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Wednesday, March 22, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 22, 1995

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

On behalf of all those who remember Jackie Robinson, I would like to pay tribute once again to this great adopted son of Montreal, who led his team to victory in the international league in 1946.

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[*English*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1966 the United Nations declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Since 1988 this date has been officially recognized and celebrated in Canada for this purpose.

While that date has passed, it is important for us all to remember that the purpose of this day is to promote racial tolerance and understanding. There is no place for racism in Canadian society. Prejudice and discrimination are problems that must be acknowledged and addressed. They must be stamped out. As Canadian citizens, we must take individual responsibility in the elimination of racism and racial discrimination.

Our greatest legacy to the world, if we so choose, is to develop a model bilingual and multicultural society where each Canadian is valued, where each and every one of us learns to work and celebrate together in a spirit of harmony and unity.

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[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO JACKIE ROBINSON

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in October 1945, Hector Racine, then president of the Montreal Royals, announced that Jackie Robinson was joining his baseball team. This signalled the beginning of the end of racial segregation in American and Canadian professional sport.

Yesterday, as we marked the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Montrealers paid tribute to Jackie Robinson, the first black to play baseball professionally.

Mr. Robinson played one year with the Montreal club, in 1946, before joining the Brooklyn Dodgers for a remarkable professional career.

JUSTICE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a gentleman, a hard working fellow cannot sleep one night. He decides that rather than twist and turn in bed he would get up, go to his jewellery store in a small Ontario town and get a head start on the day's work.

It is dark at 3 a.m. The 81-year old jeweller is quietly working in the back of his shop when suddenly a loud crash startles our law-abiding shop owner. His heart stops as he turns and sees two young, strong vandals coming in through the broken window in the front of his shop.

He is frightened. He worries about physical harm and that his private property will be stolen. The frightened shop owner reaches for the revolver which has been inside his shop for many years. Out of fear for his personal safety he fires it to scare away the vandals.

The next morning the elderly shopkeeper has more to worry about. He is now the criminal. He is now facing charges far worse than those who were attempting to rob or possibly injure him. The law says he has no right to protect himself or his possessions.

Welcome to Canada in the 1990s. Just hope you never have to protect yourself, your family or your property. Nineties justice will say you are the criminal.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the budget the government decided to pay western landowners \$1.6 billion as a partial offset to the decline in farmland values that will result from the abandonment of the Crow benefit and the Crow rate.

The minister of agriculture has decided in his wisdom to include summer fallow in the calculation for the payment but not the 10 million acres or more of cultivated lands that are seeded to forage crops for hay and seed production. The rationale for this breathtaking leap of logic seems to be that grass seed was not listed in the Crow benefit schedule.

S. O. 31

Could the minister explain his version of fairness to one of my constituents who cash rented a half section from an uncle, seeded it to alfalfa and has been producing seed? How does my constituent tell his uncle that his land is not eligible for a payout because his nephew seeded it to alfalfa?

The uncle knows his land will lose just as much value as the land across the fence which is not in alfalfa but there is no compensation for him. How is that fair?

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LEARNING DISABILITIES MONTH

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Learning Disabilities Association for Newfoundland and Labrador, I would like to remind all Canadians that this is Learning Disabilities Month. As a former volunteer with the association in St. John's, I understand and appreciate the work the organization undertakes.

It is estimated that one in ten Canadians suffers from a learning disability ranging from mild to severe. They have trouble receiving information through the senses and transmitting that information accurately to the brain. It is much like a bad telephone connection or a fuzzy photograph.

Students young and old who live with a learning disability are able to achieve if given the right help. When assisted they can become productive and valued members of society. Without assistance, the social costs are high.

I am pleased to be able to take this moment to commend the Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and all community organizations for the many hours they have spent to make a difference.

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(1405)

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday at a symposium the Quebec Minister of the Environment stated that Quebec's environment would be better protected if the province withdrew from the absurdity of the federal regime.

In 1990, when he was federal environment minister, the leader of the Bloc said: "A sovereign Quebec will not be able to solve its problems alone, any more than Canada could find a solution to the problem of acid rain on its own, without negotiating with the United States. Nationalism has no place in a global issue—".

How does the Leader of the Official Opposition intend to reconcile his earlier position with the statement of the Quebec environment minister?

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[*English*]

RAIL STRIKE

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rail line system in Canada is the prairie farmer's lifeline. Over the past week we have seen that lifeline severed by strikes and by the stalling tactics of the NDP and the Bloc.

I appeal to those parties to take a long hard look at what they have done to Canadian farmers. They have robbed farmers of \$100 million in lost revenues this week. Neither farmers nor the Canadian economy can afford these losses.

This government has clearly demonstrated its commitment to prairie farmers by introducing back to work legislation. I commend the Minister of Labour for the leadership she has shown, for her dedication to ending this strike immediately, for doing everything within her power to get grain moving again. Madam minister, prairie farmers owe you a debt of gratitude.

I urge the NDP and the Bloc to co-operate in the process to let the government end the strike for the benefit of all Canadians who depend on the rail service.

The Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to please address the Chair directly.

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[*Translation*]

SENATOR PIETRO RIZZUTO

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the promise made by Senator Rizzuto, the Prime Minister's election organizer, is still fresh in our minds. He told all the Liberal candidates who were defeated in the last Quebec election: "Do not worry, we will find jobs for you".

Like the Liberals say, a promise is a promise. Céline Hervieux-Payette, who had been a roving candidate for the Liberal Party for over a decade, is now set up in the Senate. Some may argue she is more deserving than the others, having bitten the dust on three occasions—in 1984, 1988 and 1993—in various Montreal ridings.

In her new job, she will have plenty of leisure time to devote to party politics and backstage manoeuvring. One has to find something to do: 20 years in the Senate is a long time.

Senator Rizzuto's promise will cost the Canadian taxpayers nearly \$2 million if you add up bonuses, incidentals and inflation for the next 20 years. It pays to be defeated when you are a Liberal.

S. O. 31

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena and I and 13 host MPs completed an aboriginal town hall series in B.C. last week. This included eight communities and attracted over 1,600 people.

We delivered a distinctly different and welcomed point of view to the public. Many British Columbians are concerned that none of the negotiating parties in the process is vigorously representing non-native interests and that the process is secretive. Additionally, the total cost of the settlement based on recent leaks would be at least \$8 billion and may exceed \$18 billion.

Federal responsibility for treaty Indians is clearly established and there is also a federal obligation to ensure public interest is met. The current process is built on sand and will fail. Fundamental change is needed to create modern treaties that are affordable and lead to native self-sufficiency, finality of negotiations and equality of Canadians.

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RAIL STRIKE

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic recovery is being threatened by a nationwide rail shutdown.

We believe in the process of collective bargaining, however it is clear the negotiations have not worked. Since Monday our government has worked diligently to get the trains moving again, only to be opposed by the official opposition party which is playing self-interested political games which have harmed our national economy.

Now is the time for action. In my riding of Annapolis Valley—Hants major companies such as National Gypsum rely on rail transport to ship their products and meet their deadlines. For these companies the rail shutdown has severely harmed business and will threaten many jobs.

(1410)

For the sake of the commerce of Annapolis Valley—Hants and across the country, I urge parties to support our efforts to bring an immediate end to this dispute.

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RAIL STRIKE

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of Durham and Oshawa are concerned over the continuation of the rail strike.

I have spoken today with General Motors and understand that both its inbound and outbound production systems are close to being curtailed. This will affect the jobs and the economy of the whole region.

When I see the main reason for the Bloc Quebecois' blocking the passage of this legislation is clause 12 regarding the importance of economic viability and competitiveness, I know it is the party of the status quo. Some of the collective agreements still include blacksmiths.

It is the party that does not want change. It is afraid of the 21st century and wants to cling to the past. It is so rigid that it would force people across this country to lose their jobs and livelihood so that the traditions of the past can be maintained.

This is really where the Bloc wants to go, not into the future but back to the 19th century. The people of Canada do not want to go.

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RAIL STRIKE

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rail dispute is a direct economic threat to the auto, petrochemical and manufacturing industries so important to Canada and particularly to my riding of Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

The NDP and the Bloc are needlessly prolonging this strike, a position that is clearly a threat to the economic recovery now under way. The NDP supports the right to collective misery. The Bloc must not allow its separatist agenda to put a stranglehold on Canada. All Canadians will suffer.

I urge the Bloc and the NDP to end grandstanding and allow the trains to roll.

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[Translation]

THE LATE CLAUDE DUCHARME

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were dismayed to hear about the passing of my friend Claude Ducharme who died yesterday in Paris, where he was attending a union convention. Mr. Ducharme was vice-president of the FTQ, head of the Quebec chapter of the Canadian Auto Workers and member of the board of directors of the FTQ's compensation fund.

He espoused the cause of the workers and fought relentlessly for the implementation of decent working conditions. Fernand Daoust said of him that he was a great unionist who helped give the union movement a respectable and credible image.

All the members of the Bloc Quebecois join me in extending their deepest sympathies to Mr. Ducharme's family and thank him for having devoted himself with so much conviction to the well-being of Quebec workers.

Oral Questions

[English]

HISAYA OKUMIYA

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of members and all Canadians I would like to express our deepest sympathy to the Okumiya family of Edmonton.

On March 14 while playing with two friends, 11-year old Hisaya Okumiya fell through the ice of Mill Creek. Emergency personnel and divers were brought in to search for the young boy, without success. The official search was eventually called off.

Determined to find his son, Mr. Okumiya continued his search alone, tirelessly picking away at the ice. His efforts were soon joined by upward of 40 volunteers, police, firefighters and city workers who on their own time helped in the search. On Tuesday morning the body of Hisaya was found.

While there are no words that will ease the grief members of the Okumiya family are feeling today, perhaps they will find some comfort in knowing that the thoughts and prayers of all members and indeed of all Canadians are with them. May I also express our sincere appreciation to the people of Edmonton who pulled together to help the Okumiya family in its time of distress.

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BUSINESS STUDIES COMPETITION

Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville, Ind. Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate seven high school students from my riding who recently were named to represent Ontario at DECA, the premier academic competition in North America for high school business students.

The Markham students who qualified through the provincial competition are Maha Hussain, Julie Ward, Alyson Pownall, Seung-Oh Chung, Ian Tien, Chris Vollmar and Rebecca Habsby. These elite students will now compete for top honours at the North American competition to be held in St. Louis, Missouri from April 28 to May 2.

The competition in St. Louis will feature 10,000 of the best business studies students across America. It is a showcase for student achievement and progress. These Markham students will compete in a series of oral and written examinations in numerous academic areas.

(1415)

On behalf of all members of the House I wish these students success. I am quite sure these young women and men will represent our country well in the competition.

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, I would like to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States of America.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Conciliation commissioner Hope's report clearly states that the main cause of the rail dispute is the attitude of the railway companies which, throughout the negotiations, refused to give any consideration whatsoever to union demands. It says that, at most bargaining tables, union demands did not receive any consideration, even though it is clear that these demands are serious and have merit.

My question to the Prime Minister is this: Why is the government so intent on rejecting at all cost the official opposition's offer to settle the rail dispute very quickly while respecting the rights of workers, who could not be heard? Why is the government so inflexible toward the workers?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bloc members seem to be overlooking the whole process. Negotiations in this sector have been under way for over a year, first with a conciliator and then with a conciliation commissioner.

We stand before a fait accompli: Railway operations are completely paralyzed. This has a huge economic impact from coast to coast. Even in Quebec, more plants shut down today. I am asking the Bloc Quebecois to be a little more sensitive to Quebec's economy, if they are unable to be sensitive to Canada's economy.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the Minister of Labour that if she wants to settle the dispute without trampling on workers, we are ready to co-operate right now.

It is not the official opposition but the conciliation commissioner who said that union demands did not receive any attention. The minister should read his report before opening her mouth.

Does the government's insistence on imposing diminished working conditions on CN workers at all cost mean that its intention to privatize CN is forcing the government to settle the matter of working conditions quickly and at workers' expense, in order to attract potential investors?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. We should try to stay neutral in this dispute—and I think that is what the government is trying to do—and avoid siding with either the unions or the employers. I think it is up to them to negotiate their collective agreements. We want the unions to participate in the collective bargaining process as well.

Let us be realistic: Kruger is closed, while Bécancour, Alcan and Petromont are in the process of shutting down. Let us do something, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Labour say so candidly that we should let the parties negotiate among themselves? That is exactly what our proposal calls for. We should let the employees go back to work and negotiate with their employers. That is what we are asking the minister. Did the minister not understand any of this?

(1420)

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder who does not understand anything in this case. Negotiations have been under way for over a year in this matter. All the Bloc Québécois can do is tell me to forget about results, offer to talk some more and ask for mediation.

This government wants to achieve results. We are currently facing a major crisis from coast to coast and the government has a responsibility to take action instead of simply talking and trying to avoid the real problems.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Obviously, the government's commercial and financial interests are directly affected by the CN strike. Indeed, in spite of the Prime Minister's claims, with the rapid imposition of less favourable working conditions, CN's market value is much higher in case of an eventual sale.

If the Prime Minister is serious when he claims that the government's commercial interests do not have priority over the rights of workers, why does he still reject the official opposition's proposal, considering that a negotiated settlement is much better than an imposed agreement?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add to the comments made by the Minister of Labour. Negotiations went on for months and now there is a strike. Thousands of jobs are affected throughout Canada and that strike causes serious injury to our country's economy. Our government is not concerned about its own economic interests, but about those of Canadians, including manufacturers of goods and agricultural producers, who must ship their products to market. This is our top priority and it will not change.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since Monday, we have been proposing conditions which would ensure a quick return to work. Considering that conciliator Hope

states in his report that there is collusion between the government and the employers, how can the Prime Minister claim that the arbitration commissions will do justice to the workers, since two of the three members will be appointed by the government and the employers?

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quoting from a conciliation report that did not resolve the problem. She is asking us to enter into conciliation again, to have 60 more days of that. We have been in a strike situation now for many days. We will start over in 60 days? No way. They have to go back to work right now.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today a meeting is supposed to take place between the Government of Canada and Moody's, the bond rating agency, to discuss Canada's credit rating.

Will the finance minister tell us when that meeting will take place, where it will take place and who will be representing Canada at the meeting?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the meeting is taking place today. It has already begun. The officials from the Department of Finance will be there and I will be meeting with the agency later.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right not only to know who is representing them at that meeting but what they are going to be saying. If no timetable or plan is presented for deficit elimination as distinct from deficit reduction, our credit will be downgraded, our dollar will fall, our interest rates will rise and thousands of Canadians will be hurt.

Who is talking to Moody's and what are they saying about deficit elimination? Canadians have a right to know.

(1425)

Mr. Speaker: Colleagues, I am having a little bit of difficulty hearing and understanding the questions at this end of the Chamber.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the difficulty the leader of the third party has thinking up three different questions.

I answered his first question. The officials of the Department of Finance are meeting with the agency and I will be meeting with the agency. I have not yet met with them. I will be doing so this afternoon.

Oral Questions

Therefore it is quite difficult for me to tell the leader of the Reform Party what took place in that meeting because it has not taken place. You see, there is an order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question was quite simple.

When the minister meets with Moody's is he going to present a plan for deficit elimination? If he is going to do that, why does he not present that plan to the House and to the Canadian people, not simply to an American bond rating agency?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I responded to this question yesterday. I made it very clear the government's ultimate objective is to go to zero. I also made it very clear, and I will be confirming this to Moody's, we are going to be doing this with a series of short term targets because we feel it is the best way to get there.

I also told the leader of the third party yesterday that we would be not talking with the doom and gloom he likes to indulge in but about our productivity record, our inflation record, our job creation.

There is something I did not say yesterday because the information was not out. The volume of exports in January was up 3.3 per cent. This is the eighth consecutive increase and the trade balance has again set a new record.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I love these Wednesdays.

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[Translation]

FISHERIES

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Half a dozen Spanish ships are now on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland, fishing for Greenland halibut or turbot, despite the moratorium requested by Canada. Both Canadian and Spanish armed vessels are now patrolling this area.

Since the Canadian government has stated repeatedly that it would resort to seizures again if necessary, could the Prime Minister indicate what his government intends to do to make Spanish ships stop fishing on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had a chance to speak to President Santer of the European Union, and Prime Minister Gonzalez of Spain. Mr. Santer had indicated earlier that he hoped we would be able to

negotiate a settlement to the dispute as soon as possible. That is what we intend to do.

It is true a number of ships are fishing at this time. There were 49 and now there are six. Yesterday I spoke to Mr. Gonzalez, and I told him to ask the Spanish fishermen to withdraw, because we have ordered our own fishermen to stop fishing and the same should apply to Spanish fishermen. I will be talking to Mr. Gonzalez again later today. Canada takes the position that a settlement should be such as ensure that in the future, fishing regulations will be complied with both outside and within the 200-mile zone. That is our goal, and in the interest of conservation we hope to attain it as soon as possible.

(1430)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although apparently there was a cordial exchange between the Prime Minister and Mr. Gonzalez, would the Prime Minister agree that this defiant gesture by Spanish ships is a blow to the Canadian government's strategy for resolving the dispute with the European Union?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the present time, I think I would rather talk to Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Santer, and try and find a way out of this. This is a problem that has existed for some time. We took an historic step a few days ago, and we now want to give negotiations a chance. I hope Mr. Gonzalez will be able to convince the fishermen to stop fishing so that a solution can be found.

If there is no change in the situation within the next few days, we will have to see what we can do.

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[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a one-week shutdown of our railways means an immediate short term loss of \$3 billion to \$5 billion including \$1 billion in exports.

Canada's international reputation is damaged yet again by the 15th strike in 15 years with long term costs. At a time when Canada faces a credit downgrading by Moody's, will the Minister of Labour commit to a permanent solution with a final offer of settlement for essential services?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking into the problem. We have had some strikes that have caused a lot of damage to the Canadian economy. We are looking to find a way so that we will not be trapped in this situation all the time.

We have given the right to strike. On some occasions we have accepted some strikes because the situation was justifiable, but at this time the combination of strikes is too much for the

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Canadian economy to take. This is why we have a bill before the House. We hope it will be passed by the end of the day so that work can resume as soon as possible.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the governing party is having trouble handling the situation but the Canadian people do not have any patience with it. We have had 15 strikes in 15 years.

My supplementary question is for the Minister for International Trade. Forty per cent of Canadian exports depend on railways to move to market. The government's inaction on the issue last week led to significant financial losses for exporters.

Will the Minister for International Trade impress upon his colleague, the Minister of Labour, that Canada cannot afford further damage to our reputation as a reliable supplier?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has indicated very clearly its position. If we had not been faced with the opposition of the Bloc and the NDP, the bill would have been passed yesterday. We will do everything possible for the bill to be passed today.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Defence.

Yesterday, the Minister of Defence announced the creation of a commission of inquiry on the deployment of the Canadian Forces to Somalia. However, despite repeated requests from the official opposition, the minister refuses to broaden the commission's terms of reference to include other troubling events that have occurred at the Petawawa base.

How does the minister explain that the commission's terms of reference cover only the deployment of the Airborne Regiment in Somalia and that they contain no other provision regarding other events that have occurred at Petawawa and that have considerably sullied the reputation and the honour of the Canadian Forces?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we called the inquiry as promised to deal with the very serious problems that occurred when our troops were deployed to Somalia some two years ago.

The inquiry is public. It is headed by a civilian, a Federal Court judge, and will look into all aspects of the deployment to Somalia.

If the hon. member has other troubling questions that he would like to pose with respect to any other aspect of the armed forces, he should be specific, do it in the House, write to me or put an order paper question down, and I will be pleased to answer.

We are not going to have an investigation or an inquiry into every aspect of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Ministry of National Defence. We are restricting the inquiry to the events of 1993, the deployment of Canadian troops to that theatre.

(1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that the minister undertook to bring all of the despicable events at Petawawa to light, are we to understand that the initiation rites and the display of the flag symbolizing white supremacy and the banner of the Klu Klux Klan openly and with the knowledge of senior officers constituted preparation for the mission to Somalia and will therefore be investigated?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is anything in the preparation of the Canadian airborne regiment for its duty in Somalia that needs to come to light, it should be investigated by the inquiry.

The terms of reference are exceedingly broad. The three commissioners are civilians of great repute. I have no question in my mind that they will get to the bottom of any question the hon. member has or the Canadian public has.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Minister of National Defence has seen the wisdom of conducting the Somalia investigation under the Inquiries Act rather than the National Defence Act.

My concern now is for members of the Canadian forces who may have pertinent information but hesitate to bring it forward for fear of career implications.

What provisions has the minister made to protect such individuals?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with a very serious matter. We have an inquiry under part I of the Inquiries Act.

Any Canadian with any evidence has a right and a duty to come forward to that inquiry and no impediment must be put in his or her way.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not exactly answer my question.

I have a supplementary question. Should the inquiry reveal that events involving the airborne regiment in and around

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Somalia resulted from individual rather than systemic problems, will the minister reinstate the regiment?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little frustrated. For a year now members of the opposition have asked for a public inquiry into these matters. They have their inquiry. Will they please let the commissioners do their job and report, and then we will look at it.

* * *

[Translation]

BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, Bernard Bonin, set a dangerous precedent when he endorsed the analysis and conclusions of a referendum study carried out by the C.D. Howe Institute which concluded that Quebec's separation would provoke a serious economic upset and a capital drain which would force Quebec to mint its own currency.

Does the Minister of Finance feel that it is proper for the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada to become publicly involved in a political debate?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the senior deputy governor did was mention a very well done study on a topic being debated.

I must admit that I am very surprised that the first francophone to occupy this position in the history of Canada has been attacked by the Bloc critic. Personally, I intend to defend Bernard Bonin.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question is so important and serious that I will direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

Does the Prime Minister, who as he said yesterday is the only one to have access to the ethics counsellor, intend to submit the case of the senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada for an opinion and then report to the House on this important, serious and grave issue?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Bloc should listen to the message instead of attacking the messenger.

I am a little disappointed to hear what the opposition critic, who, by the way, is an honest man, has to say. The separatists have threatened to refuse to have anything to do with the banks or currency traders that tried to make economic forecasts regarding separation, they have stated that in their view allo-

phones should not have the right to vote, and they rejected outright the C.D. Howe Institute's and Marcel Côté's analyses.

The truth is that all that the Bloc and the Parti Québécois want is a monologue where the only voice which will be heard is their own.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board and concerns pay equity.

Now that he has reached an agreement with the Professional Institute of the Public Service, is the minister prepared to try to reach an agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada which represents most of the lower paid public servants, many of whom are women?

(1440)

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is solidly committed to equal pay for work of equal value. We demonstrated that when after many years of failed attempts we were able to reach an agreement with the professional institute with respect to pay equity for nurses, dietitians, occupational and physical therapists.

In relation to the public service alliance, we have had some informal discussions to this point. I would welcome more formal negotiations to try to bring about a resolution of the matter.

We now have a new methodology as provided through this latest of negotiations. We are committed to continuing on the path of bringing about pay equity within the public service.

* * *

THE SENATE

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, following yesterday's announcement of two more patronage appointments to the Senate, has the Prime Minister completely abandoned any thought of having elections to the Senate? Has he forgotten his red book promises of openness and fair play on how we choose our political representatives?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was totally in favour of having elections to the Senate and the Reform Party opposed it when it voted against the Charlottetown accord.

We are naming senators in the other house to represent the party that forms the government. We are in a situation at this time where we have had a bill before the Senate for eight

Oral Questions

months. It is being blocked by a party that received only 3 per cent support in the latest byelections.

I need some Liberal senators who will have more sense than the ones who are blocking legislation that is very important and in the interest of taxpayers so that we will not give more money to the people who made a deal—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Prime Minister that the Charlottetown accord was a package deal with many flaws.

I also remind the Prime Minister that with provincial elections from time to time, in this case New Brunswick, the cost factor would be low and democracy is worth it.

Does the Prime Minister still find it revolting to offer the people of Canada a democratic vote on their choice of senator?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a case where Reform Party members have thrown the baby out with the bath water. They did not realize what they were doing. They in effect blocked elections to the Senate. That is all. That is reality.

Now my prerogative is to name senators. It is a prerogative that I use and I name very good senators. The citizens who are selected always appreciate it very much. I remember very well the former Senator Manning.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said, and I quote: “Mr. Beaudry is a very respectable person who does not engage in activities without first making sure that they are compatible with his duties”.

My question is for the Prime Minister. How does he reconcile this statement made by his heritage minister and the admission by his personal ethics counselor, Mr. Wilson, that it was only after the fact that the chairman of the National Capital Commission consulted him?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question was answered yesterday. I am pleased to see that Mr. Wilson’s opinion coincides with what we said in this House.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must have misheard my question on account of the noise, because I was actually telling him that Mr. Wilson said just the opposite of what the heritage minister had said.

I have a second question, a second chance, for the Prime Minister.

(1445)

How can the Prime Minister reconcile the opinion given by his ethics counselor, his personal counselor who maintains that this behaviour is in compliance with the code of ethics, when section 33 of the Public Service Employment Act states, and I quote: “No deputy head shall engage in work for or against a political party”? I would like an answer.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been court rulings on this and I must add that the Quebec referendum is not a partisan issue, but an opportunity for every Quebec citizen to say whether or not he or she wants to remain in Canada. This is not necessarily a matter involving work for or against a political party.

I know full well that many people in the National Capital Region realize that separation would be disastrous for those who live on the Quebec side of this region, and I think that any citizen has the right to express an opinion on the future of his country without engaging in political partisanship.

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. We understand that he is today in receipt of a letter from European Union president Santer regarding the turbot dispute on the east coast. Will he reveal the substance of the letter to the House and indicate what his response will be?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not read from the communication. I said he expressed the view, as he did on the telephone, that we should reach a settlement very rapidly. He is giving instructions to his negotiator to do that very rapidly. I have given the same instructions to my negotiator. I hope we will find a solution very quickly.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would have preferred a little more substance to the answer but I do appreciate it nevertheless.

The minister of fisheries has repeatedly stated Spanish vessels should not be fishing on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. Given that the Spanish often fish in waters 800 to 2,000 metres deep, it is uncertain where the minister is drawing the line. Could he tell us where this line is drawn, the line beyond which it is okay to fish?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the line is drawn in the water. It is approximately what is referred to as the 1,000 metre line on a NAFO map. The Spanish vessels know exactly where it is. It is the area where most of the fishing activity has gone on.

Oral Questions

A CP wire story has just come into the House. I received a copy and sent a copy to the Prime Minister as he sat down from answering the first question. It says the president of the European Union is indicating they are prepared to propose a series of new measures in order to ensure this fishery is controlled effectively. It goes on to say the president of the EU is prepared to consider figures, quota-wise, lower than the autonomous quota they have already set.

These are indications in the right direction; these are steps in the right direction. We would like to see this matter resolved by discussion. We have said that from day one. We do not want to see negotiations, which have gone on for a number of days now, trashed because a handful of captains want them trashed. It is not in their interest to have effective enforcement measures, to have lower and reasonable quotas that will sustain the stock.

We are waiting to see what comes out of these next days of discussion. Canada will stand firm for conservation.

* * *

RAIL STRIKE

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the farmers in my riding and right across Saskatchewan are watching with extreme anger as the members of the NDP and the Bloc hold up our settlement of the rail strike. Canada's reputation as a reliable supplier of grains and oilseeds is tarnished. We are in danger of losing our international markets.

The NDP and the Bloc refuse to co-operate for the good of our country. What will the minister of agriculture do for Canadian farmers?

(1450)

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the full answer to that question could take several days but I will try to shorten the point because of the very serious issue before the House.

One week of lost rail service has the impact of holding up 500,000 tonnes of grain shipments through the Canadian Wheat Board valued at \$83 million. When we add in the non-board grains the total goes up to very close to \$100 million, plus \$15 million in losses for domestic oilseed processors, plus another \$5 million in losses for flour millers. The cost of that is in excess of \$100 million for one week of lost rail service, not to mention the damage to our reputation as an international supplier.

The government wants the problem ended. We want it ended today. We implore the members of the NDP, who are so mouthy from the backbenches, and the Bloc to solve this problem now.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister or perhaps the Minister of Labour.

The record will show, if truth matters at all in this place, that since early Monday morning it has been up to the Bloc and the government to settle this issue, not the NDP.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am sure if the New Democrats had been in the position of the Bloc we would have had a settlement by now, as of old.

I ask the Minister of Labour whether she would be willing to consider the following changes in the legislation as a way of creating a context in which the legislation could be speeded up. I ask the minister whether she is interested in any agreement, or does she just want to play politics with this thing?

Would she consider changing the provision with respect to when VIA workers go back? Why can VIA workers not go back when CN workers go back? That is something all the unions agree on.

Would the minister consider changing the language of instruction to the—

The Speaker: I did hear a question. I am going to permit the hon. Minister of Labour to address herself to that question if she so desires.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the NDP gives its support to the legislation we can discuss that in debate.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): That is precisely my question, Mr. Speaker. Is the government open to changes in the legislation like the things I have mentioned?

If it is perhaps there could be some understanding as to how the legislation could be changed and support could be given for pushing the legislation through, even though we object in principle—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member understands the parliamentary process, he knows that legislation must first go through various stages. Then we can discuss any amendment which he may propose.

* * *

(1455)

SEAL HUNT

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, several measures were taken by federal and provincial governments to allow the resumption of the commercial seal hunt. As

you know, the seal population is now close to four million, and urgent action is required to restore a balance in the ecosystem.

My question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Since the commercial seal hunt can resume only if international markets offer adequate opportunities, which measures does the minister intend to take to counter the boycott of Canadian products getting under way in France to protest seal hunting?

[English]

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would be well served to do what most Canadians are doing, including the Canadian sealers who live in the province of Quebec on the Magdalen Islands; namely to go about their business and participate in a modest and moderate seal hunt this year based on an adult animal.

There is no hunt for a white coat. There is no ship based hunt. It is a hunt by landmen only. It is within the current quota that has been established for the last five years; in fact less than the quota of the last five years.

The way to respond to misinformation being propagated by a handful of people who see an opportunity to raise dollars for organizations that have been starved for those dollars for many years is simply to speak quietly but clearly the truth about this hunt.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in spite of the minister's assurances regarding the minor impact of the misinformation campaign, in the past, European campaigns against seal hunting have had a disastrous impact on the Atlantic provinces, and especially on the Magdalen Islands.

Consequently, will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans pledge to improve the seal products marketing policy by conducting an awareness campaign among importers regarding the consequences of the demographic explosion of the seal population?

[English]

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker. I congratulate the member for raising the question. It is an important one. The measures he is asking for have already been undertaken for sometime now by the government.

It is clear not only in North American but around the world that the number one conservation issue before Canadians and before people who care about sustainable harvest and development is the question of turbot.

I am ironically pleased that Greenpeace is taking a chartered vessel out of St. John's harbour tonight to protest the Spanish fishing of turbot. That is the real conservation issue.

Oral Questions

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

The Geological Survey of Canada recently announced that it was moving its British Columbia office from Vancouver to Victoria. This will involve transferring more than 30 geologists and their support staff and breaking a 10-year lease worth about \$6 million on new quarters.

In these times of economic restraint, how can the minister justify this boondoggle?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last budget all departments were required to cut their expenditures considerably. The Department of Natural Resources is no exception to that. It is no longer possible for us to justify having two GSC installations in British Columbia. Therefore we will rationalize and amalgamate.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that answer reminds me of that old song by Stompin' Tom Connors, "We'll Save a Bunch of Money Spending Money We Don't Got".

Most members of the mining fraternity who are still willing to work in British Columbia are based in Vancouver. They use the facilities of the GSC library, the map sales, and they consult with individual geologists.

What is the point in having a geological survey in B.C. at all if we are going to move it completely away from the people it is intended to serve? There are exactly four potential clients for this thing in Victoria—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

(1500)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member yet again that we are looking at all aspects of this move.

I make one thing absolutely clear. We will rationalize and we will amalgamate the facilities of the GSC in British Columbia.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: My colleagues, I would like to draw to members' attention the presence in the gallery of Mr. Vazken Manukian, a member of the Armenian Parliament and Chairman of the National Democratic Union Party of Armenia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

*Routine Proceedings***POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a point of order. During question period the member for Mission—Coquitlam, in making a comment with respect to the appointment of two senators, aroused my ire to some extent.

I hope you will understand, Mr. Speaker, that we have had some experiences recently with the Reform Party commenting on the appointment of Acadians to various positions in government.

I want to withdraw the remark I made to my colleague. I withdraw it unequivocally.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 17 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, September 20, 1994 your committee has considered Bill C-45, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Records Act, the Prisons and Reformatories Act and the Transfer of Offenders Act. Your committee has agreed to report it with amendments.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, I have the honour to present in both official languages the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, October 18, 1994 your committee has considered Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing) and other acts in consequence thereof. Your committee has agreed to report it with amendments.

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table the 68th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding Bill C-69, an act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries, with amendments.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[Translation]

This report is about the nomination of Robert Fowler to the position of ambassador and permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York.

Your committee reviewed the qualifications of the person appointed and declared him competent to perform the duties of his position.

* * *

[English]

RAIL STRIKE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in light of the very serious crisis facing the country, namely the national rail strike, that is ongoing and which the government is seeking to end, I think you might find unanimous consent in the House for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, immediately after the completion of private members' business on this day, the House shall revert to Government Orders for the purpose of continuing consideration of Bill C-77, an act to provide for the maintenance of railway operations and subsidiary services at the second reading stage, in committee of the whole, at the report stage and at third reading stage, provided that the House shall not adjourn this day except pursuant to a motion by a minister of the crown.

(1505)

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to make it clear that while there is opposition on the opposition side of the House to the motion, it comes from the Bloc Quebecois and the NDP and not the Reform Party.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Colleagues, I asked for unanimous consent. I did not get unanimous consent. The point of order of the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster was not a point of order. The hon. member for Mackenzie, is this a comment on the unanimous consent which I sought?

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, it is a comment concerning the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster who is pretending to speak for the NDP. He does not.

* * *

PETITIONS

PARLIAMENTARY PRAYER

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour and pleasure that I rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition regarding the parliamentary prayer in this House. The petition was originally signed by 20,593 people. The majority are from my riding of Saint John, New Brunswick, as well as from Newfoundland, Ontario, Saskatchewan, B.C., across this whole nation.

Due to various inaccuracies some were just certified today. I am presenting a petition signed by 15,268 names. I find the process to be a little questionable in that we decertify some petitions because of a lack of an—

The Speaker: I am sure the hon. member knows that we have a procedure in the House which is followed. This procedure was agreed to by the House of Commons. I would deem the petition to be presented by the hon. member and I accept it as such. I hope that the hon. member would keep her final comments very brief.

Mrs. Wayne: These petitions state that the opening prayer in the House of Commons should retain the traditional reference to Jesus Christ and that the traditional Lord's Prayer be reinstated at the closing of the opening prayer.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the House to close the prayer, "through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." They call on the House to act on this request. I wholeheartedly agree with the petitioners and would request—

The Speaker: Colleagues, last week I asked hon. members to refrain from saying whether they agree or disagree with a petition. That takes a little of the sting out of the petition for some members who may or may not want to agree with it. I would ask hon. members if they would please consider this when they are presenting petitions.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, question No. 142 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 142—**Mr. White (North Vancouver):**

What has the government determined to be the total number of immigrant families residing in Canada who, (a) continue to earn their living abroad in countries which do not have a tax treaty with Canada, (b) fail to report to Revenue Canada their total income from international sources and (c) file for the federal child tax benefit?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Revenue Canada is working with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to obtain information to facilitate the development of enforcement programs and to better focus client assistance and education programs so that new Canadians are aware of their obligations.

Revenue Canada's data bases do not at this time contain the information requested concerning immigrant families residing in Canada. Whether foreign source income is reported for Canadian income tax purposes would be determined through verification and audit programs.

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the notice of motion for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Wayne: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, pursuant to Standing Order 39, I placed a question on the Order Paper on October 4, 1994. That was 172 days ago.

(1510)

As the question required a detailed response, I did not request that I get the answer within the 45 days as the standing orders allow. However, it is my understanding that with all Order Paper questions the government tries to answer them within 45 days.

I am seeking information on the financial assistance provided to each federal riding in Atlantic Canada by ACOA. One hundred and seventy-two days is an unacceptable length of time to respond—

The Speaker: The hon. member has made her point. I request that notice be taken of the statement that the hon. member has made.

*Routine Proceedings***MAINTENANCE OF RAILWAY OPERATIONS ACT, 1995**

BILL C-77—ALLOCATION OF TIME

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that an agreement has been reached pursuant to Standing Order 78(2) with regard to an allocation of time to the second reading stage of Bill C-77.

Therefore, I move:

That in relation to Bill C-77, an act to provide for the maintenance of railway operations and subsidiary services, not more than one hour shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill and, at the end of that hour, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 174)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Arseneault	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Barnes
Bellemare	Benoit
Bertrand	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Bhaduria
Blondin—Andrew	Bodnar
Bonin	Boudria
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown (Calgary Southeast)	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Bélair	Bélangier
Calder	Campbell
Catterall	Cauchon
Chatters	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clancy	Cohen
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Cowling
Crawford	Cummins
DeVillers	Dingwall

Discepola	Duhamel
Duncan	Eggleton
English	Epp
Fewchuk	Finestone
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Forseth
Frazier	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Gilmour
Godfrey	Goodale
Gouk	Graham
Grose	Grubel
Guarnieri	Harb
Harper (Calgary West)	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Harvard	Hayes
Hermanson	Hickey
Hoepfner	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Irwin	Jennings
Johnston	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Kirkby
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	LeBlanc (Longueuil)
Lee	Lincoln
Loney	MacAulay
MacDonald	MacLaren
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Marchi
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Massé	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)	McCormick
McGuire	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Meredith
Miffin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Mills (Red Deer)
Minna	Mitchell
Morrison	Murphy
Murray	Nault
Nunziata	O'Brien
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peters
Phinney	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Pillitteri	Proud
Ramsay	Reed
Regan	Ringma
Ringuette—Maltais	Robichaud
Robillard	Rock
Rompkey	Schmidt
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Scott (Skeena)
Serré	Shepherd
Skoke	Solberg
Speller	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Stinson
Strahl	Telegdi
Thalheimer	Torsney
Valeri	Vanclief
Verran	Walker
Wappel	Wayne
Wells	Whelan
White (North Vancouver)	Williams
Wood	Young
Zed—173	

NAYS

Members

Bellehumeur	Bélisle
Caron	Daviault
Debien	de Savoye
Deshaies	Dubé
Duceppe	Dumas
Fillion	Gagnon (Québec)

Government Orders

Gauthier (Roberval)	Godin
Guay	Jacob
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Lefebvre	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Mercier	Ménard
Nunez	Paré
Pomerleau	Rocheleau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	Tremblay (Rosemont)—34

PAIRED MEMBERS

Members

Asselin	Bachand
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bouchard	Brien
Caccia	Canuel
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crête
Culbert	Dalphond—Guiral
Easter	Fry
Gaffney	Guimond
Harper (Churchill)	Jackson
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)	Marchand
Parrish	Peric
Picard (Drummond)	Sauvageau
Simmons	St-Laurent
Szabo	Ur

(1550)

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

MAINTENANCE OF RAILWAY OPERATIONS ACT, 1995

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Labour, Lib.): moved that Bill C-77, an act to provide for the maintenance of railway operations and subsidiary services, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Maintenance of Railway Operations Act, 1995. The primary aim of this bill is to put an end to the work stoppage paralysing the railway industry and to permit the resumption of activities in this sector. The bill also provides a solution, through a mediation-arbitration process, to the matters remaining in dispute between the companies and various unions.

My colleagues in the House are certainly aware that a major disruption in Canadian railway operations can have grave consequences on various sectors of the economy and on the thousands of railway passengers.

I had hoped we could avoid such a measure, but the government hardly has a choice anymore. Government intervention in this dispute has become unavoidable. We would be lacking in our duty to the people of Canada if we allowed a work stoppage

in the railway sector to threaten the stability of our economy and the jobs of the thousands of workers affected by this dispute.

(1555)

During negotiations between the railway companies and the unions concerned, it became clear that because of the position taken by the employers that substantial cuts in labour costs were necessary, it would be a long and arduous process. To cut costs, the railway companies are seeking major concessions with respect to job security and more flexibility in the distribution of tasks.

Negotiations between the employers and the unions have been going on for more than a year, and in most cases, the parties were assisted by a conciliator and a conciliation commissioner. My predecessor, the Minister of Human Resources Development, appointed Mr. Allan Hope as conciliation commissioner for the purposes of collective bargaining on eleven agreements involving the three railway companies. The report prepared by the conciliation commissioner was transmitted to the parties on February 22, 1995. This report proposes ways to reach a final settlement on issues on which the parties have failed to agree.

As I said earlier, the issue of job security was central to the concerns of the employer during these negotiations. If we look at the situation in the three railway companies concerned by the bill before the House today, CN and VIA Rail have proposed a gradual phasing out of this benefit, while Canadian Pacific suggested restructuring the provisions on job security so as to restrict employee eligibility.

The unions expressed their frustration with the emphasis placed on this issue during the bargaining process and were quick to point out that, from their point of view, job security was an advantage that had been obtained through collective bargaining in return for various concessions and trade-offs. The representatives of the unions, who see this advantage as a way to protect employees against loss of employment due to structural and technological change, maintain that the employer wants to remove this protection at a time when the job security of their members is threatened.

On the other hand, agreements concluded recently by Canadian Pacific with three of the unions that represent smaller bargaining units within the company are a clear indication that the process can work. The three unions—the Transportation Communications International Union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Rail Canada Traffic Controllers—managed to agree with the company on wage increases, conditions relating to job security and a number of improvements to social benefits.

I have tried to give hon. members a quick rundown on the events that have taken place so far and the situation we are now facing, despite assistance provided on a massive scale to the parties, in an attempt to avoid any disruption in railway transportation and its consequences for Canadian producers and manufacturers whose economic survival depends on this mode of transportation.

*Government Orders**[English]*

As hon. members may be aware, I met with representatives of the rail companies and the unions in Montreal on Sunday afternoon. At that meeting I acknowledged their efforts in attempting to achieve a resolution of their respective differences.

I expressed concern over the economic damage which was being inflicted on the Canadian business and agricultural sectors as a result of the work stoppages. I asked the parties to give the negotiation process one final push in order to achieve either tentative settlements of the issues in dispute, or agree on a binding process to solve their differences and avoid the need for legislated intervention on the part of the government.

(1600)

Unfortunately the companies and the unions have failed to reach any type of agreement on these matters. We are left with no choice but to assume our responsibility to the Canadian public and bring this feud to a conclusion.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill entitled Maintenance of Railway Operations Act, 1995, is to ensure that railway and subsidiary services continue or are forthwith resumed at Canadian National, Canadian Pacific and VIA Rail.

With respect to the dispute resolution process, the bill before my hon. colleagues calls for a mediation-arbitration commission to be established in respect of each bargaining unit prescribed. Each commission shall consist of one representative appointed by the employer, one representative appointed by the union and a chairperson appointed by the Minister of Labour.

Within 70 days after its establishment or such longer period as the minister may allow, each commission must endeavour to mediate all the matters referred to it, then hear the parties on the matters on which it was unable to bring about an agreement and render an arbitration decision on these matters. It must also fix a date for the termination of the new collective agreement, which date may not be earlier than December 31, 1997.

To ensure that each commission carries out its mandate with impartiality, the bill requires each commission to be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with the economic viability and competitiveness of a coast-to-coast rail system in both the short and the long term, taking into account the importance of good labour-management relations.

I am convinced that this bill will not make all parties involved happy, but I know that it provides for a dispute resolution process that is both fair and speedy. With this legislation, the government sends a clear message to the railway companies and the unions. It is telling them that, while believing in the

collective bargaining process, it is not prepared to let work stoppages in the railway sector interfere with the normal operation of the Canadian economy. I urge all hon. members to support this position by ensuring that this bill is passed as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that we currently bear a heavy responsibility, but it is because the Bloc Québécois takes its role as the official opposition very seriously that it cannot support a special piece of legislation that denies both the right to strike and the right to negotiate. On Monday, we proposed amendments that would have allowed the employees to go back to work without undermining the ability to negotiate for those who exercised their right under the Canada Labour Code.

Why must this special bill single out the workers and some of the strikers? Why must it undermine negotiated settlements by outlining a general and drastic worsening of working conditions? Why is the government itself not acting on the substance of the report by Commissioner Hope, who was appointed to advise the government and did so by working hard and producing a comprehensive report? Why did the government actually undermine the significance of the Hope report? Why is it satisfied with a hollowed-out Hope report?

(1605)

The Minister of Labour's position is certainly not impartial and I will show that. Is the minister acting like a sorcerer's apprentice because of inexperience, ignorance or bad faith? Let us at least put the question.

The government is in a hurry, but it has difficulty hiding the fact that it is taking advantage of a serious situation to protect interests which are not the economic interests it is referring to. The government does not care about establishing conditions which would promote co-operation. It imposes a bludgeon law which does not even leave room for mutually agreed settlements. The government also treats differently the three companies, at the expense of the workers affected by the strike and the lockout.

The proposal which we made on Monday seeks to preserve the future: everyone goes back to work; mediation takes place according to the Hope formula; a public report is released and recommendations are made to this House to try to restore a balance which was destroyed for workers by the action and inaction of this government.

Since the strike started, its settlement has become a national issue. We feel that, in the context, the two sides may have a new desire to reach a settlement. Such an example of conditions promoting fair and healthy work relations would be a definite asset for the future of the country that this government claims to want to build. However, in the meantime, what Canadians and Quebecers see, is a government taking advantage of a serious

situation to promote its partisan interests. That is not from me: it is from the Hope report.

We had to protect the interests of Canadian workers who used their right to strike, as provided in the Labour Code. I said it on several occasions:

[*English*]

If the Canadian economy cannot afford the Canada Labour Code then it should be said and something should be done in order to avoid the sort of mess we are in. The workers will be the ones who will pay and we know many persons who are not responsible for that. The government and the House cannot have blind eyes on that.

[*Translation*]

The right to strike is a fundamental right in every democratic society. In the context of labour relations, it plays a major role in bringing about a settlement between the parties, a mutually satisfactory settlement through which the level of productivity sought by companies and workers, and society as a whole, can be achieved.

Never has forced settlement brought about innovative ideas to deal with new situations. Solutions imposed on the parties only repeat patterns that cannot be adapted any more to particular situations. But there are no short cuts when it comes to looking for solutions together. Every time we failed to do so—and, as we know, this has been a problem in the public service—we ended up paying a much higher price in terms of loss of productivity, because it becomes impossible under such circumstances to find mutually acceptable solutions.

(1610)

This is not an attack on companies, on the contrary. But businesses worthy of the trust the public puts in them must know that they cannot claim to be reorganizing in order to compete if they do not take their employees into account. There are no short cuts.

It is extremely unfortunate that the new so-called “labour” minister’s second move since taking office is to undermine any chance of real corporate reorganization by putting in place mechanisms, traditional mechanisms, that have already proven ineffective in reforming the system. With these mechanisms, the minister condemns Canada to live through situations we had hoped never to live through again.

I am telling you this as a Bloc member, because we take our role of official opposition seriously. After all, we could rejoice over the fact that a position perpetuating problems and making them worse can be put in place this way. But no, we are here to

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play a positive role as long as we remain in this country and look after the interests of the workers as well as the companies who depend on a satisfactory settlement.

The Hope report contains a wealth of information. I will try to give you a brief outline of the highlights that should have guided the government in preparing its bill, if it had really sought what it claims to be seeking. First of all, I will outline the main elements of the Hope report. The report says this: “In summary, the dispute revolves around extremely complex collective bargaining issues raised under circumstances that do not lend themselves very well to negotiated solutions. Given the circumstances, the purpose of this report is to determine the possibility of initiating an ongoing process that would allow the parties to deal with these very complex issues through binding mediation or arbitration maximizing the parties’ involvement in setting the conditions”.

Mr. Hope took on the difficult task of defining the conditions in which solutions can be found despite the difficult situation. He reviewed the available literature on labour relations and administration, after stressing the labour department’s basic tradition of neutrality and objectivity. That is what Mr. Hope himself said. I think he would be disappointed in the current situation. He noted that, according to the unions, the government, through the Minister of Transport, delayed the collective bargaining process, and that both the employers and the government seem ready to attack the rail employees’ working conditions.

(1615)

It says that, in fact, the companies have already made demands of this kind in the past. They have already tried to obtain similar concessions during past rounds of negotiations. Their demands are so controversial and provocative because of the partisan role taken by the government, which supports the position of the railway companies, and because of the tenacity with which the companies have stuck to these demands. And, he says, their points of disagreement are complicated because we are now in a period of economic recovery and in a situation which management, the management of companies, has let fester for several years.

Having said this, what did Mr. Hope propose in his report after reviewing the situation? He said that we could have let the strike go on. Because we find ourselves before two reconcilable parties. The minister says that there have been hours and hours and hours of negotiation, but what she really means is that people have been sitting at the same table for hours and hours and hours. Anyone who has ever been involved in negotiations knows that people can sit down face to face, side by side, yet negotiate nothing, put nothing on the table, because the parties refuse to put anything on the table as long as they are uncertain whether they will come out winners when they play their cards.

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It is true that the government has intervened so many times in the railway industry that the employers, and in some cases the unions, are just waiting for the government to step in. This undermines the effectiveness of a strike.

By the way, the Hope report says that a strike cannot be stopped just because of interruptions in service; the right to strike can only be suspended in extremely serious cases. The report states that the worst case scenario for the unions would be if the government found itself forced to impose the railway companies' demands as a prelude to the rationalization process outlined in the reports.

We now find ourselves in this worst case scenario. Why? Once the government decided to intervene, instead of following the recommendations contained in the Hope report, it decided to use a process which has already proven unsuccessful. In fact, what does the Hope report have to say about the government legislating employees back to work? The report indicates that dispute arbitration must be avoided at all cost, because such arbitration cases have prevented us from addressing the problem and often led us to copy old systems instead of looking for new solutions and making progress.

Under what conditions could we allow the parties to break the current deadlock without a strike? We agree that the only means of settling the real issues is the right to strike.

(1620)

Mr. Hope arrives at the following solution—he says there could be other ones, but this is the one he proposes: first, a mediation–arbitration stage to allow the parties involved to reach a consensus on what he calls the parameters but that I would describe as the overall situation of the companies.

Let me explain. Workers are convinced that the companies make profits, but that they are mismanaged which results in waste, that Paul Tellier's salary does not allow him to teach lessons to others, that the government's plan—they hear about it—to streamline operations is a threat to them, that the Minister of Transport supports the companies and that he made offending comments, to say the least, when he said that railway employees with a grade eight or nine education should not be blamed for negotiating overgenerous collective agreements.

Some hon. members: Shame.

Mrs. Lalonde: Real negotiations require that the parties meet. However, for the unions, the situation is the one which I just described. The unions feel threatened and they feel they have been had. They made major concessions in the previous collective agreements to preserve job security, since everything else was in jeopardy. Now, the companies show no regard for

that right, acquired quite recently in some cases, and they want to eliminate it. In some cases, this job security, which is said to threaten the survival of the companies, was gained in 1992.

Ultimately, and not just for the workers and the companies but for all Canadians and Quebecers, the claims made by railway companies should be thoroughly examined. They claim that competition is fierce and that they can no longer continue to operate under the current conditions, that something must be done.

The Hope report says that this issue should have been discussed first. Discussions should have taken place first, with an arbitrator, the workers and the employers, on the survival of the companies and on their competitiveness, taking into consideration the workers' demands. In other words, the parties involved should have tried to agree on the information. Again, in the labour relations sector, whether through strike action or through other means, if you cannot agree to share information, you cannot negotiate.

The first phase of the mediation–arbitration process, which commissioner Hope expected to last two months, and which should have included a real debate to allow the workers to make their complaints and claims of waste, lack of organization, and to provide some explanations—because they got all the blame—was totally skipped. Had these discussions taken place, the workers might have agreed that, in some cases, some action was required, thus paving the way for true negotiations.

The second phase proposed in the Hope report provided 120 days to implement, in the various mediation–arbitration commissions, the parameters agreed on. The legislation only retains the second part of the proposal made in the report. It does not provide any means to try to reach a consensus, as proposed in the first part. Certainly not, because what constitutes one of the most serious attacks against the unions, who must feel that the employers and the government are both out to get them, is section 12. For some reason, the minister was very proud of this section, but I think this is just another indication of her lack of experience in labour relations.

(1625)

I will read it to you. Section 12 says: “Each Commission shall be guided by the need for terms and conditions of employment that are consistent with the economic viability and competitiveness of a coast-to-coast rail system in both the short and the long term, taking into account the importance of good labour–management relations”. That sounds pretty good, or does it? Anyone with any experience in labour relations knows this provision has at least two major effects. First, it does away with the arbitrator's customary mandate to abide by the juris-

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prudence. Basically, this paragraph is a substitute for the two months of research to clarify the state of the railway system.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Lalonde: This is because the government is in a hurry, for the reasons mentioned during Question Period. It is in a hurry because it wants to sell CN and can only sell CN if it makes drastic changes in the terms and conditions of employment. And because the government is in a hurry, it will not give the process designed by Commissioner Hope a chance to succeed. First, it says: You as arbitrators will have to ensure that terms and conditions of employment are consistent with employability in the short and long term.

For decades the railways have been allowed to deteriorate, and now in a single collective agreement, as a result of section 12, employees will have to pay for the disorganized approach and irresponsibility of the companies and the government. This is outrageous. Those who would blame us for the impact on small businesses and workers who suffer as a result of this right to strike should realize that the real culprit is a government that uses the situation to deal with problems it created in the first place, at the expense of the workers.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Leroux (Shefford): The Liberals are to blame.

Mrs. Lalonde: But that is not all, it is not just by stripping all power from the mediation-arbitration commissions in clause 12 that the bill completely sabotages the Hope report, on the contrary. It is worse than that because there is a mandate and, instead of doing what is customary and leaving the decision to one arbitrator, who can exercise judgment and refer to the jurisprudence, we teeter on the verge of the ridiculous either by being totally oblivious to the Hope report's contents or by acting in bad faith when we say that we accept the report. That is why I call it the ghost of the Hope report—the two do not even resemble each other.

The second objection is that everything must be settled within 70 days. The Hope report would give 60 days to hammer out an agreement on the difficult basic conditions and 120 days to apply them. But we are saying that the whole agreement should be signed, sealed and delivered in 70 days, just like that! Why the haste? Is it because we absolutely must have negotiated settlements? We are creating conditions which make that impossible. We are creating conditions under which arbitration will be carried out by a commission which has no real power and to which the government will appoint the arbitrator.

(1630)

The workers would not even be consulted on the choice of arbitrator. So, what other clauses of this bill are utterly unacceptable? Just imagine being so confident that the process will be encouraged and adopted—by the way, a basic condition for even having an arbitration commission is that both management

and the union appoint a representative to it—that if the parties neglect to name a representative, the government, the minister will intervene in their stead and name a competent person.

Words fail me to describe such a situation. And that is not all, that is not all. There is the issue of deadlines. I already said this, but I must stress that the commissioner gave 60 days plus 120, and he took care to stipulate that he is limiting it to six months because it will be easier for the parties to come to an agreement once they have agreed on the parameters. In the bill, 70 is the total maximum. This means that the government wants a settlement to be reached quickly, and once again I ask why? I will finish on this note, Mr. Speaker.

Other provisions of this bill are also unacceptable. Among others, there is the fact, and I must stress it, that the three companies are not treated equally and, as a consequence, all of the workers are not treated equally. Why? First, let us try to find out. Take the first party, CN. It gets an arbitration commission, 70 days, a clause 12 which makes no sense, and a concluding clause which says: “This Part— shall come into force on the expiration of the twelfth hour after the time at which this Act is assented to”.

What about Canadian Pacific and Via Rail? “This part shall come into force by order”. This means that, at CP, where there is a strike and a lockout, more importantly, at this point in time, workers or those who obeyed the picket lines have been laid off temporarily, punished, and the unions are no longer having their dues deducted because workers crossed the picket lines. And there is more: no one is saying that the working conditions will return to normal and that the workers will be rehired. No. No one is saying that.

No one said that because the company arranged to maintain operations. It is working at 80 per cent of its capacity. At 80 per cent. I will read you part of a notice I received today sent by the company to its customers. It thanks them considerably for their patience and understanding. It goes on to say that 12,888 railway workers are working non stop. These railway workers include some 2,888 managers, supervisors and other, non-unionized employees, who were given special training to replace striking workers.

Canada has no anti-strikebreaking legislation. This means that Canadian Pacific, which took steps and is operating at between 60 per cent and 80 per cent capacity—there is no agreement on the exact figure—is not subject to such legislation. There are examples of this in history. In 1987, in a similar situation, 400 workers who had been locked out and were therefore subject to a similar provision, waited four months without being called back to work. This means that the workers who were on strike were called back within 12 or 15 hours, and those who had been locked out were not called back for four or five months, since the company could operate. I have confirmation of this here from the unions concerned. This means that, when we say, by order, we let the company carry on.

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(1635)

As for VIA Rail, the minister says they are close to agreement. No, before looking at VIA Rail, I have other news on Canadian Pacific. Just a few small items.

In 1991 or 1992, when the company closed the Angus shops, there was a serious problem, workers were in danger of losing their jobs. So, in order to shut down the Angus shops, the company promised, in a memorandum that was not part of the collective agreement, but that seemed to be ongoing in application, because otherwise it would have been meaningless, that the workers would indeed be paid but that they would remain in Montreal.

Now, the Canadian auto workers who are negotiating with Canadian Pacific have been told—and I have confirmed this with the company—that if they do not agree to the 250 workers in question being moved to Calgary, first, that these workers will lose their job security, and second, that the company will not sign any agreement with the other workers. The workers in the rest of Canada are being pitted against the workers in Montreal. They want to find a solution to the dispute, but they say they want to restore order in the rail system, and we see what the conditions are.

And finally, VIA Rail. The minister said that everything was fine at VIA Rail, that the negotiations were continuing. The union leaders tell me that there is no more negotiation going on here than anywhere else. They tell me that their biggest worry is that this would be done by order in council, because everyone knows that for reasons that are historic and that are explained in the Hope report, the passenger rail system is operating at a deficit, and that in reality when VIA Rail is not operating, it is losing less money than usual.

So, on the one hand, the government is saying: “This is terrible, we cannot provide service to passengers”. But, on the other hand, it does not ensure that the legislation makes it possible to take action when something terrible happens.

All we hear is: “This is terrible, simply terrible! We must bring in legislation”. But those who are supposed to make the terrible situation go away are not covered.

An hon. member: Incredible.

An hon. member: Terrible.

Mrs. Lalonde: It is terrible. But that is not all. This is not a simple matter, either, because some of VIA Rail’s striking workers belong to the same local as some CN union members. Therefore, if CN resumes operations but not VIA Rail, VIA Rail workers on the same seniority list as their CN colleagues will do what union members do in similar circumstances, that is, engage in picketing. Just think about the consequences.

I can therefore strongly emphasize, once again, that the government has used with malicious intent the dramatic situation that some people are going through. A strike is never a pleasant experience. It is not pleasant for the strikers, who are at the end of their rope, nor for those who must suffer the consequences.

Instead of seeking permanent solutions—even if we take more time, as the Bloc Québécois recommends—the government is using the situation to resolve its own problems, which Commissioner Hope refers to as “its partisan problems”.

If we, in the Bloc Québécois, dared to stand up at the risk of being unpopular, it is because we have a high opinion of what politics is, of what a country is, and even of what Canada is, as long as we are part of it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

(1640)

[English]

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was Yogi Berra who said, and if it was not Yogi I am sure he will not mind if I attribute it to him, it seems like *déjà vu* all over again.

Last week it was back to work legislation for the port of Vancouver and this week it is for most of the railways. I suggest the time has long past for the government to get serious about labour issues and come up with a long term solution that does not rest on the usual crisis management approach of back to work legislation.

We can draw some comfort from the fact that Bill C-77 does contain a guiding principle which allows the commissioners to look at long term solutions. I am pleased to see that clause in the bill. However, since they have 70 days to file a report, I hope their suggestions are acted upon faster than those contained in the Fraleigh report, the Hope report, or even the long delayed and never seen Fraser study.

Perhaps I am beginning to sound like a broken record. I have said it so often in this House, and I think it bears repeating. I want to impress upon this government that we have to look to the future and find better ways to deal with work disruptions.

I want the House to know that the Reform Party is concerned and that is why my colleague, the member for Lethbridge introduced Bill C-262. That bill was specific in that it would have applied to the grain industry but the principle of final offer arbitration is one that can be applied in any labour dispute.

When the bill came up for a vote on Monday, we discovered that the government has made a new ally with the Bloc and even the NDP, the very people who are responsible for holding up speedy passage of this bill, and as a result shot down Bill

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C-262. I was disappointed by the coalition that was formed against that very sensible bill.

As is evidenced in Bill C-77, the government is putting its agenda first and perhaps labour issues second. The difference in the coming into force provision of CN, CP and VIA Rail, perhaps indicates that the government is more concerned with protecting the government's interest in CN than helping Canadian shippers, manufacturers, farmers and workers. The cost to the economy is maybe secondary. Securing a positive atmosphere for the sale of CN might be the primary goal here.

Does it not matter as much that VIA is losing \$1 million a day or that passengers are inconvenienced? Does it not matter that the transportation of goods in this country is paralyzed? Does it not matter that our international trade reputation is in jeopardy, suffering another blow that perhaps we cannot recover from this time?

As we speak, container vessels are steaming out of Canadian ports and off to U.S. ports. The whole time the Bloc and the NDP are stalling, ports throughout Canada including Quebec are losing port fees and pilotage charges. The American longshoremen have been collecting the wages that Canadians are missing.

The trucking companies are missing out on business that helps them and their workers to survive, to pay their bills and to feed their families. Our balance of payments with our free trade partner are tipping further in favour of the U.S.

Now let us look a little closer at the real impact of this work stoppage. On the east coast the port of Halifax estimates that it has lost \$1.25 million so far in this strike alone. Eight ships have already left for New York. We all know that the economy of eastern Canada just does not need nor can it sustain this kind of setback.

On the west coast the port of Vancouver was just recovering and getting back on stride after back to work legislation when this disruption came along. Now the port of Vancouver is effectively grinding to a halt again. At the moment 22 ships are at berth in the port of Vancouver, four of which are grain vessels waiting for loads of grain. Ten more are at anchor, three of which are grain carriers. British Columbia coal miners are anxious to see their four coal carriers now at dockside loaded so that mines can keep operating and miners can keep working.

(1645)

The strike has tremendous spinoff and domino effects. It is not only the people on strike who are suffering or all the industries that depend on that form of transportation. The potash industry will soon slow down if the two ships waiting at anchor cannot load their cargoes.

Why is it that we still cannot get unanimous support to provide speedy passage of the bill? Of course it is inevitable. It is just delaying the inevitable to hold up the bill.

Vancouver's loss is Seattle's gain. Halifax's loss is New York's gain. Job losses are the order of the day in manufacturing. If car manufacturers cannot get their parts they have to lay off workers. If they are not supplying cars, dealers do not have cars to sell and have perhaps been laying off people in their dealerships.

Farmers are extremely vulnerable to the whims of the transportation system. The only option they have is to hope the situation will be alleviated before it gets worse and worse. About all they can do at the moment is hope and sit back and watch their hard-won international contracts go down the drain, contracts that may be impossible to get back. After all, why would a buyer renegotiate a contract with a Canadian who could not guarantee the product will be delivered for the promised date? Buyers will go elsewhere, all because the government was slow to react and because the Bloc and the NDP did not care about the average Canadian worker.

We were asking for the legislation a week ago. If it had been introduced a week ago we would be further down the path to having it passed and assented to than we are at this point.

It is inevitable. I understand my colleagues in the opposition making a political statement. I suspect the statement has been made now. The real loser is the Canadian worker who gets laid off from his job simply because the system is backed up.

We are putting the government on notice that the Reform Party will be watching to make sure it has the best interests of Canadians in mind and that it is not just out to protect and fortify the sale of CN.

We want to know what criteria the minister will apply to her ministerial order to put CP and VIA workers back to work. Will she put them back to work when she thinks the levels of services have dwindled, or will she listen to the people who actually use the services such as the shippers and the Canadian Wheat Board? Will she be listening to those people? We will be watching to see that she does.

We expect she will take into account the impact continued stoppage will have on the wheat board, car manufacturers, small business people, grain producers, coal miners, lumber producers and kids who will not get a new pair of shoes because their parents have been laid off from their jobs. Many people are having a very difficult time with their payments. Even a week off work can be catastrophic to them.

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As a Montrealer I am sure the minister can appreciate the problems faced by travellers and workers who are having difficulty getting themselves and their goods in and out of that city. When Toronto commuters are inconvenienced or late for work, their business, productivity and families are affected.

We are prepared to give the minister the benefit of the doubt. We are prepared to believe the minister will do the right thing, that she will order CP and VIA back to work before there are any devastating disruptions if there have not already been some.

(1650)

The Reform Party intends to support the bill. I suggest the other parties in the House have made their political statement and have made their political point. Now we should all get behind the bill and do what is right for Canada.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian I am disappointed that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP have not seen fit to support the legislation. Perhaps they do not realize the economic impact of their stalling from coast to coast to coast. It is affecting the daily lives of Canadians. The economic condition of the country is deteriorating mainly because a party interested solely in the separation of Quebec is not acting appropriately. It is important to note that in this process.

I will give some examples of the economic impacts Canadians have experienced in various sectors of the economy. The shut-down of CN paralyzes approximately 60 per cent of the country's freight traffic. The country's freight traffic capacity is further reduced by the disruption at CP Rail, where services are maintained with workers not on strike and 2,000 managers and staffers at approximately 60 per cent of normal capacity.

General Motors and Ford Canada employ some 21,000 workers in the greater Toronto area. Two Ford plants have been closed, putting 3,000 employees out of work. Others are operating at half capacity due to a shortage of parts for their production lines. Further layoffs are likely if the strike continues.

It takes approximately five trucks to replace one freight car. Ford Canada indicates that there are not enough trucks available to replace the shortfall in railway services.

The core manufacturing sector is being affected to the tune of \$200 million to \$500 million in economic losses per week. A spokesman with the Canadian Manufacturers Association estimates production losses to the economy if the strike continues to the tune of \$3 billion to \$5 billion.

Numerous companies that rely on rail transportation to ship both goods in the resources and manufacturing industries across Canada are suffering. The economic impacts of the rail shut-down are enormous.

I mentioned the major auto manufacturing locations in Ontario. Some of the companies affected are in the province of Quebec. Kruger Paper in Trois-Rivières is shutting down Tuesday due to the lack of wood chips coming in. There is a loss of \$1 million a day and 500 workers are affected. Stone Consolidated in Port Alfred was shut down on Monday. Petromont in Varennes will shut down on Wednesday. Shell in Montreal is burning the equivalent of four tank cars of liquid gas daily. Port of Bécancour will shut down on Wednesday. Several aluminium plants are experiencing a slowdown in production: Alcan in Chicoutimi, ABI, Reynolds and Luralco in Baie Comeau.

This is the message that the Bloc Québécois should be paying more attention to instead of playing petty politics.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 4.54 p.m., pursuant to the order made earlier today, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 78(2) it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

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(Division No. 175)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Adams
Arseneault
Augustine
Barnes
Benoit
Bethel
Bhaduria
Bodnar
Boudria
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden
Bélanger
Campbell
Cauchon
Chrétien (Saint—Maurice)
Cohen
Collins
Cowling
Cummins
Dingwall
Duhamel
Eggleton
Epp
Finestone
Flis
Forseth
Gagliano
Galloway
Gilmour
Goodale
Graham
Grose
Harb
Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hayes
Hickey
Hopkins
Ianno
Jennings
Keyes
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lincoln
MacAulay
MacLaren
Malhi
Marchi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McCormick
McKinnon
McTeague
Meredith
Milliken
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
O'Brien
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peters
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Proud
Regan
Ringuette—Maltais
Robillard
Rompkey
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd
Skoke
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Strahl
Thalheimer
Valeri
Verran
Wappel

Ablonczy
Alcock
Assad
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bellemare
Bertrand
Bevilacqua
Blondin—Andrew
Bonin
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brown (Calgary Southeast)
Brushett
Bélair
Calder
Catterall
Chatters
Clancy
Collenette
Comuzzi
Crawford
DeVillers
Discepola
Duncan
English
Fewchuk
Finlay
Fontana
Frazier
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles—de—la—Madeleine)
Gerrard
Godfrey
Gouk
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harper (Calgary West)
Harvard
Hermanson
Hoepfner
Hubbard
Irwin
Johnston
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Knutson
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap—Breton Highlands—Canso)
Lee
Loney
MacDonald
MacLellan (Cape/Cap—Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
Marleau
Massé
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest)
McWhinney
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna
Morrison
Murray
Nunziata
O'Reilly
Paradis
Penson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Reed
Ringma
Robichaud
Rock
Schmidt
Serré
Silye
Solberg
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Stinson
Telegdi
Torsney
Vanclief
Walker
Wayne

Wells
White (North Vancouver)
Wood
Zed—171

Bellehumeur
Bélisle
Davialt
de Savoye
Dubé
Dumas
Gagnon (Québec)
Godin
Jacob
Landry
Laurin
Lebel
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Loubier
Ménard
Paré
Rocheleau
Tremblay (Rosemont)—35

Whelan
Williams
Young

NAYS

Members

Blaikie
Caron
Debien
Deshaies
Duceppe
Fillion
Gauthier (Roberval)
Guay
Lalonde
Langlois
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)
Mercier
Nunez
Pomerleau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)

PAIRED MEMBERS

Members

Asselin
Bernier (Gaspé)
Bouchard
Caccia
Chamberlain
Chrétien (Frontenac)
Culbert
Easter
Gaffney
Harper (Churchill)
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint—Paul)
Parrish
Picard (Drummond)
Simmons
Szabo

Bachand
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Brien
Canuel
Chan
Crête
Dalphond—Gural
Fry
Guimond
Jackson
Marchand
Peric
Sauvageau
St—Laurent
Ur

(1715)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

(1720)

BILL C-77—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that agreement has been reached pursuant to Standing Order 78(2) with regard to an allocation of time of committee stage of Bill C-77. Therefore, I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-77, an act to provide for the maintenance of railway operations and subsidiary services, not more than four hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the committee stage of the said bill and, at the expiry of the fourth hour, any proceedings before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the committee stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment, provided that if the said bill is not reported from the said committee during Routine Proceedings on March 23, 1995, the said bill shall at the conclusion of Routine Proceedings on that day be deemed to have been reported from the committee without amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Ye.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 176*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Adams
Alcock	Arseneault
Assad	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Baker
Barnes	Bellemare
Benoit	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bhaduria	Blondin—Andrew
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Calgary Southeast)
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Brushett
Bryden	Bélair
Bélanger	Calder
Campbell	Catterall
Cauchon	Chatters
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clancy
Cohen	Collenette
Collins	Comuzzi
Cowling	Crawford
Cummins	DeVillers
Dingwall	Discepola
Duhamel	Eggleton
English	Epp
Fewchuk	Finestone
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Forseth
Frazier	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Gouk
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harper (Calgary West)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Harvard
Hermanson	Hickey
Hoepfner	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Irwin	Jennings
Johnston	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Kirkby
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap Breton Highlands—Canso)	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lee	Lincoln
Loney	MacAulay
MacDonald	MacLellan (Cape/Cap Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Massé	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)	McCormick
McGuire	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Meredith
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Mills (Red Deer)
Minna	Mitchell
Morrison	Murphy
Murray	Nault
Nunziata	O'Brien
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peters
Phinney	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Pillitteri	Proud
Reed	Regan
Ringma	Ringuette—Maltais

Robichaud
Rock
Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)
Shepherd
Solberg
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Stinson
Telegdi
Torsney
Vanclief
Walker
Wayne
Whelan
Williams
Young

Robillard
Rompkey
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Serré
Skoko
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Strahl
Thalheimer
Valeri
Verran
Wappel
Wells
White (North Vancouver)
Wood
Zed—164

NAYS

Members

Bellehumeur	Bélisle
Caron	Daviault
Debien	de Savoye
Deshaies	Dubé
Duceppe	Dumas
Fillion	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier (Roberval)	Godin
Guay	Jacob
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Lefebvre	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Mercier	Ménard
Nunez	Paré
Pomerleau	Rocheleau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	Tremblay (Rosemont)—34

PAIRED MEMBERS

Members

Asselin	Bachand
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bouchard	Brien
Caccia	Canuel
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crête
Culbert	Dalphond—Guiral
Easter	Fry
Gaffney	Guimond
Harper (Churchill)	Jackson
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)	Marchand
Parrish	Peric
Picard (Drummond)	Sauvageau
Simmons	St-Laurent
Szabo	Ur

(1800)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a point of order. In view of the fact it is now apparent that committee stage of this bill will be completed this evening, I

Private Members Business

wonder if I might seek unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, at the conclusion of Private Members' Business this day, the sitting shall be suspended until the call of the Chair, which shall come in order to permit the House to receive the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development on Bill C-77, an act to provide for the maintenance of railway operations and subsidiary services, and shall continue to sit in order to consider the report stage and the third reading stage of the said bill;

That, immediately after disposing of the third reading stage of the said bill, the sitting shall be suspended to the call of the Chair when it shall be reconvened for the sole purpose of a Royal Assent;

That, when the House returns from the said Royal Assent it shall be adjourned until the next sitting day provided that if a Royal Assent has not taken place by nine o'clock a.m. on March 23, 1995, the House shall be reconvened for the sole purpose of being adjourned until ten o'clock a.m. on that day.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saint John—Base Closures.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The House resumed from December 14 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert has three minutes remaining in his time.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to finish the speech I began some weeks ago regarding the private members' bill of the member for Red Deer on the motion regarding access to information. The remarks I made I will leave at that point. I have concluded.

(1805)

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few remarks to make on this bill. It is a pleasure to speak in support of the motion of my colleague, the member for Red Deer. His motion states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Parliament and crown agencies should be subject to scrutiny under the Access to Information Act.

This is a very appropriate motion as it would make these agencies more accountable to Canadians. If one thing was made clear by the results of the last election, it was that Canadians demand accountability from their governments and their institu-

tions. They are no longer willing to accept governments and institutions that help themselves to the public purse. They are demanding value for their money instead of governments and institutions that take hard earned tax dollars for granted and make their deals behind closed doors.

One of the best mechanisms currently in place to give Canadians some control over these institutions is the Access to Information Act. This act lets Canadians take a look at government books for themselves. This is only fair. In Canada we pay a very high amount of tax and we have every right to know how the government is spending the money.

In this respect the Access to Information Act serves as a useful tool to keep an eye on the appropriateness of government spending. All members in the House can show they support this right of Canadians by supporting this motion. It would be a gesture very much appreciated by Canadians.

As a farmer, I would like to use the example of the Canadian Wheat Board in speaking in support of this motion. I was shocked recently when I requested information on the pension plans and wages for Canadian Wheat Board commissioners and staff. Regarding the pension plans, I asked for a breakdown on employer versus government contributions as well as the age at which the commissioners and staff are eligible to receive benefits. My request was denied by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on the basis that the Canadian Wheat Board does not fall under the terms of the Access to Information Act.

As a grain farmer and a member of Parliament I was appalled that I was refused information regarding pensions which I am responsible for funding. I can inform the House that the level of secrecy under which the Canadian Wheat Board operates is increasingly viewed with resentment by western farmers.

It further makes me wonder why the Canadian Wheat Board is so insistent on secrecy when a notice that compensation figures for executives and managers of Canada's major banks was recently released, presumably with no danger to the future operation of these banks.

Financial figures are available for the upper levels of just about every other corporation in the country and yet the Canadian Wheat Board insists on keeping its financial data a mystery. If banks can release this information, it shoots down the argument that the wheat board needs secrecy to remain a competitive player in the marketplace.

I wrote to the wheat board urging them to reconsider its policy. At that time I stressed this would go a long way in re-establishing the trust and confidence of other grain farmers in dealing with the wheat board. In turn, I was contacted by the wheat board. It provided me with some general salary information, but not in the detail I originally requested. Moreover, I was

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told that the general information is only available to wheat board permit holders.

This experience shows how frustrating it can be for Canadians if they are trying to get financial information about a government agency that is not covered under the Access to Information Act.

I am not alone in my frustration with the wheat board. Recently a publication called the *Prairie Agricultural Digest* featured an article that asked why things at the wheat board are so secretive. This newspaper wondered what makes the wheat board so different from virtually any other privately traded or government corporation. The only answer they could come up with is that the people running the wheat board are either arrogant or out of touch.

The newspaper has embarked on a campaign to make the wheat board more accountable. Grain farmers can fill out a card directed to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. The card states: "I am very opposed to the secrecy of the Canadian Wheat Board, and the board's consistent refusal to answer questions regarding the salaries, pensions and other benefits the wheat board commissioners and other employees receive. I oppose the Canadian Wheat Board being exempt from the freedom of information act".

(1810)

Apparently these clippings have been flooding into the newspaper office. This sends a clear message that farmers are fed up with the secrecy, but it is a sad comment that they have to take this drastic action in order to try and get accountability from an agency that is supposed to serve them.

The wheat board has advertised a position described as fitness instructor. How much sense does it make to have a fitness instructor on staff but not have an access to information officer that could answer questions about how the board spends its money.

The issue of accountability also becomes important when we look at the pasta industry in the country. Pasta producers in western Canada came to see me around the middle of November claiming heavily subsidized pasta from Italy was coming into the country and they could not afford to operate any more.

When I showed my facts and figures to the prairie pools, they had no answers. The Canadian Wheat Board sells durum wheat to the Americans for the pasta industry and we also sell it to Italy.

The Americans bring in 40 million kilograms of pasta for a value of approximately \$84 million. This pasta costs about \$2 per kilogram. The Italians ship 17 million kilograms of pasta at

\$19 million, which is about half the price the Americans are charging for their pasta in this country.

I asked the prairie pools if they could explain how we could sell durum wheat to Italy, ship it over there, have it manufactured and brought back into this country for half the price. Is it not subsidized? They could not give me a reasonable explanation.

It makes you wonder what is going on when you do a little digging and come up with some of these figures. It creates a stronger argument for openness and accountability at every turn.

The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange is a totally open process. A public gallery allows you to actually watch the trading. That is the type of openness the Canadian Wheat Board should be trying to achieve, otherwise we are left wondering to whom it is accountable.

It is not just Canadians who are upset with wheat board secrecy. American farmers are getting very upset with having to compete with this bureaucracy. It is not the Canadian farmers they do not want to compete with, it is the large, secret dealing wheat board they see as an unfair competitor.

I am not advocating the dismantling of the wheat board, but this illustrates how, when operating with a shroud of secrecy, people automatically suspect that you are not playing above the board. By dropping this shroud of secrecy the wheat board could avoid many of these problems.

When the wheat board came into being, it was a dual marketing system. That is what farmers want again. The time has come for the government to give Canadians the accountability it promised in its red book, and put an end to the secret dealings of government organizations like the wheat board.

The Reform Party has always stressed the need to be more accountable and responsible to the people who elected us. We have always stated clearly that the common sense of the common people should be respected. They have the right to be consulted on public policy matters. They have the right to govern themselves through truly representative and responsive institutions.

In the Liberal government's red book it states: "People are disappointed by and irritated with the poor quality of service provided by many public institutions, given the cost of government and the taxes the government are taking out of citizens' pockets. A Liberal government will take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in these institutions of government. Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program".

We have been waiting for evidence of that open government, but so far it has been lacking. Canadians have watched in frustration as billions of dollars were funnelled through crown agencies such as the CBC, Canada Post and the wheat board, and they are waiting for action.

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The time for that action is now. This non-partisan motion can be supported by all members of the House because it goes beyond party politics and achieves a purpose that is equally important to Canadians from coast to coast.

(1815)

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address the motion raised by the member for Red Deer. I compliment him on raising the issue of public access to information held by crown agencies and Parliament.

It is obvious from the debate that has ensued from the motion, and indeed from the voices of Canadians across the country, that there is need for greater openness and accountability in government. I agree with the spirit and objectives of the motion of the member of the Reform Party. I cannot, however, lend my support to it because I find it is lacking the comprehensiveness needed to achieve appropriate improvements.

In keeping with our commitment to make government more accountable, open and honest while at the same time controlling costs, the justice minister fully intends to consult with Canadians to develop more comprehensive and up to date access to information legislation.

My constituents in Etobicoke—Lakeshore along with other Canadians are calling for updated and forward thinking legislation. It must involve a careful examination of the complete framework of the Access to Information Act, with careful consideration being given to each institution. By expanding the coverage of the Access to Information Act to Parliament and crown agencies, as the member has suggested, all practical implications must be taken into account.

In our efforts to control the deficit and achieve economic recovery the government has had to modernize programs, making them more effective and cost efficient. The values of openness must be balanced with fiscal responsibilities. I believe it is the government's role to assist Canadians in the evolution that is currently taking place across Canada and around the world. That is why the government is looking at ways to enhance public access to information.

With the explosion of new technology and the evolution of government policies greater openness and transparency are needed to ensure that government structures and programs are geared to the highest priorities of Canadians. The Liberal government's policy defined in the red book is to promote more open and accountable government. Our commitment to it is demonstrated in the introduction of several initiatives aimed at restoring government integrity. The review of agencies, boards and commissions, the introduction of amendments to the Lobby-

ists Registration Act, and reduced costs in the operation of the House of Commons are just a few of the initiatives.

Canadians are demonstrating faith in Parliament. According to an international poll conducted by the *Times Mirror* in the U.S., Canadians ranked highest among the eight of the world's richest countries in confidence in their legislative institutions. Our Prime Minister has said that we have managed to restore the prestige of this institution. It is a credit to all members of Parliament who were elected, whatever their opinions and options.

With this in mind I believe we should look beyond the motion and support and participate in the justice minister's upcoming review of the access to information legislation. The opinions of access experts, the information commissioner and individual Canadians who have an interest in the act should be taken into account.

Numerous recommendations have been made since the act came into effect in 1982 by the two successive information commissioners. Its effectiveness as a supporting tool to democracy has been monitored and assessed over the years through the courts and by a parliamentary committee of the previous government. Most recently recommendations have been submitted to the information commissioner advising a broadening of the access law. One by one the provinces have been enacting their own access legislation, including Ontario.

This too must be assessed in the modification of this very important legislation. In our review we must be sure to look to the example of other foreign democratic governments that have developed similar legislation.

The people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore continually remind me of the importance of incorporating new technologies into more efficient and open government. They tell me to remind the justice minister that his review must be sure to take into consideration the advice of the information highway advisory council and the blueprint for improving government services with new technologies. This thorough review will go steps further than the motion does. It is the best way to ensure enhanced openness of government for Canadians.

(1820)

I also question the addition of other agencies to the existing legislation. I agree with the suggestions of my constituents that the government consider improvements to the existing legislation rather than simply adding agencies to the current schedule list.

The recent report of consultants to the information commissioner has recommended measures such as increases to request fees, swifter and more open responses, a reduction in years for accessibility to cabinet documents, et cetera. The recommendations should be considered, focusing on government ac-

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countability rather than, as the motion proposes, expanding the legislation to cover more independent agencies.

Crown agencies independent of the government should be subjected to scrutiny. This is provided for in other ways. In this area of the legislation our priority should be planning for a modernized access act that benefits Canada through open and accountable government.

The hon. member for Red Deer stated in his motion that he would like to see Parliament and crown agencies subjected to scrutiny under the Access to Information Act. The motion would give a general definition to crown agencies. This open ended wording does not define exactly or take into consideration the individual circumstances of the various agencies.

Modified access legislation should take care to carefully define the specific relevance of institutions to the federal government. We would be wise to follow the listing methods contained in the majority of provincial access legislation. Different laws apply to different institutions and the different laws may constitute varying applications of the law.

The wording of the motion could also lead to increased litigation in an already overflowing courts system. I can easily foresee differing interpretations of the law being used by an agency in an attempt to exempt itself from the access legislation. This would eventually end up in the courts, further burdening the legal system.

In this manner the motion would only serve to decrease the efficiency of an institution while increasing the cost to taxpayers. That is not the goal of the Liberal government.

Before considering such broad legislation suggested by the Reform Party member, one must take into consideration the implications of the motion on Parliament. It is important to protect the personal information of a constituent when considering applying the access act to the offices of members of Parliament and senators. All sorts of questions arise and we must ensure that greater thought be given to the privacy of the individual taxpayer. Any legislation must therefore be precise in its purpose and the motion is certainly not precise.

I believe the motion was an excellent stimulant for initial debate on the subject of access to information and government openness. The motion offered general amendments to an act that requires more detailed reworking. Knowing that the justice minister is planning a more full and comprehensive review of the Access to Information Act I cannot support the member's motion. Further, I cannot emphasize enough the value I place in a thorough consultative process with the Canadian people.

[Translation]

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak on Motion M-304 brought forth by the hon. member for Red Deer with respect to the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act.

The objectives stated by the hon. member for Red Deer tend to be very similar to those of my own party. As a matter of fact, in our view of democracy, it is very important that public financial management be characterized by transparency and openness.

(1825)

All the hon. members of this House were elected by people who want and have a right to know how their money is managed, this money we take off their pay cheques every week for taxes of all kinds. The people of Quebec in particular want to know what the Canadian government is doing with their money and what they get back in return.

The Access to Information Act is one of the tools available to them and I think it should be amended to apply also to crown corporations such as Air Canada and Canada Post Corporation, government agencies such as the Senate as well as public office holders who report directly to Parliament, like the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Auditor General of Canada.

As I said, the Bloc Québécois firmly believes that public administration should be as transparent as can be in a democratic regime. But this is not always the case here. Too many government institutions are still not subject to the Access to Information Act and I think that it is high time that the scope of this act be broadened to force these institutions to operate in a more upright and honest way.

The government continues to hide far too much information that could be useful to the public. Take the Senate for example. Partisan appointments to some of the best paid positions in the government are made by the party in office. The public has no say in the process, nor does it have access to the information circulating within the ranks of the government. That, in my opinion, is not very transparent.

Yet, transparency is essential to regain the confidence of taxpayers who are increasingly wondering about the way their money is spent, considering the national debt and the numerous cuts to social programs and other government services.

In his Throne Speech made in January of last year, the Prime Minister said, and I quote: "The Government is committed to enhancing the credibility of Parliament. Changes will be proposed to the rules of the House of Commons to provide Members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation". The Prime Minister also

said that, to achieve this agenda, integrity and public trust in the institutions of government were essential.

It goes without saying that a relation of trust between the government and the public is vital. However, we realize that no such relation exists when we see the resentment shown by Canadians toward the federal government.

This is an opportunity for the Prime Minister to give weight to his words by taking concrete legislative measures to ensure greater transparency within the public institutions and agencies.

Of course, the Access to Information Act plays an important role in providing information to which the public is entitled. However, we must not forget that certain types of information must remain confidential so as not to prejudice the competitive position of certain Crown corporations.

The relevant legislation, the Privacy Act, is particularly important because it has the effect of protecting information, the disclosure of which might be injurious to national security. That is why this confidentiality has been recognized by means of exemptions provided under the Act. It also protects the interests of individuals, both with respect to personal information and information of a commercial nature. However, it is probably true that the corporations and institutions exempted from this legislation are not necessarily motivated by concern that information might be disclosed to competitors but may be simply reluctant to reveal to the public certain threatening aspects of their activities.

In any case, the complexities of a system for access to information on government administration are well beyond the scope of the motion presented by the hon. member for Red Deer. Here the concern is not, as it says in the motion, to require that Parliament and crown agencies be subject to scrutiny under the Access to Information Act. As we have seen, there are two sides to this issue: providing access to information while reinforcing measures to protect privacy.

That is why the Bloc Québécois, in the name of our democratic principles and in its resolve to increase the transparency of the present system, agrees with the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General released in March 1987, which recommended that the Access to Information Act should apply to all federal institutions, including administrative tribunals and the Senate.

(1830)

The Bloc Québécois insists above all on the importance of full transparency, especially with regard to the Senate. As I said earlier in this House, people are entitled to have access to information issued by this non-elected level of government.

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Quebecers and Canadians are dissatisfied with the present government, which keeps important information from them and which ignores them by not taking their views into consideration and dealing with important public matters in secret.

They are unhappy with the treatment they receive from federal institutions, public servants, politicians and the government machine. This is why the Bloc Québécois agrees with the essence of Motion M-304 and believes the Access of Information Act should apply to all publicly funded government institutions. It is time to get on with it and implement real and effective access to information legislation that will reflect our concern for true and just democracy.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Red Deer for putting this motion forward.

At a time when Canadians are losing trust in their political institutions, all of us must be active in finding ways to promote more open and accountable government. However, in searching out these various ways to promote more open and accountable government, we must recognize that our institutions face a variety of other challenges equally important to Canadians.

People in my riding of York—Simcoe and Canadians from across the country want government to cost less, to be more efficient and to operate in a more businesslike manner. In some cases, it may be necessary to balance the value of openness with these other values. Although I find the objectives behind the motion laudable, I cannot support this motion for three reasons.

First, we must be concerned about the impact the motion will have on the competitive position of crown corporations. I do not say the impact is great or small, merely that before adopting this motion I would want to hear directly from those crown corporations on this issue.

Second, in these times of fiscal restraint we must stop and ask what this motion will cost the taxpayers and how those costs will be paid. Processing access requests requires an access to information bureaucracy and costs money.

The third reason I cannot support the motion is that it fails to distinguish between different kinds of crown agencies and different institutions of Parliament. The motion is too broadly worded. As such, it disagrees with the findings of the 1986 parliamentary committee report "Open and Shut" and with the most recent report of the information commissioner.

Returning to my first reason for opposing the motion, I am not convinced it has struck the proper balance between the competing values of open and accountable government on the one

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hand and the smaller, more efficient government on the other hand.

The motion asks that crown agencies be subject to the scrutiny of the Access to Information Act. There are presently more than 130 crown agencies subject to the act. I assume the hon. member means by crown agencies, those crown agencies not yet subject to the act. I assume he is referring at least in part to crown corporations.

It is with respect to crown corporations that the balance between efficient, competitive businesslike crown agencies and open accountable enterprise becomes most important. The basic question is whether crown corporations which have mandates to operate in a businesslike fashion, sometimes in competition with the private sector, should have to work under different rules than their competitors.

If we believe that crown corporations should act like businesses then why would we impose a different set of rules on them? Of course, if we believe crown corporations should not be competing with the private sector at all, that is a completely different question. Subjecting the crown corporations to the scrutiny of the Access to Information Act will not terminate the crown corporations, if that is the goal. It will simply make them less competitive, more expensive and less efficient.

I would not want to make a decision on the motion before the House until I know more about the implications. I am not prepared to support the motion at this time.

Also, I do not support this motion because we do not have enough information about what the potential costs to the taxpayers will be. Processing access requests costs taxpayers money. The most recent report of the information commissioner says that the annual costs of processing access requests is \$20 million and that the current fees are not designed to recover costs but merely to deter trivial requests.

(1835)

Adding institutions to be covered by the Access to Information Act is saying that the government needs to spend more money. Where will this money come from? How much will it cost? Whatever it costs, we know it is a cost that private business does not have to incur. Therefore it will make crown corporations less competitive, at least to the extent of the cost of processing access requests.

I do not say that the costs of processing access requests cannot be justified. The information commissioner says that the \$20 million is a bargain for such an essential tool of public accountability and I think he is right. We should not adopt motions based on good intentions without first asking the basic questions of how much it will cost and who will pay.

As well, I am reluctant to support the motion is because of the report of the parliamentary committee that examined the Access to Information Act in 1986. Its report is called "Open and Shut". That committee considered a broad range of entities which might be made subject to the Access to Information Act.

The committee concluded it would not be appropriate for all crown agencies to be made subject to the act. It thought a definition of crown corporations should be developed and should be limited to corporations where the crown has a controlling interest and which provides goods or services to the public on a commercial basis.

The committee thought there should be special exemptions for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in relation to program material.

With respect to Parliament, the parliamentary committee was of the view that the offices of senators and members of the House of Commons should be excluded from the scrutiny of the act. It said that the relationship between such elected and appointed officials and the electorate is sometimes described as akin to solicitor-client privilege. Parliamentary privilege is involved and therefore the committee suggested their continued exclusion from the scope of the act.

The committee thought that the Access to Information Act should not apply to the judicial branch of government and therefore not to the Federal Court, the Tax Court or the Supreme Court of Canada. Perhaps surprisingly, the committee thought the act should apply to administrative tribunals which perform quasi-judicial functions.

The committee recognized that the federal government is involved in joint ventures with others, notably the provinces. In those cases it thought it would be best if there were negotiations with the provinces before making such joint ventures subject to the Access to Information Act.

Here we have a parliamentary committee that studied the issues very carefully. The committee's considered conclusion was that it would go too far to include all crown agencies. At least in the case of the CBC, it saw merit in examining the special circumstances of crown corporations that would become subject to the act. It saw merit in excluding courts, MPs' offices and federal-provincial joint organizations.

I am not prepared to say that the parliamentary committee was wrong in making these judgments. I think it goes too far to say in a sweeping statement that Parliament and all crown agencies should be subject to the Access to Information Act.

I support a comprehensive careful review of the Access to Information Act. I will support amendments aimed at improving access to government information. I may well support extending

Private Members Business

the application of the Access to Information Act to crown agencies not yet covered by the act.

However, I cannot support a motion that fails to distinguish between various kinds of crown agencies that might make the correspondence I receive from my constituents automatically subject to the act and that is voted on without hearing from executives of the crown agencies not presently subject to the act.

The better approach is to take the Minister of Justice at his word that it is time for a review of the Access to Information Act. Let him draw upon all the expertise we can acquire and use the full parliamentary procedures, including committee hearings, to produce the best set of amendments possible.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in this very important debate on Motion No. 304. This is a motion which I believe everyone in the House should support. What better way to show Canadians that we got the message the people sent a little more than a year ago?

If we can ever say that when Canadians go to the polls they speak with one voice, it was in the results of the 1993 election. The electorate wanted fundamental changes to the way politics are conducted in this country. Canadians took great pains to ensure that a message was sent throughout the political world.

If politicians ever thought they were above the people or in some cases above the law, that election proved to be a great leveller. Now that we are here, it is important we do not breach the trust which was placed in us.

(1840)

Parliament is subject to the charter of rights and freedoms. How can Parliament and the crown agencies establishes and is a shareholder in not be subject to the Access to Information Act? A committee in the last Parliament studying the Access to Information Act likened it to the charter as one of the fundamental tenets of our society. Therefore it seems to me that if we are bound by one we should be bound by the other.

I know the Access to Information Act is used by opposition MPs and the press to dig up as much dirt as they can in order to embarrass the government during question period. The concern on the government side must be that if the access net is cast even further, that it will simply involve more work being put into question period presentations. The potential for embarrassment will simply be enlarged. That could happen.

Is the answer not simply to ensure there is no potential for embarrassing matters to be brought to light under the access procedure by assuring that crown corporations are run in a sound and efficient manner? The answer is not to limit the application of the Access to Information Act but to ensure MPs and crown

corporations act in a responsible manner with taxpayers' dollars.

We are here to exercise a trust. That trust has been placed in us by the people of Canada. We are to be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. The money collected by Revenue Canada is not our money to do with as we please; it belongs to the people of Canada. If we keep this in mind every time we do something on this hill or in our constituency offices, then we have nothing to fear from the Access to Information Act. We have everything to gain.

Suppose that tomorrow we all became subject to the act, then weeks go by without any stories in the press about mismanagement of public moneys or about trips being taken which could not be justified. Think about how that would raise the opinion of the electorate in this group it elected in 1993.

Surely the same reasoning applies to crown corporations. With them not subject to the act, there is a perception that something is going on behind closed doors. All of us have been here long enough now to have participated in in camera meetings of committees. The perception is that once the doors are closed and the sound recording is turned off, real and momentous decisions are made which affect the life of this country.

Those of us who have participated in those in camera meetings know that nothing is further from the truth. However, the perception is that we should open up the process; open up the process for both parliamentarians and crown corporations. Between us and the crown corporations billions of dollars of taxpayers' money are spent, presumably for the good of the country. If this is the case, then the public has a right to know. If it is not the case, then surely letting the public know becomes a first step along the road to cleaning up waste and mismanagement.

The rule of law is the foundation upon which our system of government is built. It was established hundreds of years ago in Great Britain during the reign of the Stuart kings that no one, not even the crown, is above the law. This is the cornerstone of the rule of law. We are all equal under the law and no one is above the law. We are equal in that the law applies to every one of us in the same way. Be we rich or poor, white or black, it applies equally.

Again, no one is above the law. No matter how high you have scaled the corporate ladder, no matter which political office you occupy either federally or municipally, when you look up, the law of the country is still above you.

If these beliefs are true, and we all know they are, then how can we work here knowing that a law which is designed to open certain parts of government to public scrutiny does not apply to us and to the crown corporations? I do not believe we can justify this situation. We must act to ensure that laws such as the Access to Information Act apply equally to all, including politicians.

Private Members Business

This will send an important message back to the electorate. It will show that we have learned from the mistakes of the past. We have learned to listen to the people of Canada and act upon what we have heard.

We have a message and the message is loud and clear: We are to be frugal stewards with taxpayers' money. We are not to receive anything more in the way of benefits than the ordinary taxpayer. And we are not ever to assume that we are above the law.

Parliament must act and let the sun shine in. It must act in a positive way to tell Canadians it has nothing to hide. We have been good in this Parliament in this regard. We have opened up to scrutiny the meetings of the Board of Internal Economy which would have been unthinkable in years gone by. It is important that we send out the message that we are open to scrutiny ourselves. If we have nothing to hide then why put up barriers? If there is something to hide then we and the crown corporations are not acting in the best interest of the taxpayers. This deserves to be exposed.

I urge all members from all parties to support the motion. The end result will be a strong message sent to the government to amend the Access to Information Act. It will then be up to the government to show that it still stands behind the promise of openness it made in the last election.

I seem to remember the Liberals promised openness and fair play in that red book they keep talking about. They promised openness and fair play to the Canadian people. Passage today of motion 304 will help to do this.

We on this side of the House will be waiting and watching. The people of Canada will be waiting and watching. If the government does not act on this matter we can rest assured the people of Canada will act at the next election and elect a group that will let the sun shine in on Parliament and its workings.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to stand today to close the debate on M-304, a motion to extend access to information to Parliament and crown corporations.

This will demonstrate the openness of Parliament and the accountability and transparency of government. I have been very impressed with the quality of the speeches and how many people have spoken positively about the motion.

Basically four concerns have been raised which I would like to address very quickly. The first concern is that members' private business and budgets would come up for more detailed scrutiny. Mr. John Grace, the access to information commission-

er, assures me there are protections within the present act so that would not be threatened.

The second concern is that there will be changes to the Access to Information Act and that it is on the justice minister's timetable. The justice minister is extremely busy right now and I would question how soon access to information would come up.

The third concern which has been raised is that the motion did not have enough detail in it. That concern was addressed probably better in the last Parliament when a number of Liberal members said that we did not need to have all that detail. Besides, this is a motion and the details can be added.

The fourth concern mentioned was that the competitiveness of crown corporations would be affected. I would like to read this from the access commissioner to assure members that it would not be the case. It states:

It is my view that the existing exemption provisions provide the necessary protection for sensitive information in the hands of crown corporations. Sections 18 and 21 provide ample opportunity for crown corporations to provide valuable information as well as corporate strategies and plans.

Therefore I do not believe that is a concern.

Because those things are not a concern and because this is a non-partisan issue, I strongly ask that all members consider voting yes for M-304.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.49 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 93, the time provided for this debate has now expired.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(1905)

[English]

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: As is the practice, the division will be taken on a row by row basis starting with the mover and then proceeding with those in favour of the motion sitting on the same side of the House as the mover. Then those in favour of the

motion sitting on the other side of the House will be called. Those opposed to the motion will be done in the same order.

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 177)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brown (Calgary Southeast)
Caron
Cummins
Debien
Deshaies
Dumas
Epp
Forseth
Gagnon (Québec)
Gilmour
Gouk
Guay
Harper (Calgary West)
Hayes
Hoepfner
Jennings
Landry
Laurin
Lebel
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Loubier
Mayfield
Mercier
Mills (Red Deer)
Nunez
Penson
Ringma
Schmidt
Solberg
Speaker
Strahl
Tremblay (Rosemont)
White (North Vancouver)

Ablonczy
Benoit
Bhaduria
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Bélisle
Chatters
Davialt
de Savoye
Duceppe
Duncan
Fillion
Frazer
Gauthier (Roberval)
Godin
Grubel
Hanrahan
Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hermanson
Jacob
Johnston
Langlois
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)
Manning
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest)
Meredith
Morrison
Paré
Pomerleau
Rocheleau
Silye
Solomon
Stinson
Thompson
Wayne
Williams—74

NAYS

Members

Alcock
Assad
Barnes
Bodnar
Boudria
Brushett
Bélair
Calder
Clancy
Cowling
De Villers
Duhamel
English
Finestone
Fliis
Gerrard
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Hickey
Hubbard
Irwin
Knutson
Lincoln
MacAulay
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
McGuire
McTeague
Mifflin
Mitchell
Murray
Nunziata

Arseneault
Baker
Bertrand
Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden
Bélanger
Campbell
Collins
Crawford
Discepola
Eggleton
Fewchuk
Finlay
Gagliano
Godfrey
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hopkins
Ianno
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
Loney
MacDonald
Malhi
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McKinnon
McWhinney
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Murphy
Nault
O'Brien

Adjournment Debate

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Patry
Phinney
Proud
Regan
Rompkey
Skoke
Steckle
Telegdi
Torsney
Vanclief
Wappel
Whelan
Zed—93

Paradis
Peters
Pillitteri
Reed
Robichaud
Serré
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Thalheimer
Valeri
Verran
Wells
Wood

PAIRED MEMBERS

Members

Asselin
Bernier (Gaspé)
Bouchard
Caccia
Chamberlain
Chrétien (Frontenac)
Culbert
Easter
Gaffney
Harper (Churchill)
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Parrish
Picard (Drummond)
Simmons
Szabo

Bachand
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Brien
Canuel
Chan
Crête
Dalphond—Guiral
Fry
Guimond
Jackson
Marchand
Peric
Sauvageau
St-Laurent
Ur

(1915)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

BASE CLOSURES

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity to pursue a question that I asked of the minister responsible for ACOA last week.

I asked him if he would explain to the House why he cut millions of dollars from a national defence program set up to help Atlantic Canadian communities hurt by base closures.

Adjournment Debate

The Department of National Defence transferred the \$30 million program to ACOA because the regional agency is believed to be in the best position to deliver such programs in Atlantic Canada. The ACOA minister has turned around and slashed \$10 million from the program.

When I asked the minister to explain the cuts, the parliamentary secretary to the ACOA minister said that the government would take my concerns under advisement.

That is not a good enough answer for the people's whose lives will be affected by the minister's actions. Maybe the reason the minister cannot offer an explanation is that he knows there is no way to justify what he has done. He is playing with people's livelihood. Even members of his party are appalled by his antics. The hon. members for Dartmouth and Moncton, just to name a couple, are on the record in their opposition to the ACOA minister's actions.

The Minister of National Defence has said:

The \$30 million is for base closure. The \$30 million was given by defence to ACOA for base mitigation. Thirty million will be spent for base mitigation.

The money was given to ACOA in trust to help people hurt by the base closures imposed by the government. It was supposed to help hard hit towns and cities attract industry to replace lost armed forces jobs and military spending, which is known as permanent infrastructure in the communities.

The Prime Minister made a commitment to help these communities. It is not ACOA's money to take away, even if the finance minister has asked ACOA to make cuts to its own budget.

In fact an editorial in an Atlantic Canadian paper put the minister's actions in very clear light. It said: "If your father gave you \$30 for your brother, you would have no right to keep \$10 for yourself because your father also asked you to cut back on your own spending".

(1920)

The same is true of ACOA and the minister responsible for ACOA. ACOA was asked to do a task and does not have the right to redefine the terms of that task after the fact. However, it seems the minister believes he does not need to answer to anyone, at least not to the people who will suffer at his hands.

The minister has cut the ACOA board, which is supposed to represent all of Atlantic Canada, and has put the focus of the board in his own riding of Cape Breton—East Richmond, known as the Cape Breton Enterprise Board. According to reports, he has handed out over 183 projects to his riding, totalling at least \$15 million last year. He did that before he announced a change to the ACOA funding to allow for repayable loans.

The minister has refused to tell the *Saint John Telegraph Journal* the findings of a 1992 company by company job survey

for ACOA, even though the federal information commissioner ruled in the paper's favour. Perhaps the minister believes that taxpayers do not have a right to information paid for with their dollars.

I placed a question on the Order Paper about the financial assistance provided to each federal riding and Atlantic Canada by ACOA on October 4, 1994. That was 172 days ago and I have yet to receive an answer.

Does the minister responsible for ACOA believe he should be accountable to anyone? Does he believe he should be accountable to Canadian voters who are also taxpayers? If he does believe this, then he would not only explain to Atlantic Canadians why he cut \$10 million from a fund designed to help communities hurt by base closures, but he would also tell them how he plans to rectify the situation.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been a tough time and a tough budget. After 10 years of Conservative economic and fiscal management, or perhaps I should say mismanagement, these measures were long overdue.

It was a fair budget. ACOA's continued existence is a testament to this government's commitment. The bottom line nevertheless is that ACOA was cut. Of the overall \$562 million cut to regional development, ACOA was asked to absorb over 30 per cent of that, or \$173.5 million over the next three years.

Consistent with the overall reduction, the base closure adjustment fund was reduced by \$10 million, or 30 per cent. It is completely incorrect to refer to the base closure adjustment program as a trust fund. The base closure adjustment program is administered by ACOA and was thus included in the budgetary review process.

Let us remember that after reductions there still will be \$20 million available to address adjustment measures in the affected communities. ACOA will take a leadership role in working with the communities affected by base closures and by these tough but fair budget measures. ACOA will strive to maximize benefits with the remaining \$20 million. It will ensure that every effort is made to apply its full array of other program instruments to address economic development programs in these communities.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.24 p.m.)

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