary and financial policies, but it must let the provinces, the regions and the municipalities do what they do better, and give them the means to do so. At the present time, the means derive from the spending powers controlled by Ottawa.

(1140)

I would like us to re-examine this issue, but I am clearly very disappointed.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the main body of my remarks I would like to deal specifically with a couple of points that the member for Mercier made in her remarks.

She talked about this motion not dealing enough with the macroeconomic factors in this equation of creating an environment for full employment and focused very much on the fact that all of these jurisdictions such as training and education be the exclusive jurisdiction of the province.

I would like to remind the member for Mercier that trying to get the macroeconomic factors in the equation right is very tough to accomplish when there are members in this House whose constant barrage dealing with the dismantling of this country affects our markets in terms of the way foreigners invest in this country, which ultimately affects the rate of our dollar, which causes great stress on our deficit and debt reduction programs.

If the member for Mercier is truly committed to getting the macroeconomic side of this equation in place, then I would ask the member to review the impact her party and its dialogue are having on that part of the equation.

Private Members' Business

To the hon. member who raised this motion, I agree that it is the most important issue facing this House of Commons today. I wish we could have this debate going non-stop around the clock until we grind this issue down and get a number of concrete and doable ideas on the table. I, like the hon. member, believe that this is the priority for all of us.

We on this side of the House are trying to work in some concrete ways in addressing this problem. I think it is important for Canadians to understand that, because it is easy to create the perception in the public's eye that not a heck of a lot happens in Ottawa and in this House of Commons.

We stated during the last election that the greatest hope for putting Canadians back to work rests with the small and medium sized business community. Not only on this side but all members have been working very hard in the industry committee on a study called access to capital for small business which essentially will challenge the banks to become more accountable in their actions toward small business.

That report hopefully will be tabled in this House in the not too distant future for all of us to debate. Members from all parties worked on that report, not just for the last six months but during the summer. It is in its final edit stages. Canadians should know that commitment of challenging the banks, that report which we said in the last budget we would undertake, is very close to becoming a public document for all of us to debate. I think that is important.

I would also like to remind Canadians that my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka worked all last spring with many other colleagues and they travelled every region of Ontario on an access to capital report. That report is in fact finished. It contains some fabulous recommendations. It is available to all Canadians. They just have to write to the office of the member for Muskoka—Parry Sound who has said repeatedly that he would be more than happy to send it out.

(1145)

In specific terms, small business needs capital if it is going to put people back to work. That is something concrete that we are working on.

There is something else happening. I do not want for a second to suggest to the member for Yukon that what I am saying is enough. I do not think we are doing enough. I think we should be more accountable. It is important to show that we are doing some specific things.

There is another thing we are working on in a very specific way. There is a joint Industry Canada—Finance Canada study on how to reduce the paper burden for small business. This is another reason why a lot of entrepreneurs have a feeling of frustration and are holding back. That study, which is being worked on, is something we must address in concrete terms.

Another issue that Canadians want us to take on this fall especially as we head toward the next budget is the whole issue of tax reform. We have a system of taxation in this country that is inefficient, complex, and obviously not fair. I support many of the recommendations of the member for Yukon. She has talked about many of these issues over the last number of years. I believe that we have now reached a point in this House and in the country where Canadians are going to be pressing us harder than ever to deal with the whole issue of taxation.

I believe taxation is an integral part of putting Canadians back to work. The harder you work, the more you make and the more you tend to want to invest or spend. The current tax system is a disincentive to investment and a disincentive to spending. In fact many of our best and brightest, our real achievers, are leaving our country. If they are not parking themselves offshore, they are parking their investment dollars offshore. Putting Canadians back to work and dealing with the very concrete and real numbers that the member for Yukon talked about in terms of deficit and debt costs cannot be done without dealing with the entire tax regime that exists in this country. That will be another one of our very important challenges.

Mr. Riis: Let's get going on it.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Members are saying let's get going. It is the first day back from the summer recess and we are going. We have a tremendous turnout of interested members this morning. It is Monday morning and we are going at it. I am not asking you to be patient. In fact, I hope you keep pressing harder than ever. I think members are raising a very important point. This is the sense of urgency.

I was working on a project this summer in the Toronto waterfront corridor. According to provincial studies—

Mr. Riis: A casino.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Yes, a casino was included as one factor in the equation. It was only 2 per cent of it. Last week some municipal politicians were saying that we are too aggressive in our actions in trying to get this project going. I do not know how you can be too aggressive in trying to put people to work, especially when you come from a city where there are close to 400,000 out of work.

That deals with my final point. We as members of Parliament have to understand the sense of urgency that Canadians feel. It is something that we really must address.

(1150)

I know that in the private sector when times are tough you work two shifts a day. Sometimes you work six or seven days a week. Not only in this government but at all levels of government we should possibly consider setting up a public service

arrangement where they work two shifts a day, seven days a week, not unlike the way members of Parliament work.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on this bill. I join the hon. member for Yukon in her sincere desire that no Canadian ever have to suffer the anxiety and the stress of being unable to find a good job with a good income sufficient to provide for themselves and their family. I commend her for her compassion and for wishing to devise a way to relieve this and other difficulties faced by all too many of our citizens.

Unfortunately the measure she is proposing in the bill before this House today simply cannot achieve this ideal. It would be wonderful if people through their elected representatives could by putting the right words on paper eliminate difficulties and uncertainty in the economic, political and social spheres of our society. In my view it does not work that way. That view is based on observations of government actions both past and present, some in our own country.

Creating a state bureaucracy which will somehow create jobs for everyone is certainly not a new idea. The well known slogan of the old Soviet Union was: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need". What that led to was summarized in the typical black humour of the Polish workers who used to say: "We pretend to work and the government pretends to pay us".

To suggest to Canadians that governments owe them jobs or are even capable of providing them with jobs in every case would be a cruel deception. This is particularly true for this government, already over half a trillion dollars in debt and spending \$41 billion and rising every single year just on interest on that debt.

The tax burden on working Canadians simply to sustain the present level of spending is already a crushing load. Where will the money come from to create the ministry of plenty envisioned in this bill? Governments have no money of their own. They must work with money taken from citizens. Even if they recovered some revenue in the form of taxes this proposal would still require an enormous additional expenditure in terms of the bureaucratic handling fee that would be made necessary by this new initiative.

If government programs, spending, borrowing for more programs and increasing tax grabs to fund it all could give people jobs, there would be enough programs and spending in Canada to give every single citizen three jobs. It has not worked out that way.

Since big government, big government programs and interference in the economy are what have brought us to today's fiscal mess I am frankly amazed that anyone would be advocating more of the same today.

Private Members' Business

Allow me to outline some of the obvious flaws in this bill. Clause 3 of this legislative proposal calls for governments to give priority to the undertaking of sufficient measures to achieve full employment in Canada and establish programs that ensure that employment opportunities are available to all adult Canadians who seek work.

These suggestions are vague and they are optimistic. The shortage of specifics with intent to achieve idealistic goals seems to infer that the government should spend tax dollars to create employment without creating wealth or economic growth to support it.

It seems to me that we have tried these measures before in countless forms throughout our history without creating any possibility for long term employment. The most recent example is this government's initiative to assist unemployed Canadian youth. These programs amount to a redistribution of tax dollars to our young people in exchange for performing routine tasks. It does nothing to give them long term jobs and skills.

The premier of Ontario tried to spend his way out of recessionary times during his first year in office. We know the results there. This type of mentality has already plunged Canada to the brink of fiscal collapse. Investor confidence has weakened and with it has come a loss of jobs and a shaky economy.

High interest rates are another result of this type of government policy. The vicious spiral of government spending leads to a high level of taxation which in turn contributes to inflation which stifles entrepreneurship.

(1155)

The best way to create employment and thus achieve this bill's objectives is to eliminate government waste, remove barriers and regulations that hinder commerce, cut spending and reduce taxes. In this environment there would be a streamlined bureaucracy serving the real needs of Canadian entrepreneurs. Canadians would have more money left in their pockets to start and build businesses and there would be enough profit left to make their work and risk worthwhile. Only when individuals are prepared to risk their own capital can we expect to have a strong and vibrant economy.

Studies have shown and indeed the hon. member opposite just mentioned that an enormous percentage of real long term jobs are created by a healthy small business sector.

We need to get government off the backs of people and keep governments' demands from obstructing their dreams and work. There is no need to further encumber the people of Canada with yet another government department and still more regulations to stimulate employment.

This bill also calls for a draft plan that will include an estimate of the number of jobs expected to be created in Canada as a result of the plan and a timetable for its implementation and

Government Orders

for the achievement of full employment. This suggestion poses some very serious questions.

First, experience has amply demonstrated that governments by their nature cannot be trusted to forecast the economic capacity of a free market. Their attempts to do so have only led to some type of a planned economy. I am sure we are all aware of the outcome of such strategies as practised in other countries.

The omniscient role for government as advocated by this proposal would be best replaced by enhancing the resources of the private sector which has the most at stake. Other countries have recognized that economic decision making must be centred not on periodic pronouncements and decrees from a distant bureaucracy. This type of top-down policy would only cost Canadians jobs by stifling initiatives and creating obstacles.

There is a need for government policies that promote competition and choice. This would foster a market culture predicated on efficiency and ingenuity. These in turn will generate more activity in the marketplace which will create more jobs. It would be of great benefit if government was more user friendly and more accessible. Canadians want more personal responsibility and less imposed government dependency.

This bill's plan unfortunately seeks the opposite. Every able and willing Canadian should be able to find suitable employment but that can only happen when the nation's wealth is left in the hands of entrepreneurs, investors and business people rather than taken from them to be spent by bureaucrats, politicians and grant recipients.

Clause 6 of this bill itemizes 22 regulatory protectionist or expenditure related measures which the sponsors hope will ensure full employment. Most disturbing of all is the consideration of the establishment of a department of full employment that would include a mandate to achieve full employment. It is almost incredible that as our fiscal crisis looms larger, ideas involving yet another increase in government spending and thus an increased tax burden are still being promoted.

Still others of these measures would close doors to Canadian drugs and restrict our markets to imports. To tie this all together, an intricate web of new agencies would also be created to carry out the policies.

What fascinates me is that there is no mention of where the funds would come from to realize these goals. This is one of the best examples of a recipe for disaster. We must instead strengthen co-operation between business, government and labour to ensure sustainable environmental development, the development of training programs which will meet the real demands of industry and work for tax relief and reform.

The Reform Party supports a general program of expenditure reduction, not increase, leading to a lower level of taxation, a lower cost of doing business and a lower cost of living. We need to get the deficit and debt under firm control while reforming the

tax system in order to create a level playing field which would allow private initiatives to stimulate the economy.

To this end we will work toward a simple, visible and flat taxation system. I was glad to hear the member opposite support that in the speech before me. Investment consumer confidence in a market economy are directly related to the cost of participation. Canadians should be allowed to spend their hard earned dollars as they see fit, not in funding endless government programs.

(1200)

In conclusion, Bill C-209 reads like another attempt at a planned economy which historically has never achieved its objectives. This legislative proposal does not allow society to harness the initiative of individuals. It creates structure and dependency, trade, profit—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1) the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

IMMIGRATION ACT

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration) moved that Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, a warm welcome to my colleagues on all sides of the House as we get back to school, as it were, today.

Whether our ancestors landed by boat in Montreal or touched down at Vancouver International Airport, we are for the most part a nation of immigrants. Of course there were people here before the boats and the planes arrived, but since the beginning Canada has been the rainbow for those looking for a new way of life, indeed a new lease on life, and Canada has not let them down for Canada has been a rainbow for those new hopes, of those new aspirations and of those new dreams.

We must admit there is a bit of rust on that rainbow for a criminal element has infiltrated an immigration system that was built on hard work, hope, faith and justice. The actions of a small group of people are causing Canadians to question the very limits and the very merits of a system that has done much to build our nation as we know it. In short, the deeds of a few have cast a shadow over the reputations of many.

Immigration has provided the very lifeblood of our country. It was the immigrants that carved our forests, worked in our factories, raised our skyscrapers in our cities and provided our

Government Orders

jobs. They did it yesterday. They do it today and we are confident they will continue to do it tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

The amendments to the Immigration Act that we are dealing with today in Bill C-44 are designed to help get the undesirables out of the system and put some of the gleam back in the rainbow. Abuse of the system by a few has been cause for alarm. While the numbers of those causing the problem are small, the damage they have done is large.

We have read the reports, heard the stories, seen the pictures or maybe even attended a funeral. A criminal minority has used the immigration system to its own advantage. There has been slow enforcement and some of us have watched with growing anger while a justice and immigration appeals system was used as a stalling tactic to delay departure orders.

[*English*]

The problem of immigration enforcement is not unique to Canada. It did not start with this government or even the previous one. Instead it is a worldwide problem. To the south our neighbour has ongoing and very well documented enforcement problems. When Cuban jails opened, for instance, Florida was inundated. Barbed wire and armed men guard the Rio Grande. Africa has witnessed war, pestilence and famine resulting in the vast migration of peoples. Only a tiny portion of that tremendous movement of people comes to our shore, but it is significant nonetheless.

(1205)

Last year almost 110 million people in Canada came through primary inspection points at our points of entry. In 1993-94 immigration officials examined over 3 million in detail, handled more than 100,000 immigration applications, conducted over 30,000 investigations and removed at the end some 9,000 people from Canada. In 1993 at the same time we also admitted some 81,000 skilled and/or business workers, some 24,000 refugees and reunited 134,000 people with their families.

We cannot and should not dismiss what is happening as a global phenomenon or excuse it as inevitable when large numbers of people overwhelm a system. When even a small number slip through with false papers, lies or simple misdirection they can cause tremendous pain and suffering, not to mention a backlash on the entire immigrant and refugee community.

It is a Canadian problem that demands a Canadian answer. Now is the time to face the issue and to provide Canadians with the answers.

We have before us today an accountability session in a legislative form for both the government and members of Parliament on all sides of the House. A number of MPs, as they

should, here today pride themselves on listening to their constituents. I hope they have been listening hard because I too have been doing a lot of listening. I know Canadians expect their members of Parliament, all members of Parliament regardless of their political affiliation, to move swiftly with this bill and get it right.

I hear immigrants and refugees telling us and the government to stop that tiny minority of criminals from reflecting badly on everybody else. I hear police chiefs and police officers telling us and the government to change the law to ensure that it is the innocent that are protected, and not the other way around.

I hear, as does my government, people from all across Canada telling us to prevent foreign criminals from infiltrating our country disguised as legitimate immigrants or legitimate refugees.

If we do not deal swiftly and crisply with both the perception and the reality of abuses to our immigration and refugee system, the integrity of the entire process is in jeopardy. When drug dealers or other thugs slip through the cracks of the enforcement or screening net they discredit a program that has made Canada the envy of the world.

[*Translation*]

So it is up to us to fix it. We do not have to take the system apart. We do not have to stop having one of the most progressive immigration and refugee policies in the world. We simply have to fix the system and make it tougher for criminals to claim they are refugees and to prevent thugs from using red tape or muddled intra-government communications to extend their stay in Canada.

When it comes to enforcement of immigration issues, we have to do a better job. The public expects better, the public deserves better, and the public will get better enforcement of immigration issues.

[*English*]

In a moment we can discuss how better enforcement procedures have already started to take place, but the amendments to the Immigration Act before the House are legal arrows for an enforcement quiver. The amendments help protect the true refugee and the average law-abiding immigrant should have no fear of Bill C-44. However the felon that has mistaken Canadian hospitality for a chance to loot the bill will find the doors to our country swing both ways. By strengthening the integrity of the system we will go a very long way toward restoring public trust and take ourselves further down the road toward building a better and a safer Canada. When the House approves these amendments I believe we will see a significant improvement in our enforcement procedures and the speed in which we can remove foreign criminals from our soil.

Government Orders

(1210)

The bill before us presents amendments in more than a dozen areas. I would like simply to touch on a number of them that are more significant in terms of their impact on the current system. Among those are amendments that would stop serious criminals from claiming refugee status simply to delay their removal from Canada.

The legislation will put an end to the ridiculous spectacle, for instance, of an immigration and refugee board having to troop off to Kingston penitentiary to listen to a convicted murderer claiming refugee status. Average Canadians, average members of Parliament, know that is an abuse. However under current legislation the IRB is mandated and has no option but to respond to such a claim for refugee status.

I submit, as does my government, our refugee laws were not put in place to promote that kind of a claim. Rather, those laws are there to protect the legitimate fears of persecution for which Canada has won a Nansen medal, the only country and the only people on the globe to receive that distinction.

At the same time Bill C-44 will permit us to remove the most serious and dangerous criminal from a refugee process that may have already been commenced. If the system found either a serious act of criminality abroad or in Canada and the process had started the system was incapable of doing anything about it. Under Bill C-44 the amendments would provide that where warranted the system would be able to remove an individual from the refugee process and place the individual before an immigration inquiry to deal with the act of serious criminality.

I believe this is a common sense change. The system is not designed to protect the serious criminal. Nor should it be built on incapability of reacting to information once it is discovered by our officials. The time and energy spent dealing with serious criminals slows down the response of the IRB to real problems facing real refugees. That is why we have chosen to act.

When approved the bill will take away the power of the immigration appeal division to allow major criminals to remain in Canada on so-called humanitarian or compassionate grounds. I underline this is not a restriction of rights; it is more a matter of accountability. I also underline this is not an overreaction to a few isolated incidents. Instead it is a reality of the world in which we live. We should never forget the goal is to ensure that the interests of Canadians are protected.

The public across the country wants some balance of the scales of justice in a certain sense, in a common sense and in a fair and equitable way.

(1215)

People want a sense of protection offered to those who seek it. At the same time, when someone contravenes that tolerance and crosses over the letter of the law, then there is a public that expects some kind of balance and some kind of accountability rather than a system that is indifferent to it, rendering a public that is frustrated, cynical and indifferent.

The minister and the government and indeed Parliament must deal with the consequences of any decision to allow a serious criminal to stay in Canada for either humanitarian or compassionate reasons. I believe it is both appropriate and reasonable that the minister and senior officials of the department make that decision.

The immigration appeal division will continue to have jurisdiction for all individuals on questions of law and fact. What we are trying to address is the accountability that the Canadian public demands of us and of its systems. As the law stands now, there is nothing to stop the citizenship process even though a person may be subjected to an immigration enquiry.

If citizenship is obtained the person cannot be deported. Once again we have tried to reflect the feeling of the public that clearly this is not in the best interest of the system. The right hand must know what the left hand is doing in government. Why should a citizenship process continue to move blindly on without due recognition for an immigration enquiry which may or may not be serious?

This bill automatically stops the citizenship process until the immigration inquiry resolves the matter for which that enquiry was caused. The bottom line once again is the protection of our interest and the safety of our country and Canadians.

[Translation]

Other changes mean that two summary convictions—in Canada or elsewhere—will make anyone ineligible to be an immigrant to Canada.

Madam Speaker, let me stress that we are talking about crimes as measured by Canadian legal standards and not political persecution for what some foreign regimes might attempt to disguise as a crime.

[English]

Bill C-44 would also give immigration officers the authority to seize documents from international mail such as passports, driver's licences and credit cards which could and are being used to circumvent immigration requirements or forge documents. This amendment does not apply to domestic mail and is limited to packages weighing more than 30 grams.

There is absolutely no question that the mails are being used to forward identity documents. We would expect the volume to

drop as soon as these amendments are passed. Last year in Toronto, for instance, about 70 packages containing status or identity documents were being located every week. In Montreal the volume was approximately 10 packages. In Vancouver officials found roughly 25.

This flows from a common sense application. Some months ago there was a *Globe and Mail* article that discovered officials from the Department of Justice telling officials from customs and immigration that they were in violation of the law for basically defending our borders through the interdiction of certain mail and fraudulent documentation.

We have moved to bring the law up to speed in order to render the system more accountable to its citizens. The amendments will also allow arrest warrants to be issued for no shows at immigration hearings and will provide an immediate loss of permanent resident status with all removal orders and not some of them.

It will also eliminate the possibility for any one person to have more than one refugee claim processed at the same time.

(1220)

Why should that be any different? We have a good system and people should have one kick at that good system rather than taxing the system and taking away a place for another legitimate individual.

The legislation will also authorize the minister or his officials to approve or reject requests for rehabilitation rather than having the matters go to a full cabinet. In plain language this cuts down the rubber stamp aspect of rehabilitation and treats each individual on their proper merits. This will be far more cost effective, cut back the time needed to make a decision and prevent the issue and the individual from getting buried in a much larger cabinet agenda.

As I mentioned at the outset, there are other elements of bill C-44 that are very positive, valuable and worth supporting. I hope we will have an opportunity to discuss these issues not only in debate form in the House of Commons but with careful scrutiny in committee following second reading.

There are also other elements to limiting abuse within our immigration and refugee network that do not fall under any act or legislation. In this regard I believe it is important for all of us to remember that C-44 should not be seen in isolation but instead should be seen as a part of a more comprehensive package of initiatives to try to come to grips with the minority of those who wish to abuse the right of the many. Some of the fixes simply mean bolstering internal procedures and changing priorities.

Enforcement of immigration issues have been tightened and toughened in recent months. As always we remain cognizant of the rights of the individuals of due process upon which our society is firmly founded.

Government Orders

Our government has already started to streamline its own administrative system. Immigration has speeded and strengthened its liaison with the correctional services of Canada so that foreign offenders will have fewer opportunities to stay in Canada after they have served their time in jail or prison. Once again common sense dictates. Why was it not in place years before now, that somehow immigration Canada was more in sync with corrections Canada so that when those individuals were released from our provincial or federal facilities they could be deported?

Why is it that those individuals serving time in our penitentiaries who ultimately will be deported or served deportation orders enjoy day parole? That is an issue I have raised with the Solicitor General and with my colleague, the Minister of Justice. Again it flows from common sense. If there are individuals who are deportable upon completion of time in prison, why is day parole instituted for those individuals as well? They are not easing into the community. They are easing out of Canada. Therefore I question why day parole should be applied to those individuals.

My colleague, the Minister of Justice, has also made a commitment that the parliamentary committee when reviewing the Young Offenders Act as part of that mandate will also look at how the Young Offenders Act will apply to those young individuals within our country facing deportation. Again, this not a knee-jerk reaction but a studied reaction in this case together with the other issues that certainly will draw the attention of that committee.

Enforcement is a priority of my department. It is not an obsession of my department, it is a priority; a priority that is roughly 10 per cent of our budget which translates roughly into \$56 million for the year 1994-95.

Our system for blocking the entry of criminals has been for the most part been vigilant and effective. Last spring a special operations unit was set up, targeting members of organized crime groups and geared to improving our ability to prevent them from entering Canada.

(1225)

For this purpose we have focused on Asian gangs, the triads, and the yakuza, as well as gangs from Russia and the Caribbean.

I am sure members are also aware of the special joint task force involving immigration officials, members of local and regional police forces, as well as provincial and RCMP forces. They have operational units in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, and their prime directive is to remove foreign criminals from our midst.

I believe that the concept of the joint force is the right approach, not because this minister or this government has deemed it so on July 7, but because in leading up to that decision we discussed the whole concept of the joint force with those who

Government Orders

knew best, the police officers and police chiefs whose mandate it is to serve and protect us and our communities.

I hope we have the patience for this force to be allowed to do its job and as I mentioned in Montreal last month to the police chiefs association there are two things that can endanger this type of joint force. One is jurisdictional squabbling which has not been the case, and I take my hat off to the four different forces that have converged in the joint forces. The second aspect is the whole thirst or appetite for what I would refer to as number crunching or bean counting. At the end of the day the mandate of this force is to get the job done, but also not to ask these professionals things that are also irresponsible of some of those who ask it of them in order to say how many did you get today, how many did you get this week, did you get them all last week.

The mandate is a very difficult one for these individuals but they are professionals and they will get the job done. In the United States the joint force concept has run into problems for those two reasons. It is my hope, not for the short term but for the long term, that we allow this force to work and not only work in terms of removing the individuals that we all believe ought to be removed but also to render us through the experience and the information that they will get in how enforcement is best done and by whom.

If the professionals come back and tell this Parliament that enforcement is more of a policing discipline and not an immigration one, then so be it. Let us answer the riddle once and for all but let us allow those professionals to do the job they are capable of doing.

There may be other improvements that we can usher in to the system and one such recommendation for instance coming from some of the police chiefs is to permit judges to not recommend deportations at the time of giving sentence but to order deportations at the time of sentencing so that the system is leaner, so that the issues of that individual are all dealt with at the right time, and that there is full due process for the individual's counsel and lawyer to react to that judge's ordering of a deportation rather than recommending and then having it go back to immigration and before an immigration appeal division and so on.

That will necessitate not a change in my act but a change in the Criminal Code. As parliamentarians we should be interested in this issue and prepared also to look at making the relevant amendments if we think those amendments will work and if we think those amendments are fair.

[*Translation*]

There have been difficulties with some removals from Canada to some countries because of problems obtaining foreign travel documentation. Senior officials are dealing with this problem and it will be resolved soon.

The immigration department is continuing to step up its international efforts to prevent undesirables from entering the country and is working closely with the RCMP and a number of foreign control authorities and in partnership with airlines.

(1230)

[*English*]

Having acknowledged the problem and having attempted to define the scope of the problem, there is certainly something else to be said. If we do not deal with these issues now in the light of day, there are those who would appeal to the darker side of our character and use the excuse of public safety to cloak a negative and hurtful agenda aimed at shutting off all immigration. I say and my government says that we cannot allow this any more than we can allow criminals to wipe their feet on our welcome mat.

It is important that every one of us in this Chamber work toward exploding the myths surrounding our immigration and refugee process.

[*Translation*]

Yes, there are problems and I have just acknowledged what some of them are. But to those who claim that immigrants are bilking our welfare system, we have to say that this simply is not so.

Statistics show that native-born Canadians are more likely to use the social assistance safety net than are immigrants.

[*English*]

For those who fear we are in the icy grip of an immigration crime wave, we have to tell them and those individuals among us that this too is far from reality.

A recent research paper prepared for a law conference at Carleton University in our capital said bluntly that immigrants were under represented in the criminal population. Researchers found that the so-called immigrant crime appeared primarily to be less serious crime. Social scientists say that a likely explanation for this so-called under representation among the criminal element is due in some part to the screening process that takes place before the immigrant arrives on our shores.

I also know equally that it is difficult and sometimes impossible to compare the dull, dry figures from a research paper with the heartache and anger that comes with the story at the top of our supper time news. As parliamentarians we must stress again and again that there is a lot more to immigration than a news story about a thief in the corner store, as important as that is, to the safety of all our neighbourhoods and communities.

Look over your back fence. What do you see? The chances are you see a neighbour who is an immigrant or is a son or daughter of an immigrant. I see the crime stories in my clipping service every day at 6.30 in the morning but I do not hear quite so often stories about people like Kim Loan Hua. Who is Kim? She is an immigrant. She came here penniless in 1979 as part of the

Government Orders

100,000 Vietnamese boat people Canada received. She was one of those. She has now opened four restaurants in Toronto and employs over 20 people. Kim was a refugee and is now a Canadian entrepreneur.

What about Shan Chandrasekar? He came from India. He overstayed. He obtained permission years ago to be able to stay legally in Canada and in the process founded a television network to serve the Canadian-Asian community.

What does that say? It says that for every criminal named in the press with an immigrant tag we can give 10,000 cases of immigrants and recent Canadians who are anything but a problem for or a drain on the country and who despise the antics of troublemakers and the lawlessness of hooligans as much as anyone in this Chamber.

(1235)

Are we courageous enough to say so? How about the guy who coaches your kid's little league? Some of our Nobel prize winners have been immigrants. Our novelists, opera stars, painters, politicians, teachers and even some of our best journalists were not born in this country.

When we hear the word immigrant we should not automatically think crime. We also should not automatically think superstar either. Instead we should think of a neighbour, of a colleague, of a husband or a wife.

When I met with the Canadian association of chiefs of police last month, I told them I expected speedy passage of this legislation. I reiterated that this morning because we must act decisively and expeditiously. The law must be changed quickly in light of the public concern for the well-being of our immigration refugee system.

I am convinced that this legislation will go a long way in protecting those so close to us from the stigma of criminality brought on by a tiny minority who have slipped through the cracks. Madam Speaker and colleagues, let us get on with it and seal up those cracks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Madam Speaker, this is my first speech in the House today, after the summer recess. Before speaking to Bill C-44, however, I would like to congratulate the Parti Québécois on its splendid victory on September 12, and also the new Premier of Quebec, Mr. Jacques Parizeau, a man with the stature of a true statesman.

I also want to congratulate the 77 members elected for the Parti québécois, the 47 members of the Quebec Liberal Party and Mr. Mario Dumont, leader of Action Démocratique. Some, like myself, belong to the ethnic community.

I will now speak in this debate on second reading of Bill C-44, which proposes to amend the Immigration Act, the Citizenship Act and the Customs Act. These amendments, according to the authors of the bill, concern 14 specific points. For instance, some changes will have the effect of stopping a person convicted of a major crime—that is, punishable by a maximum prison term of 10 years—in Canada or outside Canada, from claiming refugee status to delay his removal from Canada. Immigration officers will have the power to seize from international mail documents that could be used for fraudulent purposes. In the case of serious criminals, the Immigration Appeal Division will no longer have the power to allow appeals on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Grounds for appeals before the Immigration Appeal Division will from now on be limited to questions of law and fact. A person for whose arrest a warrant has been signed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Solicitor General of Canada, because he represents a threat to public safety, will lose the right to appeal.

(1240)

Processing of an application for citizenship may be suspended, pending the outcome of immigration proceedings. A person convicted of two summary conviction offences—a minor offence punishable by a prison term of not more than six months—whether the offences were committed in Canada or outside Canada, may be prevented from immigrating to Canada. The minister, instead of the Governor in Council, will have the authority to approve requests for admission on the basis of rehabilitation, and the minister may delegate this authority to employees of the department. The obligation to conduct a new inquiry in the case of a person who has been ordered to leave Canada has been removed, so that a person loses permanent resident status as soon as he is ordered deported.

We in the Bloc québécois agree with the general, underlying principles of Bill C-44, that is to say, the government has the right and a duty to protect Canada and all Canadians against criminals. We agree with preventing immigrants and claimants from taking advantage of Canada's reputation as a host country to leave their country of origin where they have committed serious crimes.

We must eliminate or at least reduce the ways in which immigrant refugee claimants who have been convicted of serious crimes can stay in Canada legally.

We agree with restricting the admissibility of convicted criminals. We must ensure that serious criminals who manage to escape removal are deported as soon as possible. In 1993, Immigration Canada deported 1,200 criminals; between January 1 and May 31, 1994, 600 criminals were deported. This effort

Government Orders

must be pursued for the safety of the people of Quebec and Canada.

We have many more questions and concerns regarding Bill C-44. This bill is an excessive response to certain problems and situations that have arisen over the past few months in Canada. It is the Liberal government's response to the strict, right-wing stand the Reform Party has taken concerning immigrants and refugees.

The minister's speech today only confirms this shift to the right the minister and the Liberal Party have made. I have read the speech he had made as the Official Opposition Critic for Immigration. He was much more of a humanist back then. I endorsed his ideas and objectives in those days, but not any more.

The Bloc Québécois has condemned and still condemns the murder of a young woman in a Toronto restaurant and that of a Toronto police officer. The unfortunate fact about these two murders is that they were committed by immigrants subject to a deportation order. The media gave far too much notoriety to these incidents.

On July 7, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration launched a blitz to deport out of Canada some 600 criminal immigrants. To this effect, he set up a special task force of immigration officers and members of the RCMP and the local police, to identify, trace and hasten the expulsion of foreign criminals from Canada.

Based on information from *La Presse*, this special task force has found, after going over the various cases, that only 90 of the 600 immigrants with serious criminal records were in Quebec.

(1245)

It also found that half, or 45, of them were already in jail. Seven of the 45 still at large had left Canada of their own free will. Of the 38 cases remaining, 5 have been resolved; three criminals had been arrested and deported, and the other two had been summoned before an immigration officer. As of July 19, in Quebec, there were only 33 cases pending and as we speak, I trust these too have been settled.

The special task force was manned by 4 RCMP officers in both Montreal and Vancouver and by 12 officers in Toronto. In addition to creating this group, the Standing Committee on Justice is reviewing the question of how young offenders who are not Canadian citizens and who have been convicted of crimes should be treated. Finally, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and Correctional Service Canada for expediting the deportation of foreign criminals.

Again, we urge the government to take the measures required to prevent abuses and protect Canadians and Quebecers against criminals, but we cannot endorse Bill C-44 as it now stands.

In our opinion, some provisions of this bill violate the Geneva Convention on Refugees as well as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Furthermore, it restricts without justification the mandate of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Unlike the Geneva convention, this bill does not distinguish between refugee claimants who have committed political crimes in their native countries and those convicted of non-political crimes. In determining refugee status, the first thing to be considered should be the nature and purpose of the offence, in particular whether it was committed for political or other reasons.

On the other hand, there should be a certain balance between the seriousness of the crime and the danger to Canadian society. The Geneva convention, confirmed by Federal Court jurisprudence, states that this element of comparison must be considered.

Professor James Hathaway writes that the seriousness of the crime must also be weighed against the possibility that the life or safety of a person sent back to his or her native country may be at risk. The bill does not address this aspect of the issue.

The purpose of the bill is to prevent people convicted of serious offences for which a term of imprisonment of ten years or more may be imposed from claiming refugee status. This means that the actual seriousness of the offence will not be taken into account, which we think is unfair and arbitrary.

In our opinion, the actual sentence imposed and not the maximum sentence should be considered. Every offence can be committed in a great variety of circumstances, some of which call for the maximum sentence while others only call for the minimum sentence. Our Criminal Code does not specify a minimum sentence for most offences. Therefore, a person could be convicted of a crime for which a term of imprisonment of ten years or more may be imposed without being jailed or fined.

(1250)

He would only be given a suspended sentence or put on probation. Despite all that, the minister can issue a certificate declaring that person to be a public danger, which I think is unfair and arbitrary.

This situation could violate the Geneva convention. Indeed, the manual of the High Commissioner for Refugees says that in evaluating the nature of the crime allegedly committed, all relevant factors, including extenuating circumstances, must be considered. Do not forget that we are talking about refugees

Government Orders

here, human beings for whom being deported to their country could be very dangerous in some cases and even fatal.

Under the bill, many decisions that were made by the IRB will now be made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and his officials. Despite all the criticisms we have of the IRB and the mistakes it has made, I prefer that tribunal to be fully in charge of determining refugee status. It is a quasi-judicial specialized tribunal, whose duty it is to hear the parties. The minister's decision is purely administrative and often politically motivated. Thus, many decisions will be based solely on foreign policy considerations and the state of relations between Canada and the refugee claimant's country of origin. We think that Bill C-44 is a government attack on the IRB's independence.

Obviously the minister did not like some of this administrative tribunal's decisions. So what does he do? He removes a large part of its jurisdiction. This is a blatant contradiction of the Davis-Waldman report, which the minister said reduced the need for him to intervene in the refugee determination process. Bill C-44 does the opposite and considerably increases the minister's involvement in this field. It prevents not only refugees but also permanent residents who committed crimes outside Canada from going to the IRB. This bill must be denounced, for it attacks one of the fundamental principles of our legal system, namely the right of appeal. It takes away the right to appeal to the Immigration Appeals Division for humanitarian considerations following a deportation order based on the commission in Canada or abroad of a crime punishable by ten or more years in prison.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies to all. Basic rights to a fair and impartial procedure should also apply to foreigners. I agree with the position expressed by the Canadian Council for Refugees that refugees and permanent residents must be able to apply to the appeal division of the IRB.

This bill is also contrary to the right of family reunification. In some cases, a person will be deported even though his whole family stays in Canada. It is really regrettable that this fundamental aspect of Canada's immigration policy, which is part of the program of the Liberal Party of Canada, is being attacked in this International Year of the Family. This might violate conventions signed by Canada, such as the convention against torture, the principles of the United Nations on arbitrary arrest and detention, the Geneva convention on human rights in wartime, the declaration on disappearance and missing persons, etc.

(1255)

In that context, the bill might also violate sections 7 and 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. I also oppose the provision which provides the right to search international mail

and authorizes immigration officers to seize identification papers and other documents sent by international mail or other means, in an attempt to circumvent the Immigration Act. This could lead to abuse. It is to be noted that immigration officers already have the authority to search those seeking to be admitted to Canada, as well as their baggage.

The bill also authorizes immigration officers to request a warrant for the arrest of any person who does not appear at the meeting to which he was summoned. The police will arrest that person and his name will be filed at the Canadian Police Information Centre. Under normal circumstances, police will arrest a person only under the authority of a warrant delivered by a judge. We know that a person will often not show up because he moved and did not get the notification to appear. On September 13, I attended the National Conference on Immigration, in Ottawa. Working group no. 7, which was set up by the minister during the consultation process, looked at control and law enforcement, which are the issues dealt with in Bill C-44. Why did the minister not hold consultations before tabling this legislation?

I am asking that this bill be referred for review by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Lawyers specializing in immigration law, as well as the organizations working in the field of immigration and with refugees, including the Canadian Council for Refugees, should have the opportunity to be heard by the committee. I am also very interested in hearing from the IRB. For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will oppose this bill at second reading.

I want to take this opportunity to raise other issues related to immigration and refugees. In Quebec, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration closed four regional offices in July to concentrate all its services in a single centre located in Montreal. This decision must be strongly criticized and this is what we are doing today. We must oppose these closures which have resulted in lost jobs, in Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada. There is another problem I would like to mention, namely the new rates recently imposed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Many people who were granted refugee status by the IRB are unable to pay \$500 per adult and \$100 per child to secure permanent residence in Canada. I made representations to the minister and his department in the hope of finding a solution to this problem but so far with little success. How can you demand immediate payment in the amount of \$1,400 from a newly arrived family in a state of total despair and often without any money whatsoever?

If I may digress for a moment, I would like to salute the employees of Ogilvie Mills Ltd, especially those of ethnic origin, who have been on strike since June 6 last. Located in Montreal, this mill manufactures Five Roses flour.

Government Orders

(1300)

Today, they are protesting on the Hill and I will meet with them later on. I take this opportunity not only to express my solidarity to them but also to ask the Minister of Human Resources Development to table a bill amending the federal Labour Code by including an anti-scab provision. Such a provision already exists in the Quebec Labour Code and is very successful.

[English]

As you well know, Madam Speaker, I came to Quebec in 1974 following a military coup which took place in Chile on September 11, 1973. My wife, my two children, then five and three years old, myself and thousands of other Chileans were very well received by the people of Quebec who were profoundly generous. We worked and continue to work hard to ensure a better life for our children and our grandchildren and to make our contribution to the progress of this society.

However, today I am profoundly sad because of this anti-immigrant sentiment in Canada and because of this anti-refugee sentiment in Canada.

[Translation]

It is appearing in Canada as in rich nations all over the world.

The contribution of immigrants to all sectors of the economic, social, cultural and even political life of this country is immeasurable.

I am proud to have been elected, last October, to the House of Commons by a majority of francophones in Montreal-Nord, with the support of the labour movement and various ethno-cultural communities, twenty years after coming to this country. I am even prouder of the fact that my leader asked me to be our party critic for citizenship and immigration.

I believe that this bill, even though it contains certain positive elements, will be perceived as linking immigration and criminal activities and will therefore exacerbate xenophobia and racism in Canada. Statistics clearly show that new immigrants are more law-abiding and that their crime rate is lower than that of Canadians by birth. This bears repeating.

I ask the minister to immediately launch a comprehensive awareness and information campaign to apprise all Canadians of the facts regarding immigration including the benefits that flow from it, as well as the huge contribution immigrants have always made to this country.

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my evaluation of Bill C-44 by saying it is a small step in the right direction.

For several years Canadians have been saying they have a deep concern about Canada's immigration system. These concerns have included the fact that many Canadians consider immigration levels to be too high. Other concerns are the skill and education levels of immigrants entering Canada and the effectiveness of the immigration department in enforcing government policy.

(1305)

If the Liberal government wants Canadians to place faith in the system and the elected officials who administer it then the government has a moral obligation to look at these concerns and to act in the interests of all Canadians.

One of the chief concerns of Canadians in this area is the relationship between immigration and crime. In the past year there have been several high profile cases in which immigrants to Canada were involved in criminal activity which could have been avoided had proper action been taken. The result was an increased focus on the relationship between immigration and the criminal justice system.

Confidential government documents leaked to the media revealed: "There is a sense that the immigration program is out of control". This is the public perception of Canadians who feel and again I quote: "Immigrants need to be better selected". Very clearly Canadians want to see changes in the way the immigration system in Canada operates.

Perhaps not very surprising, this is the view that has been put forward by my Reform colleagues and I for some time. I believe this is because our party has a policy of first of all understanding the wishes and desires of grassroots Canadians. This means our party pays very close attention to what our constituents are telling us. They have been telling us for a long time now that they are losing faith in the immigration system because they believe it is being poorly administered and poorly enforced.

I am pleased to see that the Liberal government is finally listening to the common sense solutions that the Reform Party has been putting forward on this issue for some time. As I mentioned before, I see the bill as a step in the right direction. But our party has chosen not to lend support to this bill for two main reasons.

The first is that the legislation is not properly structured to keep immigrants with criminal backgrounds from entering into Canada's refugee system. The second is the fear that the Liberal government will use the passage of this legislation as an excuse to take no further action on the concerns the Canadian public has about the immigration process.

This bill does take a step in the right direction. One of the elements of the bill which my party is in support of is that it empowers the senior immigration officers who are the first contact applicants have with the immigration system. The bill would allow these officers upon discovery of a criminal

background to stop the processing of an individual's application to enter into the immigration or refugee process.

This will serve a number of purposes. It will save Canadian taxpayers money because they will not have to pay for the processing of cases which would be appropriately rejected in any case. It will save immigration officials time which can be better spent processing the claims of applicants without a criminal background. More time spent studying these routine applications means fraudulent claims are less likely to be approved, giving the immigration department more credibility in the eyes of Canadians. Finally, the measure makes the common sense move of protecting the Canadian public from foreign born criminals who want to come to our country. All of these are excellent goals.

Unfortunately, this legislation does not go far enough to ensure they are achieved. The problem is that immigration officers are still not being given the tools to do their job. Officers now have the power to refuse to process applications if they discover a criminal background. At the same time, they are not being given the power to do background checks on those applicants. In fact it was recently revealed by a member of the Canada employment and immigration union that refugee claimants are not given security screenings before facing the refugee board. The proposed legislation gives the immigration officers necessary new powers but does not grant them the means to exercise them. An illustration of the problem was a news report by the *Canadian Press* published September 12. The report stated that there are very severe guidelines which restrict immigration officials as to what they may ask refugee claimants. The report also stated that this could mean people who should not get into Canada may be slipping past the immigration and refugee board.

(1310)

Here are a few examples of those guidelines. Officials cannot request information from the immigration department about a refugee aside from identity papers and passports. This means officers cannot check statements made at a hearing against the claims made when the refugee first entered Canada. Officers cannot investigate claims through sources such as the police. Only board officials can now use public record sources.

Officers may not press reluctant claimants for answers on particular issues because that could be perceived as being adversarial.

The effect of this bill is to grant powers to officers without giving them means to exercise these powers. It would be like giving a highway patrolman the power to arrest speeders without allowing him to use radar to detect those speeders.

Government Orders

This leads us to the second major reason why the Reform Party is opposing this bill. That reason is enforcement.

One of the intentions of this bill is to detect problems early in a system so that deportation orders can be issued to those who do not qualify. However, as we have seen over the past year, there have been serious problems with those deportation orders.

Several high profile cases have demonstrated that the issuing of deportation orders does not ensure removal. The numbers indicate that of 25,000 deportation orders last year, only 8,200 were verifiably carried out. Despite the fact that 1,200 criminals were deported last year, 3,000 more deportable criminals disappeared and have not been found.

Immigration enforcement officers are so overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of deportables that they are unable to execute a removal order unless the individual voluntarily turns up.

In Toronto there are 30 enforcement officers charged with the execution of deportation orders or investigation of legal residency of 40,000 cases. More deportation orders will likely only increase the backlog rather than actually clear many more people out of the country.

The greatest benefit of this legislation is that it would prevent some criminals from getting into the immigration and refugee system, but should the aim of the government not be a bit higher than this? A few simple changes could put some real teeth in this legislation.

To begin with, how about granting more power to individual immigration officers? This would mean giving them the power to do background checks and giving them greater access to data banks. This could save Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars as well.

If I understand correctly the intentions of the legislation before us today, the government is interested in adding an element of common sense to the process. This legislation is saying Canadians do not want immigrants or refugees with criminal backgrounds to come into this country.

Why do we not give the immigration officers the means to find this out before their cases come before the immigration refugee board? It would save all involved time and prevent costly hearings which would only result in the dismissal of the application in any case.

Another measure which would give this legislation teeth would be the beefing up of the enforcement of deportation orders. I am aware that in response to public pressure the minister did appoint extra staff to deal with this problem. Is this handful of extra officers really having an effect? The government needs to devote even further resources to staff and to the enforcement of deportation orders. Warrants should be issued so that the whole police network can enforce these immigration laws.

Government Orders

(1315)

When 3,000 deportable criminals disappear into Canadian society in just one year, the potential for harm to the general public is tremendous. Justice cannot be served when the law cannot be enforced. If the deportation orders issued cannot be carried out then the immigration system has very little credibility in the eyes of the Canadian public.

These are the two main reasons other Reform MPs and I cannot bring ourselves to support this bill. But do not get us wrong. We think the intentions of the bill are dead on the mark. We are very pleased the government is listening to Reform Party members and putting some of our ideas into effect. We have been listening to the Canadian people on this issue and we are pleased the government is finally starting to do the same thing.

To be quite frank, my colleagues and I did consider giving qualified support to these measures. Our party believes the parliamentary system does not necessarily require opposition parties to always be adversarial. However, after scrutinizing the legislation we came to the conclusion that we could not in good conscience support the bill. We cannot give our support to legislation without teeth. If we fail to oppose this bill the government could claim to have dealt with the issue and simply moved on to other business. But the truth is that the Liberals have not dealt effectively with this bill. Their failure to do this could have terrible ramifications for the people whose interests we are elected to represent.

This bill is definitely well intentioned but it does not go far enough. The Canadian public expects elected officials to deliver a lot more than good intentions.

I believe I speak for the majority of Canadians when I say there are a number of problems with the current government's approach to immigration. The shortcomings of this particular legislation are just a small part of the larger problem. Quite frankly, public support for immigration policy in this country is at an all time low. Canadians have little faith in the current system and want to see changes made. This means that governments must stop serving special interests and instead make decisions in the interests of the country as a whole.

There are four main areas of immigration policy which the government must reform if it is to win back the trust of the Canadian people. These four areas are: enforcement; the growth of the so-called immigration industry; economic self-interest in selecting applicants; and the unacceptably high immigration levels.

I raised the topic of enforcement earlier in reference to deportation orders, but the issue goes much farther than that. When it comes to immigration there are many areas where the government has a policy to protect the needs and the interests of Canadians but simply does not follow through on enforcing this policy. An example is the breakdown of sponsorships.

Sponsorship is one of the cornerstones of the government's current immigration policy. It consists of an individual in this country supporting an immigrant and vouching that the immigrant will not become a burden on the Canadian social safety net. Sponsorship is an excellent idea. It remains a key component in the success of many newcomers coming to Canada. Unfortunately, sponsorship is just one component of our immigration policy in which an enforcement component is almost entirely lacking.

Mainstream media organizations such as the *Toronto Star* have been reporting on breakdowns in sponsorships for some time now but nothing has been done. What generally happens is that unable to find work, recent immigrants turn to Canada's social safety net rather than to the person who agreed to sponsor them. What are the ramifications of this? To my knowledge, very little is done to counteract this avoidance of responsibility. The end result is negative for all involved.

(1320)

For the Canadian taxpayer the promise of a productive contributing citizen is broken. It is replaced with yet another individual who will require the expenditure of already scarce government resources.

For provinces and municipalities, it is yet another form of offloading from the federal government. Provinces and municipalities bear the brunt of providing services such as social assistance. When an immigrant sponsorship breaks down, the responsibility falls to the province. It is forced to take responsibility for a situation it had no hand in creating.

The breakdown in immigrant sponsorship is especially an insult to the majority of immigrants who come to Canada, work hard to contribute to this country and remain true to their promise not to become a burden on Canada's social safety net. As is often the case, wrongdoing on the part of some members of a group results in the perception that the entire group is guilty.

That is why the federal government must make the enforcement of immigrant sponsorships a priority. It would greatly raise the credibility of the immigration system in the eyes of the Canadian public. It would also honour the efforts of those sponsored immigrants who work to maintain their sponsorships and remove an unwelcome burden from all taxpayers, both those who came to Canada and those who were born here.

Another area in which a lack of enforcement calls into question the credibility of the immigration system is business class immigrants. These are immigrants who have lived in this country because they have capital to invest and have promised to create new enterprises. This is another case where the government policy has the correct priority.

This country needs the influx of capital and the enterprising spirit brought by business class immigrants. The problem is there is not a very stringent enforcement of these regulations. Promises of investment and new jobs do Canada very little good

Government Orders

unless they are acted upon. It is once again the case that immigrants are asked to keep a pledge but face very little reprisal if that pledge is not kept. Again the credibility of the system is called into question and the reputation of honest business class immigrants is sullied by those who fail to fulfil their pledges.

It is understandable that immigration bureaucrats would not invest the time to look into these areas of immigration policy. After all, it would simply create more work for the agency's already overburdened enforcement arm.

These are the words of one federal audit: "Poorly run sector of the immigration department is what is ultimately responsible for carrying out government policy". The August 1993 study of the enforcement branch obtained under the Access to Information Act portrayed the branch as racked by inadequate management systems, poor communications and inadequate safety for its officers.

One of the key criticisms in this report was the procedures that stood in the way of officers getting easy access to unemployment insurance, citizenship and social services records. The report said that allowing immigration officers access to this information would facilitate enforcement activities and increase effectiveness. This is exactly what I was speaking about earlier. Immigration officers need to be able to access information on immigrants and potential immigrants and refugees in order to make the system work. This issue is almost entirely overlooked in the legislation we are debating now. It is one of the major reasons we could not bring ourselves to support it.

One of the demands the Canadian public is making of the immigration system is that it be effective. In order to be effective the department must be able to enforce the policies it operates by. Failure to enforce these policies means a loss in credibility which is why so many Canadians are cynical about the immigration process.

(1325)

If the minister of immigration would like Canadians to once again have faith in this department, he must take steps to strengthen enforcement. This is not being done by the current legislation.

If the government is going to re-establish the faith of Canadians in this country's immigration system, the second area it must make a priority in reforming is ending the support for the burgeoning immigration industry. I am talking about the bureaucrats, the lawyers, the academics and the social engineers who rely on a high immigration rate to either further their own careers or justify their own jobs.

The people I am referring to here are not necessarily bad people. Often times they feel they are doing what is best for all involved. Unfortunately, however, they have ended up creating a system funded by taxpayers in which the primary benefits go to those who collect salaries and not to the immigration needs for the Canadian public as a whole. I am referring for example to immigration lawyers who are paid to try the cases of the huge backlog of refugees.

The amount of money spent on these lawyers and on the commissions they appear before is astronomical. The cost of the Immigration and Refugee Board alone is \$250 million a year. Think about that: one-quarter of a billion dollars for a system which deems only 15 per cent of refugees inadmissible to this country. To contrast this the Canadian government gives only \$30 million a year to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the organization responsible for caring for many of the 20 million refugees who currently exist on this planet.

I ask members of this House which would be a more utilitarian use of this money: paying lawyers to spend countless hours preparing appeals of board decisions or providing fresh water and medicine to war ravaged refugees in Africa?

I recognize there is a need for due process in the admission of immigrants and refugees to this country but I maintain there has to be a better way. This bill takes an important first step by stripping the appeal division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of its ability to overturn deportation orders on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. I suspect this will have little effect on the \$250 million spent every year on hearings and appeals.

I spoke to several constituents this summer who expressed their anger over the amount they correctly assumed this department must cost the Canadian taxpayer. Their common sense solution was to find a way to speed up the process to better serve the interests of genuine refugee claimants and immigrants and the Canadian public as a whole. The people I spoke with are not angry with immigrants. They are angry at the immigration system.

The annual expense of this immigration industry to Canadian taxpayers has never been properly calculated but we can safely assume it is tremendous. It involves a myriad of expenses. What is the cost to the provinces of immigrants who use social housing? What is the cost of English as a second language programs in different school districts? Getting this type of information is difficult because the provincial and federal governments rarely share this data.

What must be understood is that all of these expenses are the result of federal immigration policy. Therefore it is the responsibility of this House to consider these costs when making its decisions.

Government Orders

I must again stress that the increasing anger of Canadians over immigration policy is not with the immigrants themselves. It is anger with the system that administers this policy in a way which is not in the best interests of Canadians as a whole.

A big part of the problem is that Canadians see a large and rapidly increasing sum of money being spent on immigration programs at a time when funds are being cut back for health care and education. They are asking if this money is being spent unnecessarily. They have every right to ask without being called racist or small minded. I say this because proponents of the current approach to government policy often refuse to enter into a debate about these issues, preferring instead to attempt to sully the reputation of those who raise the issues in the first place.

(1330)

Does Canada really need the immigration industry we have built up over the years? About 15 years ago Canada, along with other countries in the western world, was asked to respond to the plight of Vietnamese boat people. These were genuine refugees who because of their political situation were forced out of their homes.

Canadians opened their doors wide to these people but in a very different way than we do today. Community groups and churches took it upon themselves to sponsor individual refugees and families. They made sure they had a place to stay, taught them English and French, and helped them integrate into the fabric of society. These immigrants in turn laboured to quickly adapt to their new home, learning English and French and furthering themselves through education and hard work.

Today instead of community groups and churches we have subsidized housing and government sponsored language training. Instead of inviting immigrants and refugees into our social circles we stick them in downtown high rises and housing projects and ask why these groups have so much trouble adapting to the Canadian way of life.

The only explanation is the growth of the immigration industry. It is a well intentioned and highly paid group of individuals whose own self-interests are reflected in the decisions they make for everyone. Proper enforcement of immigration policy and curtailing the growing immigration industry could go a long way toward re-establishing the faith of Canadians in our immigration system.

A third and equally important consideration is ensuring the admission of immigrants to Canada is done with the best economic interests of the country in mind. Current statistics vary on how many immigrants come to Canada based on their ability to contribute to the country economically.

In his column in the July 14 *Globe and Mail* Michael Valpy said: "Immigration policy used to be selective. Now only 15 per cent of it is selective. The rest is determined by family

reunification and a policy of refugee acceptance that is the most liberal in the world".

The Canada immigration facts and issues publication put out by Citizenship and Immigration Canada noted: "About 15 per cent of immigrants are evaluated for their potential economic benefit to Canada". The same publication noted that over half of all immigrants, 55 per cent, were admitted either as family class immigrants or refugees.

Quite frankly the government is giving too little priority to admitting immigrants to Canada based on their potential economic benefit to our country. This is especially disturbing because, as the government has often pointed out, we are now a part of a global economy and this is changing the nature of our economy at home.

There is currently little demand for an abundant supply of unskilled labour. Education is now the key to the success of individuals. There is little opportunity for employment and advancement for anyone with less than a high school diploma.

A good example of this point can be seen in my riding of Cariboo—Chilcotin, specifically in my hometown of Williams Lake. When I was growing up jobs were relatively abundant in the area as there were many mills, ranches and mines. A capacity for hard physical labour was often just as important as any type of education one might have.

Today the area is much different. Employment is hard to come by if one does not have a proper education. The jobs once performed by a large payroll of semi-skilled labourers have now been replaced with machines and technology. On the positive side this has meant an increase in well paying jobs for highly skilled workers such as engineers, agriculturalists and technicians, and a better quality of life for those employed in these industries.

In the past immigrants were drawn to Williams Lake because of the economic opportunities provided by resource based industries. However over the years less and less of these opportunities have been available.

(1335)

The lesson to be learned from this experience as a parent and relevant to the debate we are having today on the topic of change to the Immigration Act is that the government must place more of a priority on attracting immigrants to Canada that have the necessary skills and education. I would suggest this be accomplished by reducing the number of individuals admitted to Canada as family class immigrants.

A confidential report prepared for the immigration minister and leaked to the media suggests this very idea. It has recommended family class immigration be redefined to grant automatic acceptance only to spouses and children sponsored by Canadians or landed immigrants. I would suggest the shortfall made by reducing this category be replaced by immigrants that

Government Orders

have the economic skills and education to make a greater contribution to this nation.

We should also remember that family reunification here often means family disunification in the immigrant's native country. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you and other members of the House are familiar with the Statistics Canada report entitled Canada's changing immigrant population. The report noted how immigrants compared in many respects to native born Canadians. It found that a higher percentage of immigrants, 19 per cent, than native born Canadians, 13 per cent, had less than a grade nine education.

With the requirements of the Canadian economy changing to demand a stronger educational background in workers the government must place more of a priority on admitting people to this country that will be employable and competitive in our markets.

Proponents of unbridled immigration would probably argue against this policy. They would suggest tight restrictions on the sponsorship of family class immigrants are unduly cruel and uncaring. I am sure they would also suggest that emphasis on attracting immigrants to this country based on their potential economic contribution would be crassly materialistic and greedy.

I would say to these people that they are out of touch with current economic realities. Canada needs skilled workers if it is to remain competitive. By the same token what it does not need is further pressure placed on the social safety nets which are stretched to the breaking point at this time in any event.

Grassroots Canadians have been telling the Reform Party for a long time that they would like to see more emphasis placed on admitting to the country individuals with job skills and education and less emphasis placed on admitting individuals with little to offer. If the minister hopes to restore the faith of Canadians in the immigration system, responding to these desires would go a long way toward doing this.

Finally, I believe reducing current immigration levels would go a long way toward re-establishing the faith of Canadians in immigration policy and in the immigration system.

Before I begin making my argument for a reduction in immigration levels I must point out that it has been the policy of the Reform Party for some time to pursue lower immigration levels than are the current Canadian norm. Our party policy, which is based on the wishes and desires of our members, states that current immigration levels should be reduced to approximately 150,000 people per year.

Despite our opponents' attempts to label us as anti-immigrant we are in fact pro-immigrant. We simply believe current immigration levels are high and are not based on providing social or economic benefits to this country. It is clearly the desire of a

majority of Canadians to see immigration to the country lowered from current levels.

In March a survey commissioned by the federal government found that an unprecedented clear majority of Canadians, in the words of the *Globe and Mail* columnist, Michael Valpy, thought immigration levels were too high. As the same columnist noted, other research found the decision to set high levels was based on increasingly unrealistic economic expectations of immigrants.

It is very clear the majority of Canadians would like to see lower immigration levels. By refusing to lower the government's current level of 250,000 people per year the federal government and the immigration minister are quite clearly denying the will of the people.

I believe it is because of our emphasis on consulting our constituents that Reform became the first party in the House to pursue a policy of lower immigration levels. The government is beginning to see the wisdom of this approach. It is my sincere wish that the Liberal government and the minister of immigration soon alter their own policy.

(1340)

Senior advisors working in the immigration department have recently recommended that immigration levels be reduced by 20 per cent to 200,000. This information was contained in an 18-page confidential report prepared for the minister of immigration. It notes that as a result of public consultations there was a sense the immigration program is out of control and urges that immigrants be better selected. Now that the minister has completed his tax funded study of public opinion on the issue of immigration I hope he will act on the knowledge he gained in the process.

The minister and the Liberal Party have a distinct disadvantage in this regard. Unlike Reform they do not believe in voting with or in some cases representing the interests and opinions of their constituents. The Reform Party has a distinct advantage in this area. We truly believe in listening to our members and constituents and voting with their interests despite our personal stance. This means during times the Liberal caucus met to discuss how they felt Canadians should be governed the Reform Party was out asking those same Canadians how they wanted to be governed. This meant very early on the Reform Party knew very clearly what actions Canadian people wanted to be taken.

I do not understand why the immigration minister and the Liberal government remain so irrationally committed to maintaining high levels of immigration. Canada continues to have the highest immigration level in the industrialized world. The result of this is that Canada has the highest growth rate in the west and ex-Soviet block at 1.4 per cent a year. That is a higher growth rate than Argentina, China, Thailand, Korea, Sri Lanka and Uruguay. This growing population requires an increased quantity of government provided services every year at a time when

Government Orders

governments at every level are finding it difficult to raise sufficient revenues.

One of the best ways to judge what should be our current immigration level is to look at the immigration levels in countries similar to our own. A good example would be the United States. Americans have long prided themselves on being a country which welcomes immigrants with open arms by saying: "Give us your poor, your tired, your hungry". Another common phrase used in describing the immigrant experience is the melting pot. This term implies tremendous ability on the part of Americans to welcome and assimilate newcomers from different countries.

The Canadian public has spoken loudly and clearly in its desire for lower immigration levels. I hope the minister recognizes that Canadians will continue to display a notable lack of faith in the government's immigration policy until those numbers coming into Canada are reduced.

I am going to move a motion at the end of my speech, but I conclude by noting that in all decisions it makes regarding immigration, and indeed in all decisions it makes regarding any government business, the government must take into consideration the economic implications of its actions.

We are a country of immigrants. Canada was founded and was settled for the most part by peoples from every nation on earth. The result has been growth and creation of a very spectacular country with a tremendous amount of history and accomplishment and an even greater potential ahead of it. However, our party would find it necessary to go much further. Consequently we find ourselves unable to lend unqualified support for the bill. Despite a number of appealing features it ultimately lacks the substance necessary to meet the needs and desires of the Canadian public.

(1345)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Would you put the motion to the House please?

Mr. Mayfield: Madam Speaker, I move:

That all the words after the word "That" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

—this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act, and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act because of its failure to bar, prior to a refugee hearing and an application for permanent residence, those who have been convicted of a crime that would carry a sentence in Canada of 10 years or more and those individuals who fall under the category of persons listed in section 19(1) and (2) of the Immigration Act.

We cannot abandon our public—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order. I will take this under advisement.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, my remarks today will focus on the important measures that are before us from the perspective of a person who immigrated to this country more than 30 years ago.

I came here from the Caribbean island of Grenada. I was a teacher in Grenada looking for an opportunity for further education and self-development. In Grenada one goes overseas. Overseas means having money to do so.

The Canada domestic worker program offered me the opportunity to work for one year with a Canadian family in return for landed immigrant status and life in Canada.

I came with great anticipation and with high hopes. I looked forward to my responsibilities as a domestic because I saw them as a stepping stone to something better. I saw my initial job as an opportunity to support myself through honest work.

I resumed my career as a teacher while earning a bachelor of arts degree and master of education from the University of Toronto. I became an elementary school principal and went on to chair the Metro Toronto Housing Authority, serving over 100,000 people in the metropolitan Toronto area. Now I have the responsibility of serving the great constituency of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and working on behalf of the men, women and children who come to Canada to share identical dreams.

I relate my experience as an immigrant because I want to place the provisions of Bill C-44 in their proper context. I want to make it very clear to everyone who is concerned about immigrants that the vast majority of people who come here are just like I am, with credentials, hard working and committed to a future in Canada.

They may not come from Grenada. They may not look the same as me. They may have a different accent and they may cherish different customs. Most of us share identical dreams. We dream of making a better life for ourselves. We dream of building a better future for our families. We dream of crafting more challenging prospects for our children and we aspire to serve our communities.

We want to contribute to the betterment of our neighbourhoods. We want to create conditions where our loved ones can thrive and prosper and last, but hardly least, we want to rid our streets of crime and violence.

All of us have heard countless stories of successful immigrants to Canada. Even before Confederation was a gleam in the eye of Sir John A. Macdonald waves of newcomers swept into this land. Many were willing to do the most menial labour under

Government Orders

incredible conditions in order to scrape a living and to survive. Others were escaping persecution and seeking freedom. All were intent on building a new nation.

(1350)

The examples abound. History has recorded the extraordinary contribution of immigrants from many backgrounds, races and cultures who have built this country. From the Montreal harbour to the Toronto skyline, from the building of the railways to the development of our prairie wheat fields, immigrants' labour helped to build Canada.

Where are today's success stories? Are there no such success stories today? Are we now bereft of immigrants improving and enriching Canada?

What I find distressing in this discussion is the lack of recognition of the continuing contribution of newcomers to this country. What I find disturbing is the emphasis that is placed on the negative, destructive aspects of the modern immigration experience. What I find unacceptable is the distorted impression that this lack of recognition and negative depiction of immigrants sometimes leaves in the minds of the Canadian public. Think about it.

Where can we read of present day success stories? Where can we learn of the accomplishments and contributions of recent immigrants? Where can we find out about the achievements of newcomers? Not on the front pages of our newspapers. It is not standard news on the radio and it certainly is not the ordinary fare of television newscasts.

If positive information ever appears it is on the back pages. It is a late radio filler, it is an afterthought buried deep in a television program on a low rating day. Apparently good news about immigrants is not a good enough sell. It is simply not marketable news, and because they are not glamorous, another more sensational picture of the immigrant experience receives the lion's share of the media spotlight.

It is the minuscule minority of immigrants who operate as petty hoods that grabs the media attention and dominate the headlines. It is the small number of immigrants who enter the criminal world that captures the radio news clips. It is the tiny band of fraud artists who come here under false pretences that catches the attention of television reporters. A distorted public picture of modern immigrants is the unfortunate result.

The real story, the whole story, is either too big or too boring for the tabloid headlines. The real story is really about hard working immigrants, entrepreneurs providing jobs and benefits to this country, immigrant students winning scholarships, or it is about immigrant scientists pioneering innovative techniques to alleviate pain and suffering. It is the negative story that most

often dominates public reports and it is this information that confounds the public's understanding of immigration and its impact on Canada today. It is the kind of story we hear from across the way.

I doubt very much that any of us can persuade the media away from the idea that bad news should dominate good news at every turn, or even now and then. What we can do is change what is out there about immigration to report, and that is where Bill C-44 comes into play.

Bill C-44 promises to play a pivotal role in diminishing opportunities for the minority of criminals who immigrate to Canada to steal, to deal, to intimidate, to extort, or even to injure and kill. Quite simply, Bill C-44 makes it easier for us to remove unwanted elements that none of us, whether we be descendants of immigrants, old immigrants or relatively new immigrants, want here in the first place.

I would suggest that the changes incorporated in Bill C-44 will not solve the problems of crime in Canadian society but it will help us accomplish our goal of preserving public confidence in Canada's immigration program. More than that, the measures in this bill will also help us rid our country of those people who have little interest in contributing to our society in a positive way.

(1355)

All our statistics show that newcomers are, if anything, more law-abiding than Canadians born here, even though the scanty minority of exceptions loom lopsidedly large in the public eye and in the media. As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration explained to the Canadian association of police chiefs in Montreal this past August, his department has been directed to use three means of strengthening our enforcement activities; legislative changes, administrative reforms and closer co-operation with other law enforcement agencies to locate people who would abuse our generosity.

At the same time, I was particularly pleased to see the minister declare that the Immigration Act will continue to serve as the foundation of our system. This act was amended with utmost care. It was altered only after it was determined that the amendments would both protect the public and promote continued public confidence in our progressive immigration policies at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary but I have an announcement to make. She will have 10 minutes left at the end of Question Period.

The amendment presented by the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin is acceptable.

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

AIDS ACTION NOW

Mr. Barry Campbell (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, as part of the annual meeting of the Canadian Association for HIV Research this summer, AIDS Action Now, a Toronto based AIDS advocacy group, organized a demonstration highlighting promising new AIDS research opportunities which are, in its opinion, funded inadequately.

At that demonstration I was presented a petition with over 300 signatures. Technicalities preclude the tabling of this petition, however the message it contains should be made public. It calls on the government to "increase funding for AIDS research so that Canadian scientists can contribute to understanding the disease, improving treatments and finding a cure".

It also requests the government to "make clear a commitment to long term, sustained funding of AIDS research at least proportionate to the HIV population base and Canada's relative wealth".

While members of the House know that the government has allocated significant funding for the national AIDS strategy, we must always strive to do more. We cannot forget that for too many Canadians it is a matter of life and death.

* * *

[Translation]

TAINTED BLOOD

Mrs. Madeleine Dalfond-Guiral (Laval-Centre): Mr. Speaker, on September 13 we heard the sad news of the death of Randy Connors. Mr. Connors was one of many Canadian victims who contracted the AIDS virus following a blood transfusion.

(1400)

In fact, according to a recent study published by the Department of Health, nearly 1,500 Canadians, including 400 Quebecers, have been infected by contaminated blood. This kind of negligence on the part of those responsible for Canada's blood supply system must never happen again. Already too many people have suffered as a result of a mistake that will cost them their lives.

[English]

The Bloc Quebecois MPs would therefore like to join in a tribute to the courage and determination of Mr. Connors who never ceased to defend the rights of the victims of the contaminated blood scandal.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, since the budget in February there has been growing concern in Calgary regarding the cost of the government's plan to transfer the Lord Strathcona's Horse and the First Service Battalion from CFB Calgary to CFB Edmonton.

Initial government estimates placed costs at \$23 million. However, the government has now admitted revised costs of an additional \$21 million for construction and renovation. Another \$30 million is likely needed to clean up existing ranges. The cost for defaulting on leases will probably be around \$16 million and of course there are other costs.

Recently released documents indicate that DND's primary rationale for this is to compensate Edmonton for the loss of three AIRCOM squadrons.

I call on the minister to obtain an independent cost assessment in light of all new information and to hold this decision in abeyance until that time. A failure to re-evaluate this decision can only be interpreted as contempt for the intelligence and the money of taxpayers.

* * *

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Mr. Speaker, this month Sikhs around the world are celebrating the 390th anniversary of the installation of the holy book *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*. This historic event was undertaken by the fifth guru Arjan Dev Ji.

The compilation and subsequent installation of the holy book has ever since served as the fountain of spiritual wisdom and has helped foster good will and harmony among all people.

I am sure that all members of the House of Commons wish to join me in congratulating the Sikh community.

* * *

TELEVISION BROADCASTING

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, as of this morning our neighbours to the south can receive two new Canadian programming services, each owned and operated jointly by the CBC and Power Broadcasting. Newsworld International will focus on top international news, presenting a uniquely Canadian view of major world events while the second channel, TRIO, a family oriented television service, will provide the best of Canadian programming to its U.S. audience.

[Translation]

These two channels will be distributed in the United States via cable and Direct TV, a new satellite service for direct broadcasting, offering consumers programming that will include films, sports broadcasts and special events.

S. O. 31

[English]

Exports to this new market will build on Canada's traditional programming strength and supplement the revenues of Canada's national public broadcaster.

* * *

MRS. LISETTE BARSALLO-WARD

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, one week after she had been held by airport security officials under Peru's special emergency decrees, Mrs. Lisette Barsallo-Ward, a well respected Vancouver teacher, was able to return safely to her family in Canada. Her speedy release represented a classical exercise in quiet diplomacy by our foreign ministry in Ottawa and our diplomats in Lima in the best tradition of the Canadian foreign service.

We extend our congratulations to all of them.

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, not long ago some statistics were published on the painful impact of the 1993 unemployment insurance reform on Quebec workers.

The newspaper *Le Soleil* reported that more than 22,000 Quebecers had been excluded from the unemployment insurance system since the reform came into effect. In addition to the restrictive measures of the Conservatives, we now have those introduced by the Liberals, which will affect, and are already affecting, tens of thousands of Quebecers and Canadians.

I want to ask the Minister of Human Resources Development, who is now preparing a thorough overhaul of the social safety net, to look behind the figures at all the people who are severely affected by the measures being taken here in Ottawa. Perhaps he will find the compassion which has been clearly lacking since he took over the department and launched the reform of the social safety net.

* * *

(1405)

[English]

FEDERAL DEBT

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, this morning at 7.44 a.m. our debt was \$531,045,850,207.24. With every passing day the federal debt in this country grows by more than \$100 million.

Canadians are alarmed. They are concerned not only for themselves and their futures but for their children and their grandchildren. But what of the government? How concerned is it? Not very apparently when it defines success as going in the hole another \$100 billion over the next three years. Even if it achieves that goal, it has failed the people.

I say to the government that it has an obligation to preserve and enhance opportunity, not to spend it away. I say to the government that it has an obligation to do what is right, not what is easy.

In the time that I have taken to deliver this statement I point out that our debt has gone up \$80,000.

* * *

[Translation]

QUÉBEC ELECTIONS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by extending my sincere congratulations to Daniel Johnson on his outstanding campaign. His message, sincerity and convictions were such that he was able to win a splendid moral victory. However, this is only the beginning, and I am sure that he is the man we need to win the battle.

I also want to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Parizeau. I commend him for repeating his promise of a referendum within the next ten months, and I hope he will keep his word. In fact, I hope the referendum is held as soon as possible and that the question is clear and unambiguous. And when Quebecers have said no, once and for all, to the separatist option, I hope Mr. Parizeau and his followers will give up on the idea and forget about it, because, Mr. Premier Designate, democracy means accepting the choice freely expressed by the majority.

* * *

WORLD CONGRESS OF ACADIANS

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, from August 12 to August 20, Acadians from around the world gathered in New Brunswick for the first World Congress of Acadians.

It goes without saying that this event had a tremendous success. There were lots of activities including shows, family reunions and conferences. I wish to congratulate the organizing committee of Retrouvailles 94 as well as the conference organizing committee for a job well done. I would also like to thank our Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, who paid a visit to the Acadian Congress. His presence was highly appreciated and it demonstrates his commitment to the Acadian community.

S. O. 31

[English]

LEAD

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that lead is dangerous to human health because it is a poisonous substance. We have made some progress by eliminating lead from gasoline and paints but many other uses of lead continue, thus causing a threat to human health.

In Canada lead is spread into the environment when a hunter shoots or an angler loses a fishing weight. When ingested by wildlife, lead is the cause of a slow and agonizing death. In the United States the use of lead shot for waterfowl was banned in 1991. In Denmark and in the Netherlands the government banned lead in shots for all game and fishing weights.

In Canada we have a long way to go in ensuring that lead does not enter the environment as in the case of imported children's crayons which will be the subject of another intervention soon.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC ELECTIONS

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, on September 12 Quebecers elected 77 members of the sovereignist party to the Quebec National Assembly. The new government has therefore received the mandate to prepare a referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec. I would like to congratulate the leader of the Parti Québécois, Mr. Jacques Parizeau, the elected members of his party and the others, as well as all the good candidates who failed in their bid to be elected. All have expressed their desire and willingness to serve Quebec. Whatever the Prime Minister may think, it is clear that Quebecers are not satisfied with this wonderful country that Canada is supposed to be.

(1410)

Determined and persistent, they know that they are a distinct people and a distinct society. Quebecers demand full control of their social, cultural, political and economic development. With the coming referendum, Quebecers will finally have the opportunity to choose between the status quo and sovereignty.

* * *

[English]

REFORM PARTY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, so the government is taking over Reform's turf, at least according to Rosemary Speirs of the *Toronto Star*. I would like to take this opportunity to challenge the Liberals on this mock takeover of our turf.

Indeed, during the past year the Reform Party has been effective in setting the national agenda. I ask, why is the government focusing constantly on deficit reduction, criminal justice and immigration? It is because Reform members have brought these issues to the forefront time and time again. Because of this debate Canadians are aware of the ineffective status quo system and are demanding changes.

On closer scrutiny, these well informed Canadians will soon realize that these cosmetic changes have not changed the system fundamentally. The Reform Party would be delighted to see its policies being implemented. But please take the entire package, not just the label.

The Liberals cannot claim to have taken over Reform's turf. In fact this is no more than astro turf, a poor substitute for the real thing.

* * *

FUNDY REGION

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, the Fundy region of my Carleton—Charlotte constituency endured great hardship in recent weeks. Not only was the wharf located at St. Andrews, New Brunswick devastated by fire on August 31, but the Labour Day weekend brought great winds and waves, destroying numerous herring weirs along the Fundy coast. Both of these tragedies will have disastrous effects on the economy of the region.

The town of St. Andrews depends greatly on the tourism industry, the traditional fishery and aquaculture industry. Needless to say the loss of the wharf will damage these industries to a great degree.

Likewise, the weir fishermen along the Fundy coast rely on their weirs to maintain the flow of herring to processors. The destruction of these weirs will shorten their season, throwing many out of work and bringing tremendous reconstruction costs to the weir owner-operators.

I am optimistic that several departments, both federal and provincial, will pool their resources to help the people who suffer from these natural tragedies.

* * *

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to a once great nation that is slowly dying in a sea of words, warring factions not unlike two great elk locked in mortal combat. When finished both are too spent to ward off the ever present wolves. The wolves are the growing jaws of debt, money borrowed not to support investment but rather to support unearned lifestyles.

I would like to talk about strictly provincial debt, nothing to do with the federal government. The highest is in Quebec where they owe \$9,498 for every man, woman and child. Over 40 per cent of this is owed to foreigners. Other provinces are not far behind.

As we clash among ourselves, an artery here and an artery there becomes dismembered. These slashes are the ever spiraling interest rates which are borne from uncertainty.

For every Mary Smith and Jacques Tremblay, let us get on with the wolves at the door.

* * *

SWEDEN

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I would like today to join in congratulations as many of the media have done on the election of a Social Democratic government in Sweden.

The *Globe and Mail* says: "After three years of Conservative government characterized by rising inflation, 14 per cent unemployment and an enormous public debt" voters swung back to the left and elected the Social Democratic Party of Sweden.

Despite the many proclamations that the left is dead, this election is evidence that there is not only one way to go. There is an alternative to the destructive policies of the right.

The left is alive and well in Canada and abroad. There are more than 60 Social Democratic governments worldwide and in Europe Sweden joins Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and Hungary which already have Social Democratic governments. Just this summer Sri Lanka and Japan also became governed by Social Democrats.

* * *

(1415)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John): Mr. Speaker, rail service between Saint John and Sherbrooke, Quebec, both passenger and freight, is well used and important to both the people and the economy of Saint John.

The citizens of Saint John and most of the province of New Brunswick came together and fought for the preservation and need for rail passenger service in the early 1980s. We were told by the government of the day that we could retain our passenger service but we must use it or lose it. It has been used. Ridership has steadily increased and there is a three-month waiting list for reservations on VIA.

As Saint John is a port and an industrial city, it is also imperative that efficient and affordable freight service be maintained to both the port and the businesses of Saint John.

While I understand that negotiations are under way between CP and the private sector for a portion of the line, I urge the Minister of Transport to take steps to see that the remainder of

Tributes

the line from Brownville Junction to Sherbrooke remains operational.

* * *

THE LATE BILL BUSSIÈRE

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Parliamentarians both past and present from all parties, and certainly you as well, Mr. Speaker, were deeply saddened last Wednesday at the sudden death of our very dear friend, Bill Bussiere.

For 25 years Bill was an integral part of the weekly parliamentary prayer breakfast group and was instrumental in organizing the annual National Prayer Breakfast which most of us attended.

[Translation]

The importance that Bill attached to our spiritual needs can be measured by the respect and admiration we had for him.

[English]

On behalf of this House I extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Sandra and his three daughters Lori, Wanda and Linda.

Bill's presence and friendship will be missed but his memory will stay with us.

Perhaps in final recognition of Bill's strong personal commitment I can humbly say for all of us, well done thy good and faithful servant.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Honourable members, we lost one of our colleagues during the summer, a member of this House.

[English]

We will break for just a bit as we will hear tributes to Mr. Pélouquin, un de nos députés.

[Translation]

We will then extend Question Period beyond three o'clock by the number of minutes we will have spent in doing so.

* * *

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE GASTON PÉLOQUIN

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we were all saddened and dismayed to learn of the accidental death of the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi. He was not in this House very long, but he made many friends here.

He was a hard worker. He always turned his attention to the needy. On behalf of my party and the government, I would like to offer his son and his family our sincerest condolences. I would also like to take the opportunity to remind the public of what a member's life is like. The member is at least the third of my colleagues who has died in an automobile accident. After

Tributes

working for long hours weeks at a time, they died in car accidents on the way home. I am thinking of Mr. Fortin from Lotbinière and Mr. Lonsdale, a member from northern Ontario.

In their criticisms, people too often forget that members of Parliament sometimes have impossible hours. They work here, have to return to their riding and come back to Ottawa. They take enormous risks. They are always criticized. Unfortunately, Mr. Pélouquin died tragically. On behalf of my party and the government, I would like to offer his colleagues and his family my most sincere sympathy.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the Prime Minister for his deeply felt words about our friend, Mr. Pélouquin, and members like him who died in similar circumstances.

Gaston Pélouquin, the member for Brome—Missisquoi, was our friend and his tragic death has greatly saddened his family, his constituents and his colleagues. He leaves behind his 16-year old son Pascal and his close friends, Denise and Gilles Duval, to whom he has entrusted his son. During his professional career, in education, in politics and in social life, Mr. Pélouquin was always concerned for the most disadvantaged, those who are excluded and left behind. That is what motivated him to work for Haitian children.

(1420)

He was respected by all for his commitment to his constituents and his deep convictions for Quebec's full development. Everyone recognizes the work he did to serve his fellow citizens in the Eastern Townships and the determination he brought to the task.

Mr. Pélouquin was very human and modest, very giving of himself. The most important value for him was volunteerism. His great availability, his commitment of time and energy to his constituents, made him very well liked and many mourned his passing. He was very sorry about the difficulties facing the families of laid-off Hyundai workers in his riding. His concern and the comfort he gave them show his compassion.

Quebec and Canada have just lost an honest, warm-hearted parliamentarian for whom it was difficult to accept the fate and suffering of others. Members will understand that because of his Haitian experience, he was particularly affected by the painful situation in that country. Shortly before he died, he was devastated to recognize on television someone he had known who had been killed by the military junta.

Mr. Pélouquin's career was one of service for the good of his fellow citizens. First as a teacher, then as a school principal, missionary and member of Parliament, he was involved in many organizations. A committed believer, he dedicated himself to many religious and parish activities. His faith in young people and concern for their future were very important to him.

Allow me to repeat the message which he always wanted to give to his fellow citizens, a message of tolerance, of openness, of respect for what democracy in Quebec and Canada will decide. On behalf of the members of the Bloc Québécois, I extend our sincerest condolences to all those who are affected by this tragedy. Like them, we feel the emptiness left by the passing of Gaston Pélouquin.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest): Mr. Speaker, fellow colleagues, I was deeply saddened to learn of the tragic death of our friend and colleague, the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

[English]

In the first days of the new Parliament Mr. Pélouquin and I developed a friendship that transcended our political differences. We agreed to maintain our friendship throughout the travails that lay ahead of us in Parliament. We both looked forward to enriching our own lives by learning more and sharing experiences with each other.

Gaston was a gentle man, a person of character and resolve. He wanted to do right and on occasion was genuinely perplexed when his motives were questioned from a purely political perspective.

Like many of us, Mr. Pélouquin was a new member and we all did not get a chance to know him as a person. Had we had the opportunity to know Gaston, we would have learned of his life's work as a teacher, we would have known that he wrote a children's book and that he adopted a young Haitian orphan, Pascal, his son.

[Translation]

Perhaps the untimely death of our colleague will cause us all to give some thought to the bonds that unite rather than divide us, to think first of each other as individuals with hopes, dreams and aspirations, than as politicians.

[English]

On behalf of the entire Reform caucus, I wish to express to Gaston's son, Pascal, our sincere condolences. Nothing we do or say now will lighten the burden of grief you bear today, but may you find peace in the certain knowledge that your father, Gaston, rests with those who are a force of good in this life.

[Translation]

Canada, Québec and Parliament are poorer for his passing but were enriched by his presence.

(1425)

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Official Opposition and my colleague from the Reform Party in expressing, in my own name and on behalf of our Party, our sorrow at the passing of Mr. Gaston Pélouquin.

Tributes

Previous speakers have already noted some of his achievements. I must admit that I did not get to know Mr. Pélouquin very well. In fact, I believe the first time we ever met was on the floor of the House and we did barely more than exchange greetings.

Nonetheless, I have realized like everyone else, as we set aside our partisanship under the present circumstances, to what extent his life brought a ray of hope. Like my colleagues, I was greatly impressed by his contribution in the field of education, by his colleagues' tributes which, incidentally, were very touching, and also by his personal commitment. At this time when coincidentally we are witnessing extremely important events taking place in Haiti with regard to the stakes of democracy, Mr. Pélouquin, by the way he lived his life, reminds us that there are among us individuals who are prepared to take very concrete action. As a matter of fact, the wish was expressed that in his memory donations be made to charities for Haitian children. I realized then how much of a difference his life will have made for these people.

As Mr. Pélouquin's riding was next to mine, I had the opportunity to hear personal accounts of those he rubbed shoulders with and I can tell you today that these people had only good things to say about him, his work and his great sincerity.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness that I rise today in this House to pay tribute to a colleague and a friend whose loss affects us all. The accidental death of our colleague Gaston Pélouquin is a terrible blow to his son, his family, his friends, his constituents and to us all. Quebec and Canada have lost a member of Parliament who was honest and very dedicated to the cause in which he believed above all. Gaston Pélouquin, who was elected to this House in October 1993 as the member for Brome—Missisquoi, did his job with loyalty. He defended his constituents' interests with his usual determination and paid special attention to the needs of the poorest. We all recognized his legendary availability to these people. His approach to politics never raised any doubt about the sincerity of his personal convictions.

He always believed in Quebec and was never afraid to denounce the injustices suffered by Quebecers. I knew Gaston Pélouquin personally for many years. He was a warm and endearing person, as I realized while touring the Eastern Townships during the 1993 election campaign. We spent several days travelling through five ridings. Gaston was the leader of the group informally set up in the motor home of his friend Jean Bégin. He took pleasure in doing his job well.

(1430)

I shared an apartment in Hull with Gaston for 10 months during the last parliamentary session. We had many opportunities to confide in each other. His always lively comments and

well-expressed ideas showed him to be extremely sensitive. The closing of the Hyundai plant was a striking case in point. I saw all the efforts that he made in this matter so that families would not lose their livelihood. He was very sorry for these workers when this plant closed, but he had done all he could. As a former teacher of English as a second language who maintained a lifelong interest in education, he very often talked to me about the school he headed for two years in Haiti. He shared the Haitian people's problems and human misery, and he was very proud to bring back from that country his son Pascal who is now 16 years old and had become his main reason for living.

Gaston Pélouquin leaves a big void that will be hard to fill not only in the House of Commons but also in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi. On behalf of Bloc members and the great region of the Eastern Townships, I offer our heartfelt condolences to his son Pascal, his family and his friends. We share with them the sorrow of losing a loved one. Goodbye, Gaston.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, it is in my role as chairman of the industry committee that I had the opportunity to work with Gaston Pélouquin during the winter and spring of 1994. As you know, Mr. Speaker, more often than not committees conduct their work in a non-partisan fashion. We are removed from the media and the atmosphere is very different from the one during question period, for example. Mr. Pélouquin participated in all our proceedings on the financing of small and medium-sized businesses. He was assiduous and his comments were always serious and well thought-out. He was interested in every aspect of our review, whether it was the relationship between banks and small businesses, the mandate of the Federal Business Development Bank, or the role of the Superintendent of Financial institutions. Before entering politics, as was mentioned earlier this afternoon, Mr. Pélouquin made a career in teaching. He was a single parent with an adopted child, Pascal, who is now 16 years old. I attended Mr. Pélouquin's funeral in Cowansville and was able to see how much he was loved by his colleagues from the education sector because of his dedication, his generosity and his sense of humour.

Again, I want to express my sympathy to his son Pascal, to the other members of his family and to his friends, including the members of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): On behalf of all my colleagues from the New Democratic Party, I want to express my sincere condolences to the friends and relatives of Gaston Pélouquin, and particularly to his adopted son Pascal.

I had the opportunity to talk to Gaston on several occasions and I found him to be a man of compassion and integrity who was very concerned by the plight of the poor and the vulnerable in our society. Even in his maiden speech in this House he referred to social programs and, in particular, to the rights of handicapped people. A strong believer in an independent

Oral Questions

Quebec for many years, he was also very devoted to the well-being of his constituents of Brome-Missisquoi.

This is a terrible loss for them, for us his parliamentary colleagues, and especially for his family. We will all miss him.

The Speaker: As I said earlier today, we have lost one of our number. I think we should remember we have only one life to live and if we can do something for someone, for our neighbour, we should always do it as soon as possible.

[English]

Colleagues, it being 2.35 p.m., Question Period will go until 3.20 today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

ELECTION OF THE PARTI QUÉBÉCOIS

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under a Liberal government, last Monday Quebec elected a Parti Québécois government, whose main objective is to achieve the sovereignty of Quebec. The federal government should realize this instead of hiding its head in the sand, as was obvious from the speech made yesterday in Quebec City by the Prime Minister before the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

My question is this: Does the Prime Minister really think his offer to co-operate with the new government in Quebec is a credible one, when at the same time, his stubborn insistence on a centralist approach in the proposed overhaul of the social safety net is causing a major confrontation, not only with Quebec but with other provinces?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it would make better sense to wait until the minister's plan is tabled in the House, instead of using the kind of epithets we have heard from the hon. member. We have had an election in Quebec, and the people wanted a change of government. But I know what people want. They want governments to work together to create jobs and bring about economic recovery, to ensure that the most vulnerable members of our society are protected. That is the purpose of our proposal, and I hope the Government of Quebec, like the other governments that have indicated they want to co-operate, will be prepared to co-operate in the best interests of all Canadians.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister agree that the best way to ensure genuine co-operation—the kind he has so fulsomely extended to the new government of Quebec—is to start by respecting the jurisdiction and responsibilities of Quebec, instead of trying to encroach further in this area through his

minister's program for social reform which is a blatant attack on Quebec's constitutional positions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the final version. I wish the Leader of the Opposition would show it to me. I have not seen it. In other words, he does not know what he is talking about. He should wait and see what is in the document.

[English]

Once the document is ready it will be available to everybody. It will be a discussion paper. I have discussed that with the premiers. They know we have a problem in this field and it is something which needs to be modernized and adapted to changing times. I am surprised the Leader of the Opposition wants to keep the status quo.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, one of the benefits of politics is that you lose your naïvety, and when you stop being naïve, you understand the ulterior motives of a government that, in fact, is no longer trying to hide its determination to use this overhaul of the social safety net to save money and divert resources away from the pittance the needy are receiving now. They even admitted that the basic objective was to save money so that the Minister of Finance can balance his accounts, which are a disaster.

I want to ask the Prime Minister very sincerely, based on a concern for co-operation, as he himself said, whether we should take him seriously when he tells Quebecers that he wants to co-operate with the new government on job creation, and I want to ask him whether he realizes that he should first promise to transfer to Quebec full jurisdiction over manpower training, which would save a lot of wear and tear on the neediest members of our society. Is the government's real position not that this is just one of Quebec's whims?

(1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the way government and federalism works, the central government is allowed to take money from people who are well off, including people who work in fields where there are jobs, and use it to help those who do not have that opportunity and who need training.

In our country, unemployment levels vary, and we take money from the people who work to give it to people who do not work. This has no connection with language but is directly connected to the need to help people who are unemployed to get more training so that they can have the dignity of work. That is the purpose of this reform, and we will discuss with the provinces how it should be managed, but we must not create a situation where the federal government is completely out of the picture and the principle of redistribution of wealth is eliminated in this

country. That would have a very adverse effect on the poorer provinces and regions of this country.

* * *

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, serious allegations have been made during the summer putting in question the integrity of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, better known as CSIS.

CSIS has allegedly used an informant to set up a Canadian racist group. The same informant is also alleged to have infiltrated the entourage of the Reform Party leader.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Given the seriousness of the situation, does the Prime Minister think it is acceptable for CSIS to infiltrate a democratically formed political party, collect information on the CBC and the Canadian Jewish Congress, and contribute to the foundation of a Canadian racist group?

Does the Prime Minister consider that this is right?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about what so far simply are allegations, some of which have been categorically denied by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

All of these allegations are being looked into by the Security Intelligence Review Committee which is an independent body created by this Parliament and operates at arm's length both from the government and from CSIS. I think we should wait to see its report. In the light of that report we will be prepared to take any necessary action on the basis of these allegations, if and when they are proven.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, would the Solicitor General not agree that the best way, in fact the only way, to shed all the light on CSIS's alleged actions would be to set up a royal commission with real powers so that we can find out exactly what CSIS did?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, first I want to observe that we are dealing with allegations about things that may have happened before this government took office.

The second point I want to make is that the Security Intelligence Review Committee in my view is something like a permanent royal commission with a permanent mandate to

Oral Questions

review the activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. The Security Intelligence Review Committee is set up by order in council. It has full authority to question people, to examine documents, to do all the things a royal commission would do but focused on the activities, alleged or otherwise, of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

In my view this Parliament in creating the Security Intelligence Review Committee has in effect responded to what the hon. member is talking about. We have the equivalent of a royal commission looking into the allegations in question.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister responded to the first question by the Leader of the Opposition which affects the national unity issue by saying things he has said 100 times before.

(1445)

Given the circumstances, surely a better and more vigorous response would have been for the Prime Minister to declare his intention to make Canada as attractive as possible to all Canadians by balancing the budget, by offering tax relief, and by changing social programs to make them both affordable and more decentralized. These are the hallmarks of good government, not the half measures that are being introduced in the House.

What new and bolder steps is the Prime Minister going to take in the cause of national unity to balance the budget, cut taxes and fix our social safety net?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Reform Party on his promotion to the front row.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): I am very glad the member for Calgary West had the humility to change seats with the member for Calgary Southwest.

The member is right. The best way to keep the unity of the country is to have a good economy. That is exactly what we are working on at this time. When he looks at the results he will see that 265,000 new jobs were created since we have been in government and we have known a 6.4 per cent growth in the last quarter.

If we were to follow the Reform Party economic recipe we would immediately create a huge recession in Canada. If we were to take \$40 billion out of the economy in one shot there would be twice as many unemployed as at this time. We do not want to go to the right wing doctrinaire solution or to the left wing doctrinaire solution. We will go the proper Liberal way, the balanced way.

Oral Questions

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's reply will not strengthen support for the federal system because the standards of his government are too low and his timetable is too long.

Producing a social program discussion paper is not good enough when the public wants action. Fixing our deficit target at 3 per cent of GDP is not good enough when our national debt is at 71 per cent of GDP. National unity will not be achieved unless the Prime Minister sets higher standards for his ministers and a shorter timetable.

Will the Prime Minister commit to raising his government's standards with respect to social reform and fiscal reform and accelerating his timetable for bringing in those reforms?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we were very prudent when we ran in the last election. We put everything in writing in the red book. So far it is working very well and we do not intend to change our goals.

Three per cent of GDP for the level of deficit in relation to GDP is a very ambitious goal. It is the one selected by all countries in Europe as the normal goal for European countries and none of them at the moment has achieved that.

We will achieve it. As we said and as promised, at the end of the third year of our mandate we will be at 3 per cent of GDP. It is written in the red book; it will be done.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I have a fear that history is repeating itself. Members that have been around the House and have observed it for a long time know governments that get elected, have a mandate and do not use it to make fundamental changes in the first year, ones that squander their political mandate on half measures, never end up getting the job done.

(1450)

Why does the Prime Minister not use his political capital to make major fiscal and social reforms now instead of frittering it away on political half measures?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have to consult with the provinces in order to achieve reform. The son of a former premier who, I might say in passing, accepted a seat in the Senate says that we should not consult with the provinces. What kind of country does he want Canada to be?

We will have to consult with the provinces. We will do that. There will be measures in the House and reform will be achieved, but we prefer to do it with the collaboration of the provinces. The minister has spent a lot of time with ministers so far. The document will be tabled in the first week of October.

We will have other discussions with the public through the House of Commons. Legislation will come next year and you will be satisfied.

The Speaker: I know it has been a long summer but you have forgotten me again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, last week the chairman of the Security Intelligence Review Committee, Jacques Courtois, appeared before the Sub-Committee on National Security. When committee members asked Mr. Courtois about the allegations relating to the infiltration of the Reform Party, he refused to answer, saying that at CSIS he had learned to never say yes or no. That is a fine example of the transparency awaiting the parliamentary sub-committee responsible for shedding light on these allegations.

My question is for the Solicitor General of Canada. Does he consider as acceptable Mr. Courtois's deliberate refusal to answer the parliamentary sub-committee's questions relating to the allegations involving CSIS?

[*English*]

The Speaker: As a general rule the questions asked in committee are the work of the committee. Perhaps, if the question could be rephrased to make it a more general question directed to the Solicitor General, it would be acceptable.

The question relates directly to the work of the committee and I would rule it out of order. I would ask the hon. member to rephrase the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase my question: Can the Solicitor General of Canada assure this House that this matter will be clarified once and for all and that the review committee will give clear and precise answers to the questions we asked during committee meetings?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, under the rules of the House I am not in a position to comment on proceedings in a committee before the committee has reported.

However I want to say that under the law adopted by Parliament the Security Intelligence Review Committee has been set up as a body independent of CSIS, independent of the government, and I think independent of parliamentary committees. Its duties are spelled out in the act passed by Parliament.

Oral Questions

We should not jump to conclusions about the way the Security Intelligence Review Committee is going to do its work. It has promised to have a report by the month of October. We should pass judgment on its work only after we have seen it and had a chance to assess it.

I for one want to deal fully with the findings of the report so that if there is anything demonstrated by way of problems we can take corrective action even though the matters in question arose before we took office.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Supplementary question. I would ask the hon. member to formulate his question so that it concerns the department and its activities instead of the committees.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm): Mr. Speaker, the minister is obviously on the same wavelength as Jacques Courtois as he does not answer yes or no, even in this House. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister. By answering this way, does the minister not lend a little support to CSIS's way of operating and prevent the Sub-Committee on National Security from doing its job in this matter?

(1455)

The Speaker: If the minister wants to answer the question, he can do so but he does not have to.

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I want to assist the hon. member by giving him a categorical and clear answer. Yes, I will carry out the responsibility imposed on me by the CSIS act as passed by Parliament. I have no authority however to direct the chairman of the Security Intelligence Review Committee about the way he and his committee do their work. I am sure they are very conscious of the responsibility they have undertaken in accepting appointments to the committee. I am sure they are capable of following the proceedings of the House.

In light of that I look forward to their report so that we can deal with whatever they conclude in a way that serves the best interest of the country.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, in his last budget the Minister of Finance announced that Canada's debt would increase by 20 per cent or \$97 billion over the next three years. He has planned to do that. Such an increase is the highest in the history of Canada for any three-year period.

Now the news is that even this target will not be met and that the debt at the end of three years will be \$10 billion to \$16 billion above the \$97 billion already planned.

What will the Minister of Finance and his government do about this frightening problem of a runaway deficit?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, before answering I should like to congratulate my colleague on having been named one of the two co-critics. If it takes two I am a critic on ten. In all sincerity I should like to congratulate him on his appointment.

Certainly I congratulate him on the fact that he has moved to the front benches. I must say I find it amazing, knowing this particular member, that he has moved a little closer to the centre of the political spectrum.

The answer to the question is that the assumption upon which it is based is simply not well founded. The accumulation of past deficits and the fact of compound interest, as the member knows full well, have led to the tremendous increase in debt. Indeed had the party opposite, heaven forbid, been in office we would have had this compound interest effecting this tremendous increase in the debt. I hope the member understands that.

In any event the member asked what the government was going to do. Let me simply cite the Prime Minister yesterday. We are going to hit our targets.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound): Mr. Speaker, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Finance recently announced that the ministry was planning the taxation of RRSPs in order to hit those targets.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance whether this is true or whether the people of Canada who are already overtaxed can expect him to cut spending instead?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, no spokesman for the Department of Finance made that statement.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HAITI

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We learned with relief yesterday that an agreement had been reached between Washington and the military junta in Haiti that allowed the peaceful landing of a multinational force to restore democracy in the country and thus enable the democratically elected president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to return.

(1500)

Here is my question: Was the minister informed of the terms of the agreement between Washington and the military junta and, if so, can he tell this House what they are and when President Aristide is to return to Haiti?

Oral Questions

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Canadian government, I would like to say how happy we are at the turn of events, at the lack of bloodshed that could have resulted in the death of many Haitians.

There is no doubt that we must pay tribute to the efforts of the American special envoys who have managed, at the very last second, to convince the military to abdicate. It seems obvious to me that this last-minute agreement that averted the military action called for under United Nations resolution 940 provides that the military will not only have to hand over power, but also allow members of the multinational force that should land in Haiti within hours to gain control of the situation and bring about the speedy return of president Aristide.

One major factor to take into account is that under Governors Island arrangements, one legislative measure must be passed to provide for the general pardon of the military and another one to provide for the division of powers between the military and the police. In our view, it would be important that the proposed legislation called for in the original Governors Island agreement be implemented as soon as possible by the Haitian Parliament.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, does the Canadian government intend to contribute actively to the forces that will be put together to guarantee the safety of civilian populations upon the return of President Aristide and, if so, what will this contribution consist of?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting President Aristide last week, at which time I reiterated that the Government of Canada was firmly committed to providing him with support whenever he requests it, to help rebuild his country at the democratic, social and economic level. We are confident that, as soon as he is back in Haiti, president Aristide will ask for support, large-scale participation, from Canada. I can assure you that we will be ready to respond to his request and will do so most positively.

[English]

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last week the minister committed personnel and money, lots of money, toward the rebuilding of Haiti. I believe the Canadian people need to know more about that plan. They need to know what the costs are going to be, what our commitment is going to be, and how long we are going to be there.

Also as parliamentarians we need to know if we are going to be discussing this in detail in the House.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that Canada supports the UN resolutions with regard to Haiti. Indeed, we support the Governors Island agreement which calls for the sending of Canadian police forces to Haiti to train the Haitian police forces. This is a well known commitment by Canada. We are anxious and eager to fulfil this commitment. We will be following through as soon as the circumstances allow our police to go there.

(1505)

Second, we have approved the UN resolutions, which will allow—in the second phase of the implementation of resolution 940 of the United Nations—the involvement of military personnel under the auspices of the United Nations. This has not yet been realized. When this second phase takes place, we will then respond.

The Speaker: In the interest of brevity, we would ask all members to have very brief questions and very brief answers.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, in the red book it says that we can be assured we will not be U.S. camp followers. Yet the minister makes a trip to Washington on Thursday and comes back with our plan.

Can the minister assure us that we will now take the lead and work with the OAS and the UN in a leadership role regarding the solution to the Haiti problem?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am very intrigued by the question of the hon. member because I thought I heard his leader on television a few days ago expressing a different point of view. I want to assure the House that Canada has an independent position which we have clearly expressed inside and outside the House with regard to Haiti.

We believe we can play a more independent, separate role than others because of the privileged position we have with the Haitian population. Certainly under the auspices of the UN, we could give leadership in playing a very constructive role.

I hope that in the near future the House will allow us to have a debate on the matter in order to permit members of both sides of the House to express their views in this regard.

* * *

[Translation]

RED CROSS BLOOD CENTRE IN TORONTO

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): My question is for the Minister of Health. In a press conference held last Monday, the Minister of Health tried to reassure the Canadian people following investigations conducted by the United States Drug and Food Administration, which revealed several deficiencies in the operation of the Red Cross blood centre in Toronto.

Oral Questions

Although she has had the facts for a while now, why did the minister wait until the telecast to inform Canadians about the serious control problems at the Red Cross centre in Toronto?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question. First of all, let me reassure Canadians by saying that the inspections carried out by the FDA were the result of a change in its own policies and were not brought about by problems in the way the blood supply is handled in Canada. It is a question of harmonizing various policies, since the regulations differ. We are working with the FDA and will continue to do so in order to achieve harmonization. Our blood system in Canada is as safe as any in the world.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us exactly when she took action to inform other centres of the serious deficiencies identified in Toronto?

(1510)

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my answer once more.

The inspections that were carried out were the result of a change in the policies of the FDA. They were not brought about by any problems directly affecting our blood system here. Our blood system remains one of the safest in the world and we continue to do everything possible to improve it.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

For many people autumn means the arrival of the game hunting season. These people are concerned that the proposed gun control legislation will include provisions such as central storage, seizure of hunting weapons and possible expensive registration laws. A lot of misinformation is out there.

Does the minister have any words for these many hunters to calm their worries?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address the issue.

In the weeks since the House adjourned in June I have spent time crossing Canada, visiting every province but one—and I will soon be there—to meet with Canadians and to discuss directly with them the issue of firearms and their regulation. I have met with dozens of groups, with hunters and anglers, with

wildlife federations, with shooting clubs, with target shooters and with a variety of others who have an interest in firearms.

Among other things, I have tried to reassure them that the government is keenly aware that hunting is not only a long tradition but it is an important economic activity for many regions of Canada and that the proposals we will bring forward later this year will reflect not only the need for a safe society and a strong criminal justice system, but will also respect the legitimate interests of hunters, farmers and those who use firearms for subsistence.

The proposals we are now preparing will reflect the legitimate interests to which the hon. member referred.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, last week a confidential document was released by the minister of immigration's department outlining plans to cut the number of immigrants coming into Canada, to restrict family class immigration, to require security bonds from sponsors of relatives and eliminate automatic citizenship for the children of refugees.

We would like to acknowledge that the minister has recognized the merits of our party's initiatives and we would like to ask him when these very good ideas will be put into place.

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the government, pursuant to its red book commitment, began an unprecedented—

Some hon. members: Come on.

Mr. Marchi: There are lots of good ideas in that little red book, by the way.

We had an unprecedented eight-month consultative process which was rich with ideas, rich with the participation of Canadians from all walks of life and all regions. That is one important strand that certainly will impact on the ultimate decision that our government and this House will make in the levels announcement that must be made by law before November 1.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, poll after poll shows overwhelmingly that the majority of Canadians agree with the minister's department that immigration is out of control. Another document from the minister's department released earlier this summer actually agrees with that position.

When will the minister stop holding out as one of the last lone defenders of a policy that a vast majority of Canadians and even his own officials see as being out of touch?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly better than being out of mind.

That report was one of many where various departments in their policy directives certainly reflect on the things that were

Oral Questions

said during that consultative process. It would be very unfortunate if we were to simply draw wild conclusions from every single document coming from any department.

(1515)

Canadians are looking for and deserve improvements in how immigration is being managed and we have begun to deliver on that. In fact this morning we discussed Bill C-44. I hope the Reform Party sees fit to support that bill because it is an improvement in how we conduct and manage the program. We will continue to do this in the best interests of our country.

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*[Translation]***UNEMPLOYMENT**

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate rose by 0.7 per cent in Quebec last month and now stands at 12.2 per cent. In spite of a slight economic recovery, given the increase in population, Quebec still needs 210,000 jobs to reach its pre-recession level of employment.

Could the Minister of Finance, who recently claimed to be waging a world economic war, modestly try to create jobs by taking concrete recovery measures instead of pursuing his policy of laissez-faire?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, since we took office, we have not only expressed a desire but also a capacity to improve the employment situation in Quebec. In fact, as we have seen in the last quarter, this is why economic growth has been strengthened since the election. During the last quarter, the rate of real growth in Canada was 6.4 per cent, the highest among the G-7 countries. I want to tell the hon. member that, in Quebec alone, we have created 77,000 jobs since we took office. This is a record over such a period of time.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance realize that, at this pace, it will take at least three years just to reach the pre-recession level of employment, given the increase in population? Under the circumstances, is the minister prepared to give a boost to job creation by immediately reducing UI contributions, since there is a surplus, as the official opposition has been requesting since the minister himself raised these contributions?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the first initiative taken by the Minister of Human Resources Development was to announce that UI contributions would not only be frozen but reduced.

Clearly, we recognize that this situation, created by the previous government, is a very serious impediment to job creation. Consequently, we will correct the problem.

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*[English]***CANADA COMMUNICATION GROUP**

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that the Treasury Board internal investigation focusing on Canada Communication Group found that departmental managers throughout the government had illegally stashed \$61 million in bank accounts to be spent at their whim without the purview of Parliament.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the Canadian taxpayers why all these ministers in the front row sit idly by while their departments blatantly break the law and stash that money in bank accounts without approval?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, we do not sit idly by even if it is in matters that were undertaken during the last government. We get to the bottom of them. This is a serious issue. I want to have this matter thoroughly investigated and in fact that is under way. I made an announcement to that effect earlier today.

The internal auditors in the various departments and of course the internal auditors in the Department of Public Works and Government Services are looking further at the matter of Canada Communication Group. We will get to the bottom of this and will take the appropriate corrective action. We will report further to this Parliament.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the President of the Treasury Board will not stand idly by. However, the Auditor General pointed this problem out to him in 1992.

(1520)

If he feels this is serious, why would Treasury Board try to sweep this matter under the carpet rather than calling in the RCMP?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, I suppose if at the time the Auditor General had called the mayor of Toronto then maybe I would know about it today.

The deputy comptroller general in our department has issued very clear guidelines to various departments that Treasury Board rules and regulations must be followed. The deputy minister, the secretary of the Treasury Board, has also similarly sent a letter to various deputy ministers and has asked for a report within 30 days. When I receive those reports corrective action will be taken and I will be reporting further to this House.

FISHERIES

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

In the last eight months this government has taken extraordinary conservation measures to halt the destruction of fish stocks on both coasts. These measures include shutting down entire commercial fisheries, standing up to the Americans on the west coast Pacific salmon treaty, and even convincing the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization to have a moratorium on straddling stocks on the nose and tail of the Grand Bank.

Since NAFO is meeting again this week in my riding of Dartmouth to decide on next year's fishing plans, will the minister stay true to his course? What position will he be taking to the table to ensure that those stocks which are still perilously close to extinction are going to be protected?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, given that this important international multilateral meeting is being held in the member's constituency there is no question the resolve of the Government of Canada will be under his scrutiny as chairman of the fisheries committee. Therefore we will take a position of integrity and new ethics in conservation to the table. We will stand fast for strong rules to protect Canada's fish stocks to seek a reduction in Greenland halibut harvesting off our waters.

I thank the member for his continued strong and enthusiastic interest.

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THE LATE WILLIAM BUSSIÈRE

The Speaker: Order. I have notice of a question of privilege and a request for an emergency debate and I am going to do that in just a moment.

First I would like to take just a moment on behalf of the House to pay tribute to a man who was not a member of Parliament but who served this Parliament for the last 25 years in a very special way. I refer of course to Mr. William Bussière. He died on Tuesday of a heart attack.

All members should know that over the years he served the spiritual needs of hundreds of members of Parliament. For all of his friends here today and all who have known him over the years this Parliament owes a great debt of thanks and gratitude.

In your names I would like to send our most sincere good wishes to his wife Sandra and his children Linda, Lori and Wanda, always keeping in mind that his service to us was a service to Canada. He will be very much missed by parliamentarians who served here over the last 25 years and parliamentarians here right now.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

EXPENSES OF SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, I came back yesterday from a trip to Denmark where I attended a meeting of the InterParliamentary Union. While I was away from Quebec, I was told that a Reform Party member had wrongly claimed to the media that my wife's expenses had been paid for by Canadian taxpayers.

(1525)

I want to formally inform the House that my wife met all her travelling expenses, including those for transportation and accommodation in Copenhagen.

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, earlier I asked the minister of immigration a question about his department and whether or not his own officials see his policies as out of touch. When he responded in kind the comments I believe he said were: "It is better than being out of your mind". I would like clarification as to whether that was intended as an insult.

The Speaker: Order. I did not hear the comments. I am sure that on our return in our exuberance sometimes we use words that should not be used. I will look into the matter and if need be I will report to the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 31 petitions.

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[English]

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 110(2) I have the honour to table in both official languages copies of certificates of nomination from the Minister of Canadian Heritage in respect of two part

Routine Proceedings

time members of the Canadian Radio–Television and Telecommunications Commission which certificates should be deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

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ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in both official languages a number of order in council appointments that were made by the government. Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1) these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian section of the International Assembly of French–Speaking Parliamentarians regarding the meeting of the Co–operation and Development Commission which took place in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, from April 22 to 29, 1994.

* * *

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY ACT

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–46, an act to establish the Department of Industry and to amend and repeal certain other acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

[*Translation*]

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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ACT

Hon. David Anderson (on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–47, an act to amend the Department of External Affairs Act and to make related amendments to other Acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–48, an act to establish the Department of Natural Resources and to amend related acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri–Food) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–49, an act to amend the Department of Agriculture Act and to amend or repeal certain other acts.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri–Food) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–50, an act to introduce a bill entitled an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

* * *

PETITIONS

VIOLENCE

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, these petitioners want all forms of abuse and violence controlled and if at all possible to cease. They request the government to ensure that the CRTC regulate forms of abuse and violence on radio and television.

They point out that parents often feel that their efforts to raise and educate their children are denigrated by what happens on those particular media.

[*Translation*]

What they want is just to make sure that such violence and abuses stop.

[*English*]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my honour to present a petition

Routine Proceedings

relating to the Young Offenders Act on behalf of a large number of constituents of my riding of Mississauga South.

On May 15, 1994 Mr. Brian Baylen, a resident of my riding, was robbed and viciously murdered by two youths age 15 and 16. To more effectively deal with such serious youth crimes the petitioners call for amendments to the Young Offenders Act. They specifically ask for stiffer maximum penalties for violent crimes, a redefinition of the term young person so that persons who commit criminal offences when they are 16 years or older do not receive benefit of the act, and allow youths under age 16 to be tried in adult court if the crown deems it appropriate to do so.

(1535)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to present this petition from people in my constituency of Fraser Valley West. They request that Parliament not amend the Human Rights Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality, including amending the human rights code to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase sexual orientation.

THE SENATE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my pleasure to present to the House a petition signed by many of my constituents in Regina—Lumsden.

They believe that the Senate is an unelected, unaccountable institution which has become a home for recipients of patronage and which has discarded any notion of working for the best interests of Canadian taxpayers. They also believe that the cost of the Senate, which is \$54 million a year, and the travel costs related thereto are exorbitant.

They call for this House to abolish the Senate.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): It is my honour to rise pursuant to article 31 of the Standing Orders to present a petition on behalf of numerous constituents who urge Parliament to ensure that the present provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicides be enforced vigorously and that Parliament make no change in the law which would sanction or allow the aiding and abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I too have the honour to present a petition which is signed by hundreds of Canadian citizens from Kingston, Ontario, from Quebec, Nova Scotia and my own constituency which calls upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to ensure the right of all

Canadians to die with dignity by allowing people with terminal or irreversible and debilitating illness the right to the assistance of a physician in ending their lives at a time of their choice subject to strict safeguards to prevent abuse, and to ensure that the decision is free, informed, competent and voluntary.

FIREARMS

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my honour to present the following petition from residents of the east end Saskatchewan district in my constituency.

Whereas except in police states there is no evidence that the incidence of criminal or suicidal misuse of firearms within any given socioeconomic environment is impeded by restrictive legislation, whereas law-abiding Canadian citizens are already overburdened by unnecessary and ineffective gun control legislation, wherefore the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to desist from passing additional restrictive legislation with respect to firearms or ammunition and to direct its attention to the apprehension and adequate punishment of those who criminally misuse firearms or other deadly weapons.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and on behalf of residents of the riding of Bruce—Grey I would like to table three petitions, two having to do with the rights of the unborn.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey): My third petition concerns amendments to the Human Rights Act.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 36 it is my privilege to present a petition which deals with sexual orientation. My constituents have signed this petition praying that the Parliament of Canada not amend the Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way that would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships.

(1540)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I consider it my duty as representative of the constituents of Simcoe North to present the following petitions. Four hundred and fifty-four petitioners from my riding request that Parliament take measures to protect the rights of the unborn child and another 392 petitioners ask that euthanasia not be made legal.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have two duly executed and signed

Routine Proceedings

petitions representing the views of some of my constituents which I would like to present to the House.

The first petition calls on the government to enforce the existing provisions of the Criminal Code prohibiting assisted suicide. It also asks that no changes be made to those provisions which would sanction or allow assisted suicide.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, calls on the government to maintain the status quo with regard to same sex relationships.

On behalf of those concerned constituents, I am pleased to table these petitions in the House.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and duly certified by the Clerk of Petitions I wish to table two petitions signed by constituents of Lambton—Middlesex.

In the first the petitioners call upon Parliament to act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code of Canada.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex): In the second petition, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that Parliament retain the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide or euthanasia.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of constituents in Calgary North I would like to present a petition to this House requesting that Parliament not amend any legislation to sanction same sex relationships or to make the undefined sexual orientation prohibited grounds for discrimination.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 5, 8, 20, 31, 32, 52, 58, 59, 60 and 65.

[Text]

Question No. 5—**Mr. Grubel:**

What was the size of both public and private infrastructure spending from the years ending 1989 until 1993, for Canada as a whole, and by provinces, and how many workers are employed per million dollars worth of infrastructure spending, both directly and indirectly?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Public and private infrastructure spending for Canada and each province for the years 1989 to 1993 inclusive has been obtained from Statistics Canada. The current dollar amounts by province are set out in Table 1.

There are no survey measures of the direct and indirect employment impacts. However, rough estimates have been derived using Statistics Canada's input-output model: The overall Canada-wide calculated estimate is 14 jobs per million dollars of spending on infrastructure.

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Question No. 8—**Mr. Solomon:**

Does the government plan to implement the recommendation on page 90 of the Report of the Auditor General of Canada, 1993, under the section "Observations on Tax Revenue, Departments of Finance and National Revenue", to clarify the regulation on the resource allowance income tax provision?

Mr. David Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Litigation on the interpretation of the resource allowance provision concluded only when the Supreme Court of Canada denied the government leave to appeal in July 1992. On

July 23, 1992 draft regulations were released by the Department of Finance that clarified the issues dealt with in the litigation. These regulations were released in draft form in order to permit consultations with industry and with other government departments.

Once promulgated, these regulations will be effective from July 23, 1992, the date of their release. Further draft regulations stopping abuse of the resource allowance through the use of partnerships were released on March 18, 1993. Consultations on

Routine Proceedings

both sets of draft regulations have been held with industry, Revenue Canada and the Department of Justice. Every effort will be made to have these draft regulations finalized and promulgated in the near future.

Question No. 20—Mr. Johnston:

With regard to the Participation program, (a) how long has it been in operation, (b) what are its components, (c) what is its annual budget and its annual advertising budget?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): a) Initiated by the Government of Canada, Participation started 22 years ago, in September, 1971, as a non-profit organization.

b) This information should be requested directly from Participation.

c) Participation is an autonomous non-profit organization. Questions regarding its budget should be requested directly from the organization.

Health Canada contributed \$650,000 to Participation for the 1993-94 fiscal year for its annual public services announcements campaign which comprised its total advertising activities.

Support from Health Canada is for: the production and delivery of physical activity messages to the 3,327 media outlets across Canada; educational products such as videos, newsletters, posters and leader resource packages; the management of participation events such as Canada's Fitweek involving over 5,000 community events and over two million Canadians.

Question No. 31—Mr. Wappel:

For the years 1983 and 1993 (or the nearest year for which statistics are available), how many deaths in Canada, including as per cent of total deaths, were caused by the following: cancer; heart disease/stroke; diabetes; AIDS and AIDS-related complications; any others accounting for 10% or more of total deaths?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health):

DEATHS IN CANADA, 1983 AND 1991 BY SELECTED CAUSES

CAUSE OF DEATH	NUMBER OF DEATHS		% OF ALL DEATHS IN:	
	1983	1991	1983	1991
a) Cancer	42,864	53,963	24.6 %	27.6 %
b) Heart Disease/ Stroke	62,724	58,842	36.0 %	30.1 %
c) Diabetes	3,083	4,295	1.8 %	2.2 %
d) AIDS	29*	1,170	0.02 %	0.6 %
e) Others	None			

* May be an underestimate since this is the number of AIDS-related deaths actually reported to the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control.

Question No. 32—Mr. Wappel:

For the years 1983 and 1993 (or the nearest year for which statistics are available), how much money did the government contribute, in real dollars and as a percentage of total contributions, to research and/or education for each of the following: (a) cancer, (b) heart disease/stroke, (c) diabetes, (d) AIDS and

AIDS-related complications (e) any others accounting for 10% or more of total deaths?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): The following tables describe the level of funding by the government to the four specified diseases. Please be advised that there are no other diseases that represent 10 per cent or more of total deaths. The data are split into the three directorates that are involved. 1983 and 1993 figures are not available for all the diseases in all the directorates. In the situation that a year's values are not available, the closest available year's figures are given.

HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTORATE:

The health services directorate has contributed the following amounts to professional training activities for the diseases.

	1983	%*	1993	%*
Cancer	\$10,000	0.43%	\$60,000	3.05%
Heart Disease/ Stroke	\$5,000	0.22%	\$60,000	3.05%
Diabetes	\$5,000	0.22%	\$25,000	1.27%
AIDS	\$100,000 (1988)	4.10%	\$600,000	30.5%

* percentages are based on non-salary operating budgets.

HEALTH PROMOTION DIRECTORATE:

[Health Promotion contributed the following:]

	1983	%	1993	%
Cancer	\$65,864	1.55%	\$68,000	2.0%
Heart Disease/ Stroke	\$27,118	0.64%	\$6,306 (1991)	0.18%
Diabetes	\$53,203	1.25%	\$60,866 (1985)	1.0%
AIDS	\$50,000 (1985)	100%	\$8,295,289	100%

Note: Cancer, diabetes and heart disease/stroke are funded by the Health Promotion Contribution Program. The AIDS Community Action Program uses its entire budget to fund AIDS activities and therefore in both years the percentage of its contributions is 100.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE:

NHRDP contributed the following:

	1983	%	1993	%
Cancer	\$1,701,027	10.6%	\$1,972,200	7.64%
Heart Disease/ Stroke	\$1,269,002	7.91%	\$3,798,595	14.7%
Diabetes	\$33,315	0.21%	\$542,265	2.10%
AIDS	\$26,888	0.17%	\$5,780,050	22.4%

Routine Proceedings

The Medical Research Council of Canada has contributed in real dollars to research and/or education for each of the following:

	1983	%	1993	%
Cancer	\$3,200,000	2.8%	\$6,900,000	2.8%
Cardiovascular	\$7,300,000	6.6%	\$15,700,000	6.3%
Diabetes	\$3,800,000	3.4%	\$6,300,000	2.5%
AIDS	0	0	\$2,300,000	0.9%

Question No. 52—Mr. Harper:

For the last five years, (a) how many Canadian Forces members have filed an application for a redress of grievance, (b) what is the mean length of time to process a redress from date of filing to final resolution, and (c) what percentage of redresses are decided in favour of the applicant?

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): a) No statistical records are kept of grievances at levels subordinate to National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ). In the last five years, however, grievances received at NDHQ for consideration by the chief of the defence staff, minister or governor in council were as follows:

1989–259
1990–341
1991–361
1992–424
1993–366
1994–108 (to end April)

b) The length of time between the original submission and the final decision varies from several days to several years depending upon the level at which a reply satisfactory to the griever is given. Therefore, the mean time for grievances cannot be determined since no statistics are kept on those grievances that do not reach NDHQ.

c) It is not known what percentage of all grievances are decided, in whole or in part, in favour of the applicant, since such statistics are not kept for grievances not received at NDHQ. Of those received at NDHQ, the average percentage granted in favour of the applicant, in whole or in part, during the last five years, was as follows:

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
1989	40%	43%	38%	43%
1990	55%	41%	50%	32%
1991	37%	45%	42%	47%
1992	50%	46%	33%	29%
1993	39%	29%	26%	50%
1994	49%			

Question No. 58—Mr. Simmons:

With respect to the Auditor General's finding in his 1993 report that the \$200 million seniors strategy "was renewed in 1993 without reliable, complete and timely information on the results of the first five years of spending", (a) what specific action is the Department of Health taking to clarify objectives and activities, and to ensure that renewal funds are expended appropriately and effectively, (b) how does the department ensure that recipients of funds for programs under the seniors strategy comply with the terms and conditions of the arrangements, and (c) what proportion of the total costs of each arrangement is administrative?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): (a) The key elements of the \$170* million seniors strategy have now been combined under a single administration in Health Canada to improve co-ordination among the components and ensure more effective management of the overall strategy. All elements of the strategy establish annual priorities in consultation with other federal programs and with stakeholders to ensure the most effective use of the funds. All elements of the seniors strategy will be evaluated by the end of the strategy to determine their effectiveness in meeting their intended objectives.

(b) There are two elements of the seniors strategy which provide contribution funding. These are the seniors community programs (new horizons, seniors independence program and ventures) and the seniors independence research program. These programs all have clearly defined objectives, program criteria and comprehensive review processes. All funded projects are governed by an agreement between the project sponsor and Health Canada which contains details of financial obligations, record keeping, reports on progress and achievements and related matters. Projects are monitored throughout their life-cycle by Health Canada staff by various means including onsite visits and completion of progress reports. At the end of funding all projects must complete a basic evaluation and financial accounting report.

(c) Based on the allocation as originally approved in the seniors strategy, the proportion of administrative costs to program costs is 13 per cent for the seniors community programs and 18 per cent for the seniors independence research program. The estimated administrative costs for the seniors community programs and for the seniors independence research program are based on the approved strategy funds and predate the merger of the seniors directorate.

* Treasury Board approved a \$170 million, five-year seniors strategy in April 1993. There was a small A-base for certain components (new horizons program and the national advisory council on aging). This A-base is estimated at slightly less than \$51 million over the five-year period. These two amounts total \$221 million.

Question No. 59—Mr. Lavigne:

With respect to the program to replace the 5/4 tonne vehicles built by General Motors for the Department of National Defence, (a) what is the cost of the new vehicle acquisition program, (b) what are the results of the tests carried out on these vehicles (i) by National Defence personnel and (ii) by civilian contractors, and (c) what is the value of the contracts awarded to civilian contractors to carry out these tests?

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): The light support vehicle wheeled (LSVW) is the replacement for the 1 1/4 ton trucks built by General Motors. The LSVW is being produced by Western Star Trucks Inc. (WSTI) with a contract cost of \$224.3M.

The LSVW has undergone one of the most comprehensive and thorough test programs ever undertaken by the Department of National Defence (DND) with a wheeled support vehicle system. Throughout this testing, as problems were identified, WSTI developed solutions and fully validated those solutions to DND's satisfaction. Because of these problems, the LSVW was judged to have failed the initial reliability, availability maintainability and durability (RAMD) tests conducted by DND in Canada. To validate the final modifications, WSTI was obligated to conduct a second set of RAMD tests at its expense at a test site fully acceptable to DND.

To avoid delays in fielding the LSVW, it was necessary to change the test site to the Nevada automotive test centre (NATC) because snow conditions in Petawawa masked the test track terrain, in effect reducing its severity. The testing carried out at the NATC was more severe than that encountered in Canada. Furthermore, to thoroughly prove the modifications, operation was skewed so that the largest percentage of testing was over severe cross-country. The terrain at the NATC is rugged and temperatures varied considerably. The NATC is a top-notch test facility with a worldwide reputation which has tested some 1,000 systems for the U.S. Department of Defense and major vehicle manufacturers. It is noteworthy that the LSVW has undergone more testing over more varied and more demanding conditions than any other wheeled army vehicle. This testing was continuously supervised by three to four Canadian forces engineers and technicians.

RAMD has done its intended job of identifying problem to permit the Canadian army and the manufacturer to fully debug the equipment prior to final production. As a result of this second test by NATC, all modifications were proven out and the vehicle was found to be fully acceptable.

The contract to NATC was paid for and managed by WSTI.

Question No. 60—Mr. Axworthy:

How much money has the government, through every department, agency and body, provided the Royal Canadian Legion and each of its branches in the form of grants, contributions, loans or other means since January 1, 1985?

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): I am informed as follows:

Routine Proceedings

In so far as the Department of Canadian Heritage is concerned:

1985 to 1987	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90
Nil	\$1,384.50	\$2,990.00	\$1,599.00
1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993 to 1995
\$3,458.00	\$1,757.00	\$1,000.00	Nil

In so far as the Canadian War Museum is concerned:

In June 1994 the museum paid a total of \$7,500 to the Royal Canadian Legion for the purchase of tickets to 1940's dance organized by the legion.

In so far as the Department of Health is concerned:

1985 to 1988	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91
Records destroyed	Nil	\$74,653.35	\$193,157.00
1991/92	1992/93	1993 to 1995	
\$129,253.62	\$96,812.03	Nil	

In so far as the Department of Transport is concerned:

In 1991/92, the policy and co-ordination activity made a \$25,000 contribution to the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 143, Erickson, Manitoba. The contribution was provided under the conditions of the transportation of disabled persons program (accessible vehicle acquisition program).

In so far as the Department of Veterans Affairs is concerned:

Since January 1, 1985, Veterans Affairs has paid an annual grant of \$9,000 to the Royal Canadian Legion for expenses incurred by the service bureau of the Legion. The service bureau is an organization instituted by the Legion for the purpose of preparing claim submissions to the Canadian pension commission, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies on behalf of veterans and their dependants.

Question No. 65—Mr. de Savoye:

Has the government allocated an amount of money to the anti-smoking campaign and, if so (a) what is the amount; and (b) what proportion of that amount will be devoted to (i) research; (ii) television publicity; (iii) radio publicity; (iv) publicity posters; (v) the hiring of new peace officers; (vi) a market study; (vii) prevention and education programs; and (viii) other aspects?

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): On February 8, 1994 the Government of Canada announced the most comprehensive anti-smoking campaign in Canadian history.

In the meantime the Department of Health has undertaken an extensive consultation process with the provinces, territories and the health community concerning the design and implementation of many of the elements of our overall strategy.

Routine Proceedings

The Department of Health expects to present its proposals in the near future. Once the most effective and targeted strategy is finalized, funding for the various components will be allocated.

Also, resources for 349 additional RCMP officers to perform anti-smuggling duties were approved as part of the government's action plan to combat smuggling. This means that there are now to be approximately 700 RCMP officers doing anti-smuggling work, doubling the number of officers working in the area previously.

[English]

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 26, 39 and 55 could be made Orders for Returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Questions Nos. 26, 39 and 55 be deemed to have been made Orders for Returns?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 26—**Mrs. Hayes:**

For 1993, what was the total amount of funds received by individuals and groups from the Department of Multiculturalism, who were these individuals and how much did each receive?

(Return tabled.)

Question No. 39—**Mr. Mayfield:**

What is the name and location of each National Park and, for each park and for each of the last four years, (a) how many people did they employ, (b) how much did they cost to operate, (c) what revenues did they generate, (d) how many people visited them?

(Return tabled.)

Question No. 55—**Mr. Strahl:**

During the last fiscal year, how many consultants did the Canadian International Development Agency employ, what are the names of the individuals and their companies, where are they from, what project did each consultant work on, and how much was each consultant paid?

(Return tabled.)

[English]

The Speaker: The questions as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered.

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

The Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary to explain to this House why questions No. 33 and No. 38, listed in my name on the Order

Paper, have not been answered within the 45 day period prescribed by Standing Orders? I do not know the meaning of the word "stand" but if it means that I will not get an answer, I object. Question No. 33 dates back to April 14, and question No. 38 to April 21.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I am told that the answer to question No. 33 will be ready to table in the House tomorrow. I hope to be able to do it and thereby help the hon. member fulfil her duties.

As to question No. 38, I understand the answer is being prepared and should be available shortly.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the House would give unanimous consent to revert to motions so that I could move concurrence in Motion No. 1 standing in my name on the Order Paper, being concurrence in the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs dealing with the allocation of committee rooms.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to motions?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House on Friday, June 10, 1994 be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

(1545)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

WEST COAST FISHERIES

The Speaker: Before we go to orders of the day, I have a request pursuant to Standing Order 52 for an emergency debate on the mismanagement of the west coast fisheries, particularly in the light of recent news that 1.3 million salmon cannot be accounted for by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, you have indicated my intention to rise under Standing Order 52 regarding the alarm that exists now on the west coast with the alleged disappearance of 1.3 million salmon.

When fishermen see 1.3 million salmon disappear from their plans, it is fair to say a crisis is pending, if not already existing, on the west coast. Keeping in mind what happened on the east

coast, I suggest this is a matter requiring urgent consideration by the Parliament of Canada.

I ask for your leave to move the adjournment of the House on Tuesday, September 20, particularly in light of the fact that the minister is not present, being responsible for other duties at this moment, for the purpose of debating this very urgent matter.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I concur this is an important matter, especially to the hon. member because of the proximity of this to his riding on the west coast. I would like to thank him for his application. However, in my view the application does not meet with the requirements of the standing order at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

IMMIGRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act, be read the second and referred to a committee; and the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: I give the floor to the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. I believe she has 10 minutes left.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, Canada's immigration program has contributed to a sense of Canadian identity and prosperity for more than 125 years.

Our challenge, as we consider Bill C-44, is to preserve public support for our immigration system, support that is essential if we hope to maintain the humanitarian traditions that have earned Canada respect around the world.

We must appreciate that the trust of Canadians is undermined whenever abuse, fraud, criminality raise their ugly heads. Quite naturally, failure to satisfactorily address the minority of cases of fraud and abuse will erode public confidence. It will inhibit a serious and reasoned discussion of immigration. If this happens, our future as a generous, open nation is in jeopardy.

That is why the provisions found in Bill C-44 are so important. When Canadians are confident that the provisions of our immigration program are enforced effectively, fairly and without prejudice or favour, they will continue to support a progressive approach to immigration.

Today there are only four countries around the world that receive immigrants in significant numbers. The four countries

Government Orders

are Canada, Australia, the United States, and Israel, which is a special case. By almost any measurement, Canada ranks near the top in receiving immigrants and accepting people fleeing persecution. A major reason we have been able to respond with such generosity to migration needs and international crises is because we have carefully maintained public support for our broad objectives.

(1550)

Canadians have demanded with reason that their immigration and refugee systems be not only fair and effective but also well managed. Once assured, Canadians have generously supported Canada's commitment to meet our international obligations even in the present unsettled economic times.

That is why the measures in Bill C-44 are so important. This bill pragmatically balances principles of fairness and tolerance with the principle of respect for the rule of law. It is an astute and sensible response to a situation that demands action. It closes the loopholes that unscrupulous people have exploited and gives our enforcement authority the tools to remove the lawbreakers who would abuse our system and our society.

In closing I would like to emphasize that Bill C-44 is not about revenge or punishment. Instead it is about preservation, preservation of the tolerance for diversity. The government is dedicated to the integration and preservation of ethnic cultures in Canadian society. We have continued to see this great country as richer because of the contributions immigrants have made and continue to make in Canadian society.

We will continue to promote and preserve ethnic cultures in a united and tolerant Canada. Bill C-44 will play a critical part in the preservation of the ideals that we hold dear.

In speaking in support of Bill C-44, I urge all members to consider the importance of the measures within the bill.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I have several questions for my colleague. In particular I have several quotes that I picked up from her speech.

In this day and age when we talk about immigration we sometimes get confused about what the intent of the issue is. Many sources in the Reform Party have said that we are not adverse to immigration, albeit we think there should be lower levels. That is a good issue for debate at any time in any country.

However, in many cases we are talking about the problems—and I will speak a little later on this—that we are having with refugee boards and so on. I hear the hon. member say we are dealing with petty hoods. The Liberal party has this tendency to downplay what are the problems with the criminal element in the refugee system that are getting through the bureaucracy and coming into Canada. These are not petty hoods we are talking about. These are hard core criminals in some cases.

Government Orders

When this party talks about how to deal with these individuals we are told things like: “Well, it’s only a few. It’s only a minority”. We have to look at the Canadian victim, the Canadian citizen.

I would like the member to comment on how many criminal element refugees we get in this country. What makes it a majority? What makes it a significant number? When is the government going to start dealing with that problem? There are a lot of victims in the wake of some of these individuals. The government has to look at this. I would like a comment on what constitutes something serious.

Ms. Augustine: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member should be presenting the kind of statistics that he is asking for on the nature of the crime, the nature of violence and other acts committed by immigrants in our various communities.

(1555)

The member also seems to be confused about the issues. On the one hand he says that we should do this, that we support this. On the other hand, he seems to be arguing against himself. It is important to note that what we see on the front pages of our newspapers on a daily basis is that the criminal acts committed by people who come into the system and people who abuse the system are not massive numbers of individuals.

The intent of Bill C-44 is really to ensure that the loopholes that allow those individuals in and the process by which we get the individuals quickly away from our shores, are the issues that are important for this discussion. There are so many other things that the member should want to deal with but chooses to make the connection between refugees and criminality or immigrants and criminality. To continue to put the two together all the time seems to me to be doing a disservice to Canadians who are contributing members of this society.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member’s remarks. Being a fellow Toronto member, I realize how much she has been seized with this issue. We spend about 70 per cent of our time dealing with matters relating to immigration. It is very important that we get this bill right.

The minister in his remarks this morning said that a criminal element has infiltrated the department of immigration and that we were going to clean up that criminal element and make some constructive amendments to this act.

What I am concerned about is the following. What happens to the legitimate claimant who might, as he or she is going through this process, run into one of those types who the minister described as the criminal element and that person feels that he or she gets unfair treatment? What will we do during this debate to

make sure that there is also an accountability within the officialdom in the department of immigration?

Ms. Augustine: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me in reading the bill that the intent is really to take away the discretionary powers that are presently in the system.

When there are clear rules, when there are clear guidelines, when there are administrative processes that ensure that an individual acts in a specific fashion, those measures take away discretionary powers and what could be considered ways of dealing with individuals in a fashion that could be called unfair.

It is important to say that the situation we see in urban Canada, the situations that the hon. member refers to in terms of Toronto, the situations in which we could use, as the member across the way objected to, the terminology that they are really an element of a minority group of people whose activities are considered nothing more than hoodlum, whose activities could be considered nothing more than destructive not only to themselves but also to their community and society in general.

It is important that in looking at Bill C-44 we ensure that we support this so that fairness is in the system, the rules are clear, the procedures are laid out and there are members of the department and those who deal with the criminal element know precisely how to act.

(1600)

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore on her speech. I have some concerns and I was wondering if the hon. member could briefly answer a few of them for me.

We all know that Canada is the envy of the world. The bill deals with serious criminals. It tells them specifically that they cannot come to Canada which I think is a move in the right direction.

If we are the envy of the world and if we have the ability within our immigration system to choose the best people to come to our country, ones who are willing to abide by the laws of Canada, why would we say we will not allow people in if they have committed a crime that would warrant a sentence of 10 years or more in Canada? Why are we allowing any criminals into the country? It seems ludicrous.

I heard the minister mention the word accountability several times in his speech. This is not accountability. This is not what Canadian people from coast to coast to coast are asking for. They want law-abiding people to come and live in our country without this ridiculous nonsense of 10 years.

Ms. Augustine: It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, to say that we allow criminals to come into the country and not to differentiate between conventional refugees is how the discussion gets into the emotional arena.

Government Orders

Immigrants go through police checks and all kinds of processes before they are even allowed to complete documentation. To roll everything together and to say that we are doing what we are asking for or what the member is asking for is to make certain kinds of judgments. We are the envy of the world, the number one country in which anyone would choose to live. We find it is an avenue most individuals outside our borders would like to enter.

It is also important to note that at this point in time we are not just an open system where anyone who wishes may come here. Too often we hear being tossed about across the way that the system is such that anyone may come here. There are guidelines. There are rules. There are things within the system. We need to be able to differentiate between refugees, people who are fleeing, people who are coming to our shores as a result of international agreements, and people who are coming here as a result of family reunification, support systems, applications and other things. We roll so many things together that the discussion becomes almost confusing.

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired for questions or comments.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, I will attempt, at this second reading stage, to highlight some questions that Bill C-44 raises. But before doing so, I would like to discuss the philosophy underlying the legislative amendments that we are debating today.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced in June that he intended to make considerable amendments to the Immigration Act in order to, and I quote: "take all measures necessary to prevent abuses and to protect the Canadian public against criminals".

We are very pleased with that. Nobody, and least of all the members from the Official opposition, would blame a government for trying to protect its citizens. So, the ministerial position is that immigrants and people claiming refugee status cannot use Canadian laws or Canada's reputation as a welcoming country to escape their own country when they have committed serious crimes or to commit new crimes here. We agree with that measure.

(1605)

We also recognize the importance of a quick and efficient enforcement of deportation measures if we are to prevent criminals from committing other crimes. Thus, there is in this House a rare and remarkable unanimity on the objective, that is the protection of Canadian citizens. However, as nothing is ever perfect, we will reserve our judgment for now on the means chosen by the government for reaching that goal. Many issues are not quite clear to us yet. For example, we wonder about the seriousness of criminality and the link between crime and the

immigration process. We also question the motivation behind government's actions. Finally, we would like to see the proposed means analyzed thoroughly.

First of all, let me reassure my colleagues of the House and tell them that I share their indignation towards the crimes committed daily in Canada and in Quebec. All our efforts should be directed to abolishing, or at least reducing crime.

On the other hand, I do not feel it would be appropriate to take into account the public response to criminal acts, and particularly violent crimes, in order to adopt repressive and unjustified legislation. The question is of interest and deserves our attention.

Every day, in this House and outside, we hear detailed descriptions of crimes. We also hear about people denouncing the increasing criminality in our society. And then, some people make a connection between criminality and the immigration process. What is the reality?

Even if people have the feeling that the crime rate is increasing, such is not the case. It has been demonstrated in a study on victimization published by Statistics Canada. That document states that the possibility of being a victim of aggression or theft was the same in 1993 as in 1989. Moreover, another study from the same agency called *Statistics on Criminality in Canada, 1993* concludes that for the second year in a row, the crime rate established by police organizations went down in 1993. In fact, the 5 per cent reduction from one year to the next was the largest since we began collecting statistics on crime, in 1962.

The author of the study, who is the senior analyst for the policing program, explains that the very violent crime rate is slightly lower whereas a slight increase in less violent crimes was noted as well as a reduction of about 6 per cent in property crimes.

Therefore, we can see, in spite of popular belief, that there was no increase in the crime rate. As I said, I do not want to trivialize criminal acts, but simply set the record straight. I think, however, that we would be justified to ask ourselves why people feel that way. We can perhaps find the answer in the importance given by the media or the politicians to some individual cases.

Let us go back now to the subject of the debate, that is criminality among the immigrant population. An Angus Reid opinion poll published in June examined the perceived relationship between ethnic origin and crime rate. The results were interesting.

First, the pollster noticed a significant difference between the western and eastern parts of Canada. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 58 per cent of those polled saw a relation between a person's ethnic origin and criminal activities. This proportion dropped to 36 per cent in the Atlantic provinces. So there is a considerable geographic difference.

Government Orders

Another difference was perceived in the way men and women see the issue. While 56 per cent of men associated ethnic origin with criminal activity, only 45 per cent of women agreed. The division is almost the same between seniors and people under 35, that is 55 per cent compared to 46 per cent.

While the perceived association is well established, could it be mistaken? Such is the conclusion of Mr. Derrick Thomas, senior researcher for the Citizenship and Immigration Department.

(1610)

Last year, Mr. Thomas published the results of research he had done on the relationship between ethnic origin and a tendency towards criminality. He found no proof that such a relationship exists. On the contrary, immigrants, who last year represented 20.2 per cent of Canadians, accounted for only 11.9 per cent of people in detention or on parole. This is a significant difference, and compels us to reject any attempt to link immigration to crime.

At this time, it is proper to remind the House that the minister of that same organization is the very one who wants to impose new standards with the express objective of preventing abuses of the system by immigrants.

Another point also deserves some consideration: the immigrants' level of education. Experts generally agree that socio-economic conditions can sometimes be criminality factors. So, the poor with a low level of education are more likely to increase the crime figures. Yet, according to Statistics Canada, more immigrants have university degrees than individuals born in Canada—3 per cent more. Moreover, immigrants who arrived between 1981 and 1991 had more schooling than immigrants who arrived before 1981.

From all these figures, we can draw the following conclusions: first, there is no real link with the perception that the crime rate is increasing in Canada. Second, there is no link between immigration and crime; on the contrary, immigrants commit fewer crimes than people born in Canada. Finally, if we are to believe that the more people are educated the less they commit crime, immigrants will be less and less represented in crime statistics.

As was already said, we wonder about the underlying motives for these legislative amendments. Is the government trying to put to rest the fears of the public? We know these fears are real. Indeed, according to the Angus Reid poll mentioned earlier, 82 per cent of the respondents believe our justice system is not strict enough. English Canadians rated crime as their second biggest concern, immediately following unemployment and job creation. In Quebec, however, crime rated much lower and only came after economic revival, education and social services.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to mention how Quebec society is distinct, even in this area. This high percentage shows how much the public fears for its own security. The government took note of it and has introduced, since its coming to power, several pieces of legislation to strengthen the rules concerning criminals.

Fine. However, we have to ask ourselves if this is the most efficient way to curb crime. Since socio economic conditions are an important factor, we are entitled to wonder if real measures to create jobs would not be more appropriate. We are entitled to wonder if the direction taken by this government is not more political than functional. Why, indeed, is nothing done to ensure that young people can find jobs when they get out of school? Why is nothing done to provide poor families with decent housing? Why is nothing done to really ensure women are safe in our society?

The issue of women is very important here. Women whose security is often threatened know that the threat does not come from immigrants or young people. But the government is attacking these two categories of people. There is a problem here and it raises some questions.

We are also questioning the measures proposed to meet the objectives of protecting the public and preventing abuse. Bill C-44 focuses on four main subjects: crime among refugee claimants, the contraband of immigration documents, the right of appeal and the processing of claims coming from rehabilitated persons. For each of the problems identified, measures are proposed whose final purpose is to screen out persons who committed serious crimes or who try to abuse the system.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we agree that the laws must be respected. However, the means proposed by the minister to promote that need a closer look.

(1615)

We think that some of these need to be seriously re-examined to see if the government is not trying to kill a fly with a sledge hammer. First of all, it wants to limit access to our refugee status determination process so that a person who has been convicted of a serious crime in another country will not be able to apply for refugee status.

At first glance, this restriction seems logical. Nobody wants Canada to become a haven for criminals. But it raises some questions. Some experts in immigration law have expressed concern over this restriction, particularly in light of the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

We think that the bill will need to be seriously examined in order to ensure that Canada respects the spirit and the letter of the Geneva convention. Other questions have been raised concerning the right to appeal the Immigration and Refugee Board's decisions.

Government Orders

Another provision that could be a problem is the one concerning documents. Immigration officers will now be able to seize and open all documents and objects suspected of being used for fraud, and this will be possible anywhere in Canada. The first question that comes to mind immediately is the possibility of a violation under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

How will this new provision be received by the courts? How will they receive the reversal of the burden of proof in clause 18? We know that the courts have a tendency to resist legislative provisions in which a person is presumed guilty. Will the Minister not have any other solutions to reduce trafficking in immigration documents?

How do we justify seizing items without even trying to define their nature in any way? Those are, briefly put, the questions and concerns raised by Bill C-44. We do know that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigrations will take them up one by one in order to improve this piece of legislation.

However, by way of conclusion, I would like to remind this House that all these legislative amendments seem to draw their first motivation from isolated cases such as that of Mr. Gayle, of Toronto. The objective pursued by the Minister is to ensure that criminals are not welcomed into Canada. Foreign criminals will be turned away and immigrants and refugees who commit serious crimes in Canada will be deported.

But we will have to deal with more contentious cases like those where a person has been living in Canada since childhood. Will we expel to his or her country of origin a person who does not have that country's citizenship? Surely not. How can we seriously think that a person who came to Canada at the age of three and is now an adult still has links with his or her country of origin? How will the courts apply such a policy?

We agree that the security of Canadian citizens must be protected. However, we believe that we have first of all to determine what is the source of this threat to security. We then have to determine what are the most efficient and the most respectful means to be adopted in order to protect citizens and to welcome people in need, a category to which bona fide refugees undoubtedly belong.

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont): Mr. Speaker and dear colleagues, the bill before us is an ideal opportunity to show Canadians that we take their interests to heart and that we abide by our electoral commitments.

I want to speak here not only to members of our government, but also and more particularly to members of the opposition. Since this bill was introduced, practically not a week has gone by without the media mentioning the immigration issue one way or another. Headlines are not heartening, because our system is

not judged on its achievements but on its failures. That is unfortunate, because our system has its successes and plenty of them. For each case of fraud or crime that makes the headlines, thousands of cases of successful integration go unreported.

(1620)

Most of the refugees and immigrants who live with us are so well integrated that nobody notices them. I do not need to give any examples. Just look around you.

The owner of your favourite restaurant, your daughter's computer instructor, your cousin's husband or your dentist, for example, may well be immigrants, but you probably do not notice it any more. Canadian society is often compared to a cultural mosaic, and I think this is confirmed in our everyday life. When you meet all these people, ask them what they think today of the cheaters and criminals who make the headlines.

When a person has left his country to start a new life, when he has started from nothing to build a future for himself, when he has finally succeeded in carving a place for himself in society, it must be insulting, to say the least, to be associated with someone who has committed criminal acts and who, in so doing, shows that he has no respect whatsoever for the country which welcomed him.

This explains why this bill is so important and so dear to our government. Of course, we must ensure that no one flouts our laws and our immigration system. But, more importantly maybe, we must protect the reputation of all decent people, those same people whom we represent, whatever our political affiliation.

Some will say that our bill goes too far, that it could be detrimental to refugees and immigrants acting in good faith. Others will say that it is too little too late, that it will not stop criminals from entering into Canada and staying here. Our government expects such criticism. However, as a responsible government, we had above all to avoid going to extremes, and I sincerely believe that we have succeeded in doing so.

Of course, the law must be merciless for cheaters and criminals, but it must not penalize those who are most in need of our help. The measures we are debating today are aimed at a very small minority of individuals. If we had the slightest doubt that they could be harmful to people acting in good faith, we would not go ahead with this bill, that goes without saying.

On the contrary, what could be most harmful to them is not the measures we are debating today, but the actions of a few criminals. Unfortunately, one instance is enough to tarnish the reputation of all refugees as far as some Canadians are concerned. One instance is enough to lead other criminals to think Canada is wide open.

Government Orders

We do not want to give the impression that immigrants and refugees are a threat to the security of our country. That is not true, and that is why now, as my hon. colleague said before, immigration is not the responsibility of a department of public security but a Department of Citizenship and Immigration. We want to show that we can be open when warranted but uncompromising when necessary.

We are prepared to open our doors to those who really need our help, not to just anyone. First of all, we must prevent criminals from claiming refugee status or appealing decisions by the IRB.

The system for recognition of refugee status was not put in place to delay deportation measures. We know what is going on out there, and we have no time or money to waste on criminals.

We also want to use this bill to deal with the problem of multiple claims for refugee status.

(1625)

Anyone can make a mistake, and some claimants may assume that if they move, they have to submit a second claim. That we can understand. However, some people think they can confuse the authorities and delay their removal by submitting two or more claims. We must also be able to seize certain documents which those who cheat the system send by international mail. Immigration officers need additional tools to be able to do their job satisfactorily, and we, as a responsible government, intend to give them those tools. Customs officers must be able to search the mail and seize any forged documents they find.

We must also prevent criminals from taking advantage of legal loopholes. For instance, immigration officers can arrest a person who violates the Immigration Act, but in some cases, they cannot issue a warrant so the RCMP can arrest that person. In this area, we need all the help we can get. If cheaters set up networks, we must have the tools to deal with them.

Finally, we believe that the minister is still the best judge of whether dangerous criminals should be admitted to Canada on so-called humanitarian grounds. This makes sense, since in the final instances, the minister has to live with the consequences of his decision to quash a removal order which concerns a criminal. Under the bill, this authority will rest with the minister in the best interest of all Canadians. We believe that these new provisions are fair and equitable. To those who find that this bill does not go far enough, I say: tell us, tell Canadians who else should be included in this new legislation.

I know a few who would undoubtedly have a list as long as your arm of people to send back for reasons which I would call arbitrary. This is not the purpose of the government. As I said before, we are not extremists. This bill deals not with the number but with the kind of people to be deported.

We are going after people who defraud our social services and criminals who truly pose a threat to our security and that of our police forces whose job it is to protect us. The processing of citizenship applications is suspended pending the outcome of the immigration inquiry. People who have nothing to hide will have nothing to fear. Their application will not be turned down, its processing will only be delayed. People subject to an exclusion order, who had already been accepted as permanent residents, will lose that status. Up to now, this applied only to people being deported. It will no longer be true under the new bill.

To those who say that our bill goes too far, I say: Canadians are good-hearted but not weak-hearted. We would do a disservice to everyone, including bona fide refugees, by letting things drag on forever. No matter which side of the House we are on, each one of us represents Canadians who expect us to act now and in their best interest. They also expect us to take the necessary steps to enforce our laws. They are quite willing to open their doors to the victims of the various disasters which devastate our world, but not to criminals. They also expect that the efforts and resources that we spend to welcome refugees benefit those who need them most. The days of time and money being consumed by a handful of wrongdoers are gone forever. Canadians expect us to implement a trust-worthy immigration policy. To this end, we must show them that we know the difference between right and wrong. In fact, we must show them that our government is a responsible one.

(1630)

Our government has decided that it needed the means to respond to the expectations of Canadians. Bill C-44, presently before the House, is the one from which we expect the most. The measures we propose are aimed at providing specific solutions to specific problems.

This is not a bill prepared in a hurry, without any distinction between the majority of true refugees and immigrants, and a minority of abusers and criminals. Why go to such lengths for ten, twenty or a hundred unscrupulous individuals? Simply because one is enough to end the life of a person, ruin the lives of his or her family, upset their friends and relatives, and harm a whole cultural community. This is the objective of some of the measures in the bill.

The shock wave is being felt from one end of the country to the other, it reaches the ordinary citizens, as well as their elected representatives and their police forces. Who is to blame: society, you and me, our police? No, the culprits are the ten, twenty, or hundred individuals that we should expel without delay. If we do not do it, Mr. Speaker, ten, twenty or a hundred more will come in.

Government Orders

As you know, our government is convinced of the value of immigration for Canada. We believe that Canada should preserve its reputation of openness towards refugees, but we also believe that our policy towards immigrants and refugees should be strictly controlled in order to protect all Canadians.

I will conclude by comparing these abusers and criminals to the weeds that very often, not to say always, invade our gardens. They very quickly encroach on the space reserved for the vegetables we intended to grow and, when the time to harvest comes and the weeds have taken over, we wonder whether we should not have kept the lawn. Let us not deprive ourselves of the fruit we could harvest. Let us pull out the weeds that are trying to take root and let us make sure that we have the tools necessary to take care of our gardens. This is the way to build a better Canada.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of my colleague from Outremont and I think that many people of immigrant origin will be very surprised at the tone of this speech, which seems to be anti-immigration. He tells us that ten or a hundred people cheat. Do you think it is worth passing a very controversial bill to solve five or ten cases that could have been solved administratively, without the need for a very controversial bill which is criticized by immigration lawyers, by the Canadian Council for Refugees and by the churches?

You mentioned mail from abroad. Customs officers will be able to examine such mail. Immigration officers will be able to seize such mail. Who will say, "We will open this letter and not that one"? Do you not think that there will be abuses? Throughout the world, the mail is inviolable. How could you go so far as to allow ordinary officials who are not judges and not trained in law to seize mail? Can you answer me?

Mr. Cauchon: Mr. Speaker, listen, we are in Canada, in a society that is called free and democratic and we are also, first and foremost, in a society of law. I think that the bill before this House reflects the intentions of a responsible government.

As you know, some people in society demand the most extreme things on one side or the other. Of course, in this case, some people would not have wanted us to legislate and others would have wanted us to pass draconian legislation.

(1635)

This Liberal government has chosen a middle way, a solution that we call reasonable. I am surprised that my colleague seems to be shocked by this reasonable solution or seems to find the measures that we are taking extreme. On the contrary, the measures we are taking are meant above all to protect as well those who apply to Canada as a land of refuge so that they can join the great Canadian family.

As I said in my speech, often a single instance of misbehaviour or a single criminal act is enough to tarnish or ruin the reputation of a whole community. As the member for Outremont, I must say that many new Canadians live in the western part of my riding and I am particularly proud of them; they have integrated very well into Canada and they are well integrated in Quebec and in their community; they live peacefully. From being with them, I know how fragile the reputation of these communities is, unfortunately.

I am glad—and I am pleased—to join the minister of immigration in promoting this bill by which people who really need Canada's help as a welcoming country, a land of refuge, will be able to find a fair and equitable society that can receive them well, a country of refuge that can screen out what I would call undesirables at its borders.

I do not fear abuses, far from it. I am still a little surprised that my colleague from Bourassa said that we are letting ordinary officials decide. I want to tell you, Mr. Nunez, that since my election on October 25, I have had the opportunity to frequent what we call public servants and I can tell you that in many cases they are extremely competent people who see things much better than you or I do. I am glad to give them a little more power, provided that it is not used arbitrarily, and the Minister of Immigration has been very careful about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. member for Outremont be reminded that hon. members are not to be referred to by name but rather by the name of their riding. I know that this is our first day of sitting, and that he will give due consideration to this matter in future.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to speak on this bill today. This subject has been of interest to me over the last several months. Today I am going to speak about a particular case I have been involved with, a fellow by the name of José Salinas Mendoza and when I am through I think everyone will be quite appalled at what goes on in this country. Prior to talking about Mr. Mendoza, I should comment on some of the previous statements I have heard today.

Once again I am hearing comments that this is a very small minority of the intake into this country and of course it is. This Liberal government has taken in 250,000 to 280,000 immigrants a year. While we disagree with that high a number, we do not disagree with the basic fundamentals of immigration in our society. It seems every time we raise this kind of issue the government comes up with statistics and demographics to show it is such a small minority so why bother with it.

It reminds me of a discussion I had with a parole board member not too long ago. I actually called for the resignations of several parole board members after they let an individual out on the streets when he was supposed to be incarcerated for six

Government Orders

years. He was released after about 16 months and then proceeded to bludgeon somebody to death in our community.

On calling for these resignations I received a phone call from an individual whose response was that in that region there was an 83 per cent success rate. I told him that was commendable but the facts were that I deal with the failure rate. The victims come to my office. There are victims all over this country. I wish we could get off the discussion of the success rate and the rest of it is a minor issue because that is not the case.

Today the minister said we have a good system. We do not have a good system. It has flaws in it. So fix it.

(1640)

Today the minister said that we have a tiny minority, a handful of criminals. The problem is that we have a serious, serious problem with that tiny minority of individuals who are disrupting law-abiding Canadian citizens. The minister said he is listening to his constituents. I think he is listening to the Reform Party because we are going to push and push and push again until it is changed.

Today the minister asked why this system was not in place before now. We should ask the Liberal government. It brought it in. Wake up over there.

We also have to ask where this legislation deals with the independence of the immigration adjudicators and how we deal with the independence of the refugee board. As I go through the José Salinas Mendoza case they are going to find they are too independent for their own good and they are going to have to be held accountable. It is the same as parole boards.

When we talk about the deportation of individuals, where does the legislation address the fact that people like Charles Dennis Martin were deported and escorted out of Canada nine times? Does the legislation address that? There are a lot more of them. This is only one and again he was in my community.

What about cases that are currently under way? Is this retroactive? There are many people in this system who are going through time and time again, hearing after hearing. We will cover that again in a moment.

While it is nice to talk about immigration and its positive influence on Canada I want to talk about the negative influence. One of those negative influences is José Salinas Mendoza who arrived in Canada from El Salvador in 1988. From February 22, 1989 until November 1992 he had 12 serious criminal convictions in this country including assault, resisting arrest, sexual assault, and on and on the list goes.

On September 23, 1993 a 19-year old young lady in my riding was raped. This young lady was convinced to have the charges stayed on the condition that Mr. Mendoza be deported and he was. He was escorted out of Canada. End of story?—not quite.

On April 18, 1994, just a few short months later, Mr. Mendoza was back at the Douglas border crossing just outside Vancouver. He announced himself as a refugee into Canada this time around. The immigration officials processed his application and the story starts again.

Unfortunately the young lady in my neighbourhood virtually bumped into this fellow in a grocery store shortly afterward. She had not even been given the courtesy by immigration officials or anybody else of being notified that he was back in Canada after being deported. Why is he even back in Canada after being deported? Why do we not say: "Get out. We have already deported you once"? Maybe it is going to be like Charles Dennis Martin who was escorted out nine times.

Mr. Mendoza was arrested. His first hearing was on May 13 this year. He was told to report for another hearing on June 17.

(1645)

By the way, all taxpayers should know that the people at the hearings are immigration adjudicators, an interpreter for Mr. Mendoza, a lawyer who I believe is paid by legal aid, a refugee hearing officer at refugee hearings and, at the request of the criminal, an individual from the United Nations as an observer. They are all paid with taxpayers' dollars.

Two days after his arrival and two days after this young lady saw him again in a grocery store, the RCMP advised her that he is back in the country. A friend of mine asked me to help. On June 17 I attended an immigration hearing at which Mr. Mendoza from El Salvador was considered a danger to the public. He was incarcerated pending a refugee hearing on August 18. This is a fellow who had already been booted out of the country. However, his lawyer appealed that decision to have him incarcerated as a danger to the public and brought in a new immigration adjudicator who seven days later let him out on the street.

What do we have now? We are into our third hearing on this fellow after he has been ordered deported. He is allowed to roam our streets. He has 12 prior convictions and an outstanding charge of sexual assault or rape.

On June 22 of this year he appeared in Matsqui court on relayed sexual assault charges. He was not ordered into custody. On June 24, I say again, he was released. On June 17 the hon. minister of immigration came out on his white horse to Vancouver and said: "I'll intervene in this. We'll take charge". We have not seen hide nor hair of him since. This is a question he will be asked here this month.

On July 5 we did a little research on this fellow. We found that a person involved in last year's election campaign of the failed Liberal candidate of North Vancouver who donated money to the Liberal Party was appointed by the minister of immigration to the refugee board. This individual is a past lawyer for José Mendoza.

Government Orders

What is happening here? Who gets appointed to refugee boards? Who gets appointed as immigration adjudicators? Liberal political hacks are the people who get appointed. What are their qualifications? Are the qualifications that we give money or we help the party? What are the qualifications? Is it who you know or how good you are at it? It happens all the time. Look at the last three senators, senators until age 75. It is who you know in the Liberal Party, is it not?

Let's move along. We had amendments to the Immigration Act in direct response to the issues that Reform has been bringing out. The presentation of the Liberal Party is: "Listen, don't worry too too much about this small issue over here. We have to think about the big picture of immigration. You have to think about both issues, the good people and the bad people".

August 18 was the date for the refugee hearing for Mr. Mendoza.

(1650)

I found out that an application is going forth to have it closed to the public. I filed an application to have it open to the public. Instead of having a refugee hearing on August 18, we have a hearing to determine whether the public should be allowed in the hearing. Now we are getting ridiculous. We are already into the third hearing and this will be the fourth for this fellow.

The meeting again had eight people involved in it who were paid by the taxpayer. Before I was allowed into this hearing, I had to sign a document that said that I would not tell anything about what was going on on the inside. I signed it to get in. Once I signed the document, I got some documents back. One was a complaint from Mr. Mendoza and his lawyer that I had some information on him that I should not. It was a complaint to the privacy commissioner. Now I am under investigation by the very person who should not be in the country in the first place.

I checked with the privacy commissioner's office and was told yes, I would be investigated. I said: "Yes, maybe I will but you will do it in public, not behind closed doors". Then I checked with the refugee board and said this. "I got these documents after I signed the gag order. Can I show this to people? Can I show them what the charges are?" "No, you cannot". No, I cannot. I am not allowed to defend myself but he can. Why should I not be able to?

Mr. Hart: You are just an MP.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): I am just an MP.

I had our immigration critic come to the refugee hearing but he was not allowed in. He was told to get out. When I got into the meeting at nine o'clock in the morning a summons was tabled to make me a witness to that hearing and future hearings.

I found out that if I was a witness I could not attend the whole hearing. Therefore they got me out. I said that I needed some counsel. I was given 20 minutes in Vancouver to get it. This is a federally constituted refugee board. I went outside and gave our critic 25 cents and he was then my counsel inside. They were now stuck with the two of us in there and we were not moving out of there.

These hearings went on three times and there is another one coming up. We thought we would have one hearing to determine whether the next hearing could be in public but we found that we had three separate hearings. One, the minister of immigration filed an appeal on the decision that one of the second immigration adjudicators allowed this fellow out on the streets. That is going to occur September 28.

There is another one on November 3. That is a criminal court case for the sexual assault of the young lady. It is a separate one. On November 14 our Reform critic and myself will still be battling to get the public involved in the exercise.

The members on the other side sanctimoniously talk about how good the system is working, how well it is working. These people are a very small minority. Is this accurate? The members over there had better wake up.

Mr. Nault: Ask the question. I don't understand a damn thing you are saying.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): The comment I get from a Liberal member over here is he does not understand a damn thing I am saying. He is absolutely right. He does not understand what I am saying. The system is not working. Get it through your heads. This is an industry that is feeding on itself.

(1655)

I do hope I have some questions because I am looking forward to a little debate on this with this weak minded Liberal group here. Let us go back to the basics. Let us go back to the fundamentals.

This individual has had far too many taxpayers' dollars for the good of the Canadian taxpayer. He does not deserve it. For anyone with 12 criminal charges who has been deported from this country to walk back in and have a young lady hiding and cringing is wrong. It is wrong to be spending dollar after dollar after dollar on this kind of exercise. We are sick and tired of it and we are not going to take that any more.

The Deputy Speaker: Before questions or comments it is my duty, colleagues, to read this notice before five o'clock.

Government Orders

Pursuant to Standing Order 38 I must advise the House that the question that will be on the adjournment debate this evening is the following: the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona—transportation subsidies.

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I must say I had trouble following the arguments of the member for Fraser Valley West as to why he would not support Bill C-44 which attempts to deal with some of the abuses that occur.

What we heard today from the member for Fraser Valley West is typical of the Reform Party. It is typical because all of last year we heard how there was a tremendous crisis and that the crime rate was going up dramatically. We heard it every day here in the House of Commons from the members of the Reform Party only to find out that crime has actually gone down.

This is typical. They want to take the worst possible scenario and bring it forward in this House. I think it is totally irresponsible. It is playing on the fears of Canadians. Why do they not talk about the contributions of immigrants to this community? Why do they not talk about the immigrants in this House who are contributing, as many of them are? Why does he not talk about them? Instead they want to take the worst possible examples, and this is the worst kind of politics of fear that you can have.

Ms. Clancy: Shame.

Mr. Dhaliwal: They should be more responsible in ensuring that we get the true picture of the reality instead of painting distorted pictures about immigrants who contribute tremendously to Canadian society.

The minister by bringing forward Bill C-44 is acting responsibly to ensure that where individuals are abusing the system they are dealt with in a constructive way, and I applaud the minister for bringing this forward.

Instead of hearing constructive suggestions from the member opposite he wants to give the most extreme examples, not to highlight the reality of it but to distort what the reality of the situation is. Knowing the riding that he comes from, I would think he would act in a much more responsible way, as expected by his constituents.

If he is truly interested in contributing, he will support Bill C-44, go along with the government side and get this bill through as quickly as possible so we can deal with abuses that exist. We have to recognize that that is a very small number when you look at the total number of immigrants that come into this country, immigrants who contribute and work very hard. In his own riding they are contributing to the farming community which is very dominant. The faster we can get this through the better so that we can deal with some of his concerns. I am sure he will see that through.

(1700)

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, it is discouraging when we get comments like those. I made a point of prefacing my remarks today by saying that we agree immigration is healthy. We agree with it.

I come from a community with a lot of immigrants. However I was talking about what we do not agree with. It is necessary to bring to the attention of this group here the problems involved in the refugee process. Yes, the bill goes some way toward that but there are still problems. I laid them out. I know the hon. member does not understand but that is what gets Liberals elected nowadays. They do not understand things.

Let us not cloak the issue of serious criminal immigrants in the country under the positive aspects of immigration. There are some serious concerns and they are in virtually every riding. I can assure the House that José Salinas Mendoza is not the only one in my community. In the wake of these it is not only one criminal immigrant. I have already said this guy has 12 criminal convictions. There is a string of victims. There are all kinds of them.

There is not much sense in talking further to the people over there. They have a majority government. They will put through what they want to put through. They will leave out the tough aspects as they did on the Young Offenders Act. There has not really been any toughness in anything they have legislated including the budget.

I tell them to go to it. We will see them in the next election. Then we will talk some real turkey on who is doing better, them or us.

Mr. Discepolo: Is it 10 per cent?

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): I have to address this point about 10 per cent in the polls. I do not know who draws the polls, but I can assure them that if they take a little walk where I come from they will not even be on the map. They will not even be on the list of who is in a poll. They should not tell me about how they are doing. They are not doing so well in a lot of aspects. These laws they are trying to write here are weak. They are poorly motivated.

Ms. Clancy: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Did the hon. member use the word laws or was it another word that is unparliamentary? If it was the second I would be grateful if he would withdraw it. Was it laws?

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, what was I supposed to have said?

The Deputy Speaker: It was a four-letter word beginning with *l*.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): I thought I said laws.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: I thought the hon. member was using the word laws. Am I correct in that?

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Yes, that is right.

The Deputy Speaker: Very well. The word of an hon. member is always taken.

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to speak today in support of the legislation to amend the Immigration Act.

Let me start by saying that it is interesting to hear the comments of the opposition. On the one side we are becoming heartless by going too far and on the other side we are not doing enough although at least we are listening. The bill is a balance struck between the two, dictated by common sense and the comments of concerned Canadians, and will cure situations like the one presented by the hon. member for Fraser Valley West.

In its very essence this is what Canadian democracy is all about. It is fairness and protection for all including the immigrant and the refugee. It is about swift justice for criminals that threaten our system. The legislation is about balance, fairness and justice. The bill will help deal with those few hoodlums with guns and knives that want to subvert our immigration and refugee policy.

(1705)

Nowhere in the legislation will we find that the government has heeded the voices of reaction that would have us bar our doors and shutter our windows to the world because of the misconceptions of some and violence of a few.

Make no mistakes. We do not listen to those voices and we will not listen because we know our immigration and refugee policy has been just and sound. We know from what others around the globe tell us that Canadian policies are often seen as a beacon of hope in a world of gloom and doom. Bill C-44 is meant to keep that light shining.

[Translation]

When I first came to Canada as an immigrant, I found a free society in which each member was respected and immigrants considered as pillars of society. Canada is a huge country where more people die than are born. This means that the responsibility rests with the immigrants to provide Canada with the numbers required to ensure the efficiency of our society. In return, these immigrants must be guaranteed a dignified life and a future for their children, with the assurance that crime is not the norm but the exception in this country.

Our immigration policy is envied world-wide and has ensured Canada a dynamic and courageous immigration, one which has played a major role in building our country.

[English]

We are committed to maintaining a progressive immigration policy. We have seen the benefits it has brought this country. Immigrants create jobs. They do not take them. Immigrants are not likely to depend on welfare or to commit crime. We know that to be a fact. Statistics prove it time and time again.

We can also see other facts. Criminals have slipped through. Crimes have been committed. Compared to the thousands or indeed millions that come to Canada every year, those that commit crimes are in the minority. However the fact that they are small in number does not diminish the horror of some of these crimes.

[Translation]

As soon as this bill was introduced in the House of Commons, we started receiving comments from members, journalists, immigrants, refugees, citizens. We received letters, faxes, telephone calls. This goes to show how much interest was generated by this matter of great importance to everyone. This interest made it necessary to introduce changes to give a sense of security to our citizens.

[English]

The legislation is designed to root out criminals that have subverted our immigration system and broken our laws. There can be no equivocating on the issue because it quickly boils down to respect for Canadian law and protection for truly needy refugees and honest immigrants.

The minuscule number of criminals that have crept into the immigration system like thieves in the night do not make minuscule headlines when they go bad. It is those dreadful deeds. We have all seen the pictures and we heard our colleague. They start an erosion of trust in an immigration system that has served the country well.

If people feel they cannot trust a system they will not support it. If people feel a system is open to abuse or misuse they will turn their back on it. The government equates immigration with nation building. Immigrants built the country. They built our railways. They worked in our factories and broke sod for farms.

Because nation building is a process that never stops we need an immigration policy that is both progressive and effective. That in itself is a good reason for fighting to maintain public trust in the integrity of the system.

[Translation]

We must get rid of the criminal element. We must do so intelligently and without undermining the underlying principles of our immigration policy. As we know, all hon. members believe in the principles of confidence, honesty and justice, and I know that all of them wish the law to be changed to regain public confidence.

Government Orders

On examination, we see that the proposed changes cannot be rejected. Some would want more drastic changes, but this would be against the philosophy of our government as well as that of a majority of Canadians.

[*English*]

Can anybody really fault a proposal that would prevent serious criminals from claiming to be refugees to delay their deportation? I think not. We have a system to help refugees, not serious criminals.

(1710)

How about a proposal that allows us to seize documentation from the mails that would be used to defraud our immigration regulations? I cannot find fault with that and I do not think too many people would either.

The bill smoothes out a number of glitches and bumps in old legislation that gave criminals a place to hide. For example, immigration officials currently have the authority to arrest someone who violates immigration laws, but they cannot issue a warrant for other agencies such as the RCMP to arrest that person.

Under our present system the immigration appeal division of the IRB can overturn removal orders against serious criminals on humanitarian grounds. However the minister alone must deal with the consequences of these decisions. The minister alone is the one entrusted with ensuring the interests of Canadians are protected. Therefore the minister should have the authority to make the decision.

[*Translation*]

The criminal element is not acceptable and premeditated crime must be punished for our protection and for the sake of justice. For too long, Canada has been a haven for the criminal element which often misused our country's all too flexible laws.

That is why liaison was established with the Correctional Service of Canada to help rid us of criminals immediately after their have served their sentence.

[*English*]

There have been management changes at the immigration appeals division which should improve efficiency and effectiveness in decision making. We are also making sure that IRB gets the information it needs involving war criminals, patterns of fraud or multiple identities.

The legislation before the House does not deal with removals and some might see that as a flaw. I would caution those who think that way to remember that we have targeted foreign criminals for a quick exit through a joint police-immigration enforcement effort.

Members are well aware of the special joint task force involving police from a number of forces and immigration

officials. This task force is targeting serious criminals for removal and operational units are working as we speak in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to ask those calling for more drastic changes to reflect on the fact that our immigration policy has served us well and should not be abolished. Of course, when we have economic problems, we try to find causes for these problems. We do not think about the fact that the economic crisis is a global problem. We respond right away by calling for an end to all immigration. We must, of course, solve existing problems as quickly as possible but this does not mean that we must close off our borders. Canada is the only country in the world with vast empty spaces and even if we closed off our borders, we could not stop immigration. We can only limit it and strengthen the laws controlling it.

[*English*]

It is interesting to note that in the research paper presented at a Carleton University law conference last year—and the same research was mentioned earlier by the minister—researchers noted that under our system immigrants are granted legal status and have access to the legal system. Illegal immigrants on the other hand become accomplices or victims of gangs because they cannot appeal to legitimate authorities.

The research paper also noted: “Tougher immigration laws might well drive more people into the arms of smugglers and the gangs”. Of course we do need to be tough on abuse and those who manipulate our system and the intent of our laws. We must send a clear message that those who violate our laws will have to pay a price.

We are not a government that will punish the innocent just to get at the guilty. We have no intention of making people who really deserve Canada's protection pay for the actions of a small criminal element. We will not tar all refugees as criminals because we know they are not. We are not people who have the intention of labelling immigrants and refugees as security risks.

One of our first actions as a government was to take immigration out of a department christened, and unjustly so, by our predecessors as the department of public security and put it in a department called citizenship and immigration where it rightly belongs. We will fight with our every breath to prevent the word immigrant from becoming a synonym of the word criminal.

[*Translation*]

Look at the members of this House. As you can see, there are very few native people. All the others are new arrivals. They are immigrants themselves. They are the sons and daughters of immigrants. They are the descendants of recent immigrants and, as you know, this diversity represents the reality and the wealth of our country.

Government Orders

(1715)

By proposing these amendments, the minister tried to eliminate current abuses in the system. He also wanted to indicate to the criminal element taking the place of real refugees and immigrants that crime is not acceptable.

This government's commitment to progressive immigration is reinforced by this bill. We think we can have both a progressive policy and an aggressive strategy supporting the integrity and credibility of our policy.

[English]

This bill addresses real problems with real solutions. The key to success is balance. As we have done for generations, we can continue to welcome immigrants and refugees to help continue building our nation. As soon as this legislation is proclaimed we can tell those few who exploit Canada's generosity that in the land of the maple leaf they have nowhere to hide.

I urge my colleagues in all parties to recognize the importance of this legislation and give it speedy passage.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Vancouver East will probably be interested in having the House know, she and I occasionally share time together on a radio commentary show on CBC out of Vancouver. I have grown to respect her and her qualities as I have with many people not only in this House but in Canada. They have come to Canada and made this country great. They have contributed to this country. I stand very firmly behind the people who have done exactly that. They come to Canada to make it the great country that it is.

Would the hon. member not agree there are some people in Canada, again a small minority I am sure, who might want to equate immigrant to criminal or refugee to criminal. The member spoke of confidence. I wonder if she would agree that by having more precise laws, by having a better law than the one we are currently debating, by having a law that has more teeth which would do away with the abject abuses that our member from Fraser Valley West was talking about, would accomplish exactly what she and I want to achieve, that is, to be able to say truly that people coming to Canada are coming to build Canada, make it stronger and a better place for all of us to live.

Mrs. Terrana: Mr. Speaker, I feel that this law has the teeth that are required. We cannot put together a state that has too strong a police force and are in control of everything.

What we have now are laws that cannot be implemented in the right manner because we do not have the system. The immigration law in Canada is very generous. I have been in other countries and by comparison Canada has an extremely generous law. It is so generous that we have people who come and fall through the cracks.

Every democracy has its pitfalls of course because democracy is difficult. It can be uncomfortable at times but it is a system that works. We have to have the element of freedom that we have to give to the people who come to our shores.

At the same time we have to have control because people who come and say that they are immigrants should be checked right away. If they are not immigrants as they say, they should be sent away. If there are any problems with their past, they have to be sent away again.

When I came to Canada in 1966, I was asked certain things: "Is anyone in your family insane? Are you insane? No, then you can go to Canada. Did you commit any fraud? Have you ever been to jail? Has a member of your family ever been to jail? No, then you can go". At the time, we were coming for six months.

At times it is really difficult to understand what the system has become and that is why I have faith in this bill. It can do the trick without becoming too stringent and too severe. That is not our style. That is not Canada.

(1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech made by the hon. member for Vancouver and found it to be somewhat ambiguous and contradictory.

On the one hand she welcomes immigrants in a very compassionate way, but on the other hand she fully shows why this bill is unacceptable for several reasons. In my opinion, this legislation goes against the traditional policies of the Liberal Party. I remember that the Liberals were opposed to the sometimes excessively right-wing policies of Mr. Valcourt, Mrs. McDougall and other former ministers. Why play these little games today? You do not agree that there is a real problem in Canada, but I see it. There has been some abuse and there are a number of criminals. This is not an exaggeration; it is not a right-wing answer, but there is currently an economic crisis in Canada and this is the worst possible time to legislate on immigration. Why not wait until the public opinion is not so sensitive to this issue? Then we will be able to be more rational about the whole issue.

Mrs. Terrana: Mr. Speaker, if everyone was honest we could do it. Let me just give you an example. If your son was killed by someone who came to Canada as a refugee, that person would be a refugee but also a criminal and I think you would have a different opinion. I have seen too many tragedies and I continue to see tragedies. The problem is not with immigrants. I myself am an immigrant and I have a lot of respect for immigrants. I know what it means to be an immigrant. If someone is honest and comes to Canada as a refugee, then there is no problem. That person can certainly come here. However, if a person is not honest our society must have a system to keep that person from

Government Orders

coming in, otherwise there could be serious problems and even tragedies. We witnessed such a case in British Columbia.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Briefly please, the hon. whip for the Reform Party.

Mr. Abbott: That is caucus co-ordinator.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question about the levels of immigration. Currently the Liberal government targets 250,000.

It has been shown throughout the year that this stretches and puts strain on the bureaucracy and a lot of the various classifications. Because of that there has been a lot of abuse by the criminal element, a lot of abuse under family dependency programs, a lot of abuse of the immigration business program. The department cannot catch them. We may appear to be attacking and criticizing and I agree we should stress the fact that our immigration program is a good one. However, we should look at the numbers.

Does the hon. member feel there is any merit in either putting a freeze on the immigration program for a while or reducing the numbers from 250,000 to 200,000 so that each and every one of these good programs we have can be controlled? In theory they are all great. But in actual practice there are some elements that are being incorporated into the program where the immigrants themselves are getting a bad reputation and it is not fair.

Like the member I am a first generation immigrant. I like to see immigrants come to this country, be happy to come here and be treated with respect. Because we are on this program of high numbers for whatever reason, the integrity of our immigration policy needs to be restored for the protection not only of Canadians but the very immigrants themselves. Does she not feel there is merit in addressing the numbers of immigrants that are being allowed into this country and reducing them even by 50,000 or 60,000 people?

Mrs. Terrana: Mr. Speaker, briefly I would offer congratulations to both members for being promoted.

The minister is going through this series of consultations and it is clear that there is some concern about numbers. The numbers are being looked at. Again as I said in my speech it is marvellous to have immigrants, but we also have to give them a future and we have to give a future to their children.

(1725)

We are trying to get our house in order and through consultation we will know what the numbers will be. At this point I do not have any idea. It would be a real shot in the dark.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on this first day of our return to Parliament in what I feel will be a very historic session. We in the Reform Party will be here to make sure the government keeps the train on the tracks during this period.

Over the summer I had the opportunity to hold a series of town hall meetings in my riding. After those meetings it became quite evident that immigration is a priority in my riding. I know that members throughout the House have heard concerns from their constituents as well about immigration. I am certainly glad to see that Bill C-44 is moving toward fixing the problem. Unfortunately it has not gone far enough.

In addressing Bill C-44 I feel it is vital to stress the importance of immigration. It is one of the cornerstones of Canadian society. Cultural diversity has and will continue to be beneficial to our nation. Immigration provides us with an increased global awareness and has been integral to the development of Canada. We must take a constructive approach and work together to solve the many immigration problems, not just criticize, which unfortunately is all too easy.

We are considering a bill which the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has proposed, apparently to correct the all too numerous shortcomings and failures in our immigration system left by decades of ill-conceived, misguided Liberal immigration policy.

The bill would never have seen the light of day if Reform members had not presented the minister almost daily with an ongoing litany of outrage and complaints by the Canadian public.

We have an immigration system that is clearly almost as out of control as the \$600 billion debt. The government has finally conceded that Canadians in every part of the country are fed up with an inadequate and confusing immigration policy that has allowed thousands upon thousands of unworthy immigrants into this magnificent land, a policy that has blatantly ignored the interests of the people.

What are the priorities for accepting immigrants into Canada? First, family reunification is a policy that has been so badly abused that it accepts people with no thought of whether they will be beneficial members of our society. The reunification of families should be a consideration, one of many in assessing an application, but not the main priority. Immigration quotas call for the largest single group of immigrants, some 111,000 or 45 per cent of the total, to be admitted from this class.

In addition, 11 per cent of immigrants or about 28,000 people will be refugees. In far too many cases these are people who just show up on our doorstep. We have no choice, due to our laws, but to grant these people a hearing, a process which can take up to three years. During this time of overburdened taxpayers, who foots the bill? The taxpayer foots the bill.

Government Orders

Way down at the bottom of the priority list is what the immigration bureaucrats call the economic class, in other words the fortunate few who have the financial resources to purchase their way into the country. Who says Canada is not for sale?

Whatever happened to the hard working, self-supporting immigrants who built this country, people who were admitted because they deserved to be here? Whatever became of the people who had the skills the country needed, who had dreams of freedom and self-sufficiency, who had the initiative and courage to make their own way in a brave new land? That Canada of 127 years ago depended on a sturdy, skilled, hard working immigrant to develop and prosper and to populate our empty lands. That they were successful is apparent in the prosperous, safe, free country in which we live today. Many here in this House have descended from these early immigrants. My grandfather was from Scotland, my grandmother was Irish and my wife's parents are from Italy. They came to Canada and they contributed. They raised children. They were and are law-abiding Canadians.

(1730)

Today our needs have changed. Our economy no longer needs pioneers but rather computer experts, investment bankers, electronic engineers, experienced business people and traders, technicians, skilled trades people and educators. One thing has not changed. We need people who are ready to take the risk of moving to a new land, ready to seize opportunities, to move and develop some still empty spaces. We do not need those who have come to exploit or drain our social services, and we certainly do not need criminals.

Since that Liberal heyday of the seventies when Trudeau and his obedient officials opened the floodgates to immigration, based not on the needs of the country, not on selectivity or high standards, but on some seemingly intangible set of feel good principles, Canada has been on a backward slide. The Canadian public demands a tougher approach as to who we admit into this country, but this government shows no real intention of doing this or of listening to Canadians.

I have received letters in my office and I know each and every member in this House has received letters from constituents complaining about the immigration system. I would like to read a brief excerpt from a letter received the other day from a gentleman in Summerland, British Columbia. He writes:

Our current immigration system is overlooking our social services, education, health services and policing. We believe we should be good to those we allow in, but we should not be seen as easy marks by any immigrants. There are so many deserving people who want to come to Canada and be good citizens. Why should we have the patience with those who are not willing to obey our laws? If we are tough but fair, we will do far more good overall.

It is noteworthy that Bill C-44 deals specifically with provisions which decide not whether criminals will be admitted as immigrants, but which ones. I put it to you that no criminals, none, should be admitted to Canada, period, not as an immigrant, not as a refugee, not even as a visitor—none.

A report drafted by senior advisers in the immigration department for the minister says that many Canadians think the immigration program is out of control and that major changes reflecting public opinion are needed. There is a sense the immigration program needs fixing. It urges that immigrants need to be better selected.

I further submit that all immigrants to this country must respect the laws and contribute their fair share. Any slip, any criminal conviction, should be grounds for deportation.

It is a privilege for people to be allowed to come to Canada to live, a privilege much sought after by many from other countries all over the world, even by people from developed nations.

Canada and its immigration policy have become the laughing stock of the world. It is no secret it is far too easy for criminals to come here. We are not even checking to ensure the people we do admit are not criminals. As a result, the people of Canada have been subjected to increasingly violent crimes. The bitter irony is that even when these criminals are apprehended and dealt with by our courts and even when deportation orders are issued, our immigration officers are impotent to deal with them, to send them out of the country, to ensure they never darken this land again. Oh, no, they simply file an appeal of the deportation order and disappear into the woodwork.

All of us have seen the devastating and deadly effects of this inept system. Now the minister with this sadly flawed legislation hopes to lull Canadians into believing this government actually intends to do something. Canadians will be fooled no longer.

(1735)

The minister is proposing that we actually allow criminals into Canada simply because the crimes they committed would not earn a maximum sentence of 10 years in this country. Clearly, this is sending the wrong message. A criminal is a criminal. Those who commit small crimes can be inclined to commit more heinous ones. In what way does Canada or the people of Canada benefit from having criminals here? The only immigration policy that will work is one that allows people into this country solely on merit.

In a letter to me dated August 29 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration states: "Protecting Canadian society from criminals is a top priority for me and my officials". Having the minister guard our gates against criminals is like having a fox guarding the hen-house.

Government Orders

Canadians are far from gullible and will not tolerate this Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde approach. Canadians of all stripes are demanding that the law get tough with criminals. That will prove to be an impossible task if we continue to import law breakers. We should bar all criminals. I will repeat that. We should bar all criminals, without exception. Canadians do not want an invasion of criminals. Canadians do not need terrorists hiding here and plotting violence in other parts of the world. Canadians do not need street gangs or the additional stress on our already struggling social programs.

Canada is also nearly bankrupt so how can we afford to admit these people? Before any immigrant steps onto Canadian soil, before they leave their native land, have their criminal record checked with all the resources at our disposal. I have been told that immigration officers are prohibited from checking criminal records through Interpol. Why?

Immigration officials have told me it would bottleneck the application process to check whether refugees have a criminal record. Then let it be bottlenecked. I say it is far better than having even one Canadian murdered or having violence erupt in the streets or making our own citizens live in fear in their own homes, their streets or their playgrounds.

What about immigrants who commit crimes while in Canada? Again, our Liberal created policies and laws have forgotten the sole reason for their existence. It is not to concern themselves with the welfare of the criminal and his or her family. Our laws were made to protect Canadians. The criminal should have thought of the hardship he would cause his family before he broke our laws.

If found guilty of a criminal act in Canada, anyone who is not a Canadian citizen should be put on the first plane out of the country. It would be simple enough to carry this out directly from the courtroom to deportation. Let the offender have the right to appeal. Everyone should have the right to appeal, but let it be from some other country, perhaps his country of origin, not in Canada and not for the taxpayers to pay the final bill.

In my peaceful riding of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt we have a particularly repugnant fellow, a landed immigrant who feels no particular need to respect this country's laws. He scorns our courts. He laughs at our law enforcement officers. This man eluded a murder charge on a technicality in our courts. Currently he is being tried for a string of burglaries, a crime he has served time for previously. He has a record as long as your arm, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps as long as all of our arms and a deep and abiding contempt for the citizens of our land. He has been ordered deported by immigration officials but he has exercised his right of appeal.

(1740)

This man is a criminal. He has had a second chance and then some. Where is the compassion and the consideration for the innocent people who are his victims? Logic dictates that there is not even the remotest chance of his rehabilitation, yet we keep him here at the taxpayers' expense.

This individual is a burden on this country and will continue to be so. Why should Canadian taxpayers have to spend some \$40,000 a year to keep this foreign national in our prisons? This person should be on the next plane back to his homeland where I understand the law takes a sterner view of this type of criminal conduct. Why are we not sending him home? Let us do it. Send him home.

This unacceptable situation is the end result of the current laws, laws that originated to a large measure with a Liberal government. The proposals before us are more of the same. It appears on the surface to be a step in the right direction. We are tired of hearing that. It is like the old saying: You cannot get there from here. The government knows this proposal will be almost impossible to enforce. It will be spun around and distorted by lawyers and judges and the immigration bureaucracy will find a way to thwart it. After all, this is the way the government deals with these matters with Canadians.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast have called loud and clear for tougher measures. This bill does not address the ills and dangerous inadequacies of immigration. It does not have a clear mandate for the Immigration and Refugee Board which increasingly acts as a law unto itself. It does not solve the problem of a department that cannot enforce its own deportation orders. It does not even have reliable knowledge of how many deported criminals and undesirables remain in this country. It is a typical Liberal answer to a problem: doing too little far too late.

This government, the minister and his colleagues, have exhausted the patience of the people of this country. Canadians are raising a hue and cry. Not only the people of the west but all Canadians demand that the minister do his job.

We Reformers have presented our proposed amendment to this bill and urge all members of the House to support it. This Reform amendment is what Canadians are telling us to do. It is time to start listening and not just pretend to listen. The ministry is out of control. The immigration department is out of control and Canadians will not pay the price for the minister's mismanagement.

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. That is one of the most beautiful areas in British Columbia which I often have an opportunity to visit. I try to get there every

Government Orders

summer. The lake and the fruit trees make it a very beautiful area indeed.

I commend the member. He has made some important comments about immigration being very important for Canada and how immigration is very important for the economic development of this country.

He also talked about the pioneers. I can share some of his feelings because my own grandfather came here in about 1906. Luckily there was not a Reform government then. Otherwise he might have been deported because he did not have the skills or education. He was an uneducated man but he wanted to start a new life. He came to Vancouver, British Columbia after travelling extensively throughout the world. He obviously was a very smart man. He picked the right place to stay. I share in some of the comments of the hon. member as well.

(1745)

I would like to say that in immigration there is a balanced approach. One of the areas the member talked about is family reunification. I think it should be known that when you look at the total immigration to this country, the percentage of family reunification has come down. It is actually reduced from what it was in the 1980s.

The members in the Reform Party have often brought up the situation of family reunification. It is about families coming together. I am very surprised that the Reform Party, with its stand on the family and how important it is to have a strong family situation, would be against bringing families together. I am really surprised considering how often the Reform members speak out about how important the family unit is, how important the support system is. Now I hear that they do not think that family unification should be looked at.

In fact, instead of bringing families together, instead of bringing the mothers and fathers together, they want to keep them apart. They do not want to bring them here. They want to set up barriers for them. This is quite surprising considering their stand on having strong families and how important that is in terms of reducing crime and support. I am very surprised.

In the area of refugees, Canadians are compassionate. I remember the refugees from Uganda. I know many of my people who were refugees from Uganda. They have contributed substantially to this economy. I can name lists of people who are now judges or now chair of major companies and so on who came here as refugees.

We did it as humanitarians but they have contributed substantially to our economy. If the hon. member wants to get a list of the many people who have come and who have contributed, particularly those refugees from Uganda, I would be happy to provide that.

The immigration policy has a balance. It says we want to bring families together. I am sure that the Reform people want to keep families together. About 45 per cent of all immigrants to this country are into family reunification in order to bring families together.

Then of course there is the economic class. There are entrepreneurs who want to start businesses here and want to develop our economy. We want to give them an opportunity to help create jobs. I am sure that the hon. member will say it is important to create jobs. It is important to make sure that Canada is working. It is important that Canada be competitive with the rest of the world. We do need entrepreneurs.

There is another matter I want to raise because the member on the other side has talked about it extensively. That is the crime factor.

I have a case in my riding, and I would like the member to respond to this, where a gentleman was deported because he assaulted someone. This gentleman has a wife and two children in Canada but he cannot come back. Imagine what they are going through because he assaulted someone.

I would like the member to tell us whether we should keep that person out of the country forever, away from his wife and two children. Should we say because this person assaulted someone he should never be allowed to come to this country to join his wife and two children? I would like the hon. member to address that and indicate how we should respond to that wife and those two children.

Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions. They are very interesting.

I am not a judge nor a jury but I can comment. Maybe the person who committed those crimes should have thought very carefully about the consequences for his wife and children before he considered the crimes. I think it is reasonable to ask that we be responsible for those types of things.

If he is after reunification with his family maybe that is an item for his country of origin to deal with and not a particular problem for Canada in this case.

With regard to family reunification which the hon. member briefly touched on, I would say that the Reform Party does very much stand for the principles of the family.

(1750)

We do not have a problem entirely with family reunification, but I think it has gone a little bit too far. We are talking about family reunification for adopted children and children of adopted children. It goes on and on with cousins. Where does it end?

Family reunification in the close knit family is fine, but the laws in this country take it a little bit too far in my opinion.

Government Orders

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member if he has actually read this bill. I ask that question because during his remarks today he seemed to be talking about the fact that we were going to continue the flaw in the existing act that talks about criminals having access to our refugee determination system.

The minister stood in this House earlier today and highlighted that provision in the act that is being amended. I want to quote for the member. That is very important because the member is leaving a perception in the minds of Canadians that we are not dealing with this. “No immigrant and except as provided in subsection (3), no visitor shall be granted admission if the immigrant or visitor is a member of any of the following classes: have been convicted in Canada under any act of Parliament of a summary conviction offence, other than an offence designated as a contravention under the Contraventions Act, and there are reasonable grounds to believe have been convicted outside Canada of an offence that, if committed in Canada would constitute a summary conviction offence under any act of Parliament.”

That is a specific amendment to the act. It is a very big improvement. I know the constituents in my community applaud that kind of amendment. I cannot understand why the Reform Party would stand up in the House today and suggest to Canadians that we are not amending that portion of the act.

Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, I have read through this particular piece of mumbo-jumbo. It is a fact that in this bill we are saying that we will take criminals as long as they have not committed a crime that has a sentence of 10 years or more. That is what this bill is doing.

Why would we do that? Why would Canadians in their right minds say: “We know criminals are bad and we will not accept you if you have murdered somebody. We will not accept you if you have done a few other things that would have a sentence of 10 years or more in Canada; but if it is less than 10 years, if you have just broken into houses—”

An hon. member: Twice and you are out.

Mr. Hart: They can do it twice in Canada? I see. Clearly, this is not what Canadians have been asking for. Why are we admitting people with criminal records at all? They should not be allowed in the country.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in this important debate on Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act. The proposed changes will expand the government's authority to deny serious criminals access to the refugee determination system and will simplify the procedure for excluding from Canada persons who have previously been deported.

At the same time, the bill in its balanced approach to solving a serious problem of criminals, though few in number, assures Canadians that Canada will continue to welcome legitimate and law abiding immigrants as full partners in the Canada of today and the future.

Indeed this bill means a great deal to me. My wife and I came to Canada as immigrants 26 years ago. Our four sons were all born in Winnipeg. We have all been very proud to call this country our home.

(1755)

There are a number of other honourable colleagues in this House who chose Canada as their home and I would like to urge them in particular to take part in this debate because it is important to bring experience as well as compassion and intellect to our discussions of Bill C-44.

Firsthand experience is one of life's great teachers and we who have been through the immigration experience know of the urgent need to protect the integrity of the system that we have.

I want to relay to members the sense of unease I have felt of late when discussions turned to the topic of immigration policy. Recently, when listening to open line shows, talking to people on the streets or opening the morning mail I have detected an anti-immigrant sentiment in some of the comments.

It is not difficult to see where this comes from. There have been too many stories about criminal acts committed by immigrants. There have been too many tales of people who laugh at our laws or use the system to their own advantage. The anger is directed at those who have abused or who would abuse our system and our generosity. But sometimes that anger spills over and it hurts everybody, all of us.

We know there are a number of abusers, the criminals in our midst, although we do not know the exact number. By all estimates the number is small compared to the large numbers of honest, law-abiding immigrants in this country. But we also know that in our society acts of violence or crime are relayed over the airwaves far faster and further than acts of kindness and greatness. In other words, the actions of a few criminals can reflect badly on the good work of the many.

Of course this is wrong, of course this is unfair and of course it should not happen. But it does. In Winnipeg, my city, immigrants are angry when they hear stories about the few who thumb their noses at the laws of the land. We need to make sure people do not abuse our immigration and refugee system or break our laws. We need to stop the abuse and we need to root out the few who are making life difficult for the many.

When cheaters abuse the generosity of Canadians or when thieves or murders try to pretend they are refugees, we and this government should say to them: “Enough is enough”.

Government Orders

The reality is that they are not only stealing from the Canadian taxpayer. They are also stealing from would-be immigrants and refugees who really need our help. There is a limit to the resources and energy that can be expended on immigration and refugee matters and when some of those resources and energy are squandered on felons and cheaters, it clearly takes away from those who truly need our help.

Bill C-44 will ensure that the immigration and refugee system provides the best possible protection for those who really need it. I know there will be people all across Canada in the immigrant community and elsewhere applauding this fair and balanced legislation. In fact, if this government had not moved now to fix the system, there was a very real possibility that citizens' trust in it would dissolve.

We need to have the support of all Canadians so we can maintain a sensitive and fair immigration policy. After all this policy has been key to the success of our country. There is a lot in this legislation to recommend to my colleagues across the floor. The fact that the bill will prevent serious criminals from claiming refugee status or from appealing a decision to the Immigration and Refugee Board as a way to stall their removal from Canada is very important.

(1800)

I must stress that we are talking about serious criminals. We are talking about people who have been convicted of a crime either in Canada or abroad that would be punishable in Canada by a minimum of 10 years in prison, or of anybody the minister believes poses a serious threat to the public and to the security of the nation.

Bill C-44 also gives immigration officers the legal authority to seize documents sent through the international mail that could be used to forge identity papers or circumvent our immigration laws. Customs officers already search international mail and already bring such documents to the attention of immigration officials. However under the current law the immigration officials cannot do anything about these documents. The legislation will fix that problem once and for all.

All of us in the Chamber know that when loopholes exist there is always going to be somebody who will try to take advantage of those loopholes. That is another reason why the bill is necessary. It removes those loopholes. For example, immigration officials currently have the authority to arrest anyone who fails to appear before a senior immigration officer as required, but they cannot issue a warrant authorizing other agencies such as the RCMP to arrest that person. The legislation when passed will allow warrants to be issued so police across Canada can help to find suspects wanted for violating our laws.

This strategy for ending abuse of the system outlined by the minister earlier today impressed me with its fair and balanced approach. Admittedly some critics have complained the amendments do not go far enough. On the other hand there are complaints that the government is too tough and too harsh. When we hear those two extremes I think it is safe to say that we have struck a delicate balance. We can be tough and make it very clear to those who would abuse our laws that they will not be tolerated in Canada. At the same time we are being extremely careful not to destroy the very system we are trying to protect.

As we look for criminals we must make certain that we do not punish the innocent. This is like giving antibiotics to a patient with a serious bacterial infection or administering chemotherapy and radiation to a patient with cancer. We just give the dosage sufficient to cure the infection, control the spread of cancer or cure it if feasible, and not too much treatment so as to endanger the life of the patient himself or herself.

The minister has made it abundantly clear that the people who deserve Canada's protection, those who are fleeing war, famine or persecution, will not have to pay for the wrongs of a few. We must continue to remember that for the most part the people immigrating to Canada today are the nation builders of tomorrow.

I am very proud to say that immigrants have added a lot to the Canadian way of life. They built the railroads and tilled the great prairie farms. Today some of our most prolific artists and performers, distinguished educators, politicians, public servants, inventors, manufacturers and scientists are immigrants. We should never lose sight of their invaluable achievements. We should never let the crimes of a few paint a false portrait of all immigrants.

Most Canadians recognize the positive side to immigration. Many Canadian families can trace their roots back to an immigrant who landed here to start a new life. These positive facts are well documented and understood. Therefore it is very important that public faith and trust in the immigration and refugee process be reaffirmed. If people turn their backs on what we have built, if they lose confidence in the system that we had, it could take generations to gain it back.

(1805)

I believe this timely legislation will go a long way to reaffirming that faith and trust. The bill will permit those who arrive and strengthen the social, cultural, political and economic fabric of our nation to continue to wear their immigrant status with justifiable pride.

In conclusion I urge members to give passage to the legislation without delay.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the government's, the Liberal Party's strategy of letting Liberal members of ethnic origin defend a bill that is considered to be anti-immigrant by an important part of the population.

I must tell you that Canada's crime rate has gone down in recent years and that the crime rate among immigrants is lower than that among Canadians who were born in this country. I repeat, the crime rate among immigrants is lower than that among Canadians who were born in this country.

This bill could be declared unconstitutional in several respects because, in my opinion, some of its provisions violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the Geneva Convention on Refugees. How can the hon. member justify these drastic provisions?

[English]

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, the bill is a very balanced one. It has been so balanced to ensure that it withstands the challenge under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and sees to it that it fulfils our obligation under the Geneva convention. I can assure the member who is still worried that the bill will stand those tests.

I was taken aback when the member tried to insinuate—and I hope he did not mean it but he said it—that the government has a strategy to get ethnic Canadians to debate the issue. Irrespective of origin Canadians are Canadians by any definition. I must tell the member as a matter of fact that I was not sent by my government to debate the bill. I spontaneously volunteered to debate the bill even before the parliamentary recess.

To impute that motive is unconscionable in the Chamber and to impute that ethnicity is to be taken into consideration to me is the highest order of parliamentary obscenity. I hope the hon. member did not mean what he said and I am prepared to accept an apology.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I applaud very much the comments and responses of the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

I stand on a point of clarification. I believe there has been some misunderstanding on the benches opposite with regard to the question of indictable offences and summary conviction offences under the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the member addressing a question or comment to the member who just spoke?

Ms. Clancy: No, Mr. Speaker. I was addressing a comment to the House to clarify a point. We are looking at two different things here. We are looking at apples and oranges, the apples being those people who applied for landed status as immigrants. In the particular case with regard to criminal convictions, if they

are summary conviction offences there are those that are punishable by a minimum of six months. If they are indictable there are those that are punishable by five years. Mr. Speaker, you would probably know this better than I would, but I think five years is the low end of the scale for indictable offences.

(1810)

The question with regard to those crimes punishable by 10 years relates only to those within the refugee stream. That is tied to a United Nations convention to which we are a signatory. I hope that helps. Indictable offences per se run the gamut. It is not a 10-year thing. It does not relate to landed immigrant status. It relates to the refugee process and it is part of the UN convention.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member who just gave his presentation the same question I asked the previous member.

There is evidence in the past year that current levels of immigration are putting a stress and strain on the bureaucracy and all the good programs that Canada has which people love to apply and come to Canada for as the hon. member indicated his family did.

Does he not think there is some merit, any merit at all, in looking at the system and our levels of immigration which are currently at 250,000 people? In our opinion it is at least 50,000 too high. It is unmanageable. We need to control it a bit better. It would preserve the integrity of our immigration system. It would restore confidence in the minister of immigration and I am sure the hon. member would dearly love to see his reputation stay at a good level.

Most important, it would also help and protect immigrants who come here to give their best to this country. Immigrants send their children to school, but because of high numbers and the reputations that some of the bad apples bring to the system they go to school and are discriminated against. They are called names. They come home and they cry.

This is not what we brought them to Canada for. This is not what they applied to Canada for. Those are the things we have to try to improve within the system. That is what we are trying to get across here.

We are not against immigration. We are for immigration but we are for numbers at a speed and at a level that we can control things. We cannot control a car going around a 90-degree corner at 150 miles an hour. They should reduce the numbers to control it better.

Does the member who just gave his speech see any merit in looking at the numbers and reducing them for better control?

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I am pleased to note that he welcomes immigrants to the country.

Government Orders

With respect to numbers the question was put to the Canadian electorate no less than in October 1993. The Canadian electorate made a decision by putting the Liberals into government that the level was a reasonable one.

When we look at the problem we have to look at the two sides of the equation. If we do not have enough resources to manage the 250,000 one possibility is to reduce the number. However I would suggest there is another better alternative and that is to increase the resources to absorb our commitment to the Canadian people.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be involved in a debate that has engaged people's thinking as much as this one has. It is a very healthy sign that we are looking at the merits and the particulars of what we are trying to do here.

The motion before us opposes Bill C-44 on the grounds that it does not prevent the screening out of applicants for refugee status or for permanent landing when those applicants have criminal histories or may be the perpetrators of violence.

(1815)

This is as opposed to true refugees who are so often and often have been the innocent victims of violence.

Those on the opposite side of this House who have risen to speak on this motion and to Bill C-44 have argued that Bill C-44 does permit the screening out of undesirables. They argue that Bill C-44 does have teeth and that we are misguided in our attacks on this bill.

It is easy to understand why they would argue that the bill does go far enough, but this bill would not clean things up. This bill does not strike at the heart of the problem and does not deal with the real workings of the refugee determination system in Canada. One could say that it is a refusal to face facts about just how badly our immigration and refugee systems have gone wrong. We hear a lot of defence of the system across the way.

There is no excuse for this refusal and no excuse for the inability or the unwillingness of this government to face those facts. The shortcomings of the immigration system and our refugee determination system have been given wide publicity since the Reform Party began pointing them out.

The media has widely reported our exposing of deportation backlogs that cannot possibly be dealt with by the existing enforcement resources in Canada. It has been reported that refugees who are members of genocidal regimes who have caused death and despair in their native countries are now happily residing, often at taxpayer's expense, in Canada. They have reported, after we exposed them, refugee admittance guidelines that actually invite undesirables to make a refugee claim in Canada.

The government knows about these scandals. It is feeling the heat from these scandals. The people of Canada are better informed than ever about what is really happening in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and polls are reflecting their anger and dissolution.

In response to that outrage and concern, government hastily put together a package of response that it claims will take care of the problem. It claims that this package of reforms will stop riff-raff from calling Canada home by preventing refugee claims being made in prisons and will stop the immigration appeals division from overturning deportations, something that the IAD has become all too notorious for.

These so-called reforms are nothing more than long overdue common sense. However, they fall so far short of the mark of affecting any real fundamental and significant change to a system that so desperately needs it that we cannot support the bill.

I urge support not only by my colleagues in Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition but also by the members opposite for a motion to stop this bill and force, finally, real reconsideration of the way Canada handles its immigration and refugee systems.

The minister wants us to believe that Bill C-44 is a cure for the massive haemorrhage in Canada's immigration and refugee systems. Bill C-44 offers nothing more than a few band-aids and for that reason it must be rejected. For that reason we cannot allow the people of Canada to be duped into thinking that they are getting real reform here, that things will actually be better after this bill passes. They will not.

Nothing significant is going to change and I will tell members why. The first element of this legislation, the element touted by the minister as being the most significant change, is one that would prevent criminals in Canada from making refugee claims in order to delay their removal from Canada. That is a good idea. I cannot understand why it was not done long ago.

The idea of immigration and refugee board members going into a prison to hear refugee claims is patently absurd. The government would have us believe that this is somehow going to prevent criminals from making refugee claims when it will not. We know how many criminals apply for refugee status from Canadian prisons or while they are on parole. That is easy enough to keep tabs on.

We have no idea whatsoever of how many criminals who have committed their crimes abroad seek refugee status and are successful each year. We have no idea.

(1820)

It is easy enough to prevent someone who is already residing in Canada, especially in a Canadian jail, from making a last ditch attempt to remain in the country. It is not quite as easy to prevent those who have criminal backgrounds from entering the country in the first place, not that it is impossible. Other countries have extensive refugee background checks before they hear a refugee claim and make a determination. Why do we not?

Government Orders

We do not because the immigration and refugee board and its supporters tell us that we are not allowed to, that it would be a violation of our commitment to the United Nations convention on the status of refugees. Of course that is sheer nonsense but it is a popular tune that continues to be sung again and again.

It has been revealed to us by people intimately associated with the refugee process that this year the IRB has been giving orders to refugee hearing officers forbidding them to do background checks of any kind whatsoever prior to doing a refugee claim. They have issued orders preventing refugee hearing officers from using Interpol or even getting in touch with the RCMP or CSIS to investigate those refugee claimants of whom there is serious suspicion of criminal activity, guerrilla or terrorist backgrounds, or even genocide. As hard as it is to believe that is the fact.

Bill C-44 appears to be a bill that will take care of the problems when it does not even address them. What good does it do to make changes to rules governing the hearing of a refugee claim preventing those who have committed crimes in Canada from making claims when we welcome those who have committed crimes, even crimes against humanity, from other countries?

It is true that we are welcoming these sorts of people. In fact the IRB is going one step further. Not only are guerrillas from Latin America, double agents from Bolivia, and high ranking members of brutal totalitarian regimes allowed to make a refugee claim in Canada, once they do make that claim they are fast tracked through the system.

The Reform Party proved that this summer. We provided the documents written by a member of the minister's own department circulated by the immigration and refugee board and forced upon refugee hearing officers that spell out that those who fit the categories just mentioned do not even need to go before a full three member refugee panel. They get expedited. So far this year over 3,500 refugee claimants have been expedited in this manner.

How many of those claimants were criminals, terrorists, guerrillas or war criminals is not known. We may never know because the IRB with the full blessing of this government and the current minister has stripped its refugee hearing officers of the power to do even the most basic background checks. That is absurd and outrageous but it is happening.

While it may be a good first step to prevent hearing officers from hearing refugee claims in prisons it is far more imperative that the entire system, the entire process of refugee hearings and determinations be changed.

The Canadian interest is not being represented in this process and that is why it has gone so dreadfully wrong.

The second major element of this legislation deals with the prevention of the IAD, the immigration appeals division, from overturning deportation orders based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

That too is common sense but raises a troubling question. I am sure I do not need to inform this House that the IAD is a branch of the IRB, the immigration and refugee board, and that this board is populated by the same appointees as the IRB. The same people who are mandating that guerrillas, double agents, et cetera, be welcomed to Canada are also refusing to enforce the deportation orders of those we happen to catch up with.

The same people who want to fling the doors of Canada wide open have been refusing to enforce the laws of Canada for those who make it into the country. Now Bill C-44 comes along and it would take the power to overturn some deportation orders, not all just some, away from these appointees.

(1825)

Instead of slightly curtailing the power of these people to allow violent offenders to stay in the country, we need to re-examine the very role of the IRB. Do we need such a board of political appointees accountable to no one? Who are they working for? Whose interests are they serving? What are the priorities of the government when it comes to immigration?

The government has two choices right now. The first choice is to align itself with the appointed members of the IRB, the members of the immigration industry and the refugee advocates who say that we need to keep the IRB the way it is, that we do not need major reform in the system and that the interest of Canadians must be, and I stress they have actually said they must be secondary to the interests of immigrants and refugees. The interests of Canadians come second.

The government could align itself with the overwhelming majority of Canadians who feel that immigration policy and even refugee policy should first and foremost work in the interests of Canada. Immigration and refugee policy while being compassionate, balanced and legal must clearly be seen to protect the interests, the security, the health and the safety of Canadians. That is the reform we really need and it is time the government looked after its duty to Canadians.

Bill C-44 does not reflect the willingness of the government to truly protect the interests of Canadians. Bill C-44 is stop-gap. It is a band-aid and it almost entirely maintains the status quo. The status quo does not deserve to be maintained. Canadians deserve better. Thus we cannot support a weak and ineffectual bill like this.

Adjournment Debate

TRANSPORTATION SUBSIDIES

Let me make one last appeal to my colleagues opposite. I know that the Reform Party is not the only party that has been hearing the cries of Canadians for immigration reform. I know that the Reform Party is not alone in receiving hundreds and hundreds of letters and calls from across the country, but especially from Ontario, which decry immigration policy and demand change. They have been hearing those calls too. Do the people, largely the constituents of your ridings not deserve better than window dressing? Do they not deserve better than stop-gap measures? They want real change. They want a better system that protects Canadians. Let us give them that.

Let us vote against Bill C-44, start over and change the way that Canada does business when it comes to immigrants and refugees. Let us give Canadians a system that really works not just for immigrants and refugee claimants but for Canadians too.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say to the member that I thought her remarks were substantive and constructive. I listened to her attentively. The member gave me some insight I had not been exposed to before.

I am a member from Ontario, from downtown Toronto and we hear the concerns expressed about the immigration policy. Our minister is also from Toronto. Does she not think it would be more constructive in advancing this debate if some of those ideas that she talked about today are addressed in committee where the minister has said he would listen to some amendments being proposed rather than to try to kill the bill even before—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, after a bill is drafted it is very difficult to get it substantially changed in committee. I believe and the hon. member opposite would know as well as I do, perhaps better because he has been in the House longer, that it is very rare for a bill to be substantially changed when it deals with a whole system, a whole process of dealing with a government department.

I really think it would be better to look at this from square one rather than trying to tinker with a bill that has already been drafted.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is now 6.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, on June 7, 1994, I asked a question of the Minister of Transport having to do with transportation subsidies. At that time I expressed my concern to the minister about a speech he had given and which I had subsequently read. I felt the minister had given undue attention to the way in which the rail sector in our transportation system was subsidized.

Having gone through the speech, I noticed he was making a general argument about the subsidization of our transportation argument, but every time he gave an example it was from the rail sector.

I rose at that time to complain about this singling out of the rail sector, asking the minister to make sure that whatever he did or whatever he planned for our transportation system—it is still unclear at this point exactly what he does have in mind—that he not operate on the basis of this bias that he had revealed in this speech with respect to the rail sector.

Not surprisingly, of course, as ministers are wont to do, he got up and assured me that he would take everything into account. I still have that concern. It is something I want to follow up today.

Subsequent to that question, the minister has said a great deal about other elements of our transportation system, particularly with respect to airports and the commercialization plans that he has for the air sector as well as other transport sectors.

A lot of Canadians see through this. They see behind the word commercialization basically the same consequences and the same agenda as what the previous government used to call privatization.

There may be some fine difference between commercialization and privatization, but I am sure it is a difference that will be lost on the people who either lose their jobs or whose wages are reduced and whose standard of living is consequently reduced when the jobs they used to have go from the public sector to the private sector and they no longer receive the same benefit that they received before.

As with so much of this privatization, commercialization, deregulation, free trade, et cetera, a lot of this is simply an agenda for reducing the incomes and the standard of living as a consequence of a great many Canadians who over the years have come to be paid decently in the public sector and for that matter in the private sector.

What is happening now in so many ways is that these well paid working Canadians are on the hit list. They are the working middle class whose wages are being targeted for reduction. I would like to say that when the minister takes into account the relationship between the various transportation sectors, he ought to take into account the views of my constituents.

Adjournment Debate

He wrote me a letter at the end of June saying that he wanted to know what my constituents feel. I can tell him what my constituents feel. They feel that the minister should take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that we have a healthy rail sector in this country.

When he does that and when he is doing that, he should take into account the way the trucking industry is subsidized, not just through the financing of public highways, but by the people who work in the trucking industry. One of the characteristics of the trucking industry and one of the reasons why it has been able to be so competitive with railways—using that awful word competitive which hides a great many injustices—is that its average hourly wage is so much lower.

Why is it more? It is a result of deregulation. Anyone with the capital to finance a few trucks has the ability to set up a trucking business and to operate almost free of governmental constraints and regulations. There is this downward pressure on wages. Therefore many people who used to expect to make a decent living in trucking or for that matter in a great many other industries no longer have that expectation.

One of the ways in which various transportation modes are being subsidized, but particularly in this case, trucking, is through the wages of the people who work there. I can say on behalf of the people who work in the rail sector in my riding, whether they work for VIA, CPR or CNR, they do not want to subsidize the rail sector by reducing their wages but that is exactly what is being asked of them now.

I hear it in the minister's voice when he says: "Well we don't want to go ahead with the VIA cuts but it depends on the labour negotiations". The minister is deliberately trying to set up the employees of VIA and other railway employees as the scapegoats for whatever cuts he is already planning to make. I urge him not to scapegoat those employees. They are trying to hang on not just to a way of life but to a way of life for all Canadians, that is to say a way of life in which working Canadians are able to be well paid.

The agenda which this government is following is the same as the last government's. It is an agenda which means that the middle class will disappear. The wages people were paid on the railway and in other organized industries will disappear. We will have a fragmented society. A few people at the top, the minority, will make a lot of money while more and more people at the bottom will make less and less all the time as a result of so-called competition, deregulation, globalization and all of the other things I have come to despise since I came to this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member who knows he got a little more than the four minutes one is supposed

to get. We ought to give the same extension to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

Mr. Joe Fontana (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first let me say nothing could be further from the truth that our agenda is that of the previous government. There is a lot of difference between commercialization and privatization, but that is for another day. This government does not intend to attack workers or force on anyone a loss of income or lower standard of living. It is about building a national, integrated, efficient, affordable transportation system taking all modes into account. As I said, that is for another day.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona raised the issue of transportation subsidies. He expressed some concerns that the rail industry would be unfairly affected by a review of subsidies. I am glad to have the opportunity to address his concerns and assure him and the House of Commons that any review of transportation subsidies will be balanced and will ensure that all modes are treated fairly.

Transportation subsidies currently affect every mode. As an example of subsidies received by modes other than rail, almost 80 per cent of freight subsidies in Atlantic Canada are received by motor carriers. Further, as mentioned by the Minister of Transport in his speech in Thunder Bay on June 3, the federal government subsidizes ferry services by approximately \$160 million and ports and harbours by \$100 million each and every year.

I understand the hon. member's concerns about hidden subsidies. Indirect subsidies account for almost \$700 million spent by the Department of Transport. One example of such a service is the provision of navigational aids provided by the coast guard.

In the coming months the government intends to review all options for dealing with inefficient subsidies. Transport Canada is in the midst of exploring possibilities for commercialization of many activities that could be better achieved by other means. The exercise will not be targeted at specific modes but rather will attempt to eliminate existing distortions.

I can assure the hon. member that the Minister of Transport is clearly aware of the situation in the rail industry and that the rail sector will not be singled out. The objective is to provide Canadians with an efficient, integrated, affordable transportation system where the costs now imposed on taxpayers are borne as equitably as possible by the users.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. The House therefore stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.39 p.m.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Monday, September 19, 1994

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Full Employment Act

Bill C-209. Motion for second reading	5785
Ms. McLaughlin	5785
Mr. Bevilacqua	5787
Mrs. Lalonde	5788
Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	5789
Mrs. Ablonczy	5791

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Immigration Act

Bill C-44. Motion for second reading	5792
Mr. Marchi	5792
Mr. Nunez	5797
Mr. Mayfield	5800
Ms. Augustine	5806

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

AIDS Action Now

Mr. Campbell	5808
--------------------	------

Tainted Blood

Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	5808
----------------------------	------

National Defence

Mr. Harper (Calgary West)	5808
---------------------------------	------

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji

Mr. Malhi	5808
-----------------	------

Television Broadcasting	
Ms. Guarnieri	5808
Mrs. Lisette Barsallo–Ward	
Mr. McWhinney	5809
Unemployment Insurance Reform	
Mr. Crête	5809
Federal Debt	
Mr. Solberg	5809
Québec Elections	
Mr. Discepola	5809
World Congress of Acadians	
Mr. Arseneault	5809
Lead	
Mr. Caccia	5810
Quebec Elections	
Mr. Langlois	5810
Reform Party	
Miss Grey	5810
Fundy Region	
Mr. Culbert	5810
Provincial Debt	
Mr. Shepherd	5810
Sweden	
Ms. McLaughlin	5811

Rail Transportation

Mrs. Wayne 5811

The Late Bill Bussiere

Mr. McTeague 5811

Tribute to the Late Gaston Péloquin

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5811

Mr. Bouchard 5812

Mr. McClelland 5812

Mr. Charest 5812

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac) 5813

Mr. Berger 5813

Mr. Robinson 5813

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Election of the Parti québécois

Mr. Bouchard 5814

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5814

Mr. Bouchard 5814

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5814

Mr. Bouchard 5814

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5814

Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval) 5815

Mr. Gray 5815

Mr. Gauthier (Roberval) 5815

Mr. Gray 5815

The Economy

Mr. Manning 5815

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5815

Mr. Manning 5816

Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice) 5816

Mr. Manning	5816
Mr. Chrétien (Saint–Maurice)	5816

Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Mr. Bellehumeur	5816
The Speaker	5816
Mr. Bellehumeur	5816
Mr. Gray	5816
Mr. Bellehumeur	5817
Mr. Gray	5817

The Economy

Mr. Grubel	5817
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5817
Mr. Grubel	5817
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5817

Haiti

Mr. Bergeron	5817
Mr. Ouellet	5818
Mr. Bergeron	5818
Mr. Ouellet	5818
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	5818
Mr. Ouellet	5818
Mr. Mills (Red Deer)	5818
Mr. Ouellet	5818

Red Cross Blood Centre in Toronto

Mrs. Picard	5818
Ms. Marleau	5819
Mrs. Picard	5819
Ms. Marleau	5819

Gun Control

Mr. McCormick	5819
Mr. Rock	5819

Immigration

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	5819
Mr. Marchi	5819
Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	5819
Mr. Marchi	5819

Unemployment

Mrs. Lalonde	5820
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5820
Mrs. Lalonde	5820
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5820

Canada Communication Group

Mr. Williams	5820
Mr. Eggleton	5820
Mr. Williams	5820
Mr. Eggleton	5820

Fisheries

Mr. MacDonald	5821
Mr. Tobin	5821

The Late William Bussiere

The Speaker	5821
-------------------	------

Privilege

Expenses of Spouses of Members of Parliament

Mr. Paré	5821
----------------	------

Points of Order

Comments during Question Period

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West)	5821
--------------------------------------	------

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Milliken	5821
--------------------	------

Canadian Radio–Television and Telecommunications Commission

Mr. Milliken 5821

Order in Council Appointments

Mr. Milliken 5822

Inter–Parliamentary delegations

Mr. DeVillers 5822

Department of Industry Act

Bill C–46. Motions for introduction and first reading
deemed adopted 5822

Mr. Manley 5822

Department of External Affairs Act

Bill C–47. Motions for introduction and first reading
deemed adopted 5822

Mr. Anderson 5822

Department of Natural Resources Act

Bill C–48. Motions for introduction and first reading
deemed adopted 5822

Mr. Goodale 5822

Department of Agriculture and Agri–food Act

Bill C–49. Motions for introduction and first reading
deemed adopted 5822

Mr. Goodale 5822

Canadian Wheat Board Act

Bill C–50. Motions for introduction and first reading
deemed adopted 5822

Mr. Goodale 5822

Petitions

Violence

Mr. Duhamel 5822

Young Offenders Act

Mr. Szabo 5822

Human Rights

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West) 5823

The Senate

Mr. Solomon 5823

Assisted Suicide

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso) 5823

Criminal Code

Mr. Robinson 5823

Firearms

Mr. Morrison 5823

Rights of the Unborn

Mr. Jackson 5823

Human Rights

Mr. Jackson 5823

Human Rights

Mr. Johnston 5823

Human Rights

Mr. DeVillers 5823

Assisted Suicide

Mr. Ringma 5823

Human Rights

Mr. Ringma 5824

Rights of the Unborn

Mrs. Ur 5824

Criminal Code

Mrs. Ur 5824

Human Rights

Mrs. Ablonczy 5824

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Milliken 5824

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Milliken 5828

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Motion for concurrence in 28th report 5828
Mr. Milliken 5828
(Motion agreed to.) 5828

Request for Emergency Debate

West Coast Fisheries

Mr. Riis 5828

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker 5829

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Immigration Act

Bill C-44. Consideration resumed of motion for second
reading 5829
Ms. Augustine 5829
Mr. White (Fraser Valley West) 5829
Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood) 5830
Mr. Hart 5830
Mrs. Gagnon (Québec) 5831
Mr. Cauchon 5833
Mr. Nunez 5835
Mr. White (Fraser Valley West) 5835

Mr. Dhaliwal	5838
Mrs. Terrana	5839
Mr. Abbott	5841
Mr. Nunez	5841
Mr. Silye	5842
Mr. Hart	5842
Mr. Dhaliwal	5844
Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	5846
Mr. Pagtakhan	5846
Mr. Nunez	5848
Ms. Clancy	5848
Mr. Silye	5848
Mrs. Ablonczy	5849
Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	5851

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Transportation Subsidies

Mr. Blaikie	5851
Mr. Fontana	5852