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Thursday, April 6, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 6, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS IN HANSARD

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the House a remark I made in *Hansard* yesterday. I had a wrong number and I want to correct the mistake on page 11553.

I said that we are going to be spending \$9 billion on interest payments for every dollar that is cut. What I meant to say was, for the \$9 billion in cuts that were made, we will be spending about \$9 billion in interest as well. For every dollar cut, there will be an extra dollar in interest payments on the deficit.

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period I indicated that a charge had been laid in the Stoney matter. This was based on information that I had received. In fact, the charge has not been laid at this stage. It would be inappropriate for me to indicate if and when the RCMP is laying the charge. That information would better come from the RCMP itself.

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 44 petitions.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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 present the 72nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of standing committees.

[*Translation*]

With leave of the House, I intend to move for concurrence in the 72nd report later this day.

* * *

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT ACT

Hon. Herb Gray (for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-82, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mint Act.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 72nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present two petitions from constituents in my riding of Comox—Alberni.

The first petition contains 607 signatures and deals with section 241 of the Criminal Code. Section 241 makes aiding, abetting or counselling a person to commit suicide an indictable

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offence. The petitioners request that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way and to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993 to disallow assisted suicide euthanasia.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition containing 303 signatures, the petitioners request that Parliament hold a national binding referendum on capital punishment.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour on behalf of some constituents of the Vegreville constituency to table a petition in the House today. The 26 petitioners are requesting Parliament to continue to give the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly powers in marketing wheat and barley for export.

THE DEFICIT

Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville, Ind. Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am presenting a petition signed by petitioners in the Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville area. These petitioners call on Parliament to reduce the deficit by cutting wastage and reducing the overall expense of every government department by at least 5 per cent.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have a petition signed by more than 400 constituents in a very rural and remote area on the westerly side of Miramichi. They feel they are being discriminated against by the Unemployment Insurance Act.

(1015)

They petition Parliament to reform the UI boundaries, which affect their remote and isolated communities in a negative way. They believe they are not being treated fairly under that commission.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present a number of petitions from constituents in my riding who have concerns about the present firearms legislation.

These constituents call on the government to support laws that will severely punish violent criminals, which of course the minister has, but to also support legislation that will repeal and modify existing gun control laws, which have not improved public safety or have not proven to be cost effective.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I too would like to present petitions. One is from the constituents of Beaver River, Redwater, Thorhild, Radway, and the Waskatenau area, who are calling upon Parliament to be very careful about the Canadian Human Rights Act, to make sure there is not the inclusion of sexual orientation.

They are saying that because the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act would provide certain groups with special status, rights and privileges and that they would be granted solely on the basis of sexual behaviour, that inclusion would infringe on the historic rights of Canadians, such as the freedom of religion, conscience, expression and association.

These people are humbly calling upon Parliament to oppose any amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that provide for the inclusion of the phrase "sexual orientation".

I present those with pride as the member for Beaver River.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present in the House today four petitions from my riding.

The first petition deals with a request for the Government of Canada not to amend the Human Rights Act to include the undefined phrase "sexual orientation". Refusing to define this statement leaves interpretation open to the courts, a very dangerous precedent to set. Parliament has a responsibility to Canadians to ensure that legislation cannot be misinterpreted.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of Bill C-68, the gun control bill. The petitioners believe the target for all gun control laws in the Criminal Code of Canada must be the criminals who are a danger to the public safety, not law-abiding, responsible firearm owners.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is on the subject of child care. The petitioners believe current federal government child care policies are intrusive and discriminate against many families. They believe parents should have the freedom to make the choices about what type of child care is best for their families.

The petitioners request Parliament to oppose any legislation that will increase child care expenditures.

JUSTICE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is on the subject of drinking and violence. The petitioners were shocked by the recent Supreme Court decision, and

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they believe all individuals must be held fully responsible for their actions, even while under the influence of alcohol.

I concur with these petitions.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition signed by over 800 people in my riding of Red Deer. The citizens express their concern that they are already overburdened with taxation due to high government spending. Therefore, the petitioners humbly pray and request that Parliament reduce government spending instead of increasing taxes and implement a taxpayer protection act to limit federal spending.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I did not want to take too much time. We do have 15 minutes. I have a couple of other petitions. One is on the Young Offenders Act, signed by a number of people from St. Paul, Saddle Lake, St. Vincent, and a number of other places across Beaver River. They want an act that is serious enough to deter young people from committing crimes and tough enough to provide real justice.

The Young Offenders Act in its current form is not meeting the objectives. These people are calling upon Parliament to make sure we have a really forceful Young Offenders Act, in addition to the Criminal Code.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition on CBC programming. The petitioners are concerned about Canadian broadcasting, that the CBC is playing programs like "Kids in the Hall". They do not fulfil CBC's mandate. These people are concerned about this particular program, as well as others. They are saying that these kinds of incidents in programs are becoming more and more frequent.

They are asking Parliament to enact legislation that would provide very specific standards of acceptable conduct and content for CBC television programs.

JUSTICE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36. The petitioners point out that many violent offenders and sex offenders are being paroled prematurely or are being released without proper treatment and rehabilitation. They believe that those people convicted of dangerous and sexual offences ought to remain incarcerated until they have successfully undergone treatment and can demonstrate unequivocally that they have been completely rehabilitated. They are asking that the government take whatever steps are necessary to assure this.

(1020)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 102.

[Text]

Question No. 102—**Mr. Breitzkreuz:**

For each federal riding, what has been the total amount of financial assistance provided by the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec from October 25, 1993, to date?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Contributions approved under the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec programming for the period October 25, 1993 to November 1, 1994 inclusively are listed on the following chart.

It does not include any contributions made under the federal—provincial—municipal infrastructure works program and the industrial and tourism agreements, which fall under the purview of other federal departments.

Riding (1988 electoral map)	Approved Contribution
Abitibi	\$4,055,188
Ahuntsic	\$3,167,000
Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies	\$3,660,737
Argenteuil—Papineau	\$977,632
Beauce	\$721,055
Beauharnois—Salaberry	\$99,375
Bellechasse	\$906,120
Berthier—Montcalm	\$2,484,270
Blainville—Deux-Montagnes	\$950,401
Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	\$1,138,175
Bourassa	\$22,000
Brome—Missisquoi	\$257,300
Chambly	\$436,250
Champlain	\$1,974,272
Gatineau—La Lièvre	\$530,225
Charlesbourg	\$247,705
Charlevoix	\$2,239,092
Châteauguay	\$447,940
Chicoutimi	\$5,408,048
Drummond	\$2,611,213
Laval Est	\$60,000
Frontenac	\$864,855
Gaspé	\$1,162,520
Hochelaga—Maisonnette	\$5,866,235
Hull—Aylmer	\$285,775
Joliette	\$87,500
Jonquière	\$128,185
Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	\$1,956,121
Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis	\$1,232,040
Lac-Saint-Jean	\$165,792
Québec	\$136,100
La Prairie	\$174,520
Lasalle-Émard	\$1,126,600

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Riding (1988 electoral map)	Approved Contribution
Laurentides	\$862,940
Laurier—Sainte-Marie	\$2,957,600
Laval Ouest	\$60,150
Laval Centre	\$1,263,712
Lévis	\$152,350
Longueuil	\$486,980
Lotbinière	\$910,360
Louis-Hébert	\$468,180
Manicouagan	\$699,062
Matapédia—Matane	\$627,220
Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead	\$516,930
Mercier	\$1,604,500
Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans	\$1,656,970
Mont-Royal	\$481,305
Notre-Dame-de-Grâce	\$901,150
Outremont	\$4,436,412
Papineau—Saint-Michel	\$25,000
Pierrefonds—Dollard	\$19,500
Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle	\$3,463,140
Portneuf	\$1,001,079
Québec-Est	\$471,879
Richelieu	\$1,916,210
Richmond—Wolfe	\$1,203,610
Rimouski—Témiscouata	\$385,675
Roberval	\$2,493,361
Rosemont	\$55,999
Saint-Denis	\$2,028,800
Saint-Henri—Westmount	\$6,059,916
Saint-Hubert	\$128,000
Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	\$232,850
Saint-Jean	\$849,750
Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	\$2,963,283
Saint-Léonard	\$357,700
Saint-Maurice	\$5,995,460
Shefford	\$736,325
Sherbrooke	\$6,102,590
Témiscamingue	\$488,734
Terrebonne	\$123,325
Trois-Rivières	\$7,095,040
Vaudreuil	\$1,136,500
Verchères	289,904
Verdun—Saint-Paul	75,186
	<hr/>
	\$109,363,878

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to popular demand, if Question Nos. 83 and 91, one standing in the name of the hon. member for Saint John, who has been protesting the delay in getting the answer, could be made Orders for Returns, I would be pleased to table those returns immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 83—**Mr. Cummins:**

With respect to the Early Stuart and Early Summer sockeye migrations and the Steveston Field Unit of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and each of the other such Field Units on the Fraser River system and the area covered by each such unit, for the years 1993 and 1994, (a) what were the staffing levels at each such unit and what were the staffing levels during weekends and statutory holidays during these migrations, (b) did staffing levels allow staff to be on the fishing grounds to conduct complete pre-fishing opening and post fishery clean-up patrols, (c) did staffing levels allow for pro-active patrols on a regular basis and full coverage of the native fishery during the open times, (d) what level of fishing occurred prior to the opening and the closing of the fishery, (e) what was the nature of the monitoring of the mandatory landing sites, were the mandatory landing sites monitored at all times during fishery openings on a regular basis, were there occasions when fishermen desired to land fish at a site but there were no monitored landing sites available, (f) did the monitors at the landing sites count the fish as stipulated in the Aboriginal Fisheries Agreements, (g) what was the level of catch monitoring and enforcement for Ceremonial Licences, (h) what was the level of night fishing and the level and consistency of the monitoring of such fishing and (i) what was the number of persons charged with infractions of fisheries regulations?

Return tabled.

Question No. 91—**Mrs. Wayne:**

For each federal riding, what has been the total amount of financial assistance provided by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency from November 4, 1993 to date?

Return tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 1995

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 1995, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, in addressing the issue of the budget, I would like to address it with specific reference to fish. I know that hon. members will be relieved to hear that the issue of fish in the budget will be addressed this morning.

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Spending on fish will decline appreciably over the next three years. In fact, it will decline by \$211 million in the next budget.

Our party believes that government spending is out of control and that serious cuts should be made. That being said, our party recognizes that there are certain responsibilities the government has, including a constitutional responsibility to manage Canada's fisheries resource in a responsible and reasonable manner.

We should not simply go into the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and willy-nilly cut the budget. We have to do it with great care and caution to ensure that this valuable resource, a resource that could in fact be the engine of the economy on both coasts of our country, is protected.

To begin with, I would like to look at a couple of points in the budget and discuss the impact they will have on the fisheries.

The budget indicates that the government will negotiate with the provinces to transfer authorities for freshwater habitat management and other related inland responsibilities. In other words, the government's objective is to transfer its constitutional responsibility for the inland fisheries resource to the provinces. At the outset, that may seem like a reasonable objective. The fact of the matter is, it denies a very critical problem in the country, that is, the difficulty that is faced by many resource-based communities in our country, communities where the resource extraction may be seasonal, where populations are growing, and where transportation routes are very difficult. That is a problem that we must address as a nation. It is a problem that exists not only in the more remote northern regions of the prairie provinces, but it is also a problem that is becoming more and more evident in the province of Newfoundland, for example.

Last spring, in the standing committee hearings on problems in Newfoundland, the same types of social problems that we have heard about for years, which are occurring and have occurred in the northern communities, in prairie provinces and in the territories, are appearing now in Newfoundland because of the loss of a very valuable fisheries resource.

(1025)

The federal government, in trying to sidestep its responsibilities in this area, will help no one.

Another issue in the budget states: "to integrate the operations and fleet of the Canadian Coast Guard with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in order to increase efficiency". We are all for increasing efficiency. The issue that must be determined is if we downsize both fleets and use one smaller fleet to cover both objectives, what will be the priority of that fleet? If the priority is maintaining navigation aids when there is an ongoing fishery, what happens to the enforcement in the fisheries resource? By the same token, if the coast guard vessels are going

to be diverted to the fishery, what happens to the aids to navigation?

We have to look at combining these two operations, but we must make sure that our priorities and responsibilities are maintained. Simply cutting back on the number of vessels and personnel available is not going to do the job.

This government fell down badly on this point in this past salmon season. In the past the coast guard was given the authority on the west coast to enforce fishery law. This did not happen in the 1994 season.

One instance was reported to me where a coast guard vessel was returning from an operational patrol of Vancouver Island. It was called to the Tsawwassen ferry terminal by the B.C. Ferry Corporation because of illegal fishing activity by Americans in Canadian waters. When the coast guard vessel arrived it did not have the authority to arrest those vessels. All it could do was advise them to leave Canadian waters. They tried to contact the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but no one was available. At that hour of the day the offices were closed and the only contact they had was with a fisheries officer far up river who said: "I'm monitoring a fishery up here, there is nothing I can do".

We must make sure that our priorities are clearly established if we are going to follow the route the government proposes.

There is a proposal to rationalize commercial fishing harbours, including implementing higher fees for use. I have nothing against paying our own way. My party strongly supports that principle. The last thing we want to do is impose fees on people when they are on their knees. That is the case on both coasts. It is an inappropriate time to increase taxes on the fishing industry when it is hardly able to make a living.

Much of the responsibility for that falls not only on this government, of course, but on previous governments.

The government also seeks to enter into partnerships with the fishing industry and others in the management of capacity, licensing and compliance, and it says it looks to industry to pay more for access privileges, contribute toward the cost of managing the fishery and pay higher fees for services. Again, this comes at a time when mismanagement by the federal government has seriously weakened the ability of the fishing industry to pay, not only on the east coast but also on the west coast.

The collapse of the fishery in 1994 was the direct responsibility and directly attributable to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. It was a devastation, the effect of which will take probably 12 years from which to recover on the west coast for that cycle of fish. Yet we are expecting fishermen to pay higher licensing fees when it will be very difficult for them to maintain payments on their boats, let alone absorb higher licensing fees.

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The same can be said, of course, for the problems on the east coast.

The cut of \$211 million from the budget of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is something that must be done very carefully, as I suggested earlier.

(1030)

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has experienced serious budget cuts over the last two or three years. The effects of those cuts, particularly on the west coast, have been dramatic.

I want to quote the concerns expressed by fisheries officers to the minister on November 2, 1994. The fisheries officers were pointing out the difficulties they have experienced because of budget cuts. They suggested that budget allocations did not provide for the successful delivery of programs and untrained staff members were not able to carry out enforcement controls. The monitoring of the catch was affected and so on.

Three months before the opening of the 1994 fishery season, senior fisheries officials on the west coast were warning of a disaster if the level of enforcement was further downgraded. I will quote from a report by R.K. Carson, area manager, Fraser River division. He says:

The impact of a further—cut will have significant ramifications on the success of the implementation of the AFS agreements along the Fraser River. The reduced level of fishery officers and fishery guardians—will result in non-compliance with terms and conditions of agreements, licences, regulations and loss of control of this fishery. The resource will suffer and we could have another repeat of the 'missing sockeye' problems that occurred in the 1992 season.

That is exactly what happened.

In a report by D. Aurel, chief, conservation and protection, New Westminster, it was noted as well that budget cuts would reduce the free trade officer's allotment in the fisheries. He points out that:

—a 1993 investigation into the illegal export of two million pounds of chum salmon has resulted in 15 charges pending against one fish processing company. These types of serious FTA violations cannot be investigated by one officer alone.

The list goes on. However, when we cut in a department like fisheries we must do it with care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak this morning to the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. This debate on Bill C-76, on provisions to implement certain changes in the 1995-96 Budget that will affect transfers to the provinces, concerns all Canadians and Quebecers.

I would like to start with a short summary of the major changes introduced by the 1995-96 Budget, after which, as the official opposition's representative for seniors organizations, I

will try to show what the federal government has in mind with its plan to reduce old age pensions in 1997.

Transfers to the provinces are not changed by the 1995-96 budget. Today, there are three main transfer programs: Established Programs Financing, \$21.73 billion; equalization, \$8.87 billion; and the Canada Assistance Plan, \$7.95 billion. The federal budget did not make any changes in the equalization program but it has extended the ceiling provision for equalization for a period of five years.

Section 48 in Bill C-76 will deprive Quebec of \$650 million in 1996-97. Bill C-76 proposes new national standards for health care and provides for establishing new national standards for social assistance and post-secondary education. This new federalism does not decentralize at all. These national standards will restrict the autonomy of the provinces in their own jurisdictions.

The government is trying to minimize the significance of these cuts, although they are in fact devastating for the provincial governments, especially for Quebec. The government includes tax point transfers in its figures on cuts in transfer payments to the provinces. The federal government has no control over tax transfers paid to the provinces under its main transfer programs.

(1035)

In fact, all financial transfers, cash transfers paid to the Government of Quebec, will be reduced by 32 per cent between 1994-95 and 1997-98, as a result of cuts in transfers to the provinces.

A sovereign Quebec would lose federal transfer payments but recover the \$30 billion in taxes Quebecers are now paying to the federal government.

The latest budget cuts implemented by Bill C-76 will hit the most vulnerable in our society. The Quebec Minister of Finance estimates that these cuts and transfers to the provinces will reduce the federal contribution to social programs funding from 37.8 per cent to 28.5 per cent between 1994-95 and 1997-98. The federal government is intervening in areas that are under provincial jurisdiction and may make additional cuts in the cash portion of transfers to the provinces.

As the official opposition's representative for seniors organizations, I am very concerned about the old age pension reform announced by the government, which will become effective in 1997. In 1994, they said a document would be tabled very shortly, but the government has delayed production of this document, preferring to wait until after the referendum in Quebec.

In fact the government announced that the most disadvantaged seniors will not lose any protection. This means that the pensions of those defined as having high incomes will be reduced and that the reductions in their pensions will not go to raising the pensions of low income seniors, who have only the

assurance that their pensions will not be cut. So, some will have their benefits reduced and no one will receive an increase.

Another important point has to do with family income determining pension eligibility. This measure is unacceptable, since women have fought for financial independence for decades.

It is not a new measure. The government was preparing similar changes to the unemployment insurance plan as part of the social program reform. Given women's general opposition to the idea, the Liberal majority on the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development did not recommend linking benefit levels to family income levels. This is in the report by the committee on social program reform.

It is noteworthy that old age pensions have already been reduced for seniors with an income over \$53,000. The Liberals decided, in the last budget, to reduce the tax credit for seniors with an income over \$25,000. The federal government is continuing to go after the incomes of seniors, particularly those in the middle class.

Old age pensions are a major source of revenue for seniors. Federal government documents indicate that old age security and guaranteed income supplements accounted for 28.9 per cent of the income of single men; 41.3 per cent of the income of single women and 25.9 per cent of the income of couples, in 1989.

The government announced a review of the Canada pension plan, the CPP, for the fall. The federal and provincial finance ministers are scheduled to meet as part of the five-year review of the Canada pension plan. They will use this opportunity to claim that a review of old age pensions is mandatory.

(1040)

The federal government does not have to change the old age pension system unless, that is, it wants to cut the budget at the expense of seniors.

Quebec seniors had the opportunity to state their opinions on their future at hearings of the seniors' commission on the future of Quebec. The chairperson of the committee was a minister in the former Conservative government, Monique Vézina. This consultation has shown that seniors across the country have similar concerns, mostly about their social and economic situation.

Quebec is going through a difficult economic period. Some of the witnesses at the hearings told of the problems they are having with unemployment or poverty because of the constant threat of cuts to social programs and the health care system.

Representatives of the Quebec Federation of Senior Citizens (QFSC) told the commission that their organizations were fighting the four main problems affecting seniors: the feeling of uselessness, inactivity, insecurity and isolation. Almost every-

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where people are lobbying for society to guarantee seniors their rightful place. Seniors want nothing more than to use their experience for the good of the society they will leave behind for their grandchildren. It is clear that the universality of old age pensions should not be tampered with.

Lucien Bouchard, the Leader of the Official Opposition, recently shared with Quebecers his party's reaction to the federal government's position on pensioners. He said:

After hitting pensioners with annual incomes of more than \$26,000 with a tax last year, the federal government has continued to go after them. The Minister of Finance has made it very clear that the universality of old age pensions is definitely a thing of the past, since in the future, pension benefits will be based on combined family income, and this will result in the loss of financial independence for thousands of women. By waiting until after the referendum to cut into social security, the federal Liberals are hiding the negative ramifications of their cuts from Quebecers. Be assured, Mr. Speaker, that the Bloc Québécois will do its utmost to prevent the government from making the needed spending cuts at the expense of seniors, the unemployed and people who are most in need of health care, post-secondary education and social assistance.

The federal government should cut \$2.85 billion more from the Department of National Defence's budget for the next three years instead of looking to seniors' programs next autumn to reduce its deficit.

You can be sure, Mr. Speaker, that, as the official opposition critic for seniors' issues, I pledge to fight any proposal the federal government might make to reduce its deficit at the expense of seniors.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot tabled in this House an amendment that I am happy to support.

Bill C-76 is inconsistent and the Minister of Finance should go back to the drawing board and introduce in this Chamber a bill that truly reflects what Canadians want, which is to see more fairness in the government's handling of its fiscal responsibilities.

The absence, or in some cases, the weakness of certain measures in this bill are of particular concern to me. I would like to speak about two of them. First of all, there is the government's science and technology strategy. In his last report, the auditor general deplored the lack of a government strategy with respect to science and technology. He stressed the importance of such a strategy, in light of the liberalization of trade and the new technological era we would be entering in the 21st century.

(1045)

The government must demonstrate strong leadership in this area, so that Canada can continue to develop technologically and to maintain its competitiveness on international markets. The standard of living of Canadians and Quebecers depends on it. There must be some sign of this leadership in the government's budget. It is the cornerstone of any strategy to put Canadians back to work. Unfortunately, there is not a trace in this budget of any strategic planning with regard to research, science and

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technology. Worse yet, the cuts are in the areas of highest performance.

I will give some examples of cuts in the funds made available to granting councils. The minister told us in his 1994 budget that he would not touch the money set aside for granting councils, because of the importance the federal government attached to research and development activities. But now, in a complete about-face, the Minister of Finance is cutting the councils' funding by more than 10 per cent, despite what he announced in the 1994 budget.

In order to better understand the impact of such a decision, let us look at Canada's situation with respect to science and technology. Canada ranks sixth among the G-7 countries, just above Italy, when the size of its budget is considered as a percentage of the gross domestic product. On the other hand, according to the relevant trade journals, given the quality and use of research and the size of its population, Canada ranks second among the G-7 countries, after the United States.

This situation is primarily due to the fact that granting councils award funds to our universities and industries on the basis of merit. And yet, in his report, the auditor general has pointed out the sorry state of our science and technology strategy for the last thirty years. This is not a recent development. For thirty years now the auditor general has criticized this lack of strategy. He recommends that the government focus mainly on the most successful research activities which, in our case, are those financed by granting councils.

It is important to point out that most of the stakeholders consulted by the government, that is, the experts who testified during the consultations held on this issue, stressed that the budgets of granting councils should be maintained. These highly qualified consultants said that if research budgets had to be cut, the government should at least keep at the same level the funds allocated to the granting councils, given the effectiveness and quality of the research projects they accept, and cut elsewhere in the budget.

The government ignored these consultants' recommendations. Not only did it cut the budgets of granting councils and the research budgets of all government departments and agencies, but it has the nerve to continue giving \$1 billion in R&D tax incentives to business, arguing that the consultation process is still under way. This clearly shows, once again, that government is holding consultations just for show and to smooth the way for the blind cuts it intends to implement in its budget.

This is not a consultation process, my dear colleagues across the way. This is a case of manipulating public opinion, which really shows this government's deep contempt for the Canadian population. I also want to talk about the inequities in federal

spending. The Bloc Québécois has always deplored the federal government's flagrant inequity in its R&D spending.

(1050)

In 1990-91, Ontario received a 53 per cent share of federal spending, while Quebec received only a 19.5 per cent share.

The government figures I received this morning show that, since 1985-86, if we exclude the National Capital Region, Ontario has received about 22 per cent or 23 per cent of all federal science and technology research funds every year, while Quebec receives only 17 per cent. If we include the National Capital Region, we realize that Ontario has received 27.9 per cent, almost 30 per cent, every year since 1985-86, while Quebec receives only 3.1 per cent. That is government equity for you.

If we compare what the federal government spends on natural sciences in Ontario and Quebec, we see that Ontario gets between 24 per cent and 26 per cent of federal spending each and every year, while Quebec's share, if we exclude the National Capital Region, is 19.9 per cent. There is still a 6 per cent difference.

Now, if we look at what has been done in the National Capital Region in terms of natural sciences research, the Ontario side of the NCR gets 26.6 per cent while the Quebec side receives 1 per cent.

It does not take a PhD to figure out that 26 less 1 equals a 25 per cent difference. That is what the government calls budget equity.

Mr. Nunez: It is inequitable.

Mr. Laurin: The quality of Quebec's industrial structure cannot justify the low level of federal investment in research and development. Especially since Quebec runs off with more than 30 per cent of grants awarded on merit, which clearly shows Quebec's competitiveness. When our projects are assessed on their merits, we qualify for 30 per cent of the grants, but when the award is motivated by favouritism, Quebec is always out-pointed by Ontario, the other most powerful province.

Some hon. members: Patronage.

Mr. Laurin: Such an imbalance maintains provincial disparity in research and development funding. And the statistics are not mine, but the government's own. This imbalance has a direct impact on the provinces' rate of growth. In other words, this harmful policy has been operating for years. With this policy, some provinces get R and D funding, while others, like Quebec, get UI funds.

And it goes on and on, year after year, and the government keeps doing nothing about it. We have been denouncing this kind of thing for 15 years now.

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Certainly cuts could have been made in other areas. Let me set aside my prepared speech to give you statistics I just received this morning.

Where could more cuts have been made? We, Bloc members, often suggested National Defence. In DND estimates, astronomical amounts could have been saved in forecasting errors alone. For example, \$2.8 billion are supposed to be cut over the next three years. Our estimation was that \$5 billion could be cut, but DND said this was impossible. The fact is that these forecasts were wrong, and here is why.

Take the closure of the base in Portage la Prairie for example. Savings of \$411 million were expected, when in actual fact only \$170 million was saved. A \$241 million shortfall.

With respect to space training, we were told that the cost of basic training was \$200,000 per student, when the actual cost is \$700,000, or \$500,000 more per student. They make this kind of forecasting errors and come and tell us that they will be able to save \$2.8 billion. We cannot be sure of that, Mr. Speaker. There will be more unforeseen deficits.

Improving housekeeping in DND and several other departments would be one way of making funds available for research, research being the seed of successful new products that would promote rapid growth.

We will have a chance to pursue this at a later time.

(1055)

For now, I suggest that these new statistics should give both the department and the government food for thought. The minister should go back to his drawing board, his operation table, his computations and come back with another set of estimates. This way, perhaps we will be able to see more eye to eye with the government in a few months.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-76, the budget implementation act.

My Reform colleagues have already addressed the various components of the bill. I would like to broaden the focus and look at the budget as a whole. I want to go through the Liberal government's what I call smoke and mirrors show or budget and show Canadians exactly what was cut in the budget and where it was cut.

Members of the government are misleading the people of Canada in several very important aspects. They are being dishonest in selling the budget. To date they have got away with it. Unfortunately Canadians have not recognized what has happened.

Today I will expose two blatant mistruths I believe are in the Liberal budget and have not been clearly defined to Canadians.

Canadians have been led to believe this was a tough budget which cut spending some \$25 billion and that provinces got off easy relative to the cuts the government made in its own backyard.

Reform announced its plan to balance the budget by 1998. We told Canadians in order to do this we would have to reduce spending by some \$25 billion, \$15 billion of which would come from social program spending.

What was the Liberal reaction to this? The Prime Minister said such a plan would throw Canadians into a deep recession or perhaps a depression. The finance minister called it fiscal savagery and said our plan would gut the nation's social programs. The Minister of Human Resources Development said we would be blow torching the poor.

One week later the Liberals released their budget. On page 65 it says expenditure reductions due specifically to the actions in the budget total \$4.1 billion in 1995-96, \$9.3 billion in 1996-97 and \$11.9 billion in 1997-98. In other words, \$25.3 billion would be in spending cuts.

Clearly there is some double talk. When Reform proposes \$25 billion in fiscal spending cuts it is fiscal savagery which will hurl the country into depression and throw widows and orphans out on the streets. When the government makes the same proposal it is acting in the best interest of Canadians. It is acting in the best interest of the country. It is being tough but it is being fair. Cutting the deficit is said to increase economic growth in the long run.

The government is not completely hypocritical when it is doing this. It does not actually cut \$25.3 billion. It wants the financial markets to believe this, especially Moody's which is still trying to decide whether to downgrade Canada's credit rating.

The truth is these are \$25 billion in what I call make believe cuts. They are cuts to money that was never spent and will not be spent. The Liberal budget makes real spending cuts of only \$15 billion. This explains why Reform Party's \$25 billion in cuts in the taxpayers' budget will eliminate the deficit in three years and why the Liberal budget will leave us with \$24 billion of deficit. Clearly the budget was not as tough as the government would have us believe it was.

(1100)

The second mistruth is that government cuts in its own backyard first and does not offload its deficit problems on to the provinces. Is that true or not? Let us look at it.

It says this on page 65 of the Budget Plan:

The expenditure cuts fall primarily on federal government operations, rather than transfers to provinces or to households—demonstrating that the government's priority has been to get its own house in order first.

Let us look at that statement. Is this true? Do the provinces get off lightly in comparison to other cuts in the budget? The answer

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is no and I would like to explain why. Let us look at how much was really cut from the provincial transfers.

On page 51 of the Budget Plan, it shows total transfers falling from \$37 billion in 1994–95 to some \$34 billion in 1997–98, for a reduction of approximately 4 per cent. This is less than cuts to other areas of spending, which are reduced by some 7 or 8 per cent.

What is hidden in these numbers is the fact that tax point transfers were included in the calculation of the value of the transfer. This is completely misleading to Canadians and is a misleading statement in the budget.

These tax points were given to provinces in 1977. In that year, the measure affected the budgetary position by creating a one-time reduction in revenues. Since that time, these tax points have not added one cent to the annual deficit. They ceased being a budgetary item.

If one looks at the 1994 budget, one will not see any mention of tax points. Indeed, one will not see them in any other budget since 1977. They were included this year solely to confuse Canadians so that they would not realize the magnitude of the cuts that were being made.

Since we have peeled off this tax point veneer, what lies underneath? What is the real truth? Total cash transfers to provinces, which include payments for equalization, health, post-secondary education and welfare will be reduced from \$25 billion in 1994–95 to \$20 billion in 1997–98.

This is a reduction of \$5 billion or 20 per cent. Compare this to cuts being made in two other major areas of spending. The \$38 billion in transfers to persons were virtually untouched being reduced by only \$500 million, a minor amount.

The \$52 billion in departmental spending, which fell under what is called government's program review, will be reduced by a little less than \$10 billion or 18 per cent. Clearly the provinces did not get off easy in the budget. They were the biggest victims of the budgetary cuts. They took the major hit.

What is even more amazing is how much was cut specifically from health, education and welfare, the three programs that have been folded into what is now called Canada health and social transfer. Cash transfers for these three programs will fall from \$17 billion this year to \$10 billion in 1997–98. There will be a reduction of some \$7 billion. This represents a major reduction, a 40 per cent reduction in federal cash transfers for health, education and welfare.

Can members imagine what the Liberal opposition would say about a Reform government if it attempted to slash medicare by 40 per cent? This is what the Liberals have done and nobody has picked up on it. The Liberals will still paint the Reformers as fiscal savages. They should look at the brush themselves.

(1105)

In closing, let me clarify the purpose of my remarks. My intention is not to say that deep spending cuts were inappropriate. To the contrary, the government's budget did not go far enough. There will still be a \$25 billion deficit when this party leaves office. In other words, more remains to be done.

It is my sincere hope that once Canadians get beyond the government's smoke and mirrors, we will be able to begin a very serious dialogue with regard to fiscal policy. I hope over the next two to three years people will look at our taxpayers' budget and at the Liberal's budget and debate the strengths and weaknesses of both.

If that can be accomplished, if we can elevate the national debate, the country will be much better off.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to discuss Bill C-76, which seeks to implement the 1995–96 budget, as well as the amendment tabled on March 30 by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, an amendment which I support.

The amendment proposes that the bill be read a second time only in six months. In other words, it asks the Minister of Finance to go back to the drawing board, because this is the worse possible budget for poor and ordinary people. However, it is an excellent budget for rich people, banks and major corporations.

I already had the opportunity to denounce this budget, which is tough for the provinces, particularly Quebec, as well as for workers, immigrants and refugees, public servants and poor people.

This budget provides no measures to stimulate employment or economic growth. Its main objective is to cut everywhere, particularly in social programs, unemployment insurance and international assistance. It only targets the poor. This so-called Liberal government is in fact the most conservative government in Canada's history.

Both the government and the Liberal Party are making a sharp turn to the right. This is incredible. For example, over the next three years, the government will reduce by \$307 million the money allocated to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Yet, social housing is in great need, both in Quebec and in Canada, and particularly in my riding of Bourassa, in Montréal-Nord, where many welfare recipients live and where there is a shortage of such units for them.

I want to briefly comment on the report which was just released by the National Council of Welfare. According to that document, 20.7 per cent of Quebecers live in poverty. Between 1992 and 1993, the number of people living in poverty increased everywhere in Canada. At the national level, the percentage of those living in poverty went up from 16.1 per cent, in 1992, to

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17.4 per cent, in 1993. This is a dramatic increase in just one year.

More importantly, child poverty reached a 14-year high by climbing up to 20.8 per cent. In 1993, there were 1,415,000 poor children in Canada. These children are poor because their parents are poor. And the parents are poor because there are not enough jobs in this country. Generally speaking, women are poorer than men. This is shameful.

(1110)

[*English*]

Nearly half a million more Canadians became poor in 1993. The number of poor grew to nearly 4.8 million Canadians, from 4.3 million the previous year. Half a million more poor people in Canada. It is a tragic situation.

[*Translation*]

This is shocking. The government should analyse this report carefully and act on it. I ask the government to table a plan to fight poverty in Canada, and I hope more members will express their outrage about this situation: one half million new poor.

Significantly, 50 per cent of these people are working poor. In other words, they are forced to accept unusually low wages. In fact, the minimum wage is a scandal, both federally and provincially.

Although Alberta is one of the richest provinces, it has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada: \$5 an hour. Our colleagues opposite often say we live in Canada, the best country in the world. I think that with these figures, Canada is hardly the wonderful country they say it is.

I said that this government and the Liberal Party are leaning increasingly to the right. A few days ago, we saw the passage of back-to-work legislation in the form of Bill C-77, introduced by the new Minister of Labour, legislation that is a direct attack on the unions and denies them the right to strike, just because the government wants to privatize CN and get even more money for the Treasury.

With this legislation, the government is trying to break the unions and federal employees as well, who are very disturbed about the loss of 45,000 jobs. The government is attacking social programs and the unemployed, instead of attacking unemployment.

On the other hand, the government refuses to pass anti-scab legislation as requested by the unions. Especially in Quebec, where Ogilvie, for instance, whose employees have been on strike for months and months, continues to operate because it hires scabs. Once again, I want to ask the government to introduce anti-scab legislation.

At the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and I happen to be the official opposition critic on this matter, in 1995-96, according to the budget, spending will total \$592.7 million and the department will have the equivalent of 4,645 full-time employees, including 260 in Canadian missions abroad.

It is outrageous, and I mentioned this before in the House, that more than 50 per cent of the department's budget will be self-financing, in other words, about \$300 million will come from user fees, especially the new tax on immigration. I think the minister is trying to run his department like a private company. Today it is self-financing, and later he will probably want to make a profit as well.

There have been cuts at the IRB, cuts totalling around \$500.7 million. From now on, cases will be heard by only one commissioner, not two. The number of commissioners will be reduced from 175 to 112.

(1115)

I would like to use the two minutes I have left to say a few words about international aid.

I condemn most vigorously the cuts made in international assistance. This country, which used to have a genuine concern for the problems and well-being of poor countries is no longer the Canada I knew a number of years ago. There have been horrendous cuts in Montreal alone, and in the rest of Quebec and Canada. More than 80 organizations dedicated to promoting public awareness of international assistance will see their funding cut by 100 per cent and will disappear. Cuts totalling \$1.3 billion in three years—that is a lot of money. The UN has asked all industrialized countries to spend 0.7 per cent of GDP on international assistance. Canada will be left with a rate of 0.3 per cent.

Finally, I would urge the government not to reduce the programs for older worker adjustment. The unions are very concerned, and the provinces as well. These agreements must be renewed, and I hope the government will try to do something for these workers.

[*English*]

Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents about the federal budget.

My constituents tell me time and time again that they are sick and tired of paying for federal government programs that they do not want, they did not ask for and they certainly do not want to pay for. My constituents stop me and ask about Canada's official languages policy. Why do we have this program? Why do we have to pay for it? Today I will confine my budget remarks to bring forward the concerns of my constituents about official languages.

I will start by asking the government on behalf of the people of Yellowhead: Why do we have a Department of Canadian Heritage? Of all the departments in government, the Department of Canadian Heritage is one of the most controversial and

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disruptive to the people of Canada. It is in this department that we find huge public funding for highly contentious areas, including the CBC, multiculturalism and of course, official bilingualism. I will be direct. The people of Yellowhead have no use for the Department of Canadian Heritage and its destructive, divisive programs.

They do not know what possible good can result from the funding of the bilingual bonus which cost them and their fellow taxpayers \$50 million last year. They do not know what good can result from funding the language police, the Commissioner of Official Languages, \$11.1 million. They do not know what good can come from funding the Edmonton region of the Alberta Francophone Association to the tune of \$103,000 annually plus a grant of \$12 million to be spent in a riding containing 945 francophones.

The people of Yellowhead are not sure why they are helping to pay for official languages support, which is projected to cost \$253 million this year, a cool quarter of a billion dollars.

It is not my intention to fan the flames of resentment, only to question a policy which has done much to tear the social and linguistic fabric of our nation.

Official bilingualism in Canada is not about promoting the equality of the French and English languages. It is about the promotion of minority language rights to the majority of the population. In fact the Official Languages Act, which entrenched the notion of coast to coast bilingualism in 1969, has been abused by federal governments which operated behind the smoke-screen of keeping Canada together.

The OLA was about appeasement right from the beginning. There are questions as to how this forced language program was to be funded, to be paid for. English Canada protested this imposition and of course it is paying for it.

(1120)

Pierre Trudeau knew the mathematics involved. He needed to retain power. He needed to retain his stranglehold on Quebec. After all, he had no support from the west. Therefore, the OLA was imposed on all of Canada. Ever since, the Official Languages Act has been used to put out anti-nationalistic fires in Quebec but to no avail. The effects of this firefighting have been severe.

I draw attention to how the Official Languages Act was used in 1976, at a time when great dissension in the province of Quebec was reaching its apex, to put out a fire that threatened national unity. On the eve of the Quebec election, 30,000 federal employees in Quebec threatened to refuse to serve people in English unless they received their bonuses for being bilingual, just like the bonuses bilingual secretaries, stenographers and typists received.

To pacify the civil servants and keep the separatist Parti Québécois from claiming unfair treatment of francophones, Trudeau caved in and passed the order to pay the bilingual bonus. To top things off and to add insult to injury, the PQ won the election.

Ever since, the bilingual bonus has stuck and has even been extended to bilingual RCMP officers under this Liberal government. I have little doubt this decision was made to cool disparaging attacks from the Bloc.

This policy is discriminatory against unilingual anglophones and francophones. It has created division instead of unity. It is the opposite of what the OLA intended for Canada. The disruption of the merit system has a negative impact on morale.

That was not the only time the master social engineer used the contentious issue of Canada's official languages as an instrument of appeasement at the expense of the majority of Canadians. Trudeau implemented affirmative action in the hiring of public servants.

I draw my colleagues' attention to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. It recommended dividing the public service into French language units in which all work would be performed in French, and English language units in which all work would be performed in English. Under this system almost all jobs would be open to unilingual speakers.

It is true that at first there might be a swell of unilingual English jobs, but as anglophone employees retired and francophones joined the public service French language units would expand to eventually include a proportion of jobs equivalent to the French speaking share of the Canadian population. In essence, there would be equitable representation without resorting to affirmative action and without claims of discrimination against either anglophones or francophones. I think all members would agree that such a scenario seems reasonable and fair.

Trudeau, because of political considerations, did not adopt this fair solution. He apparently felt the French language unit would take too long to implement while the separatist threat was an immediate problem. As Trudeau said: "We cannot tell Quebec: Cool it, fellows, in 40 years we will be able to talk to you. We might save some money but we would not save the country". Well we sure have saved the country.

Today it is the unity of the country which is threatened, something that should not be happening if the sacred cow known as official bilingualism had worked, but of course it could not work. This policy has cost billions of dollars to enforce since its inception. We see what Canadian taxpayers are getting in return: among other things, a separatist party as the Official Opposition in the House of Commons.

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If policies of the past do not work, perhaps it is time that we stopped them and developed a new framework with which we can all work toward a unified Canada. Canadians resent official bilingualism as it stands now.

I will close by relating an instance which occurred last October. The Commissioner of Official Languages, the language police, visited Jasper National Park to award park officials for their outstanding promotion of French language in the park. A closer examination of the demographics shows just how wasteful the commissioner's junket was. It is illogical to have bilingual services available in Jasper National Park or any other place where there is not sufficient demand.

(1125)

Last year over 2.4 million people visited the park. The visitors to the campgrounds came from the following regions: Alberta, 35 per cent; British Columbia, 15 per cent; California, Ontario, Washington, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The origin of people visiting by country was: Canada, 60 per cent; United States, 20 per cent; Germany, 5 per cent; and then England and Switzerland.

Curiously enough, signs in the campgrounds are in French and English and most of the campground staff are required to be bilingual in both official languages. If anything, services should be offered in English and German according to the statistics. Of course that would be ludicrous because the majority of Germans visiting Canada speak English.

Common sense must dictate all government policies. It is time to end tired, old divisive and expensive policies which not only add to our debt but which create problems instead of solving them. The time to end those is now.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I will ignore the preceding incendiary remarks of my colleague. It is certainly not out of pleasure, but rather out of a sense of duty as an MP, that I rise today to debate Bill C-76, which concerns certain provisions of the budget tabled on February 27 and which implements some of the announced changes in transfers to the provinces.

In fact, this bill is nothing more than the bitter fruit of certain decisions in the latest federal budget. Bill C-76 clearly illustrates the federal government's conspiracy against the provinces. With this bill, the federal government intends literally to offload \$7 billion of its debt onto the provinces. To this end, it has already made a mockery of one of its three main programs of transfers to the provinces—the equalization program. Under this program, the provinces will receive \$8.87 billion this fiscal year.

The aim of the program is to redistribute wealth within Canada by transferring some of the income of the wealthier provinces to the poorer ones. Since 1982, however, the federal government has imposed a maximum on transfer payments to provinces under the equalization program, tying total payments to growth in Canada's nominal GNP. This capping was renewed in January 1994 for five years under Bill C-3. With this measure, the federal government, be it Liberal or Conservative, has deprived and continues to deprive the provinces of revenues they would normally be entitled to.

As Quebec is one of the provinces, along with the Atlantic provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, receiving federal money through the equalization program, its public finances will suffer enormously as the result of this measure. In fact, Quebec's public finances are already suffering because of this measure. The situation is more difficult for Quebec, because, of all the provinces benefiting from this program, it benefits the least per capita.

By tying maximum total payments to growth in the nominal GNP, the federal government is changing the very nature of the equalization payments, which serve primarily to redistribute wealth among the provinces. There is more. Bill C-76, as announced in the last budget, also provides for the replacement, in 1996-97, of the two other provincial transfer programs—the Canada assistance plan, known as the CAP, and established programs financing—by a new program, the Canada social transfer.

So far, we might consider this combining of two programs into a single one, thus streamlining operations, simplifying structures and so on, to be good news. However, that is the end of the good news. Because, instead of maintaining or increasing the level of transfer payments to the provinces, Ottawa is preparing to cut \$2.5 billion in 1996-97 from the budget usually reserved for these payments.

(1130)

The 1997-98 fiscal year will be even worse, because the federal government plans to cut transfers to the provinces by another \$4.5 billion. This is yet another face of the flexible federalism the government is always trying to sell us in this House.

The problem is that the only thing that the government has successfully decentralized is its deficit. Obviously, Quebec will not be spared in the federal government's deficit decentralization operation. In the 1996-97 fiscal year, Quebec's transfer payment will be cut by \$650 million, thanks to clause 48 of Bill C-76.

For the 1997-98 fiscal year, we are still unsure of how the federal government intends to determine by how much it will cut transfer payments to the provinces. If it decides to continue using the same formula, Quebec's transfer payment will be cut by \$1.2 billion.

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Because of the pressure that the richest provinces, like Ontario, are exerting, it looks like the federal government may use a new formula based on the proportion of Canada's population living in each of the provinces.

If the federal government decides to use this formula, Quebec will lose \$1.9 billion instead of \$1.2 billion, an additional shortfall of \$700 million. Unfortunately, chances are that it will use the new formula, because the federal government is not in the habit of calling into question an established formula if it does not intend to change it and especially because of the pressure it is currently getting from the provinces that are better off.

Therefore, all told, Bill C-76 will probably cost the Government of Quebec at least \$1.85 billion and at the most, \$2.55 billion. As I said before, is this not a fine example of flexible federalism, cost-effective federalism?

After reading the provisions of Bill C-76, one can only wonder how competent and responsible the members of the government really are: they are shirking their responsibility to manage the public purse wisely. In fact, can anyone in the House think of anything easier or more convenient than passing the buck to the provinces, as the Liberal government is currently doing, especially to Quebec?

This sad chapter in the life of the federal government's economic and budgetary policy, if indeed it does have one, shows undeniably just how much of a mess the country's finances are in. Therefore, not only has the federal government either put off until later or offloaded onto the provinces the main deficit reducing measures it announced in the last budget, it also is doing nothing about the thorny issue of Canada's debt.

We must realize that every deficit incurred by the federal government simply adds to Canada's humongous debt. The deficit forecast for 1995-96 is \$32.7 billion. Even if the government brought its deficit down to zero this year, at the cost of difficult and harrowing sacrifices, the Canadian debt would continue to grow just the same, inexorably, on account of the applicable interest charges.

Because the federal debt is growing almost exponentially, the portion of the budget going to interest payments alone continues to grow, automatically. This year, the government is facing a substantial increase in the interests to be paid on the debt, with interest charges rising from \$42 to \$50 billion. This means that, if the government were to simply freeze its spending at the current level, its deficit would increase substantially anyway, also adding to the debt.

A government bent on reducing its deficit would therefore have to cut mercilessly in both spending and programs, if only to offset the rise in the deficit attributable to interest charges. In other words, the debt problem would not remain unresolved in spite of the government's efforts.

As we were able to see earlier, the federal government did not have the courage to tackle its own deficit, simply shifting the problem on to the provinces by gradually cutting transfers. To offset this loss of revenue, the provinces will have to cut services, rise taxes or pass the buck themselves to the municipalities.

(1135)

But finally, it is always the same people footing the bill: the taxpayers.

It was suggested that the Government of Quebec should put its own fiscal house in order before inviting the people of Quebec to give a decision on sovereignty. But one must realize that it will become increasingly difficult for the Quebec government to make ends meet as tax transfers to the provinces shrink. Let us also keep in mind that, at the time of the first referendum on sovereignty, in 1980, the federal debt was \$90 billion. It has now grown to nearly \$550 billion and should have passed the \$800 billion mark by the year 2000.

In 1980, the federalists doomed Quebecers to Gehenna of hell if they dared venture onto the road to sovereignty-association. If Quebec were to become sovereign, these doomwatchers predicted the dollar would be worth 70 cents, interest rates would skyrocket and the debt would reach several hundred billion. But we got all of that while we were within the Canadian federal system. To top it off, the Canadian Constitution was patriated without Quebec's consent, and we have the current Prime Minister of Canada to thank for that.

To conclude, Quebec will not be spared in the federal government's scheme to shovel the Canadian deficit in the provinces' backyards or the other sneaky measures contained in the budget. Today and in the months to come, the people of Quebec will bear the brunt of this budget, at least until they decide to pull out from this unfair and inefficient system, which is moving ever closer to financial disaster, until they decide to assume responsibility for their own future by going the way of sovereignty.

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, "there are times in the progress of a people when fundamental changes must be faced, fundamental choices made and a new course charted". With these words the finance minister tabled what has been called the most important budget in Canadian history. He says it is a budget with one objective, to break the back of the deficit and bring our finances under control.

Canadians will have to judge by the minister's own criteria. They will have to judge whether the fundamental challenge of a deficit elimination been faced. Have fundamental choices been made to meet that challenge? Has the new course really been charted toward federal fiscal responsibility? These are questions I will deal with.

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First is the question of whether the deficit elimination challenge has been faced. In the dying days of the Trudeau government a budget was tabled with a then unheard of deficit of over \$38 billion.

Michael Wilson six years ago said: "We have a serious problem, our large and growing public debt". The Tories had nine years to balance the books but failed to do so at each and every attempt. The closest they came to a balanced budget was \$19 billion.

Now the Liberals are back. The finance minister, as his predecessors before him, says the time has come to deal with this deficit crisis. When one looks at his three-year plan, the final goal is not deficit elimination, it is only modest reduction. If the challenge is a balanced budget, and it must be, given today's economic climate, this challenge has not been met.

Second is the question of whether fundamental choices have been made to meet the deficit challenge. There were clear decisions to be made: the status quo or new direction, continued deficit or no deficit, tax hikes or spending cuts.

The bottom line said it all. Program spending has decreased a mere \$5.1 billion out of a total of \$163.5 billion. That works out to only 4 per cent of program spending or a mere 3 per cent of total spending. These so-called cuts are a drop in the bucket compared with what must be done to bring our finances under control.

At the same time, there are new business taxes, gasoline taxes and new user fees. Clearly the government has not taken decisive action and has not made the fundamental choices Canadians have been demanding.

(1140)

Third, regarding the question of whether a new course in government spending has been charted in the budget, clearly for the past 20 years federal governments have followed a course leading from one deficit to the next at an accumulative cost of over \$548 billion.

Since the government came to power it has followed that exact pattern, predicting deficits past 1997. No new course has been plotted. It is still business as usual with deficits, deficits, deficits.

Several months ago I asked Cariboo—Chilcotin constituents in a householder survey for their thoughts on cutting the deficit. I placed before them the list of cuts the Reform Party presented to the finance committee and asked whether they agreed with this list.

There was overwhelming support for ending regional development programs, privatizing the CBC, stopping the funding for crown corporations, ending multiculturalism and bilingualism funding, immediately stopping support for special interest groups and downsizing the ministries of agriculture, industry, natural resources, and fisheries and oceans. These are the recommendations of my constituents.

Is the budget fair? The finance minister has been quick to stress the budget spreads the burden. No one escaped the pain, he stressed, and the burden has been borne equally.

Is it fair to Canadians? Is it fair to our families? Is it fair to our children? Is it fair to our grandchildren and great grandchildren and future generations to come? The answer on all counts is firmly no, it is not. It is not fair to thousands of civil servants who could lose their jobs based on their race or sex.

According to the minister of intergovernmental affairs cuts will focus on white males in the civil service despite the fact this violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Families will be strained, careers destroyed and the principles of merit ignored, all for the sake of pacifying radical special interest groups.

It is not fair to the grassroots which will continue to be shouted down on the national scene. Funding for special interests, the political fringes of our society, lives on. The radical agendas will continue to be pushed to centre stage while views and opinions of ordinary Canadians will once again be pushed out the exit doors.

It is not fair to young Canadians, our future workers, our future leaders. For the first time in Canadian history young Canadians are facing a future that will bring them less prosperity than their parents or grandparents. It is these young people and not their parents or grandparents who will eventually have to begin paying off a debt that now totals \$548 billion.

The finance minister has put off any major cuts for some time in the distant future. It is our children who will have to deal with his indecisiveness with even higher taxes and fewer social programs.

I have often said I did not enter politics for myself but for my children and for their peers across the country. When I graduated from school the opportunities were virtually limitless. When I wanted a job, I picked my field. When I wanted more schooling, admission was both easy and affordable.

I could count on having a good salary to meet my needs and the needs of my wife and family. All that has changed. Young people no longer have their pick of jobs. They have to take what they can get, often piecing together two or three part time jobs to make ends meet.

Tuitions are rapidly rising, enrolment falling and opportunities becoming fewer and farther apart. There are many reasons for these changes such as high payroll taxes, decreasing funding and economic restructuring but it all comes down to one thing, the debt.

As our debt increases over the next three years, our economy will be even more strained to pay ever more interest on our growing debt, meaning our young people will have even fewer opportunities in the years to come. For their sake we have to tackle the deficit now.

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The budget has failed on all counts.

(1145)

The challenge of deficit elimination has not been faced. The fundamental choices Canadians demanded have not been made. A new course towards fiscal responsibility has not been charted, and this budget has not been fair, as the minister claimed.

Canadians are not looking for another Michael Wilson or Don Mazankowski, both of whom drifted from deficit to deficit. They are looking for decisive action to bring our nation's finances back into balance. I hope this finance minister will show more decisiveness next year than he has this year. The window for opportunity is quickly closing.

I am very pleased that the Reform Party has presented an alternative budget, which the Liberal Party has been invited to review, to copy and to use.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the months before this budget was brought down, the Minister of Finance appeared before the finance committee and made a number of statements, some of which were reported on television. One of them was the following, and I quote: "The total debt of Canada's public sector has now reached 100 per cent of the gross domestic product. The interest alone on this debt exceeded \$56 billion last year, close to \$39 billion of which were paid by the federal government. This amount may well top \$44 billion this year. We have reached the point where the interest on the debt is growing faster than the economy. We are in debt over our heads and this cannot go on. The situation is untenable from the point of view of the laws of the financial market and equally untenable under the laws of compound interest".

To conclude in the words of the minister: "It is as if our country were trying to go up the down escalator". We have all seen young boys trying to do this in the subway. They manage quite nicely, but for the average person, it is not easy. I again quote the minister: "The problem is so monumental that we can no longer rely on economic growth for a solution. Why not? Because the deficit itself is dragging down growth. As long as it goes unchecked, too many investments will be stalled at the planning stage, interest rates will remain high, the rate of employment will go down, and future generations will pay the price".

Canada's debt has become so large that the Canadian government is now in the position of having to borrow billions of dollars annually to pay the interest on it. It is no different than the average person who owes the bank money and who, every year, has to go deeper into debt just to pay the interest charges. Clearly, it is a vicious circle.

Canada's debt, which was \$90 billion in 1980, will be \$548 billion as at March 31, 1995, and it will keep climbing. In 15 years there has been a 509 per cent increase. We know perfectly well that no ordinary citizen would be able to handle an increase in debt of this magnitude, just as we know that there is no company that could either, without soon falling into bankruptcy, and we are equally well aware that countries are no different. In January 1995, the *Wall Street Journal*, one of the most prestigious newspapers in New York, mentioned that Canada had now gained third-world-country status in terms of its debt, and even indicated that there was a real possibility that it might go bankrupt.

The minister gave us an idea of what that meant, in a document entitled *Creating a Healthy Fiscal Climate*, which he released in October 1994. In his presentation, the minister said that a powerful thrust of the debt is firmly anchored in the Canadian economy and is hard to correct. As deficits keep accumulating, interest costs also increase, thus perpetuating the vicious circle. The deficits which result from the interest charges on the current debt contribute to increasing that debt, which continues to grow. For several years now, the Canadian economy has not been strong enough to make revenues grow quickly enough to compensate for the rapid increase in interest charges and, as the minister said, it is not expected that this trend will change in the predictable future.

Following this analysis, the minister tabled a budget which seeks to bring the deficit back to 3 per cent of the gross domestic product, by 1996-97, which means that the deficit would go down from 39.7 to 25 billion dollars. In order to reach that target, the minister intends to make cuts of about \$13.4 billion, over the next two years.

(1150)

What does a budget such as this one tell us? First, it tells ordinary Canadians that the national debt increased, but in an abstract manner.

Indeed, for ordinary citizens, a debt of 200, 300 or 500 billion dollars is something abstract if they do not feel it in their pocket book. However, the major change with this budget is that things will now become very concrete. Canadians will start paying off that debt. Massive cuts are anticipated, including in the UI, welfare and health care programs, and students will have to get into debt to go to school.

This morning the hon. member sitting next to me even mentioned that old age pensions are now in jeopardy, this just after the government announced—and this is no laughing matter—a substantial increase of \$0.78 per month, which is not even enough to buy a coffee.

The second conclusion to be drawn from this budget is that, regardless of what we do, as the minister himself told us, the debt will continue to rise. Consequently, the budget cuts which

will affect social services in a few months can only increase in the years to come.

The third conclusion essentially applies to Quebec. For the first time in history, Quebecers will realize just how much it costs to be part of Canada. This will be costly and painful.

As you will recall, the Prime Minister's advisor himself recently went to Toronto to tell the Canadian intelligentsia that, the more Quebec would suffer, the more Quebecers would be tempted to stay in the Canadian Confederation. I will not comment on the morality of this statement. I think that it denotes stupidity more than anything else and that it will have exactly the opposite effect.

Of course, the argument is still the same: it is Quebec's fault. If things are going badly in Canada, it is Quebec's fault. The Prime Minister himself, who did not denounce his special adviser's remarks, thereby agreeing that Quebec should be made to suffer, was quoted in the newspapers yesterday or the day before as saying that if Quebecers rejected sovereignty, interest rates would drop by a few points. He was immediately challenged by the real economists in Canada, who found his comments extremely naive.

I wish to remind the Prime Minister of two little events that clearly show that there is no relation whatsoever between the disastrous state of Canadian public finance and Quebec's political role. At a time of great political stability, in the years that followed the rejection of Quebec sovereignty in 1980, Canada experienced the highest interest rates ever, which rose well beyond 20 per cent. Yet, Quebecers had just said Yes to Canada.

Hon. members will also remember 1986. Who was in power at that time? The Quebec Premier was Mr. Bourassa and the Canadian Prime Minister was Mr. Mulroney. This was, of course, a few years before the Meech Lake and Charlottetown failures. The Parti Quebecois was keeping very quiet in its little corner. Some people were even saying that the PQ was dead. The Bloc Quebecois did not exist. The dollar fell to 69 cents US. And it will probably return to that level very soon. I remind hon. members that there was then no link between the very quiet political situation in Quebec and the economic problems.

Of course, they have always said that it was Quebec's fault and they will continue to do so. They are repeating the same arguments they used in 1980. We remember very clearly what Mr. Trudeau told us: "We are putting our seats on the line in Canada. We are putting our seats on the line at the political level so that changes can be made". There was the patriation in 1982, which was never accepted by Quebecers, followed by the Meech Lake and Charlottetown failures.

They also tried to scare Quebecers—now they want to hurt us, but back then they wanted to scare us—by telling them that if

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they chose sovereignty, they would be up to their necks in debt, unemployment and taxes. We said Yes to Canada at that time and since then the debt has risen from \$90 billion to \$548 billion, the unemployment rate has gone from 7.5 per cent to almost 10 per cent, the number of welfare recipients has nearly doubled, and taxes have never been so high. And that is only the beginning.

(1155)

In the end, by staying in the Canadian Confederation, we have experienced all the problems we were afraid would occur if we became a country. And things will get worse. Let me remind the House that the *Wall Street Journal* said that Canada was heading toward bankruptcy.

We recently held regional commissions on sovereignty, which attracted a large number of participants throughout Quebec. Quebecers submitted numerous briefs saying that they had two options: staying in the Canadian Confederation or making Quebec a country. They mostly said that they wanted more information.

In closing, I think that we should give Quebecers much more information on sovereignty issues, let the Canadian budget produce its effect and reveal exactly how much it costs to be part of Canada. I sincerely believe that when the right time comes, Quebecers will end up choosing the only possible option: making Quebec a country.

[English]

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to talk about the impact of the budget on my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, and I would also like to talk a bit about agriculture.

We have heard over the last few days statements made by members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition and members of the Reform Party in terms of fairness in the budget. They are trying to suggest that in agriculture the cuts seem to be either in Quebec or in western Canada and that they are not spread fairly across the country.

When the Minister of Finance set out his budget proposals, and when the debates, negotiations and discussions with various groups were occurring beforehand, within this caucus and in talking to constituents in my riding, understanding the significance of the debt and the deficit and the problems we have there, what has been emphasized is the fact that there needs to be fairness. People across the country are prepared to do whatever is necessary to deal with the government's finances, as long as it is shown that what the government does, it does fairly across the country.

Let us take a look at agriculture. There were three significant areas that were cut in agriculture. The dairy subsidy was reduced by 30 per cent over a two-year period, the WGTA was cut, but,

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significantly, there was the centralization of research and development projects.

In terms of the dairy subsidy, obviously, given what is happening with the GATT and given the changes within supply management that are required, all dairy farmers realize that there will be changes and that within the next 20 years they will have to develop ways to compete internationally and not only within the Canadian market. This dairy subsidy reduction of 30 per cent is going to be a hit on dairy farmers. Certainly, dairy farmers will have to do their share in bringing down the deficit.

When I talk to the farmers in my riding, and in fact across Canada, most of them are willing to make that sacrifice to help reduce the debt and the deficit. However, they want to make sure that the sacrifice is also being made by other Canadians.

They speak particularly about social policy reform. They want to ensure that our social policy programs are doing what they need to be doing, that they are doing it efficiently, and that they are not just leaving a whole class of people relying on government handouts. They also talk in terms of trying to cut back on some of the spending we do in that area. I think if they see a firm commitment from the minister and the government, they will be more than willing to take a cut in what they are receiving.

(1200)

We have seen somewhat of a hiatus there. The minister has indicated we will probably come back sometime in the fall when some of the necessary changes will be made.

I had a very big meeting in my riding with a number of concerned people on the whole question of social policy reform. I received a lot of good ideas. I am sure many members on all sides of the House also held these forums. I know my colleague across the way always likes to hold these open public forums. They are a good thing for members of Parliament to do because they give us an opportunity to hear from our constituents on very important subjects with a wide range of diverse ideas.

A lot of dairy farmers who were in attendance were telling me they understood what the government did. They were not particularly happy that it came out of their pockets but they were prepared to take it as long as they saw the government making firm commitments in other areas.

The Reform Party throughout our earlier discussions on the WGTA gave us an indication it wanted us to scrap it. We wanted to make sure, given some of our GATT commitments, there was adjustment available for those farmers and that the system would still work.

I have a number of concerns in that area as chair of the standing committee on agriculture. We got together with all parties. We decided there should be a subcommittee on transportation to look at these issues. Farmers in western Canada and

people who rely on the St. Lawrence seaway have a number of concerns. Hopefully the members of Parliament on the subcommittee, chaired by the hon. member for Malpeque, will be able to do something in that area to make sure the concerns of these farmers are taken into consideration and that the minister of agriculture and the Prime Minister hear first hand some of these concerns.

The \$1.6 billion payment, essentially a payment over a two or three-year period, is an adjustment period. The farmers I have been talking to are not very happy it is coming out of their area but they are prepared, as are farmers in other parts of the country and all Canadians, to do their share in terms of bringing down the debt and deficit.

That theme was pretty much what I heard in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk after I went back after the budget and talked to my constituents. Normally after a budget, even as an opposition member, one should receive about 20 or 30 calls. After this budget I received three calls from constituents. I felt this was an acceptance of the fairness of the budget.

After the budget, as I went around to the different events in my riding I began to learn people accepted the budget, grudgingly granted, but they understood the need to deal with the debt and deficit and the need for cuts. They were prepared to go along with it as long as they felt there was to be more and there was a commitment of fiscal responsibility by the government.

I have talked to the Minister of Finance in caucus and know the commitment is there. We have to deal with the fact that 43 per cent or 44 per cent of our debt is controlled outside of the country and our current account deficit is a problem.

The Minister of Finance indicated he will take the tough steps necessary to deal with that problem. It is a problem for all Canadians. It is a problem for my children and children all across the country. It is something they do not look forward to. We will deal with that problem. We will deal with the question of fairness not only in future budgetary expenditures in terms of the country but also in agriculture as we move along with the co-operation of the opposition and the third party to help Canadian farmers in the future deal with the uncertainties of the new reality in world economic trade.

(1205)

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, on February 27 the finance minister brought down his second budget. That document showed how spending is to be reduced by \$4 billion, taxes are up by \$1.5 billion and the annual projected deficit will be only \$32.7 billion; that is, \$32 billion deeper in debt.

The document did not show how the government will spend \$50 billion to service the debt this year and how our overall debt will climb by more than \$100 billion over the term of the Liberal government. Think of it. We are spending \$50 billion to service

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the debt. How much could we buy in the way of social services or anything else for \$50 billion in a year?

The surprisingly mild public reaction toward the budget seems to indicate Canadians do not fully understand the full extent of our financial situation. Do they realize we are \$550 billion in debt and by the time the government ends its mandate we will be \$650 billion in debt? I do not think it has quite struck home yet.

It is therefore our job as a responsible opposition to tell Canadians all is not well. We must do much more to tackle our crippling debt and deficit situation. The fact our hon. colleague across the way from Haldimand—Norfolk only received two phone calls on this well illustrates this fact. The public is not aware of the severity of the problem.

What can be done? According to the government it is moving as fast as it possibly can to solve the problem. However, if we look closely at this baby step budget we find that is not the case. More can be done.

Look at my area of responsibility, official languages. I can very easily demonstrate how we can save money without sacrificing service to the public. We will look at my little area but this could be multiplied one dozen or two dozen times by other areas, thus illustrating we can find the money.

To be fair to the government, it has moved quietly even in the area of official languages to trim some of the excess spending, but not enough. The estimates show how approximately \$50 million has been taken from official languages spending in the Department of Canadian Heritage. Likewise, there is a small reduction in the budget for the commissioner of official languages.

Again, these are only baby steps in the right direction. There are many more areas that can be reduced or eliminated. Funding of special interest groups is a classic example. We are looking at one little area of detail within overall official languages. This year Canadian heritage alone will spend \$28.5 million. Where does this money go? About \$1 million will go again this year to Alliance Quebec, a so-called English language rights group in Quebec. I say so-called because it is difficult to truly believe this group is doing any meaningful work to preserve English rights in Quebec.

(1210)

Earlier this week I stood in the House and asked the government why it would give Alliance Quebec \$1.2 million when it has been learned \$837,000 of that is being spent on wages, while another \$95,000 goes to pay for luxury offices in downtown Montreal. At the same time its membership has sunk to an all time low of about 2,500. This figure was disputed on radio this week by Mr. Hamelin, head of Alliance Quebec, who said its numbers have risen to 3,700. Even if they have, this is down

from a membership strength of 15,000 or 20,000 some years ago. What is going on?

The government response to my question on the donation to Alliance Quebec was: "It is important the Canadian government supports minority language groups outside and inside Quebec. That is what we are doing. That is what we will continue to do".

If we examine that answer we will quickly discover it does not make any sense. How can anyone claim that lining the pockets of a few well heeled Liberal friends in the Montreal area does anything to support the anglophone community within Quebec? This group spends 75 per cent of its taxpayer supported budget on wages and rent. What can it actually be doing to support the community it purports to represent?

Worse yet, when my office requested this type of financial information from Alliance Quebec and other similar language groups throughout Canada, we were told that information was not public knowledge and therefore was not available to us. We were told to contact Treasury Board if we wanted information. Treasury Board then told us it could only provide the overall grant information which is readily available in public accounts and therefore of little value. For detailed information we were told to contact Canadian heritage. It in turn told us in most cases it did not have the information and what it had was not available to us.

I have been fighting this situation for a year and a half in the House trying to get some facts on spending of the government and all I get is sandbagging. This is taxpayers money supposedly being spent for the benefit of all Canadians. The people who provide the funds are not allowed to know how they are spent.

It is only through the persistence of a reporter at *La Presse* that the information on Alliance Quebec was brought to the attention of the public. It takes a reporter to get it out. This is unacceptable.

It is also interesting to note that official languages may well be the only federal program to have totally escaped the scrutiny of the Auditor General. This program has been in place for a quarter of a century and has never been fully audited. What is going on here? Where is this money being spent? What can we eliminate?

Part V of the 1993-94 public accounts which detail funds for professional special services shows almost \$9 million spent in the name of official languages. For example, Privy Council, \$900,000; communications, \$4 million; transport, \$340,000; energy, mines and resources, \$500,000; external affairs, \$255,000; national defence, \$1.6 million, to name a few. How these moneys were spent and for what purpose is a mystery.

Similarly, part VIII of the 1993-94 public accounts shows \$273 million for official languages transfer payments; over \$270 million of that by communications and \$2.5 million by employment and immigration. Again, for what purpose? Only

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the people who receive the money know for sure and they are not willing to say.

Surely it makes sense to do a comprehensive audit to find out if all these moneys are being spent wisely. The government lacks the will to do so. It is a sacred cow and it will hang on to it.

If we look closely at the budget we find it simply does not do the job. We cannot afford to stroll toward a zero deficit target. The time for serious action is running out. It may be this year.

(1215)

In conclusion, I urge the government to take a serious look at spending just in my little area alone on official languages in an effort to get on with the job of deficit elimination, which Canadians will support.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate on the budget. I am certain 10 minutes will not be enough to cover all the ground I would like to cover. I will outline in point form some of the major concerns I have with it.

I have concerns about the fairness of the budget. I would like to debate at greater length the question of fairness with the member for Haldimand—Norfolk but I will not have the time to do that.

One of the reasons the budget has been received as well as it has is the fact that the government has given the impression there have been no tax increases. In many respects there were not the kind of tax increases that had been flagged prior to the budget. The trick, which is as old as the hills, is to get people worried about a bunch of measures and then when the measures are not included in the budget, people are relieved.

The fact is that Canadians will have to fork over more out of their own pockets in a variety of ways. It may not come through taxes but it will certainly come from having to spend more money on services that were previously provided by the government, whether it is in the form of user fees for national parks, decreased health care availability or whatever the case may be. We ought not to be under any illusion that Canadians got a free lunch out of the budget. Hardly.

I am concerned about a number of things in the budget. First and foremost in my mind and in the minds of my constituents is the privatization of the Canadian National Railway. This is something, given the location of the main repair shops of CNR in Transcona, in the riding of Winnipeg Transcona, that is of obvious concern.

It is a measure of how far to the ideological right this Parliament and the Liberal Party in particular have swung. We see the Liberal Party bringing in a measure to privatize the CNR which is something that previously would not only have been

thought out of character for them but which goes against the promises many Liberal MPs and Liberal candidates made to railroaders in Winnipeg, and to Manitoba as a province, during the election of 1993.

Many people were under the illusion—I was not—in 1993, given some of the things that have been said by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, the Minister of Human Resources Development, that if the Liberals were elected the bleeding of rail jobs away from Winnipeg toward Edmonton and other places would stop and that Winnipeg would be restored as a transportation hub.

The very opposite has happened. The Minister of Transport makes former Tory ministers of transport almost look like friends of railroaders with some of the things that he has said about railroaders and certainly the policies that he seems to be following.

The privatization of CN in the budget is just the final icing on the cake of the things that have been done to rail by the previous Tory government and now by this government. It is a betrayal of Liberal promises and Liberal policy. It shows just how ideologically bent the Liberals are and how, in spite of everything they said in opposition, once they got in government picked up where the Tories left off and accelerated what used to be known as the Mulroney agenda.

With respect to the Canada social transfer and the block funding of all social spending, again it is a total betrayal of the things the Liberal Party has stood for in opposition and previously in government.

(1220)

Perhaps the Minister of Finance should have waited until May 8 to have given his budget. Then we could have celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war and the end of post-war Canada the same day.

That is basically what the budget did. It declared an end to the kind of society we have been able to build up over the last five decades. It is no coincidence that the end to that era comes at a time when the NDP is severely weakened in Parliament.

The government has no pressure from the left, no criticism from the left, no opposition from the left, at least not the kind it used to have. It gets pushed to the right by my Reform colleagues here. The Bloc Quebecois is preoccupied with its own agenda.

The government and the right wing business Liberals who for so long have had to contend with a left wing contingent in their own party, and with the NDP on their left flank, now are having a heyday. The Minister of Finance is one of those right wing Liberals. He is having his heyday.

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I do not know what the Prime Minister is doing. He is letting the Minister of Finance do whatever he likes. It does not matter how much it contravenes what the Liberals have said before.

I am particularly concerned about the effect this is going to have on health care. When does it end? When will the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister get up and say to Ralph Klein in Alberta that enough is enough, that the Canada Health Act is going to be enforced, that we are going to have national standards in the country, and that all this talk about enforcing the Canada Health Act flexibly and the other kinds of things that have been spoken about will come to an end.

It is not going to come to an end. It seems to me that the Liberals have decided that the Canada Health Act is *passee* and that in various ways they are going to allow it to fade away. They are going to permit provinces to experiment with the dismantling of medicare.

This is something I predicted in 1984 in my final speech on the Canada Health Act. I said that if the federal government was not going to sufficiently fund medicare, sooner or later there would be pressures both from the public, from provincial governments and then in turn from the federal government to dismantle medicare.

Medicare has to be adequately funded if it is going to succeed. That is an insight which in some ways others have brought to bear on this debate. It is not just a question of having national standards. One has to have national standards and appropriate funding. If there is not the appropriate funding, for one thing the federal government cannot withdraw that funding in order to enforce standards, and for another people become disillusioned about the health care system if they feel that in spite of the standards it is not the kind of health care system they expect.

With respect to the Crow benefit and its elimination, again it is another blow not just to railways, farmers and railroaders, it is another capitulation on the part of the government to the global opposition to anything that comes in the form of a subsidy. This ideology against subsidies and against taking into account the realities of a country like Canada is something that is very dangerous for us. In many respects, Canada was built along east-west lines against natural north-south forces. If we are going to cut all the things that bind us together east and west and if we are not going to take them into account any more, we are going to end up with an entirely different country.

Maybe that is what the government wants but that is certainly not what its members said in opposition. It is something that they should be held to account for by the Canadian public.

Even in the administration of the elimination of the Crow benefit, I hope the government will soon tell us how it intends to make absolutely sure that it is the producers who receive the money that is going out as compensation for the elimination of

the Crow benefit and not landholders, as may well be the case given the current state of the legislation.

It is not enough for the government to say that the Farm Credit Corporation will make sure that producers get it. The government has to make sure that producers get it, no matter who they are, no matter who owns the land that they rent.

(1225)

My final point is with respect to the deficit. I listened to my Reform colleague talk about the need to get a grip on the deficit and to take the deficit a lot more seriously than the government is doing.

What I would like to see both the Reform Party and the Liberal government take more seriously is the need to address the real causes of the deficit. In the judgment of NDP members, the real causes of the deficit go back to the tax loopholes which were created in the mid-1970s by a Liberal government and to the high real interest rate policy which has been followed in the country for the last 15 years. It is a combination of those tax loopholes and the high interest rate policy that has created the deficit.

It is not social spending. Social spending has not grown in the way which some have suggested. It has not been the cause of the deficit. It may well be that it will have to be part of the solution, in the sense that it is an obvious area to look at, how we spend the money and whether we could spend it more wisely. However, unless we deal with the high real interest rate policy, unless we deal with monetary policy, unless we deal with how we finance the debt, we are going to continue to have the problem. We will continue to pay out \$50 billion in interest every year.

If the interest is the problem, let us look at the interest rate policy which creates the interest we have to pay. Let us look at the role of the Bank of Canada and ask if there are not ways in which it could finance a greater portion of the national debt than it does now in the way that it used to. Let us look at the way private banks have been allowed to print and lend money to the government, at a great profit to them and at a great expense to Canadians, without having to put up the appropriate deposits.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many other things I could have talked about, but ten minutes only permits so much.

Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this debate is about the implementation of the federal budget. However I would like to take advantage of the occasion to pick up on a point made by the hon. member in the closing passage of his speech and look beyond the budget to examine the whole question of Canada's national debt; that constantly growing monster which requires \$44 billion annually simply to feed. As the finance minister stated in the budget, service charges on the

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debt will eventually reach \$50 billion before the ratio of debt to gross domestic product starts to improve.

This is a good time, as everyone knows, to talk about the debt because officials from the Department of Finance have been meeting with Moody's, the bond rating agency in New York, to discuss a possible downgrading in Canada's rating. If the talks go badly and if Moody's ultimately downgrades our credit worthiness, the cost of borrowing money to service the debt will be even higher.

As has often been pointed out, the Liberal red book is silent on two questions: when will we eliminate the deficit and how will we then deal with the accumulated stock of Canada's debt?

A constituent of Don Valley West, financial analyst Ross Healy of Strategic Analysis Corporation in Toronto, has proposed a radical, elegant solution to Canada's debt problem called the Phoenix Rising Solution. At the heart of his proposal is an approach which is often used in corporate restructuring, cleaning up the balance sheet by converting excessive debt to equity. In this regard the Phoenix solution is conventional and even commonplace in the private sector, but for government the solution is unique, daring in the proposed scale of the financial offering and radical in its drastic alteration of government finances.

What is proposed is, in Healy's words:

—an equity underwriting of up to \$780 billion which will be used to pay down the indebtedness of the federal and provincial governments. The 'equity' used is a 30 year stream of tax revenues 'bundled up' such that there is sufficient present value to replace the indebtedness of the government. The new instrument we shall call the Canadian Phoenix Trust. Shares in the Canadian Phoenix Trust will be exchanged for current government indebtedness on a dollar for dollar basis. It is therefore a replacement of the existing debt with equity, as no 'new' capital is required for its success.

(1230)

Here are the details of the proposal. The federal and provincial governments sell the rights to a future stream of tax revenue to a tax free trust, the stream being large enough to create a present value of up to \$780 billion, the total of all direct government federal and provincial indebtedness. Units of the trust would be swapped for existing debt obligations.

Using a 3.5 per cent nominal growth rate in gross domestic product and a 4.5 per cent tax free discount rate, it would require about 4.2 per cent of gross domestic product annually over 30 years to service and retire the \$780 billion of equity so created. The moneys would come from existing tax revenues.

The cost of servicing current and provincial debts is about \$60 billion annually and rising. As a result there would be an immediate saving of roughly 50 per cent in debt service costs. The moneys paid not only cover service costs but also amortize the full amount of the debt.

Like a mortgage, the blended annual payments of dividends and principal are paid every year, and trust income is a flat 4.2 per cent of Canadian gross domestic product for 30 years, the annual amounts growing in direct relation to the growth of GDP.

Two questions arise immediately. If such a scheme worked, what would be its advantage? Of course, most importantly, would such a scheme work?

First the advantages. Economists have calculated that the current high levels of Canadian government indebtedness constitute an enormous drag on the Canadian economy by crowding out private sector borrowers. These economists estimate Canada's gross domestic product would be between \$110 billion and \$140 billion greater per year without the debt.

Eliminating government debt would permanently lower Canada's interest rates, thereby improving the climate for innovation, investment and long-term growth.

With the government reducing costs of servicing the debt by 50 per cent, coupled with the existing budgetary measures proposed in February, Canada's federal deficit would be eliminated in two years, not simply reduced to 3 per cent of gross domestic product. The combination of stronger economic growth and future budgetary surpluses would allow governments to lower tax rates, thereby encouraging even stronger economic growth. The Phoenix solution would create a virtuous economic circle indeed.

The biggest question, of course, is can such a scheme work? More precisely, will investors buy? Why would investors swap their holdings of government bonds for Phoenix Trust units on a sufficient scale to make it worthwhile? In the words of Ross Healy and his associate, Enrico Sgromo: "Investors will swap if they feel that the Phoenix Trust units represent a good investment and the current Government of Canada bonds represent increasing risk because of the financial crises that the government finds itself in". Well, given the last and recent gloomy conversations with Moody's, at least the latter half of this proposition seems reasonable.

The major attraction for foreign investors in the short term is the very positive impact on the Canadian dollar, which would gain value immediately. Over the long term the participation in a growing economy with low interest rates would offer both foreign and Canadian investors the opportunity for major capital gains. The beauty of the Phoenix solution is that the better Canada does economically, the better investors do financially. When we succeed, they succeed.

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I have only sketched the outline of a concept that has been more fully elaborated elsewhere. My purpose is to test a new idea and ask for constructive responses from my parliamentary colleagues and indeed from citizens who may be watching this program.

I do not claim that the Phoenix solution is perfect, only that it is better than all other solutions I have heard proposed to date for solving our debt crisis.

In the end it will be up to members of the international investment community to decide whether they are interested in exploring a new investment vehicle. Over the years that financial community has shown a remarkable capacity for innovation, sometimes to their cost, as Barings Bank recently discovered. But I suspect that the prospect of charging even a modest commission on the conversion of \$780 billion from debt to equity might intrigue even the most jaded spirits on Bay Street and on Wall Street.

(1235)

[Translation]

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to speak to Bill C-76 which proposes to implement certain provisions of the federal budget tabled by the Minister of Finance in February.

Unfortunately, this bill confirms what the official opposition suspected when the budget was tabled. And how does it confirm these suspicions?

Since the Liberal government cannot go on adding to the debt, it has decided to reduce the federal deficit by offloading the deficit to the provinces. Our Liberal big brother suddenly turned into an unwilling partner, a most unwilling partner, who decided unilaterally to reduce transfer payments to the provinces by more than \$7 billion over the next three years.

These cuts will not take effect until 1996, to maintain the illusion that federalism pays, especially for Quebec. An illusion that will be particularly useful during the referendum campaign.

But the official opposition is keeping a close watch. This camouflage operation is despicable. Starting in 1996, Quebec stands to lose more than \$700 million, and in 1997, more than \$1 billion. This is intolerable.

What we have here is an irresponsible government that is trying to make the provinces take care of a situation the government created. The provinces are stuck with the bill, but they are not being given new powers. Only the federal debt is being decentralized, not government.

In the social sector, the long-awaited transfer of jurisdiction did not take place. Appearances to the contrary, the federal government insists on interfering in areas over which the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction. It withdraws but refuses

to allocate an equivalent share of tax points to the provinces. Is this the much vaunted flexible federalism?

What is so flexible about letting one's so-called partners in this wonderful federation pay the bill, while imposing increasingly restrictive national standards in several areas?

Section 48 of this bill confirms that in addition to national standards for health care, there will be new standards for social assistance and post-secondary education. And provinces that do not play by the rules will see their funding cut.

The federal government's response is that these standards will not come into force before a consensus is reached among the provinces. Then why this attempt to introduce so-called national standards before there have been negotiations between the parties?

I will not dwell on the fact that the provinces were ordered to mention the Canada Social Transfer in all advertising and documentation referring to health care services offered by the provinces. Flexible federalism is dead in the water, long live imperial federalism.

But the empire is crumbling under its tax burden. In spite of cuts in social programs and transfer payments, the federal giant will need even more money to survive during the next three years.

The Canadian government's revenues will increase from \$125 billion in 1994-95 to \$137.4 billion in 1996-97. Taxes will increase by more than \$3.5 billion over a period of three years. In fact, we will be paying more for less.

Need I remind the House that since 1980, the ratio of government revenues to GDP has increased by 18 per cent? Since the 1980 referendum in Quebec, taxes in Canada have increased at twice the average rate for G-7 countries.

It is shocking to see that as it prepares to cut payments to the provinces and increase taxes, this government refuses to do anything to stop duplication and the outrageous waste of public funds.

(1240)

Where are the real measures to eliminate waste and overlap between levels of government? The answer is obvious. With the federal system, there will always be two departments of the environment, two departments of health and two departments of justice. By nature, the federal system extends its grasp ever further. The negative effects of the federal budget, renewed in Bill C-76, will hit all the provinces hard, particularly Quebec.

According to a recent study by Wood Gundy the expenditure control plan proposed by the federal government to reduce transfer payments to the provinces and the many changes over the past decade to established programs financing have increased provincial deficits.

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The Government of Quebec has estimated that the cumulative effect of these measures from 1982 to 1994 meant a shortfall for it of \$14.3 billion. The federal government's latest budget confirms that this trend will increase.

Federal money transfers in fact represent an increasingly smaller portion of Quebec's revenues. I will give you just one example. In 1983, federal transfers represented almost 29 per cent of Quebec's revenues. In 1994, they represented 20 per cent.

Wood Gundy believes that the cost of the federal government's withdrawal from established programs financing alone, responsible for 28 per cent of provincial deficits in 1993-94, will grow to 60 per cent of them in 1996-97. February's budget simply announced a worsening of the situation.

On the other hand, needs in the areas of post-secondary education and health care are on the rise. The provincial governments are faced with an existential dilemma: cut services or increase their deficit.

The official opposition has no choice but to criticize the government's lack of vision in reducing the deficit accumulated over the years. The government should have put its energies into eliminating useless duplication and overlapping jurisdictions with the provinces.

It should have trimmed the fat off its still cumbersome and ever costly structure. The Liberal government could have cut nearly \$3 billion more over three years at the Department of National Defence alone. It failed to do so.

If it had gotten out of areas of provincial jurisdiction, in exchange for equivalent compensation in the form of tax point transfers, it would have created significant savings for both itself and the provinces. It would have meant savings for the federal government of nearly \$3 billion in health care, professional training, post-secondary education and all programs relating to human resources development.

If the federal government withdrew from these areas of jurisdiction, the Government of Quebec could, among other things, establish a real job creation strategy by tailoring human resources development and job training programs to key sectors of the province's economy.

But the federal government's actions tell a different story. The official opposition feels that this bill will actually impede job creation, because, instead of withdrawing from labour and education, which would permit the provinces to get to the heart of the problem, the federal government's role in these areas is actually reinforced by this bill.

As for Canada's tax system, the federal government still has given no real indication that it was serious about thoroughly revamping it. Some people still have the joy of exploiting tax havens!

Quebecers will soon have to decide which path to take. On the one hand, they have the option of taking their own matters in hand, of being masters of their destiny by founding a country they can call their own, and investing the imagination, creativity and constant quest for excellence that they are well known for in that country.

On the other, they have the option of remaining in a political and economic system that distinctly refuses to acknowledge their existence, of sticking with the status quo, which undoubtedly will lead them nowhere as a people. A stale political and economic regime crumbling under its own debt, deficit and taxes, unable to guarantee its citizens an acceptable standard of living. A political and economic regime which, without a doubt, is doomed to failure.

(1245)

Sovereignty, admittedly, is not the miracle cure for all of Quebec's woes, but it will give Quebecers the power to pull the political and economic levers which will promote Quebec's growth.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, why is the opposition, through its amendment, asking the government to redo its homework? Because spending cuts are often made in the wrong places or simply mishandled. Let me give you an example. It was decided to eliminate transportation subsidies in eastern Canada. It is understandable that, after several years, this program had to be reviewed.

However, according to Transport Canada documents, the transition fund that will replace these subsidies cannot be used to help shippers or to invest in roads and other transportation infrastructures on a cost-shared basis. There may be interesting projects in the two options offered but what is important in the region affected is to ensure that the money will be used to achieve what should be the real objectives: to direct industrial development and to ensure that the new industrial structure can handle the challenges of the 21st century.

That is why the opposition is submitting a very constructive proposal to the government. The opposition is proposing that this fund—which amounts to \$78 million in Quebec, \$121 million in New Brunswick, and so on in the other Maritime Provinces—be used not only for the road infrastructure but also to establish a business assistance fund that will help develop the second and third stage processing sector or simply help business adjust to technological changes. It is important to invest in roads but they are only one aspect of industrial development.

If we put all our eggs in the same basket, we will end up with a road network that will have to be maintained over a certain number of years. The government is experiencing difficulties that do not augur well for the future but by investing in business, by establishing a fund from which companies could borrow money that they would have to repay later, the fund could last for

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5, 10, 15 or 20 years and have a permanent impact on economic restructuring in eastern Canada, especially in eastern Quebec.

Suggestions like this lead us to call on the government to redo its homework and take a few more months to work through the bill aimed at making the changes needed to implement the budget.

Let me give you another example of this type of situation. In the next few months, we will see what I would call the automation of Canada Employment Centres. It is rather paradoxical that, next year, the so-called Human Resources Development Department will be focusing in a major way on replacing workers with machines. Computers will be made available to the jobless in some places. I can clearly detect in that the approach taken with seniors and voice boxes. But the people who deal with unemployment centres may not know how to work automated systems.

Citizens will be further removed from civil servants, aggravating the problem of individuals becoming file numbers and having a tendency to abuse the system. So, instead of striving for realistic goals, this measure will be counterproductive because machines are replacing people. The human resources sector differs from the car manufacturing sector in that robots can be used to build cars but, if you want to help individuals find work and reenter the workforce, it is essential that they establish good contacts in terms of professional counselling and feel that the people they deal with at the employment centre are able to help them with their personal circumstances.

(1250)

As I recall, when I was touring with the committee on the Axworthy reform, someone came to me with a proposal that I think would have been much more appropriate than these changes. What of it was now up to the users, the UI recipients, to evaluate or assess the services they receive? Perhaps that, based on the information provided by the users, the government would abandon this reform, or at least make sure that the human element is not removed, and plans for adding new technologies.

I would also like to list a few areas where we urge the government to go back to the drawing board. It was decided to reduce to nil—that is no small cut—funding for agencies involved with public participation in and awareness of international development. Every organization with a mandate to make Quebecers and Canadians aware of the importance of international co-operation will not be getting a penny more. This was done in a very cavalier fashion. The organizations were informed by phone and, in my riding, the CREECQ received written confirmation after it had taken effect.

It is rather insulting and appalling for organizations dedicated to ensuring that there is a future for co-operation. On the downside of this decision is the fact that these organizations also

drew a parallel between poverty in our part of the world and in the South. It made it clear that everything is interconnected and that choices made in Northern countries create poverty in the South. We often have the same attitude towards our underprivileged as we do towards third world nations.

These organizations made sure people were aware of the reality. Given the government's current tendency to copy the American model, which entails the disintegration of the middle class, it is easy to figure out that it wants to get rid of those who question its social measures.

This appears to be a very bad decision which will result in Quebecers and Canadians being less aware of the need to provide international assistance.

I also want to mention the abolition of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This is another example of an unacceptable announcement. No ministerial statement was made. It was during a debate that we were informed that the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women would disappear. This is another case of getting rid of those who question the government's actions regarding those who are in difficulty and who need a more flexible society.

The last example which I want to give relates to agriculture. The subsidy for industrial milk is reduced by 30 per cent. This means that either producers or consumers will be affected. And which consumers will be most affected if the price of butter goes up? It is those who have less disposable income. When the price of a pound of butter goes up 10 or 15 cents, that increase is not felt by those who earn \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000, but it has a direct impact on the budget of the poor, who have no choice but to reduce their spending even more.

All this is to tell you that we kind of wonder why the reaction to this budget is relatively positive in English-speaking provinces, while it is negative in Quebec. The media gave us the answer yesterday. Thanks to the federal system, Quebec is the province with the highest proportion of poor in the country. After 125 years, that finding alone would be enough to convince me that we must change systems and have control over our development as a whole. This is essential.

Whether in the context of an annual budget such as this one, or in the context of a more fundamental decision, Quebecers have a very different vision of development. This is why we want the federal government to do its job properly, while we are still part of that system. We are asking it to go back to the drawing board and to reconsider a number of legislative provisions which will have to be passed to implement this budget. We also hope that, when the time comes for Quebecers to make their fundamental decision, they will realize that a new system is essential for their development and also to change things which can no longer be tolerated in Quebec.

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(1255)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The vote is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour 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 nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the division bells having rung:

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until the end of Government Orders on Monday, April 24, 1995 when the bells will be rung for not more than 15 minutes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
READJUSTMENT ACT, 1995**

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-69, an act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries, be read the third time and passed.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-69 being debated today deals with the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries.

This bill would certainly improve the current situation. For one thing, the provincial commissions will now have to hold hearings before starting their work and will have to produce three maps for every region covered, that is, three redistribution proposals. If there is sufficient public demand, the commissions will have to hold new hearings. We must admit that the process has been improved compared to the current situation.

The bill also requires the commissions to consider certain elements in setting satisfactory electoral boundaries. Clause 19(b) of the bill outlines the criteria to be considered: first, community of interest; second, a manageable geographic size for districts in sparsely populated, rural or northern regions of the province, and; third, the probability that there will be a substantial increase in the population of an electoral district in the province in the next five years.

Finally, clause 19(c) stipulates that the commission shall recommend changes to existing electoral district boundaries only where the factors considered above are sufficiently significant to warrant such a recommendation.

It is interesting to note that the first criterion refers to community of interest. However, another provision of the bill specifies that an electoral district cannot vary by more than 25 per cent from the provincial quota. For example, if the electoral quota for Quebec is 100,000 voters, the commission can establish ridings that have between 75,000 and 125,000 voters.

The commission can agree that there is a community of interest but that the number of voters does not meet standards.

(1300)

Take, for instance, the riding of Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine which is now below the provincial quota but has a vast territory.

The bill does, however, provide that under certain circumstances, the commissions are not obliged to apply the 25-per cent rule. However, these circumstances are so restrictive that one wonders in what cases they would actually apply.

In accordance with subsection 19(3), a commission may depart from the 25 per cent rule if an electoral district or territory is geographically isolated from the rest of the province or is not readily accessible from the rest of the province.

What does geographically isolated mean? Who is going to define this? The provincial commission? The courts? The bill gives no indication. To get back to the case of the Magdalen Islands, they are, of course, geographically isolated. Should the population rule apply? Residents had their own federal electoral district until 1968, and to this day, Quebec law has guaranteed them their own provincial riding. With all due respect for the work being done by the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, we think it would make very good sense for the Magdalen Islands, located in the middle of the ocean, 210 kilometres from the Gaspé coast, to have a member exclusively for the islands.

It will therefore be up to the residents to make a case that the islands are geographically isolated. That should not be difficult. Complying with this initial rule should not be a problem. Subsequently, they will have to show that the population of the islands would justify establishing a new riding. Of course, this

would have certain consequences. If the Magdalen Islands are entitled to have their own member, the riding of Bonaventure will lose the constituency that would form the new riding on the islands. So there is still a problem for the Gaspé peninsula.

What happens to the ridings of Gaspé, Matapédia—Matane, Rimouski—Témiscouata and Bonaventure? What about them? Does subsection 19(3) provide a way to deal with the problem of the Gaspé peninsula? Unfortunately, the subsection is not sufficiently detailed. The Gaspé peninsula is a region with a decreasing population, where members must cover considerable territory. They must deal with problems that do not exist, or at least not in the same way, in the more central areas of the country or province represented. Members are concerned about representation in the Gaspé peninsula.

Subsection 19(3) is far too restrictive to be acceptable to us. We had suggested maintaining in the bill before the House today the rules now in effect. What are these rules?

At the present time, a provincial commission may depart from the 25-per cent rule in any case where any special community or diversity of interests of the inhabitants of various regions of the province appears to render such a departure necessary or desirable. So in fact, provincial commissions have far more leeway when they have to deal with specific cases. They have far more flexibility than they have under this bill.

So a region, like the lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspé or the Islands, would have benefitted more under current legislation than they will under the extremely restrictive legislation they want us to adopt today.

Clause 19 is for the official opposition a major reason for not supporting this bill.

Clause 16 is unacceptable as well, both for what it says and for what it does not say. Its silence speaks volumes. The government is turning a deaf ear to the traditional request by Quebecers and their successive governments for minimum representation in the House of Commons, as enjoyed by some of the Atlantic provinces.

Representation of the Atlantic provinces is guaranteed, as you know, by the senatorial clause which dates back to 1915. We have no argument with this provision.

(1305)

It enables Prince Edward Island, with a population of 120,000, to have four members in this House, because the senatorial provision specifies that a province may not have fewer representatives in the House of Commons than it has in the Senate. Prince Edward Island is guaranteed four seats in the

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Senate. The same rule applies to New Brunswick. It has a guarantee of ten seats in the Senate.

Although its population does not warrant its having ten seats in the House, New Brunswick is entitled to ten seats. We have no problem with that. The Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada of 1949 also covered this point and could be used to guarantee proper representation of Newfoundland in both the House of Commons and the Senate. This is just what it did; it guaranteed Newfoundland six seats in the Senate.

If we accept the senatorial clause that guarantees are to be given to Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, why is there such an impediment to giving guarantees to Quebec on the subject of minimum representation?

Quebec is one of the two founding nations of this country. The collective memory of Quebecers has not forgotten that, in 1867, we were one of the two founding peoples. Allow me to remind you that on June 30, 1867, on the eve of the day the British North America Act was to come into force, Quebec, then called Lower Canada, had 65 of the 130 seats in the Parliament of the Province of Canada, that is half the seats, 50 per cent of the members.

Through its representatives, that is to say those elected to represent us, Quebec accepted at the time of the British North America Act to be limited to 65 seats out of 181 in the Parliament of Canada. This was the agreement reached by the Fathers of Confederation which was to come into force on July 1, 1867.

There was no referendum at the time. There was no consultation of the people of Quebec before the decision was made. It is also important to note that women were not consulted, since they did not have the right to vote at that time. There was no constitutional provision for a minimum representation for Quebec. The only guarantee we got was that Quebec would have 65 seats, although it did not say out of how many. On that point, there was nothing in the act.

Then, with the expansion of the Canadian territory and the inclusion of new provinces in the Confederation, the proportion of seats held by Quebec in the House of Commons constantly diminished until, in the last few decades, it stabilized at somewhere slightly above 25 per cent. Clearly the Fathers of Confederation erred when they failed to include a clause guaranteeing Quebec a minimum representation and, at that time, it should have been 50 per cent.

It is rather difficult to rewrite history and to claim 50 per cent today. What we are asking for is a guarantee of at least 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. Should Quebec participate in the elections for the thirty-sixth Parliament, for

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the first time in its history, its representation would fall below 25 per cent, since it would have only 75 seats out of 301.

This explains our proposal which, basically, is the same as the Liberal proposal of 1992, when they were in opposition. Let us see what the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel and present Minister of Foreign Affairs was saying at the time. He was happy to seek for Quebec a guarantee of at least 25 per cent of the seats, saying that it would be a major gain for Quebec.

Yet, none of the Liberal members who were in this House in 1992 and are still here today supported our motion for a minimum of 25 per cent. How is it that these members changed their minds in so short a time? Why do they refuse Quebec something which is really minimal? Why do they refuse to make a move in the right direction? Why do they refuse a simple overture to Quebec? Why do they refuse a small sign of attachment to Quebec?

(1310)

Why is this government refusing to show that it cares about Quebec, that it wants it to remain in Canada? Canada has no interest in having Quebec under-represented or diminished in the House of Commons. Quebec must keep its representation because it is a nation. It is one of the founding peoples. As a founding nation, francophones occupied all of Canada and went even a little farther, since our territory went as far as Louisiana.

It goes without saying that this request from Quebec must be supported since the large majority of Quebec members in this House voted in favour of guaranteeing Quebec a 25 per cent minimum representation. Daniel Johnson, Leader of the Official Opposition in the Quebec National Assembly, presented the following motion: "That the National Assembly of Quebec reiterate the goal of maintaining a representation of at least 25 per cent for Quebec in the House of Commons of Canada and request the Government of Quebec to make representations to that effect".

Thus we know that there is a large consensus in Quebec, going beyond party lines, to claim this minimum guarantee of 25 per cent. When we see the Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition that is the Bloc Québécois, and the independent member for Beauce support such a motion to include in Bill C-69 a guarantee of a 25 per cent representation, it is obvious that this issue achieves a large consensus in Quebec.

Needless to say that Senator Rivest also supported this provision. Even the governments of Quebec which requested that such a provision be included in our legislation have given it their unwavering support, and as far as I know, the current government had never retracted what had previously been agreed to.

How strange it is indeed to see the government finally recant on something that it supported in September 1992. This government reneged on what our Canadian partners had unanimously

accepted. Of course, it was in the context of the Charlottetown accord. But should Quebec be punished because the rest of Canada decided that this accord was not to their advantage?

You will therefore concede that the bill before us today for third reading is incomplete. Especially when it comes to the criteria used to determine whether there can be a departure from the boundaries of a riding or those used to designate special ridings. It is also incomplete because it fails to deal with the issue of the representation of one of the country's two founding peoples. The vote on the amendment proposed by the official opposition demonstrates without a doubt that the federal government's failure to guarantee in this bill fair representation in this House for Quebec was not an innocent oversight: it was deliberate.

Would Canadians have been against the government finally recognizing Quebec's distinct society status, status as a founding people, as a nation on which this country was built? I am convinced the answer is no. This is the smallest request Quebec has made over the past 50 years.

I would be helpful to go back to the beginning and to remember that Canada's history all started with the arrival of Jacques Cartier in Gaspé, in 1534. Then comes the founding of Quebec City by Samuel de Champlain in 1608; the founding of Trois-Rivières and Montreal in the decades that followed and afterwards, the establishment of the first public government in New France, as Canada was called then.

Our first public institutions were created in 1663, when the King of France established the Sovereign Council of New France. We slowly stopped being French, became Canadians, then French Canadians and, ultimately, Quebecers.

Meanwhile, in 1774, the Quebec Act restored civil law in Quebec and allowed us to have an unelected legislative council. They were afraid to give francophones, who were so peaceful, democratic institutions, institutions to which Quebecers could elect their own representatives. And yet, Quebecers, Canadians of the time, had shown great pacifism and open-mindedness.

Finally, in 1791, thanks to the Constitutional Act, we were granted the right to elect our own representatives to our very first national assembly, in Quebec City. In 1791, we gained partial control over our institutions. Things went fairly fast after that, except that Canada was divided into Upper and Lower Canada. The assembly elected by Lower Canada has no extraterritorial power and cannot legislate on matters concerning Upper Canada and vice versa.

(1315)

In 1867, the institutions we still have today were created. It may seem somewhat paradoxical for a sovereignist to rise in this House to ask for a 25 per cent representation. We have not left yet. We are still part of Canada. It is our duty and our responsibility, in accordance with our commitment to defend Quebec's

interests, to ask all parliamentarians in this House to grant us 25 per cent of the seats.

We were here first, we joined the union in 1840, we decided to live together. You will lose nothing in giving us 25 per cent of the seats. It would be a nice gesture toward a nation, a people you claim you want to keep within your ranks. It seems to me that if the government wants to give an obvious sign of its love for Quebec and is serious about keeping us in Canada, it must guarantee us a 25 per cent representation.

[English]

Mr. Stinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have had a question on the Order Paper for 348 days now and I am starting to wonder if I will have to wait—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is quite entitled to raise that point, but he should raise it at a different time. Since the hon. member will not get a response at this time, I would ask him to raise that point the next time Questions on the Order Paper are discussed in the House.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on the electoral boundaries issue because it relates to representation by population and, more importantly, to responsible government.

I would like to point out that the House of Commons is built on the principle of representation by population. This great country of Canada came to be not by chance, but rather by strong convictions that all people could work together for the betterment of all. Perhaps it was the right man in the right position in the 1850s and 1860s, or perhaps it was a strong determination that a dream of federalism could work, but I know that compromise played an important role in the final decision. To make responsible government work in the 1850s, before Confederation, it took a lot of people working together, in particular the compromise for trade by George Brown, a man who put his country before himself when he proposed the great coalition in 1864.

My hon. friend from Chambly spoke the other day of the French influence and what he felt was a lack of support by Reform members of this House for the French cause or French history. I want to assure my friend that Reformers are not so ignorant as to deny the history of their own country, nor to be unaware of those who shaped it from its beginnings.

To be honest, I would first have to acknowledge our aboriginal people, whose beginnings we can trace well back to before Christ. On the west coast of Canada the use of cedar gives us

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many of our time clues. We can actually trace cedar growing on the west coast of B.C. to at least 3500 B.C.

Later, as Europeans came to our country's shores, they claimed the land as theirs. Does that not seem odd? So many others were already in occupation of this land. True, the first European settlements were French settlements, after Cartier's visits of 1534 and 1535. Those settlements were along the coast of Nova Scotia. In the 1604–05 settlements there was severe hardship. The hardship was due to very cold winters, the lack of fresh water, and sickness. Those settlements did not remain at that time.

Later came settlement in Quebec in 1608, as my colleagues from the Bloc have stated. That, of course, was Champlain's settlement in Quebec. As I recall, Champlain was very concerned about those in his small settlement. He wondered how to keep the morale up. His order of good cheer was to increase the morale and bring some relief and entertainment to those inhabitants who were so far from home. It is interesting to remember that many years later, Voltaire referred to New France as those few acres of snow.

(1320)

Meanwhile, some French settlers had returned to the Acadian shores, and by 1613 these Acadians, peaceful farmers who tilled and looked after the land, really bothered no one. Yet that did not prevent the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755. Of course, they did not swear allegiance to the British crown. When they were expelled from Grand Pré, it was an injustice; it was cruel.

Does it matter now that the English at the time feared the unrest to the south in the 13 colonies, which they thought was about to explode because they knew the Americans in the 1760s protested against the unjust taxation by the English? I think they called them the "intolerable acts". We are all aware of the Boston Tea Party. Well, does it matter now? I do not think so.

Reformers are also aware of Longfellow's epic poem, "Evangeline", the immortalized young Acadian woman who spent her life in search of her lost love, only to find him as he lay dying. Let me assure the Bloc, it is part of our tragic history as well.

I watched the Anne Murray show last Friday night, dedicated to the fine music and musicians of Nova Scotia. She spoke with pride of her Acadian ancestry.

What of the 30 years following 1755? Many English, later nicknamed loyalists, fled to the 13 colonies, often to escape being tarred and feathered—peaceful, law-abiding citizens—all because they wanted to remain obedient to the English crown. Is that not odd? A few years earlier cruelties had taken place because Acadians did not want to swear allegiance to the British crown. Wrongs on both sides.

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Many fled persecution by the Americans with only the clothes on their backs. They trekked for miles through unknown forests, hostile Indian lands, the same as the Acadians. So many came here in those years that in 1784 the colony of New Brunswick was created.

We in this House are well aware that we are talking about over 100,000 loyalists. They came to all parts of Canada, to Nova Scotia and Quebec—so many came to Quebec that Upper Canada was created—to P.E.I., to areas of Newfoundland.

By 1791 the Constitution Act became a reality. The Quebec colony split into Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada contained many of the loyalists. The Constitution Act created elected assemblies with limited powers. Here again, we have England in control, so concerned dare she give much authority to these colonies. She has just seen what happened far to the south. At least she thought that was the lesson she should take from all of this. Was she wrong? I think history proves that she was.

To go back, following the downfall of New France in 1759 and 1760 with Montreal's capitulation, decisions had to be made. The first two governors, following military rule from 1760 to 1763, were Murray and Carleton. Both these governors tried to protect the Canadian way of life: Catholic religion, French civil law, the language, the culture; English criminal law, though.

Hesitation came when Murray did not introduce the elected assembly. Why did he not introduce the elected assembly? He had a minority of English people in Montreal scrambling for it. He was under constant attack. Why did he not do it? He was trying to protect the majority of French Canadians who at that time could not be elected to serve. Murray did not introduce it and the rest is history.

Due to our diverse history our country has many tragedies. Perhaps there are those who feel they should be divided into nationalities. I do not. These are the tragedies of our country. They are our tragedies.

To my friend from Chambly, I acknowledge that there was a British-French rivalry in the 1600s and 1700s. Of course there was. The wars continued at that time. Each nation wanted to control the rich resources of North America. What were those rich resources? The cod fishing grounds of Newfoundland and Acadia, the fur trade of the St. Lawrence. But where are they now? The cod are gone. Do we blame each other?

Does it matter that in the last 20 years our Liberal and Conservative governments did not care for this vast resource wisely? In the fur trade, the animals pushed further and further into the remaining forests and hinterlands.

Have we kept the mighty St. Lawrence free from pollution? Are the Belugas not being slowly poisoned? What about the Beluga who pushed her baby toward a boat so scientists could see her baby's open sores? The scientists in that documentary honestly felt that the Beluga wanted them to see that. Do the animals know what we are doing?

(1325)

The Bloc is arguing for a 25 per cent guarantee. When the city of Quebec fell in 1759 to the British General Wolfe and later when Montreal fell in 1760, New France as it had been was gone.

Under the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the proclamation promised protection for the Canadian way of life, including its traditional laws and the Roman Catholic religion. That does not mean we destroy representation by population.

However, I would like to assure the member for Chambly that Reformers do not think Canadian history began with Reformers, but rather we are very much aware of the contribution made by the early French settlers. Representation by population, won by the population, fairness for all, equality for all—that is where we are coming from.

However, if we are talking about Reformers, which Reformers was my hon. friend referring to? The 1800s or the 1900s? I see my friend over there is laughing again. This always gets a laugh from him. Well, if he will listen for a little while, I will see if I can get him to be serious for a moment.

In the 1800s in Upper Canada we had Bidwell, Ryerson, Mackenzie and Baldwin. Why? We had the hated family compact, a small group of English gentry, for want of a better word, who wanted to keep the control in their own hands. The truth was the majority of Upper Canada's inhabitants were very poor. Immigrants were encouraged to come to Canada in the great migration.

I want to share briefly with the House an article I read many, many times to my students, just to put them in the picture, not of the French Canadians' plight but in this case the Europeans' plight when they came to Canada in 1815.

"Most immigrants who came to Canada during the great migration were very poor, but they could get cheap transportation to Canada. Passage to Montreal or Quebec by sailing ship in the 1820s was seven pounds, about two month's wages for a farm labourer, with meals included. Children travelled for half fare. These immigrants faced extreme hardships, both on board ship and in the colonies to which they travelled. Sickneses such as cholera were common aboard ship. Tens of thousands died on their way to North America. The survivors faced great problems as they tried to find work or to clear the land for pioneer farms."

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The following description of a plight of an immigrant family living in a cave in Upper Canada was written in 1821.

“The mother, who continued to shed tears, told me that she and her family were Irish immigrants. They had been induced by a series of misfortunes to set sail for Canada, with the intention of obtaining land, and had, after many difficulties, got thus far in their voyage. But, being now destitute of money, they were unable to procure a lodging and knew not where to apply for work, assistance or information. ‘A husband and these two boys’, said the woman, ‘are all who remain to me. My little girl died on the ship and they threw her into the sea. Aye, sure, that was the worst of all’, continued she in an agony of grief, ‘poor babe, she had neither prayers nor a wake’.”

We do not often hear these stories, but let me remind the House that there are many of them. As a teacher for 30 years, I have books full of them.

Often, after years of working the land, instead of the promised land deeds, these new Canadians received a bill for the total price of the land and of course they did not have the money. The promises that were made to them were all lies, and many of them lost their land. They were promised roads, schools and help that never materialized.

Who were those first Reformers? They were the new Upper Canadians, who were lied to and could see no way of changing or of change coming under the existing system. Hardships? Oh yes.

So we had moderate and radical Reformers from 1824 to 1837. I choose those years because that is when it seemed to rise to a crescendo.

Finally, when peaceful constitutional means did not bring relief or results, William Lyon Mackenzie King became a radical Reformer. How many times was he elected to the legislative assembly? How many times did Bond Head throw him out? He was re-elected again. Frustration? I guess he was frustrated.

We are talking here about fair representation; the result, the rebellion of 1837. What am I saying? Rebellion did not just happen; it took many years of injustices created by a few at the top who tried to control others. Reformers came about because of necessity. Necessity is the mother of invention.

I am well aware that the rebellion in Lower Canada happened again because of oppression by a small group in control. In this case again, English Governor Sir Francis Bond Head, in my opinion, should never have been in the position of power he was in. In history we often find people who are in positions they should never be in. He appointed who he wanted to be his executive and legal counsellors.

In Upper Canada the Anglican Church dominated the scene. John Strachan, of course, the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto, wore many hats.

How did the family compact get its name? Well, they inter-married, many of them, and gave jobs to friends and relatives. I think we call it patronage, do we not? Is it happening again today?

(1330)

We are talking here of a privileged class of judges and magistrates, again family compact connections in a colonial society, all leaders of Upper Canada, members of the dreaded family compact and in Lower Canada the Chateau Clique, the same composition appointed by one governor, Bond Head. He chose his executive and legislative council from a group of British merchants. The mandate, what was it in Lower Canada? It appeared to be to force the Canadian population to adopt the British way of life.

Louis Papineau emerged as a brilliant orator of the reform movement in Lower Canada. The frustrations of the Canadiens were rooted in both of the following: a cultural division between the French and English in Lower Canada; and the undemocratic nature of the colonial government. Power was abused. There is the saying: Absolute power corrupts; power corrupts absolutely. That is certainly true.

Last night I briefly watched part of a documentary on J. Edgar Hoover. It was frightening. I think perhaps he epitomizes the master of civil servant control and how dangerous it can be if it gets out of hand. Why? It must be that the people who are elected and can be removed, must be accountable.

What happened to Hoover? We saw people who lost their lives. Was it justified that they lost their lives? We saw a president killed. Who killed him? We saw some terrible things happen and all because power was not placed properly.

Wrongs have happened in our country's history. Reformers arose in the 1800s out of necessity. In Upper and Lower Canada again Ryerson, Bidwell, Mackenzie, Papineau, Baldwin, La Fontaine were all reformers. On the east lawn there are statues of two reformers: La Fontaine and Baldwin. My friend from Chambly, these reformers were good men. They were all good men. Unfortunately when people want change and nothing happens they become frustrated. Rebellions happen.

What happened to these reformers? Some in positions of power referred to them as Yankee loving traitors. Does it sound familiar? How often have we heard this in this House? Reformers try to talk about reforming health care. We try to talk about serious things that need to change and are going to have to change if we retain them. Yet we get accused of being American, of trying to force American doctrines in this House. I am really

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sorry to see debate reduced to these attacks and misrepresentations. Usually it is to avoid answering a question.

Responsible government. Baldwin and La Fontaine worked hard for it. How important was it to address the rights of fair representation, the rights for responsible government? Finally England faced its responsibilities. When a rebellion happens you have to see the writing on the wall.

Unfortunately though the colonial secretary, Lord John Russell, was in no way committed to responsible government. It was totally unacceptable to him. Although both rebellions failed, they succeeded. They succeeded because Britain became alarmed. Sixty years earlier it had lost its 13 colonies. Someone saw sense.

Lord Durham was sent to Canada. He was nicknamed Radical Jack, probably because he was a powerful advocate for political reform in the 1830s in England. He was instrumental in getting votes on the secret ballot and was also instrumental in getting the vote for all men. I believe he was probably chosen because of this. He certainly was a man who would look at the other side of things. He was a sick man; he was a dying man when he came to Canada.

Durham's appointment was seen as a welcome change on both sides of the Atlantic by those wishing for political change. He arrived in 1838. He was not well, as I said, but he was determined to do his duty.

Responsible government was suggested to Lord Durham, the new Governor General, by Robert Baldwin, a reformer for all of the six British colonies remaining in eastern North America: Upper Canada, Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland.

Many similarities existed in the injustices in all six, injustices which led to the American revolution. Robert Baldwin was a moderate reformer. His proposal for responsible government appealed to Lord Durham. It was similar to Britain's form of government.

After the rebellion, Durham had to deal with political prisoners. His leniency toward the rebels, especially in Lower Canada angered the English minority in Montreal. Because of the constant antagonism against him, after five months he resigned and went back to Britain. He still wrote the Durham report and the result of that, as we know, was the Act of Union in 1840.

(1335)

Favouring responsible government, the reaction in the Canadas for this favour it was now going to receive in Upper Canada was pretty positive. The Reformers knew political leaders were to emerge, like Francis Hincks who had been a newspaper man with the Toronto *Examiner*, and the Baldwins again, the people who had waited years for change. In Lower Canada, Étienne

Parent and Louis La Fontaine were also anxious to see these changes.

Lord Elgin was actually going to be the man who was instrumental in putting responsible government forward. He was actually the son-in-law of Lord Durham. He was married to Mary, Lord Durham's daughter. When he came the instrument was going to be the rebellion losses bill to make amends to those people who had lost valuable property.

We know what happened. We received responsible government. Lord Elgin listened to the people. He gave royal assent. In 1848, Nova Scotia had it because the Reform government was in power. In 1849, New Brunswick and the Canadas had it. In 1851, P.E.I. had it and Newfoundland had it in 1855.

What about the native people in Canada? What about the genocide committed on the Beothuk Nation in Newfoundland? We have made so many errors. What about the Japanese? During the war maybe we had to have security restraints but we did not have to give away all their property.

The Deputy Speaker: I wonder if there would be unanimous consent to give the member a few more minutes to finish her talk?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Jennings: Thank you. What of our errors in the way we treated our Japanese Canadians? They had a lot of valuable real estate, especially in British Columbia, which ended up in the hands of a lot of suspect people. I did not like what happened in British Columbia. It was wrong.

We have a lot to be ashamed of, but it is all of our shame. It is our history. It is us. We have to be equal. We have to care together. To remove and sell off people's possessions is wrong.

Should we visit the sins of the fathers on the sons? I think not. In my classroom we would often say: "Yesterday was another time; tomorrow is the first day of the rest of my life". That is where we should be going in Canada today. We had two mothers in Ireland, one Protestant, one Catholic, who tried to go for peace, who also used that idea. We have to make it a better world.

Any electoral changes must be to protect all Canadians equally, as equally as our Constitution at present will allow. I hope my friend from Chambly will concede that Reformers know their history. Perhaps it is with a little different emphasis, but I hope I respect all cultures in our country: no special privileges, no special interest groups, all of us working together in a federal union.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. We are currently debating the motion that Quebec should keep at least 25 per cent of the seats in this House.

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I listened carefully to my colleague. After going over 200 to 300 years of history, she said we should forget all that. But she did not mention the events that have occurred in the last 20 years.

I would like to remind her of the reasons why Quebec is so distrustful and why it is asking for this protection. As recently as 1980, the federal government defeated the Yes side in the Quebec referendum after spending hundreds of millions of dollars. In 1971, for instance—why was it not mentioned?—Parliament passed the Official Languages Act, which since then has become the perfect instrument of assimilation.

(1340)

In 1970, the Canadian government invoked the War Measures Act in the middle of the night in order to send in the army and stifle the separatist, the sovereigntist movement. They arrested 500 people without warrants. Do you think we will forget this overnight? No way. One cannot forget those events.

More recently, there was Meech Lake. I will not spend too much time on this, since a member of this House sitting across the way, who was then a member of the Manitoba legislature, prevented debate on this matter, thus killing the accord. No one seemed to be sorry about the Meech Lake failure, except Quebecers of course.

Today, the hon. member, who claims to be a good teacher, would like to wipe the slate clean and forget about those events.

My question is this, Mr. Speaker: Do you think Quebecers can trust this government to set the record straight regarding those events?

[English]

Mrs. Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments.

First, his history professor feels very strongly, as does he, about the pain people experience. I understand his pain. I do not think it can be forgotten. I do not know if anyone could forget the pain. I do not know if my father could forget everything he saw in the four wars in which he fought. I do not know if my grandmother could forget that she lost four sons, 17, 18 and 19 years old. I do not know if people can forget those things. I know that we had better start looking at making a change. I know that they are still trying to get repatriation.

No one can say that our friends in Quebec have been assimilated. I do not think that would ever happen. They are very proud of their culture. They have done a wonderful job in maintaining their culture. Every year in my classroom I had six students who came from Quebec. It was a wonderful experience. There is no danger of our friends in Quebec ever being assimilated.

However, I am asking them to do something for all Canadians, as well as for the people of Quebec. We are all one country. It is a

rich country. We can set an example for the world if we are willing to work together. Please help us make that change.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague from the Reform Party. I heard him say, referring to the Loyalists, that: "There were so many in Quebec that Upper Canada had to be created—To be created out of what exactly?"

Does this mean that we were confined to a smaller territory; by "we", I mean francophones?

We are reminded of the massive influx of immigrants in 1815. The hon. member from the Reform Party said: "Those people were lied at. They could see no chance, no change coming into the system". Have we not been seeing the same thing happen over and over again for years.

She also said: "Reformers arose in the 1800s out of necessity". Does this statement not also apply to the sovereigntists who have been pursuing their action for 30 years already and perhaps more?

I would like to leave you with this thought and I would like the thoughts of my hon. colleague from the Reform Party on this. "History tends to keep repeating itself mainly because we do not listen to it". And that is a question I would like an answer to.

(1345)

[English]

Mrs. Jennings: Mr. Speaker, yes, I would agree with the hon. member, history does keep repeating itself.

What happened when the Loyalists came there? We know that in the 1850s there were 400,000 people in Upper Canada. After the division in Lower Canada there were about 150,000 English compared to 450,000 French. When we look at that balance it is a lot of people to govern.

In the wisdom of the people at that time, I would assume it would only make sense to make a geographic division, the Ottawa River being the dividing line. That is all I can give the member in that answer.

Yes, there were reformers in Canada in the 1800s. The member said that history keeps repeating itself. I must tell the member that Upper and Lower Canada both had their reformers. Lafontaine and Baldwin were both recognized by the Canadian government. History keeps repeating itself. That is why there are reformers today. If we do not pay attention to history, then necessity comes again.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must denounce Bill C-69, which, in my view, is a farce.

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The only purpose of this bill is to take away from Quebec its vested rights as a founding nation. Allow me to explain.

It is essential that the historical number of members representing Quebec be maintained. Needless to say that, in a few months, after Quebec has become sovereign, the Government of Canada will be free to do as it pleases. But for the time being, we are still here and our job is to look after the interests of the people of Quebec.

Obviously, the members opposite, the Liberal government, have a short memory. I will try to connect them to reality by stating a few historical facts.

Representation and the description of the electoral boundaries are both calculated according to the rules provided in sections 51 and 51(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867 and sections 14 and 15 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

The federal legislation on the readjustment of electoral boundaries established an electoral boundaries commission for each province. These commissions are responsible for drawing a new electoral map, in which the population of each electoral district will correspond to the electoral quota for the province. This quota is obtained by dividing the population of the province by the number of members of the House of Commons assigned to the province.

There is a section of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act that I find fascinating, namely section 15, which states: "Community of interest, or the specificity of an electoral district in the province or the historical development thereof, and a manageable geographic size for districts in sparsely populated, rural or northern regions of the province".

Last year, when this commission came to Chicoutimi, changes were proposed. Five of the seven municipalities in the riding of Chicoutimi were to be assigned to the riding of Jonquière. The problem with this change is well defined in the section I just read.

(1350)

First, there is the community of interests. The municipalities of the Lower Saguenay which would find themselves separated have always had economic and social ties with La Baie, which is another major centre of the riding of Chicoutimi. Indeed, several services located in La Baie are provided to Lower Saguenay residents, including the Canada employment centre and the small business development centre.

Second, the area covered by a riding must be taken into consideration. In order to have access to services in the riding of Jonquière, residents of Ferland-Boileau—the municipality closest to the one which was going to be included in the riding of Jonquière—would have had to travel 45 kilometres. This is a

good example of what the Liberal government planned to do in my riding last year.

I am convinced that this kind of nonsense would also have occurred elsewhere than in the Saguenay region. It would be interesting to check this out for the province as a whole. However, given the decisions taken every day by this government, there is no point in doing that. Indeed, the daily actions of the Liberals speak for themselves, which is more than enough.

A few days ago, the hon. member for Bellechasse pointed out that the 1985 legislation on electoral representation was very clear as regards the number of seats to be allocated to Quebec, since it stated that, before any new distribution, the chief returning officer had to ensure that Quebec would get 25 per cent of the seats.

This is not the first time that Quebec gets taken. This unfortunate reality is prevalent throughout the history of our province, which is one of the two founding provinces of Canada. I could mention the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which imposed laws written in English, and which prescribed for public office holders an oath administered under the Test Act, whereby they gave up their Catholic faith and pledged loyalty to the British Crown.

I can also think of the Quebec Act of 1774 and the Constitutional Act of 1791. In a newspaper of the time, it was said that Lower Canada was much too French to be anglicized by English-speaking settlers. Referring to Lower Canada, it said: "This colony is much too French. It must be degallicised. Since Quebec has fallen, it is time for this province to become English." We simply do not forget episodes like that.

Then came Confederation, which finalized a process which had started with the Union Act of 1840. After Confederation, French-Canadians thought they had a treaty between two peoples, between two distinct societies, between the two founding nations, but English-Canadians considered the treaty mostly as a piece of legislation giving the English majority the right to dominate the minority made up of French-Canadians. And why not try to make them suffer, to use a fashionable expression these days. With this bill, the government is trying to remove our vested right, which is the right for Quebec to elect 25 per cent of the hon. members in this House.

(1355)

As I said earlier, as a matter of good conscience if not of respect, this bill should not be used to penalize Quebec once more. Have Quebec and Quebecers not suffered enough from this domination? As far as I know, Quebecers still account for more than 25 per cent of the Canadian population. So, do you not think it is normal that at least 25 per cent of the members in this House represent Quebec? What is the rest of Canada so afraid of that it feels it has to try so hard to remove our most legitimate right to fair representation?

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As I said, Quebec has the legitimate and historical right to preserve a minimal political weight within the Canadian federation, even more so since we are not getting our fair share of federal transfers to provinces, whether it is for defence, for research and development or especially, as everyone knows, for job creation. Now Quebec could have its representation in the Canadian Parliament reduced.

Where was the Prime Minister, where was the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, where was the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, three outstanding Quebec citizens, when on a vote on March 28 the House rejected a motion put forward by my colleague from Bellechasse, which would have protected, once and for all, Quebec's political weight within this federation? They were away from the House at a time when they should have been here to vote with us on this issue.

The Speaker: My colleague, usually we refrain from referring to the fact that an hon. member is in the House or not. The hon. member may wish to rephrase his statement after question period.

It being 2 p.m., the House will now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

YOUNG ACHIEVERS AWARD

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I extend congratulations to Measha Gosman on winning the YTV Young Achievers Award for 1995 in the vocal category.

Measha is a grade 12 student in my riding of Fredericton—York—Sunbury. She now holds the distinct position of being only the second of two people from Fredericton to receive this recognition in the six-year history of the award.

Constituents, New Brunswickers and her parents are obviously very proud.

Competition is fierce for the YTV award since only 15 are presented annually. Categories for the competition range from dance to entrepreneurship, and more than 1,000 young Canadians are nominated each year.

I look forward to seeing Measha at the awards ceremony here at the National Arts Centre tonight. On behalf of the people of Fredericton—York—Sunbury, I wish her well in her national television performance.

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development has once again shown a lack of consistency and vision when developing government policies that are supposed to protect citizens who are treated unfairly.

Last February, he tabled amendments to the Employment Equity Act. The commission's new responsibilities include enforcement of the Employment Equity Act, establishing an employment equity review tribunal and, last but not least, auditing reports submitted by private sector employers. According to the Human Rights Commissioner, the commission would need 15 new officers to carry out these new responsibilities.

The minister has probably forgotten that he himself closed the commission's regional offices and cut its budget by more than \$3 million. This makes no sense at all.

* * *

[English]

THE DEBT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt to salute the residents of Salmo, British Columbia. These fine Canadians have decided to take action on the national debt. They have to because the Liberals have done nothing to reduce it, in fact they are increasing it.

The people of Salmo are collecting pennies to send to the debt reduction fund. While these good Canadians are scraping the bottom of the barrel, desk drawers and every nook and cranny, the Grits continue their spending binge.

The Canada Council handed out \$88 million in grants last year. One of the latest handouts is \$10,000 for a gay and lesbian film festival to be staged in Saskatoon this weekend by the Positively Queer group.

My heart goes out to the residents of Salmo. What will they do when they realize that they will have to collect one million pennies to pay for the Liberal government's financial support of the Positively Queer film festival? That is almost three tonnes of pennies. The Liberals should be ashamed.

* * *

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Council on Welfare reports that the number of poor

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people in Canada has increased dramatically and child poverty has reached a 14-year high.

For many years, successive Canadian governments have followed policies designed to reduce the wages of working Canadians and fatten incentives for wealthy Canadians. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and there are more of both of them. Middle income Canadians are being driven to extinction.

Deregulation, free trade, privatization, contracting out, and union busting are driving down the private incomes of working Canadians. At the same time, their social benefits are being reduced by cuts in health care and education, justified as a means to pay off a deficit caused by a high real interest rate policy and tax loopholes that favoured the rich in the first place.

Children are poor because their parents have no money. Case in point. Famous Players Theatres, owned by Viacom Blockbuster, wants its projectionists to take a 60 per cent wage cut and is using scabs to enforce its will. Government should act to protect the children of people who are on strike to protect—

* * *

OPERATION HOME FRONT

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Christmas, residents of Brant, led by Sheila Enslev and the Dunsdon Legion organized Operation Home Front to send support packages to our peacekeepers overseas. This idea was inspired by a study trip to Bosnia during which Ms. Enslev saw firsthand the valuable contributions made by our peacekeepers.

The response from the community was overwhelming and 172 packages were sent to Canadian troops stationed in Bosnia. One soldier wrote back and said: "You showed me that there are people who care and know we exist".

As the Easter season approaches, Operation Home Front will be extending its services to include our troops in the Golan Heights and in Haiti.

In light of the negative media that has recently accompanied our military operations abroad, it is important that Canadians everywhere recognize and appreciate the good work our peacekeepers have done and continue to do.

I want to say on behalf of our community, thanks to Sheila and the members of the Dunsdon Legion, for giving us an opportunity to say thank you to our peacekeepers.

MARY KENNEDY

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of friends gathered on Monday in Ottawa's St. Patrick's Basilica to say farewell to a very special lady, Mary Kennedy.

Mary's work in Canadian politics spanned three decades, during which the likes of Hugh Faulkner, Ross Milne, Ralph Ferguson and our colleague from Edmonton North, John Loney, benefited from her dedication, hard work and principled advice.

I am humbled by the fact that Mary also helped me in the recent Ottawa—Vanier byelection. Mary was not an armchair critic. She believed in our political system and acted on that belief. She epitomizes the kind of Canadian every political party depends on and to whom we in the House owe tribute.

A passage from one of Irving Layton's poems describes Mary's spirit very well.

They dance best who dance with desire,
Who lifting feet of fire from fire
Weave before they lie down
A red carpet for the sun.

We will miss you, Mary.

* * *

[Translation]

CREE NATION

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, Domtar and Mishtuk built a sawmill in Waswanipi, in northern Quebec, as a joint venture. The new company is 55 per cent owned by aboriginal people and 45 per cent by Domtar.

We have here a perfect example of a large corporation contributing to the self-sufficiency of an aboriginal nation. Eighty long term jobs will be created for the Cree.

(1405)

This initiative should also be commended for its approach to sustainable management of our forests. Today I want to pay tribute to Chief John Kitchen of the Cree Nation and to the Domtar management team.

* * *

[English]

SUGAR INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two shocking and extremely dangerous pieces of legislation have been introduced in the U.S. Congress that could devastate the Canadian sugar industry.

Senator Jesse Helms and Congressman Dan Burton have each introduced legislation that would tighten the economic sanctions against Cuba by imposing sanctions against any country

that trades with Cuba. This would bar Canadian exports of sugar and related sugar products and would eliminate over \$500 million in exports to the U.S. market.

These bills have been co-sponsored by presidential candidates Dole and Gramm and Senators D'Amato, Thurmond and others. Yesterday the *Washington Post* stated that this bill enjoys broad bipartisan support and is likely to pass after hearings this spring.

In the name of Canadian sovereignty, I call on all parties to continue our work together and support any government attempts to stop these dangerous pieces of legislation dead in their tracks.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs treated the people working in organizations promoting awareness of international development abominably yesterday.

After cutting the funding of these organizations, which represents only one half of one per cent of the total aid budget, the minister had the nerve to insult the thousands of volunteers involved. By saying that if they really felt it was important to increase public awareness about development aid, they would do it for free, the minister was distorting the facts. The funds allocated to these organizations do not go to pay volunteers.

Furthermore, the minister would appear to be unaware of the incalculable consequences this measure will have on the network of solidarity and international co-operation. Rather than insulting everyone, the minister should reconsider this very hasty decision.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENS AGAINST CHILD EXPLOITATION

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today Monica Rainey, executive director of Citizens against Child Exploitation will present the Minister of Justice with the signatures of 42,000 people. Each signature represents a child who has been sexually abused in Canada.

The message is loud and clear. Elimination of sexual exploitation of our children must become a priority.

However the government continues to choose political issues like gun control over critical issues like child sexual abuse, making this House merely a House of partisan politics. Un-speakable criminal acts are being committed every day in the places our children play, learn and most devastatingly, call home.

S. O. 31

I challenge the Liberal government to enact legislation which will protect our children. Stop the legal system from betraying them. I ask the Minister of Justice to prove to us that Ottawa is not merely a place of political opportunism but a place where justice prevails, where meaningful issues take priority and true humanitarian acts of government are born.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certain members of the House are calling for an inquiry into gasoline prices.

With provincial and federal taxes representing about 55 per cent of the price and refineries averaging about a 4 per cent return on their investment for the last several years and gas stations closing because there is no profit, what is left? Might it be combined federal and provincial taxes, or legislative demands unilaterally imposed on the industry or high municipal taxes in cities such as Ottawa?

Clearly any inquiry must start with full examination of the role of government at all three levels in driving up the cost of gasoline. Acting otherwise would be closing one's eyes to the real problem.

* * *

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE

Mr. Barry Campbell (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 31 the minister of public works announced federal financial support for the Harbourfront Centre would be \$6 million for the current fiscal year. He made no further commitments for subsequent years. In light of this announcement the Harbourfront board decided to close the facility on September 15.

(1410)

Greater Toronto area MPs met on Tuesday night and reaffirmed their commitment to the centre, which is a vital cultural asset benefiting the region.

Area MPs are united in their determination to work for stable, multi-year base funding or identify alternative funding sources to secure Harbourfront's future. Area MPs have worked to obtain a significant level of funding for this year, in spite of tight fiscal constraints, and we will continue to work for the centre's future.

We regret the board's decision to close on the 15th. We had hoped it would have taken more time to explore other funding sources or secured the participation of new directors prepared to keep the centre open on a reduced budget.

The people of Canada would be poorer for the demise of centres like Harbourfront, but the people of Canada have also demanded that we get our fiscal house in order. Regrettably this means that Harbourfront and other important institutions and programs will have to learn to live with less financial support than in the past.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

EXPO 2005

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Bloc Québécois member for Rimouski—Témiscouata stated that Hull was the ugliest city in the world. What a pleasure it is to hear that the hon. member is now spreading the message far and wide to the people of Hull that she is retracting her remarks and that she wants all who will listen, particularly her new friend the Minister of Canadian Heritage, to know that she supports Hull's application for Expo 2005.

This means that people from around the world could come and see the phenomenon of a city transformed into a friendly, welcoming community in the space of a week, thanks to the Bloc members. Is this a sign that the separatists have finally chosen a date for the referendum—2005?

* * *

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not share the opinion of the Minister of Labour when it comes to the announcement, yesterday, by the Premier of Quebec, that the referendum will not be held in the spring. The heritage minister confirmed that he and the Prime Minister did not wish that the referendum be held before the summer.

However, the labour minister, responsible for the federal involvement in the referendum battle, said she was surprised and disappointed that the referendum on Quebec sovereignty would not be held before the summer. Clearly, cabinet ministers are divided on the subject. However, they should be reminded that this decision belongs to the Government of Quebec, and the Premier is at liberty to set the date when this important consultation for the future of Quebec and Quebecers will be held, no matter what the labour minister might think.

* * *

[*English*]

BILL C-68

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice, with the support of the Liberal caucus, demonstrated his blatant disregard for the principles of democracy that govern this country.

The opposition Liberals ranted and raved when the GST debates were cut off and the ill-conceived tax was shoved down the throats of Canadians. Now what did they do? Follow the Mulroney lead.

First, the Minister of Justice publicly proclaimed that the gun legislation would not be determined by a head count. Then, on introducing Bill C-68, he said the consultation process was over.

The Speaker: Colleagues, we are all aware of the traditions of the House that we do not refer in any way to a vote that has been taken in the House. I would hope that the hon. member is not going in that direction. May I gently caution the hon. member not to mention any votes, reflect on any votes, or the way members voted in the House.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that while the Liberals rammed through the bill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

* * *

CANADIAN POLICE INFORMATION CENTRE

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that 42,000 Canadian children are sexually abused annually. Last November the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General announced changes to the Canadian Police Information Centre.

(1415)

I commend the ministers for their positive improvements. Unfortunately, even though the database is available, there is no obligation to access it. At the moment the process is cumbersome.

Another serious problem is the granting of pardons for those convicted of sex offences against children. Tens of thousands of Canadians have signed petitions and letters asking for additional laws to protect our children. Many of these will be presented today after question period by Monica Rainey, founder and executive director of the Citizens Against Child Exploitation.

In light of the urgent plight of Canadian children, I urge the Minister of Justice to implement a mandatory certificate of clearance system and immediately investigate the option of amending the Criminal Records Act to prohibit pardons for those convicted of sex offences involving children under the age of 18.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec officially announced, yesterday, that he was postponing the referendum until the fall. The leader of the Parti Québécois is telling us that he has no use for the report by the National Commission on Quebec sovereignty which is to be tabled on April 13.

Oral Questions

We all know that millions of dollars have been spent for this huge consultation operation which was to give the people of Quebec an opportunity to advise the government on the issue of Quebec sovereignty.

With yesterday's announcement by the PQ leader, one week before the tabling of the national commission's report, we have to conclude that for the PQ government and its friends in the Bloc, strategy is more important than the opinion of Quebecers.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

JOB CREATION

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Human Resources Development.

In a report released yesterday, the National Council on Welfare reveals that, in 1993, poverty kept on increasing in Canada, especially in Quebec where 20.7 per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

In view of this worsening problem of poverty, how can the government explain that it has not implemented any job creating measure and that it has reduced its participation in the infrastructure program, its only initiative to create jobs since it came to office?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for all members of the House to recognize the seriousness of the situation as underlined by the National Council of Welfare report.

The continuing incidence of poverty is something which requires all of us to make a very serious response. The most important is to ensure we can create the right climate, the right framework in which jobs can be created. That is still one of the most effective ways of alleviating poverty, to get people back to work.

In this past year we have created over 450,000 jobs. We have had the highest job growth rate of any industrial country. The figures used by the National Council of Welfare stop at 1993. We would certainly hope the very substantial job creation of this past year would tend to alleviate that problem. However that certainly is no cause for any kind of complacency.

We must redouble our efforts to get people back to work, to invest more in the kind of programs and initiatives that will give people some real opportunity to improve their status. I would welcome the co-operation of the hon. member and his party as we go about trying to reform our social system to enable that to happen.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions, we offered to co-operate with the government to create jobs. It brushed aside all our suggestions.

How can the government claim that it is working to create jobs when it refuses to implement a real defence conversion strategy, to come to the rescue of the MIL Davie shipyard, and decides to stick to a monetary policy obsessed by inflation control instead of job creation?

Will the minister dare say that the laissez-faire attitude of this government will contribute to job creation?

(1420)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that most of the jobs in the country must be created through the activities of the private sector.

If we are in a situation in which interest rates rise at an unacceptable rate or international capital flows become volatile and we are vulnerable to them, we pay the price by not being able to create incentives for job creation.

That is one of the reasons why in the budget we undertook to stabilize the fiscal situation in the country, to make ourselves less vulnerable to those international flows of capital, to be able to stabilize our interest rates and to provide a very effective framework within which the private sector can go about creating jobs.

At the same time, we also believe to parallel that we must invest very seriously in what we call the human deficit, the issue of making sure people have more choices about improving their skills and being able to get beyond simply benefit programs and into active employment programs.

That has been the whole indication and thrust of the reformed proposals the House of Commons committee considered and the recommendations we are now considering for action which we intend to bring in this year.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, could it be that the minister's passionate plea in favour of job creation by the private sector hides the government's inability to help the unemployed?

Will the minister recognize that the sad picture in Quebec, where 21 per cent of the population now live below the poverty line, the highest rate in Canada, might I add, is the result of federalism and irrefutable proof of the failure of a system totally unable to promote economic development in Quebec and powerless in the face of deepening poverty in Quebec?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the hon. member has taken what I think we all see to be a very serious situation and tried to turn it into some kind of attack against federalism.

The issue of poverty, especially among our young children and our families, will require the collaboration and co-operation of all levels of government, not one party continually insisting on separation, on breaking the country apart and fragmenting our efforts at a time when what we need is collaboration, co-operation and a coming together.

The real issue of attacking poverty is having all Canadians, all provinces and all regions working ensemble.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

In the same report, the National Council of Welfare pointed out that poverty among young families, mostly among single parent families headed by a woman, is on the rise. The report says that children are poor because their parents are poor. And one of the main causes of this poverty is the shortage of good jobs.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development admit that, far from reducing poverty, the unemployment insurance cuts for which his government is responsible will actually cause it to increase because they force tens of thousands of unemployed on to the welfare rolls each month?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the changes to the unemployment insurance bill introduced last year in Bill C-17 we introduced a special measure that provided a two tier benefit support so that we would provide a higher level of benefits for individuals of very low income who have dependent children so they would be able to receive 60 per cent of a replaceable income compared with 55 per cent, the national standard.

(1425)

Since that time close to 200,000 Canadian families have been able to take benefit from that second tier of benefits, which means they have been able to add close to \$1,000 of income to their family resources during the year.

That indicates we took into account, in making changes to the unemployment insurance program, that there is a special need, especially for those families which have children. I can assure

the hon. member that as we begin to look at a broader reform of unemployment insurance the same principle of targeting our help to those most in need will continue to be our basic philosophy.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's own budgetary plan says that, as a result of legislative amendments contained in Bill C-17 which reduced the maximum number of weeks of entitlement, there has been a 16.2 per cent decrease in the number of recipients.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development acknowledge that this situation will only continue to deteriorate in the next three years because of the cuts in transfer payments and the implementation of the Canada social transfer, which is nothing less than a veiled attempt to cut federal funding for social programs even more?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I think that the new framework for transfers being hammered out between the federal and provincial governments will be an opportunity for the governments to develop a co-operative and effective approach to combatting family and child poverty. I think that it is an effort to develop a national strategy, a co-operative strategy which both levels of government will use to solve the problem, and I hope that the hon. member and her colleagues will join us in this national effort to fight poverty in Canada.

* * *

*[English]***DIRECT TO HOME SATELLITES**

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Last November the cabinet decided to overrule a CRTC decision and create a blue ribbon panel to review Canada's direct to home satellite policy; I should say a red ribbon panel because it has strong links to the Prime Minister's office.

We understand from leaked reports to our office this back room, closed door review is now complete. To avoid public scrutiny the cabinet's decision will be announced after the House rises for the Easter break.

What decision has the government made with respect to direct to home satellites and why was it not announced before the break?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the statements in the member's preamble to her question are generally incorrect.

Oral Questions

The questions referred to the panel were of great importance both to the information highway initiative and to the satellite broadcasting system. We announced the review would be completed in an open way and it was done so. The panellists were named and received written submissions from all Canadians interested in the matter. Those submissions were made public. The public was then given an opportunity to provide written responses to submissions. Those responses were made public.

This afternoon the panel will make its recommendation public. I suggest to the hon. member she might wish to read it and perhaps then she will have some suggestions of her own.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The politics of this review has tainted its outcome. The review was ordered because the original decision went against Power Corp., a company headed by the Prime Minister's son-in-law. The review panel included Robert Rabinovitch, who has personal ties to Power Corp. and the Claridge Group, and Roger Tassé, a partner in Eddie Goldenberg's former law firm. If that was not bad enough, the government tried to slip the decision by the House to avoid public discussion.

Why was the DTH review not conducted as part of the industry department's information highway hearing or the CRTC convergence hearings?

(1430)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we have an example of a shamelessly irresponsible member of Parliament making unsubstantiated allegations.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I appeal to members to be very judicious in your comments when referring to members of Parliament. I ask you to keep this in mind in your questions and in your answers.

Mr. Manley: Mr. Speaker, there is a reason this process was followed. Very simply, as the hon. member knows, the satellite broadcasting system, the direct to home system, is one we are concerned about with regard to the very rapid growth of what is called the grey market.

It was important the government establish its policy in a very clear way as quickly as possible and yet attempt to make it as open as possible. We decided we would appoint a panel. It would hold the process as I described it in the previous question.

I want to make it clear to the hon. member that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and I received the report only this morning directly from the chairman of the panel. We will be reviewing it very carefully. I suggest to her perhaps she might like to. We

have not taken a decision as to whether the recommendations will be followed.

I would like to hear whether the Reform Party has a position on this important issue. I would be happy to take it into account before recommendations are made to cabinet.

The Speaker: I appeal to members to make both the questions and answers more concise.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Reform Party has always favoured a review of Canada's direct to home satellite policy. We do favour competition but it should be done in a very public forum.

Instead, the government's review was a backroom, closed door deal to favour a bunch of Liberal bagmen. It is yet another example of the government's lack of cultural policy.

One day it is restricting competition in favour of Canadian industries, the next it is swinging the door—

The Speaker: The question please.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Does the government have a cultural policy or will decisions continue to be made in an ad hoc way to the benefit of Liberal insiders?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what part of the universe the hon. member comes from. I do not know whether she knows anything about satellites at all. She is clearly accustomed to flying in spacecrafts, though.

In endeavouring to deal with this policy in as rapid a way as possible we have conducted a process using people whose reputation is really beyond being impugned, certainly by the member.

We have appointed a panel of three former deputy ministers, all of whom served under other governments. These people's reputations have not been questioned by anyone else, certainly not by this member outside the House where she might be subject to legal action. She comes in here and tries to smear three people who are offering their services to the government.

Perhaps if the member would read the report she would find her allegations false.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. We have learned that, last November, the Minister of Justice awarded a \$22,500 contract to Earncliffe Strategy Group, a communication firm.

Oral Questions

(1435)

Under the terms of the contract, this firm had to advise the minister on the gun control strategy he should adopt in dealing with his caucus.

How can the minister justify spending \$22,500 in public funds to develop a communication strategy aimed at convincing his Liberal colleagues to meet their electoral commitment?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contract referred to was entered into in the ordinary course of business in order to provide advice of practical assistance in discharging every day responsibilities. It is perfectly proper. It is money well spent.

I offer the events of yesterday as the most cogent proof of that investment.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

Can the Acting Prime Minister tell us if the practice of using public funds to develop a communication strategy for the Liberal caucus is widespread among his cabinet colleagues, and if it is consistent with government ethics?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has some facts, only some. The balance of her question is a combination of either invention or wishful thinking.

The funds were spent for the legitimate purpose of seeking the advice of others as to how best to serve the public interest. This was not advice on how to deal with caucus. This was advice on how to deal with issues that confront the Minister of Justice in relation to performing public responsibilities in the public interest. That is exactly why the money was spent.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this morning the justice minister said Liberal MPs who express their opinion and opposition to gun control legislation would not be punished. That was cool comfort. Already these MPs have been turfed from their committees.

The Speaker: As I explained earlier, we have a tradition in the House of not referring to any votes taken in the House or how members have voted. I ask hon. members to please be cognizant of this in framing their questions and also in giving their answers.

Miss Grey: Could the government House leader explain to the House and to the Canadian public what has happened to the red book promise of allowing more free votes in the House of Commons?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, free votes are those designated as such by the government. We did not designate the vote on second reading of the gun control bill a free vote.

However, we are keeping our promise each day the House sits because we treat all private members' business as free votes. This is certainly a lot more than was done by the previous government. At the same time, in the way the House voted on the gun control legislation we are responding freely to the consensus of the Canadian people.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, MPs must be allowed to represent their constituents without threats from the party whip. MPs should be praised for that, not punished.

Could the justice minister or the government House leader explain to the House why some Liberal members have been immediately turfed from their committee duties?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not a matter involving the government as such but the internal workings of our caucus.

(1440)

We would be happy when the time comes to go to the Canadian people as a party, as a caucus and ask for their support on the basis of the good work we have been doing for the Canadian people. This is exemplified by our support of the Minister of Justice's very positive, necessary and constructive gun control legislation.

* * *

*[Translation]***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Last November, the federal government, unhappy with a CRTC ruling on direct satellite broadcasting, formed a committee made up of friends of the government so that it could bypass the CRTC ruling in order to benefit other friends of the government, including Power Broadcasting.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage give credence to the report by a panel of so-called experts, when they only met with the Power Broadcasting project representatives and refused

to meet with their competitors under the pretext that they did not have enough time?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these allegations are false. I suggest to the hon. member that she could perhaps take the time to read the report; she may even agree with the recommendations made by this panel of experts.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague earlier, the Minister of Industry said that the government had set up its own committee in order to get the opinion of experts.

Are we to understand that the minister formed his own committee because he felt that the CRTC was not able to make what he sees as an appropriate recommendation and that his own committee would make a recommendation that would suit him?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no. In fact, the government has not indicated it wants a particular decision at all. The government has the responsibility to establish policy in an important area which affects not just the delivery of program services but indeed has quite a broad effect on the information highway initiative in general.

The responsibility for making policy is that of the government. That is why governments are elected. We will consider the views of the panel of experts which will be reporting today and we will indicate what policy we believe should be followed.

The issue of who wins and who loses in these things frequently is a result of decisions of a regulatory panel, a tribunal, as in this case the CRTC. Nobody has suggested those decisions should be made elsewhere.

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of Indian affairs displayed petulance and obfuscation which has forced him this morning—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to be very judicious in the words he is going to use from here on in.

Mr. Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this morning the minister of Indian affairs clarified his conflicting answers on the series of events on the Stoney Reserve. It is now evident the minister did not seriously investigate this ongoing situation until after yesterday's question period.

I have now heard reports that there are five other locations in Alberta where logging may be exceeding DIAND permits: Gerard, Sturgeon, Hart Lake, Boyer and Eden Valley. What is the minister doing about this?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was enlightening if for no other reason than the member for Kootenay East told the Vancouver *Sun* that all the companies were from his riding and would not name them.

In case the hon. member wants to know where the member for Kootenay East is, he is about three down and sits in the Reform Party. If he wants to be helpful, he obviously knows the names of the companies and he could quietly provide the RCMP with the information so that charges can be laid.

(1445)

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it would be refreshing to have the minister stop attacking the Reform Party every time he is asked a question. He could start being a professional manager.

The minister has given conflicting reports as to when he knew about the overcutting at Stoney Reserve. Did he know when the department knew one year ago? If not, why not? If he did, why did he not do something?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would categorize this as more of a confession than an attack. I am glad the hon. member has raised that question because I think it is time to get positive.

What are we going to do about it? I think we could use the help of the Reform because the National Aboriginal Forestry Association has proposals for legislation. It represents 120 First Nations who are involved in forestry, 50 forestry companies, educational institutes and the Meadow Lake Integrated Management Program which does training. They have five goals all of which presumably the Reform will endorse.

If they work through a consultation process, which I think they will, and if we have legislation—

Mr. Thompson: Useless.

Mr. Irwin: Just relax. I know I get you every time.

The Speaker: I think I will just relax and go on to the next questioner.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for the Status of Women.

This morning, women representing literally hundreds of Quebec and Canadian organizations came to Ottawa to protest against cuts in the Equal Opportunities for Women Program. They denounced the gradual erosion of federal grants to

Oral Questions

women's groups, which have shrunk by over \$4 million over the past six years and are getting smaller every year.

How can the Secretary of State for the Status of Women justify these new cuts to organizations working with disadvantaged women when pride and dignity is all her Prime Minister ever talked about during the last election campaign?

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud and confident of our government's unequivocal commitment to equality for women, period.

I must remind my hon. colleague that we have restored the Court Challenges Program, are setting up health centers of excellence for women and are working on sentencing reform, firearms control, employment equity and small business issues, all with women in mind. I think this clearly shows our concern for equality for women.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State for the Status of Women is said to have informed women's groups before the budget was tabled that the criteria for grants would be reviewed by next fall.

Does the hon. secretary of state intend to hold consultations with these groups in developing these new criteria? If so, how much weight will she give to the results of these consultations in making her final decision?

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the Bloc's concern for the status of Canadian women. I think this suggests it recognizes that equity and unity are going strong in Canada.

In this regard, she must recognize that our February budget did not contain any cuts in grants or contributions to women's groups. And I told women just that: "No cuts in grants or contributions". I told women and I repeat that the opinion of women from all regions of Canada will be taken into consideration when budget adjustments are made. I hope that the Bloc Québécois is interested in the well-being of all women in Canada.

* * *

(1450)

[English]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the west island of Montreal, indeed the whole region, was shocked to learn of the brutal murder of Reverend Frank Toope and his wife, Jocelyn. Three youths have been charged with the first degree murder of the retired couple. The victims were battered to death with a baseball bat.

Can the Minister of Justice assure this House that with the amendments to the Young Offenders Act currently before the Senate, young violent offenders will no longer be able to hide behind the law? Will justice be served for the victims, their families, the offenders and most of all for society?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragic deaths of Reverend and Mrs. Toope have shocked and saddened the community of Beaconsfield. All Canadians have been touched by the senselessness of this brutal crime. As the hon. member has said, people have been charged and the case is now before the courts. I will be careful not to comment on the facts of that case. Let me speak more broadly to the issues the member has raised.

The government cannot say that merely changing words in a statute, in a book, is going to prevent tragedies like this from happening. We know that is not so. A number of things are required to prevent crime and to get at its causes.

To the extent to which changes in the criminal law and the Young Offenders Act can deter and properly punish such misconduct, this government has acted. Bill C-37, which is through the House, is now before the Senate and I hope it will receive its prompt attention. As the House knows, that bill increases penalties for murder. It provides for the transfer to adult court of certain youths charged with serious violent crimes. It provides for the sharing of information.

I have also asked for the justice committee to tour the country, to listen to Canadians, to examine our juvenile justice system and determine whether other changes are needed. This government will be responsive to those recommendations. We are committed to a system that is fair and tough. We will act on that conviction.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to the aforementioned horror which took place in Montreal. Two citizens were brutally, coldly and with extreme calculation bludgeoned to death by three young offenders. These murders were coldly planned homicides without remorse.

Will the justice minister assure the people of Canada by insisting that the 14 and 15-year old psychopath young offenders be tried in adult court?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand how Canadians, including members of the House, react to the horror and tragedy of events such as these.

I do urge the hon. member to bear in mind that the judicial process must run its course. There are people charged who are presumed innocent. There will be a trial. The crown will proffer evidence and a court will decide who is responsible. We must not prejudice that process.

Let me say in response to the point raised by the hon. member that any decision on whether or not to seek a transfer to adult

Oral Questions

court is for the prosecuting lawyer to make. That person takes direction from the Attorney General of the province of Quebec.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have received nearly 50,000 letters and I know the minister has received the same amount regarding the Young Offenders Act.

We have continually heard from this minister that crime prevention, assistance for troubled youth at risk will stop these horrible crimes. It is too late for these two elderly people.

We have been told by provincial agencies that this government talks about assistance for youth at risk but does nothing. I ask the minister: When will he become a minister of action instead of an acting minister?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the record will show that I have never claimed we are going to be able to stop all crime. That is not going to happen.

What I have said is that while there is a role for toughening up the laws and providing better responses and enforcement, that is not all that is required. A great deal of other things are required as well and we have to focus on all of them.

(1455)

I respond to the hon. member by saying that we have taken action by passing Bill C-37. We have taken action by asking the committee to recommend further changes. We have created the National Crime Prevention Council. My colleagues in cabinet are working in a variety of ways to address the underlying social causes of crime in this country.

* * *

[Translation]

BURUNDI

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The UN special envoy to Burundi accused the international community of pushing that country toward a genocide. Yesterday, in Bujumbura, that official denounced the international community's inconsistency and irresponsibility regarding the crisis in Burundi, where two million people may have to leave their homes, thus creating the world's largest concentration of refugees, according to the British Red Cross.

Will the minister once again remain insensitive to the increasing number of calls for help in Burundi?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me simply remind the hon. member what Canada has done in recent weeks and months to avoid a crisis

which could reach proportions similar to the one which occurred in Rwanda.

First, the Secretary of State responsible for Latin America and Africa personally travelled to Bujumbura to participate in a meeting to find solutions to the refugee problem.

Second, Canada tabled a resolution which was supported by all the ministers attending a conference of the Francophonie, which was held in France, and where it was decided to send a ministerial delegation to Burundi to try to work out a solution with local authorities.

Third, the Canadian government is subsidizing NGO's, particularly the International Red Cross, in their efforts to help the civilian populations affected by the conflict.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister already told us about his information, his concerns, his representations and his hopes. However, my question is: How can Canada remain unconcerned by the plea for help made yesterday by the UN special envoy in Burundi? What is Canada waiting for to act, to show some leadership and to help a fellow member of the Francophonie? After all, Canada has displayed such leadership in the past.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for recognizing that the government is already involved. It is not fair to say that we are unconcerned. On the contrary, the initiatives which I just mentioned reflect our will to find a solution.

The hon. member would like Canada to be a leader regarding that issue. We are prepared to take on the role which the parties involved would like us to assume. Canada cannot impose itself. However, we have clearly shown that we are willing and prepared to help the parties involved if it is their wish.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, seven weeks ago the 14-year old daughter of two constituents of mine moved in with a 26-year old convicted sex offender. Neither the parents nor the police can do anything about this because the law states that the age of consent is 14 years.

Does the Minister of Justice see this as a case of child exploitation, or is the government content to see the situation continue?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice has under review the whole question of the age of consent to sexual activity precisely because of our concern for the young people who might otherwise be victimized.

I do however emphasize that the criminal law is not entirely silent in this respect. For example, as provided in section 273.1

Point of Order

of the code, there is no consent if the participation of someone of that age is induced by breach of trust or authority, threat or fear.

(1500)

I point out to the hon. member that there may well be provisions in the code which would deal with this situation.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the minister's attention another instance where for two years 46-year-old Henry Halm has been in Canada to avoid facing a prison sentence in New York for sexually abusing four young males, aged 15 and 16.

A Canadian judge recently ruled that Canada's laws dealing with the age of consent for sodomy are unconstitutional.

Does the Minister of Justice see this as a case of child exploitation? Is he prepared to change the law for the age of consent to see that this is stopped?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue in the case referred to by the hon. member is just the opposite. It was alleged in that case that the prohibition of homosexual activity by those who are under 18 years of age is unconstitutional because it is inconsistent with the rule otherwise for heterosexual activity. I believe that case is still before the courts and I will be careful not to comment further.

I am meeting this afternoon with a group called Citizens Against Child Exploitation led by a courageous and energetic woman, Monica Rainey from British Columbia. I am looking forward to that meeting. I have met with her in the past and I always learn from my encounters with her. This very subject is on the agenda. I will express my interest to Ms. Rainey and I will discuss it with her.

I can assure the hon. member that it is something that we will consider very carefully.

* * *

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Saskatoon—Dundurn, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last fall a group of western MPs consulted with western Canadians on regional development. Important matters were recommended to the minister in charge of western diversification, including export promotion and helping high growth sectors.

What is the Minister of Western Diversification doing to implement the recommendations to help strengthen the economy of western Canada?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon.

member, and especially members of his committee, who made some very important recommendations.

I am pleased to report to the House that as a result of those representations and the guidelines set out in the budget that as of April 1 the Department of Western Economic Diversification has changed its fundamental approach to funding. We are now out of the direct lending or contribution business to individual enterprises. Instead we are now working with financial institutions to set up a network of investment capital pools across western Canada.

I can report that the Royal Bank, as it indicated last week before committee, is now prepared to join with us in setting up a very large investment capital system for the agriculture biotechnology industry. We have several other investment pools ready to be initiated that will provide a whole new system of investment capital for western Canada which will be the spur for real growth and real jobs.

* * *

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw members' attention to the presence in the gallery of Mrs. Kleveland, Minister of Cultural Affairs (Culture, Sport and Media) from Norway.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS UNDER S. O. 31

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Standing Order No. 18 states in part:

No Member may reflect upon any vote of the House—

Nowhere in my member's statement did I specifically refer to a vote in the House nor was I about to.

By cutting me off halfway through my statement, I ask, with respect, for you to please tell me how my privileges as a member of this House have not been breached.

The Speaker: Order. There are times in the House, when we are making statements and asking and answering questions, in the heat of the debate, sometimes words are used that I interpret as indications of where a member is going.

(1505)

In the particular case today, as members know, the Speaker does not explain his decision. I would be happy to speak to the hon. member for Crowfoot.

With all respect the hon. member, I would say this. It seemed to me at the time that the member was going in this direction and I thought I heard inference to the vote.

Business of the House

I am perfectly willing to review the blues. If, indeed, I made a mistake, as I will from time to time, because a lot of things happen at once and I am trying to pay very strict attention to hon. members when they speak. I will have a look at the blues and if, indeed, I was in error then I will come back to the House.

Will the hon. member at least give me the time to review the blues and we will take it from there. I will be happy to speak to the hon. member in my chambers if he wishes to pursue this.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. I would ask that when you review the blues and this question, that you give us a little more guidance on the interpretation of this rule. It seems to me there have been numerous references during question period to votes that have taken place in the House.

For instance, the minister of immigration regularly refers to the vote on Bill C-44. Perhaps you could clarify your interpretation of that rule.

The Speaker: If it is necessary to come back to the House with a ruling on this particular subject, your Speaker will take into account all of the requests that are made to him here in the House today.

I am going to proceed first to the regular Thursday question. Then I want to give my ruling on a point of order raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as incredible as it may sound, I rise to ask the traditional question for a Thursday, even though today is the last time we meet for two weeks. I still wish to ask the hon. Leader of the Government in the House to tell us what is on the agenda for that period of time.

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to know what we are going to do during the next two weeks. I do not think that comes under the purview of the House.

However, I will make a statement about what will happen when the House returns on April 24. As I have said, I will leave what is to be done by hon. members in the intervening period to them and their own good judgment, if not their good taste.

When the House returns on April 24, we will be entering the most intensive part of the parliamentary calendar. I believe, therefore, it would be useful if I outlined briefly, not only the business for the next few days we are back but also priorities for the period between our resumption of sittings and the break in the month of May.

The business of supply requires many opposition days in this period, one or two a week. I should like to designate Thursday, April 27 as one of those opposition days.

Our first priorities when we come back from the Easter break will be to complete the third reading of Bill C-69 regarding electoral boundaries, and second reading of Bill C-76 implementing the budget, if these bills have not been completed, of course, before we adjourn today.

We will then return to report stage of Bill C-43, respecting lobbyists and to a motion to set up a special joint committee to develop a code of conduct for members of both Houses of Parliament.

Our next priority will be second readings of other important and pressing bills, namely Bill C-75 regarding farm loans; Bill C-70 regarding income tax; the bill respecting the Mint which was introduced this morning, and a very limited number of measures to be introduced later this month on which there are some time constraints.

We will also give priority to the bills that have already been considered by parliamentary committees and which have been reported back to the House and which, therefore, are now in their final stages of debate in the Chamber. These are Bill C-54 regarding old age security; Bill C-67 respecting veterans pensions and Bill C-65 concerning government organization.

(1510)

There is also Bill C-41 regarding sentencing; Bill C-45 respecting conditional release; Bill C-58 regarding the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and Bill C-52 respecting the Department of Public Works and Government Services.

We will then consider other items reported from committee and any other items on which there is a consensus to move along.

By way of conclusion, I want to say I am providing this information now so the House leaders of the other parties are able to assess their positions in order to enable them to join with me, when the House resumes, in planning a reasonable schedule for the House in late April and early May which will in turn make it possible for us to do similar planning for what will be a very crowded agenda in June.

Having said all that, I wish all members of the House and their families a happy Easter and a happy Passover.

*Speaker's Ruling***POINTS OF ORDER**

QUESTION PERIOD—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Colleagues, on March 31, the member for Crowfoot raised a point of order concerning answers given by the Minister of Justice in response to questions posed during question periods on March 27 and March 29. I would like to thank the hon. member for Crowfoot, the hon. Minister of Justice, the chief government whip and the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster for their contributions to the discussion.

The hon. member for Crowfoot contended the Minister of Justice had contravened the sub judice convention by commenting on a case under appeal in the Alberta courts, and in so doing could have compromised the outcome of the case. Making reference to several citations from Beauchesne's sixth edition and to the case of Regina v. the Atlantic Sugar Refineries Co. to support his arguments, the hon. member requested that the Chair review the matter and determine whether or not the minister had contravened the sub judice convention.

[Translation]

The hon. Minister of Justice responded that nothing he had said in relation to the case offended the convention, and maintained that there was a difference between commenting on the facts of a case while the case was before a court, and stating the government's opinion about the ruling which had been rendered by a court.

Under the *sub judice* convention, it is accepted practice that, in the interests of justice and fair play, certain restrictions be placed on the freedom of members of Parliament to make reference in the course of debate to matters awaiting judicial decisions. Similarly, it is understood that such matters should not be the subject of motions or questions in the House.

As I commented last Friday, we use the word "convention" when referring to matters which are *sub judice* (that is, under the consideration of a judge or court), as no "rule" exists to prevent Parliament from discussing such matters.

[English]

In Canada, the First Report to the House of the Special Committee on Rights and Immunities of Members, presented on April 29, 1977, remains the definitive study of the sub judice convention. This special committee was chaired by Mr. Speaker James Jerome. In its report, the committee gave a lengthy explanation of the purpose of the convention. With the indulgence of the House I would like to quote from the committee's report, issue No. 1, at page 1:4:

The freedom of speech accorded to Members of Parliament is a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, and to say what they

feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents. This basic parliamentary freedom is to some extent limited by the sub judice convention. Under the convention as it has developed over the years Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts. No distinction has ever been made in Canada between criminal courts and civil courts for the purpose of applying the convention. It has also had application to certain tribunals other than courts of law. The purpose of the convention is to protect the parties in a case awaiting or undergoing trial and persons who stand to be affected by the outcome of a judicial inquiry. It exists to guarantee everyone a fair trial and to prevent any undue influence prejudicing a judicial decision or a report of a tribunal of inquiry.

(1515)

[Translation]

The *sub judice* convention itself is poorly defined and its interpretation is usually left to the Speaker. The difficulty that I face as Speaker is that any attempt to determine when a comment might have a tendency to influence something can be at best speculative rather than preventative, that is, I cannot make such a determination until after the comments have been made. Hence, it has been the approach of most Chair occupants to discourage all comments on *sub judice* matters, rather than allow members to experiment within the limits of the convention and test the Speaker's discretion.

[English]

As stated in the special committee's report, Issue No. 1, at page 1:12:

Your Committee is of the opinion that precise regulations concerning the application of the sub judice convention cannot be evolved and that it would be unwise to attempt to do so. Your committee recommends that the Speaker should remain the final arbiter in the matter, that he should retain the authority to prevent discussion of matters in the House on the ground of sub judice, but that he should only exercise his discretion in exceptional cases where it is clear to him that to do otherwise could be harmful to specific individuals. In exercising this discretion your committee recommends that when there is a doubt in the mind of the Chair, a presumption should exist in favour of allowing debate and against the application of the convention.

As to the matter raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot, I have reviewed the question period exchanges. I have reviewed them many times and the points raised by hon. members during the discussion on the point of order. I cannot conclude the Minister of Justice contravened the sub judice convention by stating the federal government disagreed with the decision of a court and planned to challenge the decision.

[Translation]

Let me make one additional comment. While the ultimate authority to judge on these matters rests with the Chair, I must emphasize that All members of the House must share the responsibility in exercising restraint when it seems called for. Again, I quote from the special committee's report, issue No. 1, at page 1:12: "It is the view of your committee that the responsibility of the Chair during the question period should be minimal as regards the *sub judice* convention, and that the

responsibility should principally rest upon the member who asks the question and the minister to whom it is addressed.”

[English]

In conclusion, I urge all members and ministers to be prudent and exercise caution in their choice of words when dealing with matters that could fall into the difficult area of sub judice.

I want to thank all hon. members for their contributions.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before the debate resumes I have a few motions and I think you will find unanimous consent for these.

First, I move:

That the Subcommittee on Aboriginal Education, composed of five members of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, be authorized to travel to Sudbury, Manitoulin Island, Sioux Lookout and Winnipeg from April 22 to 30, 1995 and that a staff of three do accompany the subcommittee.

(Motion agreed to.)

(1520)

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second motion is to authorize a committee to travel. I move:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and the necessary staff be authorized to travel to hold hearings and undertake site visits in Iqualuit, Resolute Bay, Cambridge Bay and Yellowknife between May 1 and 19, 1995.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next I move:

Routine Proceedings

That a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to travel to Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Nanaimo and Campbell River, British Columbia, from April 27 to May 4, 1995 to discuss Pacific salmon issues, aboriginal fishing strategy, the merger of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the coastguard, and licensing.

(Motion agreed to.)

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to impose on the House this afternoon; however, I have one further motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, the government may table its response to the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations no later than June 5, 1995.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, earlier this day a vote was deferred until our return on Monday, April 24. I ask unanimous consent to further defer the vote until Tuesday, April 25, at 5.30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières seeks the unanimous consent of the House to revert to presentation of petitions. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PETITIONS

VOICE MAIL

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit three petitions all asking the government to abandon plans for voice mail for seniors.

The first petition is signed by residents of the Mauricie area, the second one is from constituents in my riding and the third one is also from my riding, more particularly from members of the AFEAS of Sainte-Thérèse, in Trois-Rivières, whom I want to salute.

The petition reads: “The petitioners call upon Parliament to ask the government to abandon its plan to install voice mail, particularly for seniors”.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I support these petitions.

[English]

CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it pleases me to present a petition to the House in accordance with the standing orders.

Government Orders

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne Regiment is an act without precedent in Canadian history.

(1525)

Therefore they request that Parliament initiate a royal commission or a wide ranging full public inquiry into the Canadian Armed Forces, including the reserves, to investigate, report and make recommendations on all matters affecting operations, tasking, resources, effectiveness, morale and welfare.

MAHESH INDER SINGH

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our colleague, the member for Nepean, I have the duty to present a petition from the Sikhs of Canada concerning the pending extradition of Mahesh Inder Singh.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[Translation]***ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
READJUSTMENT ACT, 1995**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): **When we interrupted debate to go on to question period, the hon. member for Chicoutimi had about ten minutes left.**

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was just telling this House that we should at least confirm that Quebec must be represented by 25 per cent of the members of the House. I was also wondering why the rest of Canada was so afraid, why some people are trying to deprive us of the perfectly legitimate right to equitable representation. Furthermore, on April 4, the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly of Quebec, the kid brother of the federal Liberals, presented exactly the same motion as my colleague from Bellechasse.

I repeat that Quebec has a legitimate and, above all, an historic right to a minimum of political power in the Canadian federation. As things stand right now, we do not get our fair share of federal transfer payments and defence spending and we have showed this on a number of occasions in this House. Just this morning, one of my colleagues pointed out that we do not get our fair share in R&D, nor do we get it in job creation, and that is hardly all.

Besides this reduction in its representation, Quebec will be facing other similar inequities in the next few months. I was wondering: What does the Prime Minister think of that? What do the hon. members for Gatineau and Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine think of that?

In the last vote on this issue, on March 28, I did not sense much support on the other side of the House. I can hardly understand what is going on. Is it not true that, in the political history of Canada and Quebec, the legislator has often expressed the will to assure regions, especially remote and rural regions, of a fair representation in the House of Commons? As long as the current formula for seat distribution between the territories and the provinces set out in the Constitution Act, 1867, as amended in 1915 and in 1976, is not changed and that this Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act remains relatively unchanged, is it not obvious that the same principles of representation for remote and rural regions should apply, especially to Quebec?

All members know that until Quebecers make a decision in favour of Quebec's sovereignty, it is very important that this province maintain a minimum representation of 25 per cent in all federal institutions.

(1530)

As surprising as it may seem and in spite of all the constitutional mechanisms aimed at protecting provinces that are experiencing a relative population decline, one province has always had fewer seats than its share of the population ever since Canada was born 128 years ago. And, of course, some people will say that the fact that it happens to be Quebec is just a coincidence.

Even the most densely populated province, Ontario, was given several extra members at the beginning of the century and eight extra members after the 1941 census because it was considered to be experiencing a relative population decline due to the rapid growth in the western provinces. I will say however—and this should not come as a surprise to anyone—that Quebec which, at that time, accounted for 33 per cent of Canada's total population did not hold 33 per cent of the seats in this House. And, today, we have trouble holding on to 25 per cent. From 1867 to 1995, we never had extra seats, even when we could have demanded it. Is this double standard really acceptable? I submit that it is not and that it should not be.

I strongly believe that the constitution and the elections acts must reflect the Canadian duality and thus guarantee that Quebec retain a quarter of the members in the House of Commons until the people of Quebec decide otherwise. Beyond party or partisan considerations, this proposal, once again, is true to the traditional demands of Quebec. I remind you that this proposal got the support of the Liberal Party of Canada in the last round of constitutional negotiations. The hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel surely recalls it unless he has a very short memory.

It would be a lot wiser for the government to wait a few months before putting this legislation forward or, better still, put it off indefinitely. Let the government deal with this country's real problems. Does it not know that Bill C-69 is going to cost taxpayers an awful lot with its commissions that will have to

Government Orders

travel across Canada? Would that money not be put to a better use or spent more wisely if it were to go for job creation, for example, or for a family policy?

As for the Reform Party, it would like to see a decrease in the number of seats in the House of Commons. The day after the referendum, their wish will be fulfilled. The Liberal government claims that this country needs a readjustment of electoral boundaries. The day after the referendum, their wish will be fulfilled too. In a few months from now, both the Reformers and the Liberals will get satisfaction. After the referendum that we are going to win, do not forget.

(1535)

As a result, there will be fewer members sitting in this House and Canada will really need a readjustment of electoral boundaries, since Quebec will be sovereign and will no longer be part of a country that, historically—and I dealt with the historical background before question period—has not wanted it. I stated the relevant facts earlier.

[English]

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the comments made by the hon. member and his proposition for 25 per cent of the members of this great House.

I wonder if he is seriously looking at the possibility of forgetting the proposal for separation and instead having a future as part of this great country of Canada. There is no question in my mind that Quebec complements and plays a very important role in the make-up of this whole country.

Is the member now suggesting that the referendum should be put on the back burner and that in the future Quebec should continue to be part of this nation and this House of Commons? Is that why he is putting forward this proposal of 25 per cent? If that is the case, I think it is wonderful the hon. member is prepared to come forward with that. It suggests to me that he and other Bloc members are changing their minds and now realize what a privilege it is to be part of this great country.

[Translation]

Mr. Fillion: Mr. Speaker, historical facts from a more recent past will give us the answer to that question.

In 1965, the War Measures Act was proclaimed in Quebec. In the middle of the night, the government of Canada invoked the act. The army, used certain pretexts, supposedly to stop a separatist movement. Five hundred people were arrested without warrant. That is the first fact. The second one is even more recent. It happened in 1981, when the premiers of Canada, once again in the middle of the night, in Quebec's absence, went

against what they had signed and accepted the unilateral patriation of the Constitution.

I could also remind the hon. members of the very recent Meech Lake accord in 1987. Everybody knows that one member of this House prevented his legislature from discussing the Meech Lake accord, with the result that everything that had been provided for in that accord was rejected. That member now sits on the government benches.

We could also recall the Charlottetown round of discussions and the way it all ended. It is too bad, but Quebecers will not forget these facts. Bloc Quebecois members will not abandon their option, which is to pave the way to Quebec's sovereignty. Through our efforts here, we will reach that goal.

The only thing we are asking for now, because we are still in this federation, is the preservation of our rights. It is that simple. When Quebecers make a decision on Quebec sovereignty, you will do as you please. When that moment comes, both founding nations will gain something, in my opinion.

(1540)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to my colleague's speech, I remembered the mandate we received from the electorate, which is to defend the interests of Quebecers and at the same time to promote sovereignty.

Would he not agree that we have before us a very clear opportunity to fulfil both objectives? By rejecting the amendment which aims to maintain at 25 per cent the representation of Quebec in the House of Commons, the government shows that the Constitution cannot possibly be renewed. The government has not even given us this basic right.

By negating our status as a people, as one of the founding nations of this country, is it not the federal government, and particularly the Liberal members who voted against this amendment or simply abstained from voting, who will be blamed for not protecting the interests of Quebec? Will they not bear the brunt of this decision by the present government, a decision which is in keeping with the thinking of previous governments as well as with the logic of the unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982? Is the member not more comfortable with his position than Liberal members in general can be?

Mr. Fillion: Mr. Speaker, the comment made by my colleague allows me to demonstrate that despite the past hundred years, the people of Quebec have matured and are not about to gamble with their future. They will make a decision based on events they have witnessed throughout history.

The people of Quebec have reached a point where they will have to make a decision. Of course, that decision will be to hand the government of Quebec all political and economic powers to allow Quebec to govern itself without having to constantly wait

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for actions from this Parliament that never materialize, for instance responsibility transfers that do not come with the required funds.

There is no doubt that we are now at a crossroad. The decision will be made. I am convinced that with the debate to be held in the coming months, a majority of Quebecers will say no to these fruitless battles we have been involved in for too long.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-69, an act to provide for the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions and the readjustment of electoral boundaries, at third and final reading today.

I am pleased to have this opportunity because, although I am opposed to the way the Liberal government has handled the issue, the debate which has taken place around the issue of electoral boundary readjustment has produced some very good suggestions for change. This debate today gives me a chance to comment in more detail than I did earlier this year when I spoke on the concurrence motion that was presented before the House.

Bill C-69 was first tabled in the House of Commons on February 16, 1995. It has been dealt with in committee and is now back in the House for third reading. Bill C-69 repeals the existing Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act which has been in place since 1964.

In early 1994 the commissions established under the 1964 rules and appointed in more recent years began issuing their proposals for the new electoral boundaries, which they had been working on for months previous. The proposals generated considerable concern and debate, especially since the federal election had just been held and concluded.

(1545)

In March 1994 the government introduced Bill C-18 to suspend the operation of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. As originally drafted, Bill C-18 would have abolished the 11 electoral boundaries commissions and suspended the act itself for up to two years. Because of concern that this would unduly delay redistribution—and the Liberal majority in the House of Commons refused to acknowledge this—the other place proposed amendments to suspend the act only until June 22, 1995 unless new legislation was put in place before then and rather than abolish the committees to suspend them until that time.

The bill in front of us today is meant to address those matters. The government is doing what it can to ensure it has full passage before June 22. At the outset, let me say that I will be opposing the bill when the vote occurs at the conclusion of the debate. I will do this because I believe the government is interfering with

the independence of what should be a completely non-partisan arm's length relationship between the people of Canada and its politicians.

There is a place for politicians to debate process and procedure and to set rules that will apply in the future. However, in this case the independent process had begun its course and was acting according to its existing mandate when the government unilaterally shut it down and began setting new rules that would be applied retroactively.

With the passage of this bill the new rules will be in place and the work of the many existing boundary commissions, much of it completed after numerous public hearings were held, will be put on the shelf to gather dust. I expect such will be the case of the Saskatchewan Boundaries Commission which for all intents and purposes has completed the work of readjusting the federal boundaries within my province. Because of the provisions of this bill, that commission will likely not be reappointed and Saskatchewan residents will vote within the same boundaries that were originally set for the 1988 general election when the next general election is called.

Political constituency boundaries are like provincial and national boundaries. Despite the fact they are often arbitrarily drawn, they help to recognize economic, social and geographic patterns. They are most easily accepted by the public when they recognize those patterns.

We in Canada have developed a system that is based on a reference to population and changes in these constituency boundaries take place when populations shift. I realize that in a system of representation by population this is an important consideration. I agree with those who, inside and outside this Chamber, argue that it makes no sense for one member of Parliament to represent a constituency populated by 110,000 and another MP to represent a population of 55,000 or less.

Even though each citizen of Canada has one vote in a general election, the votes when counted are not equal. In the case I just outlined, those smaller constituencies require only half as many votes to elect their representative as do those in the larger constituencies. Those representatives in turn vote on matters of concern to all the people of Canada in this House on their behalf.

The boundaries commissioners who are appointed to redraw boundaries when populations change are also charged with taking into account local trading patterns, communities of interest, geographical barriers to movement and local economic conditions. Past experience has shown this has not always been the case. Therefore, changes in the way we do this stuff is important.

To a certain extent this bill addresses a few of the problems we should be looking at for the future. I will address some of those changes in just a moment. First, I think it is important that we do

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not overlook the fact that the system is in much more need of an overhaul than this bill provides.

There is talk about the need to reduce the number of members of Parliament. This is a matter I support and one which I think this Parliament should examine in greater detail. There has been much talk about building an electoral system around a couple of different concepts, like proportional representation, or perhaps a preferential ballot. This is another matter I support, the discussion of these different systems of elections. We would be doing ourselves an injustice if we did not pursue that debate as well.

(1550)

The House of Commons is only one part of what we call Parliament. It is impossible and I think irresponsible to reform one part of this picture without addressing the other. I talked about the other place in my remarks on the concurrence motion.

I want to stress again that as long as we are hitching our horse to an electoral system based completely on representation by population, we must address the problems this creates in regional fairness. We can best address this by reforming the second chamber of Parliament. I support the idea of abolishing the currently unelected and unaccountable Senate and replacing it with a new elected, accountable and certainly more useful second chamber that can address more equitably the grievances of the regions.

These matters are all important to addressing the real economic and social issues facing all Canadians. The government should be prepared to take the next step in this matter as soon as the debate on this bill is complete.

In presenting his report to Parliament the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs which by and large drafted this bill, the member for Kingston and the Islands suggested that there were a number of problems with the process of looking at boundary changes. For the most part I agree with him. Those problems have to be addressed.

The member for Kingston and the Islands said there was a problem with the beginning of the process. Newly drafted boundaries maps often appeared to the general public as if by magic. For most ordinary Canadians the first they knew there was a boundary change in process was when they saw a redrawn map published in a local newspaper. The new boundaries appeared as if they were a fait accompli, a done deal. The work had been completed. Although public input was sought at this point, to many Canadians this seemed like a futile gesture. Most of the work had already been done.

Changes considered and brought forward in this bill now make the consultation process start earlier. The public will be notified before the boundaries commissions begin the process of redrawing the maps. Public input will be considered at that

stage. This is very important and I am pleased to see it included. So much of the work goes on in that early decision making that the role of the public must be considered.

At the same time we know today that the existing commissions are not required to justify their rationale for making the early decisions, those decisions which determine the basis for readjusting the boundaries. The new rules will require the commissions to justify themselves. This is also most supportable.

In our own case in Saskatchewan, the most recent commission made its early decision to give our two largest cities, Saskatoon and Regina, four instead of three seats each. That decision subsequently affected every other seat in the province since there were no additional seats to be had in Saskatchewan.

There were 14 seats before redistribution and there were 14 seats after redistribution. When the commission decided to move two additional seats into the urban environment it meant that two rural seats would basically disappear. On that point there was no public input prior to the decision being made. Subsequently the commission was not asked to justify why the two urban seats needed more MPs and the rural areas needed fewer.

In a historical aside, I think it is worth noting that I found in the history of federal representation in Saskatchewan a very interesting circumstance. If we look at the historical record we note that the first federal election in which the newly formed province of Saskatchewan participated was back in 1907. Ten federal constituencies were contested. In 1907 Saskatchewan had 10 seats out of a total of 221 in the House of Commons. That number fluctuated considerably over the years to a high of 21 seats in the elections of 1924 and 1933 when the House total was 245 seats. Today in a House of Commons of 295 members, Saskatchewan residents are represented by 14 MPs.

If the House of Commons expands to 301 seats, we will continue to have the 14 seats for a while but then we will begin to lose seats, eventually ending up with just 10 again sometime in the early part of the next century. After 100 years of history we will be right back to where we started: 10 seats in 1907, 10 seats in 2003.

(1555)

I might add that according to Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, if the government ever addresses the question of a smaller Parliament, Saskatchewan will again lose more seats. It will likely end up with no more than eight members of Parliament representing every citizen within its provincial borders. This is more than enough reason for Saskatchewan residents to say that we should make sure that we look beyond representation by population in the second chamber and develop a system that will ensure there is fairness in regional representation.

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Going back to the bill, another problem in this mix of existing rules left any sort of national standards for the basis of decision making as non-existent. Every boundaries commission made their own set of rules and set guidelines for how they would adjust the boundaries within their area of jurisdiction.

As a result, there was no consistency across Canada. Some constituencies were created under guidelines which took into account normal local trading, economics, social and even religious patterns. Others were created for population or even for political purposes.

This meant that some commissions made changes that were completely unnecessary. They only did so because they were given the opportunity to make changes on rules they established for themselves. The whole matter of unnecessary changes is crazy. I think the committee has recognized that in proposing changes in this bill.

The changes proposed in this legislation will now make public input more useful, consultation more widespread and boundary changes necessary only when warranted by dramatic population shifts. These are definitely changes that have to be made.

I agree that the role of the public must be strengthened because this exercise is ultimately for them. The boundaries on which MPs are elected have an effect on the type of representation the people within those boundaries can expect or should expect. In drawing up those boundaries the needs of those who will be directly affected must be respected.

I also like the principle of "least amount of change" which this bill proposes, although I do not support its retroactivity. The principle of least amount of change means that no boundaries readjustment commission would be appointed when the population does not warrant it. If there is no substantial population change, then there is no new commission, no new work done to adjust boundaries, no public hearings, no new maps or advertising and with that no new expenditure of public money to create something that does not need to be changed. This is a positive element.

For the benefit of my constituents back home in Saskatchewan, as I mentioned earlier, this likely means that there will be no new map for Saskatchewan's federal boundaries. The Battlefords—Meadow Lake constituency created for the 1988 election and which was in place for the 1993 election will likely remain in place for the next federal election whenever that may be.

In conclusion, let me simply say that the changes presented by Bill C-69 do not justify the suspension of the current process and the discarding of the work of so many commissions that was virtually complete. However, the debate has been worthwhile. The changes will improve the process for the future. At the same time, let us not forget there is that bigger picture to look at, a picture that should include a review of the total number of seats in the House, the concept of proportional representation or preferential ballot and the concept of a second chamber of Parliament that is accountable to the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the presentation of our colleague from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake. I think that his position was clear and well put.

I would like to ask him a few questions, perhaps two, particularly on the issue of an elected Senate. But before I get into the subject, I would like to justify, just a little, my participation in the debate.

As a sovereigntist member of Parliament from Quebec, it might seem strange that I would want to get involved in the representation of Canadians in the House of Commons, but it should be well understood that constituents gave us the mandate to be the official opposition in the House. I think that it would have been inappropriate for us not to deal with this issue claiming that it does not concern us.

(1600)

It concerns us, first, because of the mandate which we received, as I just mentioned, and also because, in view of the association with Canada that we want to promote, it is in our best interests, as Quebecers, to ensure that Canadian Parliament works in the best way possible.

I would like to remind my colleague, whom I was interested to hear mention that the representation of Saskatchewan's members in Parliament would be reduced in the future, why we, in the Bloc Québécois, were moved to present an amendment which was defeated by the House. The aim of this amendment was to ensure that, should Quebec remain in Canada, its representation would never drop below 25 per cent.

Why are we insisting on that figure? I think that this 25 per cent is very small if we consider what we have been. When you come into the lobby of the House of Commons, there is the opposition door and the government door. If you look above the opposition door, you can see two medallions. In one of them, there is Louis XIV and in the other, François I.

Above the government door, you notice two English kings. What does that mean? It means that you can see, carved in stone, what Canada was when we entered Confederation. By the way, we entered Confederation on a vote by the Parliament of what was then Lower Canada. There was no referendum. At the time, Canada was a duality, what people used to call the French Canadian people and the English Canadian people. That is how people saw Canada.

In 1982, Canada changed. Canada was a country with ten equal provinces, and in those provinces there were citizens who were all equal, irrespective of their origins, but that is not really my point. My point is that the nature of the country in which we live was changed and it was done forcibly, and, I may recall, by means of a law passed by the Parliament of England. So this is not exactly conducive to good relations between peoples, and

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when I say peoples, I am referring to the people of Quebec and the people of Canada.

The hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake rose to complain that Saskatchewan would have fewer members. As members from Quebec, we also rose to complain about this eventuality, and the House of Commons ignored our complaint. We protested on the basis of our historic responsibility as the homeland of French Canadians. Today, French Canadians call themselves Quebecers, possibly to the dismay of some people in English Canada.

And now my question is about the Senate. The hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake suggested, to compensate for the decrease in representation of the provinces, an appointed or elected Senate that would act as a kind of counterweight to the fact that the House of Commons would then perhaps represent more ridings and the Senate would then represent the provinces and play a kind of protective role.

Considering his experience in the House of Commons—the hon. member is an experienced member of Parliament who was here throughout the Mulroney era—does he really believe that in the present situation, Canada will ever achieve the kind of constitutional reform that would allow for making changes in its institutions?

(1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of comments within the member's question to which I would like to respond.

I will start by addressing the question because the answer is quite simple. I am a great optimist. I believe that people can work together and reach compromises that will be acceptable to most Canadians.

We have built an entire heritage of doing that. We are in the process of reaching agreements with aboriginal people that I wish were further along in process than they are today. We are reaching that point and I know we will do so with the province of Quebec, its people and its leaders as well.

I have no hesitation in saying that when we share the will we will share also the dream of developing a political system that we can all work with and live under.

At the same time, in approaching his question the member made the comment that the Bloc Quebecois is playing a role as the official opposition in the House of Commons. He talked about the Bloc Quebecois ensuring that Parliament is as effective as possible as the official opposition. He implied that the

Bloc Quebecois therefore was able to represent the interests of Saskatchewan people because they are the official opposition. I do not think anything can be further from the truth.

After 18 months in office, the present government enjoys unprecedented popularity among the Canadian people. It is not for anything that the government has done. It is because the ineffective opposition is not communicating to the Canadian people the devastation that the policies of the government are creating on the people of our country.

Nothing could be more clear than the policies that are affecting the people of Saskatchewan. The elimination of the Crow rate in any other Parliament in our history would have been a raucous debate in this Chamber. There would have been members yelling and screaming from their chairs. They would have done everything within the rules, within their power, to prevent the government from changing the Crow rate, which devastates the rail transportation system and the agriculture system in Saskatchewan.

We have completed, over the last couple of days, debate that implements the changes to the Crow benefit. There were 23 Bloc speakers on the bill that changes the government's relationship with Saskatchewan farmers. Of those 23 Bloc speakers, not one defended Saskatchewan's interests on the Crow rate. In between these debates, the Bloc even introduced a motion stating that because of the minuscule payout to the Saskatchewan farmers in compensation for this huge program they have lost, Quebec was somehow discriminated against in the process.

That is not an official opposition representing the interests of Saskatchewan people. That is not an opposition that is going to bring the people in any part of the country to the conclusion that the policies of the government are wrong for all Canadians.

Until we have an effective opposition in the country composed of people who care about all of Canada, the government is going to continue to have undeserved popularity.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to address Bill C-69.

Bill C-69 really has not received much news coverage. On the face of it, it is a technical piece of legislation completely lacking in sex appeal.

At its essence, it can be an important bill for a couple of reasons. First, it points beyond itself to the desperate need to bring about some reform of the Canadian parliamentary system. It points to some of the flaws that we have in our system today. It should be scrutinized, regarded and debated in the context of overall reform of the Canadian parliamentary system.

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The bill will find opposition among three different groups of people. It will find opposition among people who believe in real representation by population. It will find opposition among people who feel that we are already over-governed to a great degree. It will find opposition among people who disapprove of the idea of granting power to unelected and unaccountable bodies like a boundaries commission.

(1610)

First, let me talk about representation by population in the context of the reform of the whole parliamentary system. Reformers believe in the idea of absolute representation by population. In other words, to the greatest degree possible constituencies should have the same population.

However, as a counterpoise to that, to balance the idea of constituencies which perhaps would congregate in heavily populated areas, we have to have a triple-E Senate. It should have an equal number of senators from each province; it should be an elected Senate and it should be an effective Senate. It is something that our party has been fighting for since its inception in 1987.

We are proud of the fact that we are the only party that has ever elected a senator. The late Stan Waters was elected in the Senate election of 1991 in Alberta and was subsequently appointed to the other place. That could have been a very valuable way to start the trend toward a triple-E Senate.

That system would probably give some regions, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, as my hon. friend from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake has just talked about, and other regions of the country some representation and protection from the tyranny of the majority that we have found when we have a pure representation by population system in a country that is as geographically large as Canada.

Reformers believe in the idea of representation by population because it underscores a commitment to the idea of equality before the law. It is a very important concept which, to some degree, has been forgotten in the past several years. It has been superseded by a different type of equality which governments have come to believe in, that is, the equality of outcome. All Canadians want is equality of opportunity, and they would find that, to a large degree, in a system that had absolute representation by population, along with a triple-E Senate. It is a very pragmatic concept, a concept familiar to countries which have large geographical areas, such as the United States and Australia.

It is a pragmatic idea because it prevents countries which are big and sparsely populated in some areas from falling apart. In a country as large as Canada, we have very disparate points of view and divergent interests. Sometimes, certainly under a pure representation by population system, those ideas that we find in

different areas of the country would not be adequately addressed in a House of Commons, for instance. We need a counterpoise to that and that is why Reformers are big supporters of a triple-E Senate.

Bill C-69 gives us neither of those concepts; certainly not representation by population and definitely not any kind of change that would give us a triple-E Senate. In fact, it offends the principles that underlie both of them.

One of the things that Reformers find hard to deal with is the 25 per cent variance regulation in Bill C-69. It means that constituencies can vary in size by 25 per cent from the mean. That could lead to discrepancies of as much as 67 per cent in population size between constituencies. That is a huge difference in population size. It permanently dispels the idea that we can have equal influence for our votes in a Canadian system.

That may be a quaint notion to a lot of people in this place, but I would argue that people back home very firmly believe in the idea that each vote should carry the same weight. We would argue strongly that the government has to begin to move that way. That is why the Reform Party has suggested, at least, to amend the variance to 15 per cent between constituencies. If we did that, it would mean that, at most, we would have a variance of 35 per cent in populations between constituencies. That is not perfect, but it certainly brings us closer to the idea of representation by population until such time as we can have constitutional reform that can address some of the real problems that affect the Canadian parliamentary system.

(1615)

As I mentioned a minute ago, I think people feel we are already over governed. I remind members of an article in that ubiquitous journal that sits on just about everybody's night stand, *Readers Digest*. About a year ago there was an article about how much money is spent on governing Canadians, how much it costs to run Parliament. When I think of that article I cannot help but think of our unelected Senate and the people over there who sadly do not enjoy the confidence of Canadians, and how at times they have not displayed the type of conduct we would like to see from all parliamentarians. I specifically think of the GST debate.

It is necessary to make those people accountable. If we had a triple-E senate it is entirely possible that we could trim the size. Reform has called at various times for Senate reform that could possibly leave us with six senators from each province. Some people have suggested we only need two from each province. We look to the American example and we can see they can get by with two senators from states as large as California, which has a population almost as large as Canada's. Somehow they manage to make that system work. One thing that could be done is trim the number of senators.

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A lot of people would agree with me if I said there are a lot of backbenchers in the House we probably could do without because there is not always enough meaningful work to go around. I mean no disrespect to any particular backbencher. However, in a private moment if they were true to their heart of hearts, many backbenchers would acknowledge we could probably get by with fewer members of Parliament and still do the essential work required to make the government run.

The article mentioned it costs somewhere in the order of \$770 million to run Parliament. If we could get the number of members of Parliament to about 265, as Reform suggested, it would still leave constituencies of a size allowing members to deal with the concerns.

If we could get the size of the Senate down, make it effective, elected and equal, it would have the confidence of the people and could serve a necessary purpose and perhaps go a long way to healing some of the wounds that divide the country.

Concerning boundary commissions being given a lot of power to make changes, I am concerned about that and Canadians should be concerned about it as well. It is conceivable that power could reside simply in the statutes for the government to administer.

The boundary commissions people are unelected and unaccountable. They have the power to set boundaries. I would not suggest they have this in mind but if they wished they could do a tremendous amount of mischief with the boundaries. It has been suggested by other members that has happened in the past, that boundaries were drawn somewhat arbitrarily because of political and other reasons that really do not have anything to do with the proper function and the proper way representatives and their areas should be chosen. That bothers me.

We need to move away from that to the greatest degree possible and enshrine in statutes more precisely how rules should work so there would be less latitude for unelected, unaccountable bodies to change the boundaries to suit either their own needs or perhaps the needs of their political masters.

In Bill C-69 we see the tremendous latitude boundaries commissions have to make exceptions to the 25 per cent variance rule by allowing them to exempt certain constituencies. In the past this has applied to very large constituencies. There is nothing in the rules preventing boundary commissions from making exemptions for constituencies that are not as large.

(1620)

Reform would like to propose bigger changes which would require a different forum and a different debate. In the context of this bill we would like to see a rule that would put a limit on the minimum size of a constituency that could be exempted on the schedule. We are suggesting somewhere in the range of 200,000

or 250,000 kilometres. We are concerned that as long as it is left open, we will see MPs from various areas of the country coming forward, lobbying to have their boundaries exempted, not for any good reason, but because they want to keep their boundaries for very political reasons.

I point to the reason we are here discussing Bill C-69. There was a very unseemly scene not too long ago when the boundaries came out under the current bill. MPs from the government and the Bloc were running to the government saying: "Please do not change my boundaries. It will ruin my chances for re-election". It stopped a situation in which we already had a process underway to draw new boundaries.

Reform constituencies were very much affected by this. The member for Beaver River, the deputy leader of the Reform Party, was to lose her riding altogether. Nevertheless, Reform did not squawk about this. Members across the way and in the Bloc squawked, made a big deal about this, made sure their own interests were protected at the expense of Canadian taxpayers and at the expense of slowing the entire process down, forcing it back into the House under new legislation, tying up members' time to deal with this once again. That is entirely inappropriate.

The government has made a grave error. It has gone to great lengths to protect its own interests as it has done with other issues like MP pensions. For once it would be nice to see the government put the interests of its constituents and of the people of Canada ahead of its own interests. That is all Canadians want.

That whole unseemly situation gave birth to Bill C-69. It is why we are here today. What Canadians really want ultimately is a complete change to the underpinnings of the Canadian system. They want representation by population. They also want a triple-E Senate which would go a long way to giving the regions representation and in healing some of the wounds as a result of a faulty system today.

A fair and transparent democratic set of institutions is all Canadians want. The government and Bill C-69 have failed to give them that. For that reason I will not be supporting this legislation.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little curious as to something the member said. He referred to the schedules in the bill whereby members could apply to have their ridings exempted from redistribution because it would be included in the schedule.

Is he aware that in committee that section of the bill was removed?

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak directly to what the hon. member has referred to, but my concern is that we will have members and their delegates arguing before boundary commissions for exemption and that will tie up the whole process.

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We have already seen how members have run to the government to have the whole system changed at great expense to the Canadian taxpayers. I am concerned there might be loopholes that would allow government members and other members, from the Bloc for instance, to continue that.

(1625)

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member has not answered the question.

Is he not aware the section to which he refers whereby Bloc members, Liberal members or any member could ask to have their riding put in a schedule either because it is too large or for any other consideration is not there? The last section of this bill is entitled coming into force, section 40. The previous section to add to this schedule was removed at the committee by unanimous vote, including the Reform members who sit on the committee.

Given that is the case, surely the member will understand the whole premise of his speech today is wrong. Given that all of that was wrong, should we now conclude he is now in favour of the bill because the whole premise by which he thought the bill was wrong is not there? It was removed several weeks ago in the committee on a motion by a committee member and approved by all other committee members.

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I reject the hon. member's premise. Obviously I addressed many points in my speech. The hon. member across the way has not addressed the concern I raised that there be a minimum level at which exemptions would not be permitted, 200,000 to 250,000, somewhere in that range. That is what we are calling for.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on a regrettable aspect of the Reform member's speech, namely the denigrating of an MP's work.

The member started by saying that the choices made by Canadians were not all good ones. This is tantamount to insulting voters. Then, he criticized the number of members. These are facile comments. Indeed, regardless of which side members sit in this House, regardless of their option, the fact is that, as with any group, some people are more efficient than others. However, the overwhelming majority of members put all their energy into their work and try to do a good job.

The member also indicated that we try to protect the interests of our individual ridings. I categorically object to that statement. When representations are made, at any stage, it is always with the public interest in mind, to ensure that voters are adequately represented and to also ensure that certain criteria are taken into account.

I will end with a question which expresses my astonishment. The Reform member, as well as the NDP member who preceded him, both feel that a constitutional reform is essential. Do members not realize that, since the failure of the Charlottetown accord, it is no longer possible to reform the existing structure?

[English]

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I reject the idea there is no possibility of constitutional reform. Canadians by and large want to ultimately change the system and there will be a day in the not too distant future when they will be ready to discuss that. Perhaps that is a little wishful thinking on behalf of the member from the Bloc Québécois who would like to separate. Sadly for him that will be denied in an upcoming referendum which they surely will lose due in no small part to the ineffectiveness of the Bloc Québécois to represent the constituents of Quebec.

Perhaps he has made an argument for me that certain backbenchers have not been effective in putting across the views of their constituents very effectively.

[Translation]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to ask a question to the hon. member, but first I would like to make a short comment.

After hearing the hon. member's speech, I think I can see the difference between Reform and Bloc members. I feel that Reform members represent taxpayers, while we, Bloc members, represent citizens.

It is often said that citizens do not want their riding to change, or that their member makes representations on their behalf to preserve the boundaries of the riding. That is because the member recognizes that these people feel a sense of belonging to their riding.

(1630)

People get attached to their riding, which is represented by a member of Parliament. Often, they will have created a sense of community in that riding.

To think strictly in terms of numbers when establishing the boundaries of a riding would be to make the same mistake as in 1982, when the Canadian constitution was changed and when the country's ten provinces, whose populations are far from being equal, were said to be equal. That created an artificial country.

I believe that, given the attitude which frequently prevails when setting electoral boundaries, we create artificial ridings which do not mean anything special. It is as though Canada was a big cake cut into pieces, with the hope that these pieces will somehow be equal. You simply cannot do that with a country. You cannot overlook the sense of belonging.

I ask the hon. member: Does he not think it is important to take into account the voters' sense of belonging when redefining electoral boundaries?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, certainly I recognize there are differences from community to community. To the greatest degree possible boundaries should recognize this and try to embrace communities where there have been traditional boundaries.

However the first principle, the driving principle in my judgment, has to be representation by population. At the end of the 20th century we do not yet have a political system that either serves people on the basis of representation by population or contrarily has a counterpoise through a triple-E Senate. It is time that we started to move toward that.

In our amendments to Bill C-69, the one that called for a 15 per cent variance would have given us a closer system. That has to be the first principle that drives any changes to the boundaries. The second principle should respect trading areas and things like that. We agree with that absolutely. Let us not make that the first principle.

Canadians are democrats first and foremost. I think they would like to see a system that is based on a more democratic type of system.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway—Turkey; the hon. member for Bourassa—Immigration.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the start of this the last statement on this bill, I would like to identify my reasons for opposing it.

First, the Bloc Québécois was elected to defend Quebec's interests and to promote sovereignty. Personally, as a member, I said, obviously, that I wanted to protect the interests of the people in my part of the country.

When the electoral map is to be redrawn resulting in the disappearance of one of the five ridings of eastern Quebec—be it Gaspé, Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine or Matane—Matapédia—or a change to the riding of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup or Rimouski—Témiscouata, I believe it is important that all members of this House understand the need for legisla-

tion permitting true representation of the people, one that would not be simply based on a mathematical computation.

To this end, while we have been in this House, we have made representations to the electoral boundaries commission, we have spoken during second reading, we appeared before the standing committee. After all that, I would once again ask people to make sure that consideration is given to a region's natural configuration in the make-up of federal ridings, if the federal map is to be used again.

(1635)

I gave as an example my riding of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. If the electoral map were ever changed, I would like the people in the RCMs concerned to be asked what riding they would like to be in in order to be sure that people are where they want to be and not stuck somewhere as the result of mathematical or geographical calculations that have nothing to do with reality.

When changing electoral boundaries, we are reminded of the past a bit—very large ridings across Canada with a scattered population that is difficult to reach. In the past, there have even been protected ridings in Quebec to ensure better representation for anglophones in the Eastern Townships. However, when we consider the electoral map as one of the tools of democracy for the future, we must ensure it provides for better representation and that it is an effective tool for the exercise of democracy.

I have been a member for a year and a half. I think all members of this House think the same way. The work here is apportioned fairly well. Whether we come from a large or a small riding, area-wise, our work is quite similar. However, it is another matter when we are talking about our work in our ridings. Some ridings are located right downtown, a few streets away from each other, whereas the one I represent encompasses a total of 55 municipalities. There are even ridings with 80 municipalities. This all affects the work of MPs and the way they will go about doing it.

The number of municipalities is not the only issue. We should also consider the extent to which government services are spread out in a riding. MPs must try to compensate, particularly in rural areas. In major centres, all of the government services can be found; people in those ridings can always find the office which can provide them such and such a service. But for people in rural areas, the MP's office is often the only resource they have to help them locate the government services they need. The workload, therefore, is heavier and when a riding is particularly large, this obviously has an impact on the amount of work to be done.

Therefore, it is very important that we take into consideration the size of the territory covered if we want to ensure that MPs will be able to represent their electorate well. They must also be able to see their constituents regularly.

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Other important factors which must be taken into account are activity and industrial sectors. For example, this week, we had an opposition day on agriculture. If we move closer to basing representation purely on demographic considerations, the impact of the agricultural sector will be reduced, the impact of MPs representing such ridings will also be reduced, and even society as a whole will be negatively affected because agriculture has an impact on the population as a whole.

Therefore, we must ensure that we continue to be able to take into account this kind of sector. That is why it seems to me that the current bill lacks nuance and subtlety in the way that the boundaries of ridings can be determined. That was one aspect that I wanted to discuss, but there is another—and it was perhaps the greatest disappointment during the entire consideration of the bill—the Liberal majority's refusal to grant Quebec a minimum of 25 per cent of all of the seats in the House of Commons.

I equated this behaviour with someone slamming the door on another person, an egotistical act committed by the majority and a sort of negation of the fact that Canada has two founding peoples. Initially, in this House, two founding peoples created this country. Through immigration policies and the way that the provinces were created, Quebecers, the first explorers of this vast continent, will become a smaller and smaller minority as time goes by if they choose to stay in Canada, a choice which will mean that they will be a minority without any real impact compared to the position they have had in North America for centuries.

(1640)

I believe that this tendency to reduce Quebec to a minority reflects the same attitude that gave us the unilateral patriation of the Constitution. There is some consistency there. In the same way as Quebec Liberal members were not very proud of patriation in 1982—and were reminded of that during the 1984 election—the Quebec people told them that they were not very pleased with their vote on this amendment. We were very surprised to see Quebec Liberal members vote against our amendment which, basically, was to guarantee a minimum representation in the House.

I believe that it is something that all Quebecers will remember for a long time. They will remember it, in particular, when they have to decide whether they want to become a country or not, and one of the reasons for their choice will be that they have no hope of regaining the place they had in this country, given that they are refused even this small guarantee of survival.

The refusal to make the Magdalen Islands a special case, and consider it a separate riding, is another disappointment, even if it does not have the same national significance. This shows a lack of sensitivity and in that regard I should mention that the

Quebec Electoral Law considers the Magdalen Islands as a separate riding, outside the norm for other ridings. At the federal level, this riding has existed in the past, but later the islands were joined with either Gaspé or Bonaventure.

This puts the member who represents this area in a very awkward position, since there are very distinct interests. This is clear when you consider the territory to be covered and the isolation of the place, and also when you consider its relationship with other Canadian communities surrounding the Gulf. I find the decision not to recognize the islands as a separate riding regrettable, because a member representing solely the islands could have made a very interesting contribution. This does not mean that there could not be in Canada some other exceptions of that kind, which could be given special recognition.

The reason I am against this bill is that the provincial commissions which will be established to readjust the electoral boundaries will have to apply the three following criteria: community of interest, reasonable size, and significant population increase over the next five years. This is the exact opposite of the argument I presented to the committee when I said: "Would it not make sense, when considering eliminating a riding, to give it the opportunity to continue being represented in the House of Commons until the next census and, if it shows that the population is still dropping, to eliminate it then but only then?"

The situation is reversed; for a riding to be exempt, one must forecast a significant increase in the population of the area over the next five years. This flies in the face of regional development. For instance, eastern Quebec has seen its population drop for the last 10 to 15 years as a result of deliberate policies on the part of centralizing governments which have pushed people to leave the area in search of a job.

For the past few years, all the economic stakeholders have been working hard to reverse this trend. It will take a few years. Demographers say that it will take another 10 years, if the measures being implemented are successful. But, if in the meantime, you take away their ability to be represented, you are thwarting the efforts of the people who want to develop that particular part of the country.

Therefore, I believe that electoral boundaries commissions should have to consider other criteria over and above the three I already mentioned, namely: community of interest, reasonable size, and significant population increase over the next five years.

(1645)

I have already listed them, but the main ones are the economic profile of a region, its size, the number of municipalities of which it is comprised and geographic unifying factors. These are all factors that should be considered and would, in my

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opinion, make for a more balanced definition of electoral boundaries.

So, if you apply to the five electoral districts in Eastern Quebec the rules contained in the bill as it stands, you inevitably end up with a higher rate of depopulation and conditions unfavourable to building a new rurality. This situation is not unique to us. Every region in Canada is similarly affected, and I think the government should really be responsive to this.

In conclusion, after following this bill as it went through several stages, I think that it should be defeated because the government did not fulfil the mandate it should have given itself, that is to ensure that all citizens of this country are adequately represented on the electoral map and that this map will promote a more participating democracy.

One more thing, and I will conclude on this. I think it is very important to make sure that the cost of our democratic mechanisms are well within reasonable limits and that this is probably the least expensive system allowing us to achieve interesting results. Under the present circumstances, the government could have come up with a better mechanism and I think that it would have gained from listening to representations in that regard.

I hope that the people of Quebec will be able to clearly see that, in that regard, the Bloc fully carried out its mandate to protect the interests of Quebecers and respect the choice they will make in the referendum. Either way, they will have been represented in this place by members who will have done their utmost to ensure adequate representation.

As we examine electoral boundaries, we also notice duplication in the representation provided by members of Parliament. In the day-to-day work of members, there is clearly duplication resulting in additional costs to the government. There is also, in a way, unhealthy competition between provincial and federal members of Parliament, which does not promote efficiency in the system. I think this is one of the main reasons why a majority, the vast majority of Quebecers condemn the federal system in its present form and have been trying for 30 years to change it and make it better, but the actions taken in recent years have shown that this is impossible and that the only way to get things moving again is to vote "yes" in the referendum to make sure they are in control of their future.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the comments of my hon. colleague across the way.

"Slamming the door in our face" I think was the terminology he used for not immediately agreeing to providing 25 per cent of the seats in this House for the province of Quebec. I suppose many Quebecers, and indeed many other Canadians, consider

that the separatists from Quebec who propose separating from Canada are slamming the door in other Canadians' faces.

We are adults and should resolve our problems as individuals and as a country through serious discussion, through caring and sharing our thoughts and ideas with all areas of this great country. It would certainly be childish to suggest that one needs four or five strikes and then, like children, take the ball and bat and go home.

(1650)

In this particular case, my hon. colleague across the way noted some of the concerns he and perhaps others have had. We could sit down and cite, back and forth, historic concerns probably for several days and weeks. However, we have to take a point from where we are today and move forward. We cannot move forward and accomplish our goals when we have such things as a referendum and separatists and separation hanging over our heads. What we really need is an opportunity to sit down and, with serious discussion, negotiate where this country is going in the future.

I compliment my hon. colleague across the way for even suggesting that. The fact that they are talking about whatever percentage of seats in this House indicates to me that indeed deep down they are looking to stay in Canada and to stay in this House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member heard that I chose to stay here. I think that it is quite obvious from our approach and our desire to stay until the end of our mandate. I think that it is quite obvious given the number of times we showed that we favoured sovereignty and that we want Quebecers to make that choice in a democratic fashion.

However, on the issue of the bill before the House, it is interesting to note that it is not the official opposition in Ottawa that asked for the 25 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition in the Quebec National Assembly, who is the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party, proposed that the Quebec National Assembly reiterate its objective of keeping at least 25 per cent of the seats in the Canadian House of Commons for Quebec and call on the Quebec government to make representations to that effect.

This reminds me a little of the type of consensus we see on the issue of jurisdiction over manpower. It is the kind of unanimous opposition we in Quebec can summon against this. It is the Liberal majority in this place that voted against giving Quebec 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. It is the kind of results we will keep in mind.

The official opposition in Quebec agrees with the official opposition in the House of Commons in this regard. The Quebec government wants to assume that responsibility, to ensure that minimum level of protection. I think that there is a consensus the Liberal majority must face.

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We must be able to hold serious discussions in an effort to address the problems. My father told me that, long before I was born, electoral boundaries were imposed on Quebecers even though 80 per cent of them voted against them.

Later, the Constitution was patriated unilaterally without the agreement of the Quebec government under Mr. Lévesque or of the federalist governments that followed. We are still living with this Constitution today but the Liberal majority does not have a problem with it just because one of the provinces did not sign the agreement, and that is very difficult for us to accept.

However, I did like one element of the presentation by the hon. member across the way. He said that we should sit down and negotiate. I think he should speak with his leader and all Liberal members because it is obvious that the leader of the government has repeatedly denied the need to amend the Constitution.

It is clear that the current Prime Minister is trying to make Quebecers forget their own reality by providing good government for both Canadians and Quebecers. According to the figures we got earlier today, we are for the first time in 125 years the province with the largest number of poor people in Canada. This kind of situation calls for fundamental changes. If the system has produced such results for 125 years, the only solution, in my opinion, is to get out.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

(1655)

The Deputy Speaker: As no other speaker wishes to ask a question or make a comment, we will resume debate. The hon. deputy government whip.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most Quebecers do not agree with the position of the last speaker and obviously do not want to leave Canada. This is why Quebec separatists have postponed the referendum.

I would also like to remind the Bloc member that Quebecers rejected the constitutional amendments that would have guaranteed them a percentage of the seats in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue, I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*English*]

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. It really is an extremely important bill, which deals with how we as Canadians determine how we will be represented in our House of Commons.

While I have had the privilege of being a member of the committee on procedure and House affairs, which dealt with this bill, I joined the committee only part-way through the process. I am aware that the members of that committee spent a great deal of time on it. It was an innovative process in that it was the first

time a committee fulfilled a mandate that we as a government promised to give members of the House of Commons, as members of committee, to actually initiate legislation, to bring legislation forward to the House from the members of this House as opposed to from the government.

I want to compliment those members of the committee who have been on this project since the beginning for the excellent work they have done and the detailed consideration they have given to all aspects of this bill.

I said it was an important bill and it is. It deals with how we are represented democratically as Canadians. That is a very difficult issue in a country like ours, which is so disperse, so disparate, so diverse geographically and demographically.

We have huge concentrations of people in urban centres such as Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and yet we have huge and vast expanses of the country with very little population, with very little opportunity for people to have direct contact with their elected representatives.

One dilemma the committee faced was how to deal with equal representation by population for people in very concentrated areas and in very dispersed areas.

It is not an easy challenge. One has to recognize that representation by one's elected representative is more difficult when the member of Parliament has to travel perhaps thousands of miles even to see the parts of his or her constituency. One may have a very small population in a vast northern riding or in a riding such as Labrador and still have less contact with one's constituents than with a much larger population in an urban area that is much more compact.

(1700)

The committee has proposed some innovative ways of ensuring when riding boundaries are decided upon. Of course they will not be decided by us but by independent commissions. However those factors will be taken into consideration. The very unique nature of this country will be taken into consideration. Ridings will be constructed so that people are equally well represented regardless of geography, dispersion of the population, sparsity of the population, or concentration of the population.

I did want to speak about the whole concept of community of interest. That very clearly is a factor many of us felt was not adequately respected in the previous report of the electoral boundaries commissions, a factor that I feel has been tremendously strengthened in the legislation now before the House.

One must not only look at numbers when deciding on ridings, how large they are and what their boundaries are. One must look at the commonality of interests in the people to be represented by the same member of Parliament. Do they identify themselves as a community? This is probably nowhere more important than in deciding what groups of people are going to be represented by

the same individual. Of course, there will always be diversity and differences within any community no matter the size.

It is extremely important that when members of Parliament walk into this Chamber to represent their constituents, they do so for a group of people who feel they have something in common. They identify themselves as a community historically or by virtue of common interests.

I also want to respond to some comments that have been made about the 25 per cent representation. Members from the Bloc know very well that what they have talked about this week cannot be achieved except by constitutional change. To pretend anything else is simply not being straightforward with people.

I do not think we could identify a handful of people in this country who want to go through the turmoil of talking about constitutional change again. There are so many bigger and much more important issues which touch the lives of people daily.

People have contacted me asking why we cannot have a much smaller House of Commons. That is certainly an option. Again, it would require a constitutional change because of minimum representation which is guaranteed to some of our smaller provinces.

I also tell people it is entirely possible to have a very much smaller House of Commons but we would lose something in doing that. Canadians would lose much closer and more personal contact with their members of Parliament.

The people I have talked to value the ability to be in personal contact and have a personal response from their members of Parliament, when they want to discuss an issue with them or have a problem resolved or have recommendations for government action. This is extremely important to Canadians. Coming back to the first point, it is extremely important given the diversity of this country. Therefore, people should be cautious when they suggest we have fewer elected representatives. They would also then have more remote representation.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a few seconds left. Therefore, I move pursuant to Standing Order 26:

That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of adjournment for the purpose of considering Bill C-69.

(1705)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Would those members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

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And more than 15 members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: More than 15 members have risen, pursuant to Standing Order 26(2), the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn.

(Motion withdrawn.)

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening closely to the parliamentary assistant and I thought it was rather presumptuous of her to state without any doubt that Quebecers do not support the theory of Quebec's sovereigntists. Although it is true that Quebecers rejected the Charlottetown agreement which kind of guaranteed Quebec 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, I want to point out to the hon. member that English-speaking Canadians and the residents of the rest of Canada also voted against the agreement.

So, she should not blame us for the failure of the Charlottetown agreement. I would also remind the hon. member that her leader, the current Prime Minister of Canada, warmly welcomed in his party the man who torpedoed the Meech Lake accord. I also want to take this opportunity to say to the hon. member that it is not because the sovereignty option is currently down in the polls that one must conclude that Quebecers support the federalist option.

I think that, for various reasons, but mostly because of everything that is going on, because of previous threats they have received, because of fear-mongering, Quebecers are reluctant to opt for this avenue, but remember that a marriage run by fear is not a happy one. The hon. member should remember this, because with the growing debt and the deficit they will never get rid of—although they will never admit to it—one day they will have to say to Quebecers: "Please, leave. We are no longer able to afford to be so big, so fat. We can no longer afford all this splendour".

This will quickly put an end to the member's rejoicing. So, I would ask her to be a little less presumptuous and to tell us what is wrong with giving Quebecers 25 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons, when they used to have, at the very beginning of Confederation, almost 50 per cent of them?

I want to remind the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that Confucius said that the hen has no business ruling the farmyard.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, it would be easy to play on the word sovereigntist and claim the support of a majority of Quebecers.

(1710)

But after yesterday's declaration it has become clear that there will not be a referendum before next fall and that separatists are afraid of what Quebecers might decide. It is very clear that they want a sovereigntist interpretation which would please Quebecers.

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But the truth is that they constantly avoid the real question, which is separation. They want to avoid a clear definition of their aim, which is separation, and they do not want people to know that they are separatists. It is a very clear question. I do not understand the problem with asking the question right now.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have such a large audience and to see all the members of the Bloc who are eager to hear my speech, which will lead them to vote in favour of Bill C-69. They are all here in front of me.

Let me begin with the member who has just taken us back to Confederation and talked to us about the representation in the House of Commons in 1867. One does not have to be a great historian to know that, in 1867—The member, who knows his history, knows perfectly well that the Union Act, 1840 and the British North America Act are not the same thing.

Anyway, at the time of Confederation in 1867, there were in fact three regions. There were, of course, 24 seats for what was then Upper Canada, 24 seats for Lower Canada, and 24 seats for the three maritime provinces, that is ten for New Brunswick, ten for Nova Scotia and four for Prince Edward Island.

We all know that Prince Edward Island chose not to enter Confederation at that time and joined a few years later. So, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia each had 12 seats; 12 and 12 are 24, right? Twenty-four for Quebec and 24 for Ontario. For a member to claim that Quebec had 50 per cent of the seats in 1867 is the opposite of the truth, as Sir Winston Churchill and his parliamentarians said so well.

Those are the facts. With all due respect, the hon. member opposite does not know what he is talking about. Twenty-four out of 72 is not 50 per cent. Our friend who wants to leave the room, no doubt on very urgent business, should know better.

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think there is some laxness in the negative turn of phrase used to avoid using unparliamentary language. There is a lot of laxness in the content of the hon. member's speech; I hope there will not be as much in his vocabulary.

The Deputy Speaker: I too heard language that came very close to being unparliamentary. I would ask all hon. members to respect the rules.

Mr. Boudria: I will go on, after being interrupted by a Bloc member. Another Bloc member claimed today in a speech, and again this was not what actually happened, that it was because of certain federalists here in Ottawa, and only because of them, he said, that the War Measures Act was invoked during the October crisis.

(1715)

I have here some excerpts from a letter I would like to quote to relate certain facts: "Under the circumstances, on behalf of the Government of Quebec, I request that emergency powers be provided as soon as possible so that more effective steps may be taken. I request particularly that such powers encompass the authority to apprehend and keep in custody individuals who, the Attorney General of Quebec has valid reasons to believe, are determined to overthrow the government through violence and illegal means". And it goes on.

I read further on: "The chief of the Montreal Police has informed us that the means available to him are proving inadequate and that the assistance of higher levels of government has become essential for the protection of society", etc.

Of course, I was reading from a letter the Quebec government of the day wrote to the Canadian government at the request of the Montreal chief of police. I do not mean here to defend or criticize the War Measures Act, but I want to tell members opposite that when they talk about the War Measures Act, they should tell the whole story instead of hiding half the truth the way they so often do.

Earlier today, we heard members across the way say they reject this bill even if they unanimously endorsed it in committee. They changed their mind along the way because one of them saw fit to move this motion to ensure Quebec will never have less than 25 per cent of seats in the Commons. Those same members opposite keep whining, like one of them is doing now while I am speaking. They tend to forget that they opposed the Charlottetown accord that gave that kind of assurance.

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): It was rejected everywhere.

Mr. Boudria: It is not true. I am sorry but in French-speaking areas outside Quebec, in my own riding, 70 per cent of my constituents supported the accord. The hon. member across the way says it was rejected everywhere, but it is not true. Obviously, the accord did not pass, though. But when I hear Reform members demanding an elected Senate, something they rejected in the Charlottetown accord, and when I hear Bloc members demanding 25 per cent of the seats, something they refused in that same accord, I am entitled to question their sincerity.

[English]

Some people across the way are remembering the truth in a selective manner. They are indeed remembering the truth in ways that pleases them.

I for one am in favour of this bill. It is not to change the Constitution. It is nothing of the sort. It is just to modernize our electoral laws. Let us do it now. If we do not pass this bill, those same people across the way are going to accuse us in very short order that we did not proceed with the bill and redistribution could not take place on time.

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I will say to them at that particular time, they know everything has to be installed by June; otherwise it will not proceed. I have here the timetable for the boundaries readjustment in front of me. Unless this bill clears the House by the end of June, unless Royal Assent is given by June 22, this whole thing will not be possible.

I say to the members across the way, shame on them for having deliberately held this piece of legislation to give better, more effective representation to all Canadians.

(1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a little while ago, I heard the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell read a letter concerning the October crisis. He did not read it all and did not say who wrote it. We know that it can only have been signed by the Premier of Quebec at the time, Robert Bourassa. I am very sad to hear the member recall these events as if they were something Canada and the Canadian Parliament should be proud of.

I believe that everything that has come out regarding the Cabinet discussions at the time clearly shows that if ever there was a dark time in Canada's recent history, it was then. I can assure him that now that we have a Premier with a backbone in Quebec, we will not see such a letter in the months to come.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I always like to hear the hon. member speak about the head office and his leader in Quebec, the head of the provincial government, whom he praises and says he has guts, courage, etc.

I ask my colleagues to ponder over these few questions. Is that the same leader as the one who refuses to hold a referendum because he knows he will lose? Is that the provincial leader who postpones the referendum until next fall? Is that the leader who broke the formal promise he made to Quebecers during the election campaign? Is it another person? It must be. It certainly cannot be the same one.

I know the hon. member from the other side is only a member of a local branch of the Parti Québécois, the one they call the Bloc, and that the head office is far away. But I would suggest he makes a conference call to talk to other representatives of the head office. And when he gets his information from that head office, he will find out something we all know already, that is, the Parti Québécois does not have the courage to call the referendum immediately. They say they must wait because people are not ready, but in fact it is because they do not want to lose.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there were several things in the speech of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that I agreed with and a few that I did not agree with. He said one thing, perhaps inadvertently, and I would like to give him a chance to elaborate on a particular

comment he made that if we do not pass this bill we will not have a redistribution before the next election.

Is it not in fact the case that the present electoral boundary redistribution process is under suspension and if we do not pass this bill we simply resume with the process as it is virtually now completed and could be completed fairly quickly? Is that not a more realistic option than restarting the process all over again at the cost of some \$5 million to \$6 million?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. This same electoral redistribution that he refers to, the bill we have put under suspension in order to get this better one, would not have the measure of providing quinquennial redistribution to increase the number of seats in British Columbia, which some of his colleagues have said was under-represented by not proceeding with a bill like this. This is the same party that advocates both positions.

I say to the hon. member, he may be from the next province over, but he should discuss this issue with his friends from B.C. if he wants to go back to the bill that is under suspension as opposed to Bill C-69. Bill C-69 is far better in terms of providing more even redistributions in a quicker way and that are fairer to all Canadians. Surely he knows that, but if he does not, the people of British Columbia—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mercier.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say that we have just heard a prime example of contempt for the Quebec people as they are known now, after having been for a long time the French Canadian nation.

(1725)

In this Parliament and the previous one, if other members had respected the people of Quebec, Quebec's history would have been different, and I would like to talk about that, because after all, we will have to live together in any case as neighbours.

I may recall that Daniel Johnson senior was descended from Irish immigrants who spoke no French. In 1965, he gave his party a fresh start with his book, published under the title *Égalité ou Indépendance*, which became the slogan for his convention and his election campaign.

Daniel Johnson wrote the following: "Our English Canadian compatriots refer to a nation consisting of two peoples, while according to our French concept of the Canadian fact, we say there one people consisting of two nations. The confusion arises from the fact that English puts more emphasis on the political connotation of the word, while French uses the word in its sociological context. If we go by the description I just gave, there is no doubt Canada has two nations. Canada has two communities that are distinct by reason of their language, religion, culture, traditions, history and finally, a common desire to live together. Even in provinces where they are a minority, they have a natural tendency to regroup on a regional or local basis so as to create an environment in which they can flourish". As Daniel Johnson said in 1965: "The fundamental

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characteristic of a nation is not race but culture. Whatever one's name or ethnic origin, one belongs to one of the two nations depending on whether one's roots, education, choices, lifestyle, and philosophy lead one to identify with one cultural community rather than another. And I am thinking", he said, "of all the new Canadians who chose to become a part of French Canadian culture and to contribute to its development and growth".

He goes on to say that "the French Canadian nation is trying with all its might and with every fibre of its being to realize its potential as a nation and that its aspirations are entirely normal and legitimate. Later on I will explain how and why French Canadians try to identify with the State of Quebec, the only one where they can claim to be masters of their own destiny and where they can develop the full potential of their community, while the English Canadian nation tends to make Ottawa the centre of its community life".

If Canada had recognized the French Canadian nation, we would not be where we are today. And we are there because after being denied equality, the French Canadian nation became the Quebec nation and now seeks its sovereignty, as Daniel Johnson explains here.

I have very little time, Mr. Speaker, but I will go on. However, in this vote on the position of the Bloc Québécois, Canada and the Liberals could have shown a minimum of respect for this people, this nation with whom, in any case, they will have to find a *modus vivendi*, as neighbours or otherwise.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. member for Mercier will have 15 minutes, next time.

It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as indicated on today's Order Paper.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately end employment equity programs and the inclusion of employment equity requirements on employment or training forms because such requirements encourage candidate selection to be made on the basis of sex or ethnic origin rather than merit, and, as a result, foster a sense of resentment among applicants.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this motion has been deemed not votable. Because it covers such an important topic, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to make it votable.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is refused, but the hon. member has the floor.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, it is noted that the government members do not want to vote on this issue.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The member across the way has just impugned motive to government members because he says a committee of this House has unanimously decided that his motion was not votable. It is right in our standing orders. Members across the way know it is in our standing orders. Therefore, I submit that it is a valid point of order.

The matter is that this is simply a motion that was addressed by a committee of this House. To say that refusing this is somehow the fault of the government as opposed to the committee that unanimously did so is simply and factually incorrect.

The Deputy Speaker: With respect, I do not think that is a point of order.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, over the next hour this House will have the opportunity to discuss what some members will see as a politically incorrect motion.

I made the decision to prepare this motion after receiving complaints from constituents that they may have missed out on being selected for taxpayer-funded training or job creation programs solely because they did not fit into a designated target group on an application form.

It is appalling that the government of a democratic country has a policy condoning the selection of workers or trainees based on their gender or ethnic origins. It makes the government guilty of promoting sexism and racism, and it is particularly bad policy when there simply is no statistical evidence to support the claimed need for employment equity programs.

For example, figures from Statistics Canada indicate that the unemployment rate for young males ranges between 20 per cent and 23 per cent, while the unemployment rate for young females ranges from 14 per cent to 15 per cent. While both figures are far too high, clearly it is the young men who are the disadvantaged group. Their unemployment rate is consistently twice the national average, and it probably is contributing to their higher suicide rate and an increase in youth crime.

Some interesting material comes from a research paper by Dr. John T. Samuel of Carleton University, which cites statistics from the 1986 census, showing that 72.1 per cent of visible minorities over 15 years of age are in the workforce while only 66.5 per cent of the general population over 15 is in the workforce. The same census shows that the average personal income is \$17,500 for the general population and almost \$1,500 more for visible minorities. The REAL Women organization has also confirmed these figures in their own investigation of the representation of visible minorities and women in the Canadian workforce.

Well-meaning people are chasing ghosts, because there is no evidence that employment equity programs are needed. This is not to say that every employer out there is a saint. But the best way to handle individual cases where there is improper treatment of employees is for those cases to be dealt with in the courts and the employers properly punished.

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Unfortunately, government-enforced provisions start with the assumption that all employers are guilty, even though 1993 Nobel laureate and economist Gary Becker notes that discrimination poses internal as well as external costs on a company. In other words, discriminatory employment decisions cost firms money. If they do not select the best person for the job, that translates directly to a drop in productivity and a drop in the bottom line. Since the overriding objective of a company is to make money, discrimination will be short-lived and the marketplace will police discrimination. This theory is borne out by the statistics I have already given and the ones that will follow in the rest of this speech.

(1735)

In terms of public support for employment equity, a December 1993 Gallup poll showed 74 per cent of Canadians to be opposed to such programs. This high percentage is not a surprise to me because to this day I have never met a person who wanted to get a job or be promoted on the basis of their gender or their race rather than the skills or merits they have brought to the job.

Sadly, this government, as usual, is not the slightest bit interested in what the majority of Canadians think and is bound and determined to stick to an agenda of social engineering that will unfortunately have the opposite effect to that which is intended.

I correspond on a regular basis with a young lady in Vancouver named Kim Oliver. Kim has a disability called Fragile X Syndrome. Despite having this disability, Kim has a great sense of humour, she has great ambition and quite an artistic flair. Kim has indicated in her letters that she wants exactly what any other young person wants. She wants to be able to support herself through the skills that she can bring to the workplace.

I would like to read from one of Kim's letters. I quote:

The United Farm Women of the 20's and 30's were western women who withstood the hardships of life on the farm alongside their husbands. They were responsible for lobbying for the vote, universal social programs, and pensions for widows and orphans. They also helped their men form unions and collectives. I identify with these women because, unlike today's feminists, they took matters into their own hands, using printing presses to spread the word via a women's newspaper, travelling to the Geneva Convention in the 40's and most impressive of all—got men to let us vote! Unlike NAC, Vancouver Status of Women and other special-interest groups, the UFW didn't have the media nor did they have millions in government funding—So why keep funding ethnic groups or women's groups? All they do is tell women, especially poor 'visible' minority women with disabilities, that we are the victims of racism, sexism, white male imperialism—and that we will never be equally paid, heard, educated because of men and men's cultural symbols. Makes you want to scream, doesn't it?

Kim identifies with people who had to work hard for what they achieved. She also makes it clear that she does not want to be treated like a victim by special interest groups.

Kim also writes that she has found that members of the Reform Party treat her like a fellow Canadian instead of putting her into a box labelled "disabled" or "disadvantaged".

I wish I could hold up some of Kim's drawings to show to the House her artistic flair, but unfortunately we cannot use props in the House, so I would ask members to believe me when I say they are very good. I think Kim will eventually find a place in the workforce to utilize her artistic skills. I know she wants to

achieve that not through employment equity but through her own hard work.

This should not be interpreted as meaning that the disabled do not need any assistance to gain skills or that the government should not be involved in helping them gain access to the workplace. However, it does mean that we should not insult their intelligence and their abilities by artificially pushing them to the front of the line for employment. Like everyone else, they just want the chance to prove their worth and their true value through open and unbiased job interviews.

Obviously, there are fewer opportunities in the job market for someone with Fragile X Syndrome, and that is where every one of us as caring Canadians can help. We must be aware of the problems and we have to do what we can to support them. For Kim, I would like other members of this House to give me some examples, or perhaps the public who become aware of this debate, of where there have been successes in Canada achieved by people with Fragile X Syndrome. What sort of jobs have they managed to fill? How have things worked out for them? I hope they will write to me so I can pass these successes on to Kim, to give her even more encouragement for the future.

(1740)

In wrapping up, I would like to read one more piece from a letter she wrote to me last September:

We have a ministry responsible for women's equality, plus multiple feminists groups who are government-funded. As well, 'visible' minorities and natives have just as much government attention.

So why does the Ministry of Social Services and Human Resources still classify women, minorities and natives as disadvantaged?

She also mentions:

Why is it that our social services and human resources departments have no 'Ministry of the Disabled'? If we are to be Foster Children, couldn't the Provincial/Federal governments acknowledge our special needs?"

I know that Kim is not alone in feeling this way. She represents a very large group of thoughtful people with disabilities who really feel that the government is not representing their needs.

In their well-meaning attempts to promote the equality of opportunity that we all support, the government is actually fostering legislative racism and pitting identifiable groups against one another.

In their pursuit of social engineering they are inadvertently sowing the seeds of racial conflict by forcing employers to emphasize differences in race and gender instead of the differences in skills and suitability that should be the basis for employment.

I have here a letter and a questionnaire from the Chief of Defence Staff to all regular force and primary reserve members, announcing a survey of Canadian forces to identify the representation of aboriginals and visible minorities.

Is it not racist to be carrying out a survey specifically designed to identify persons by race? Is it really appropriate for a government to have a database identifying its employees by racial background?

Respondents have to identify themselves as black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian, East Indian, Southeast

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Asian, non-white Latin American, non-white West Asian, Inuit, Métis, First Nation, or mixed race and colour.

If anyone except this Liberal government had asked for such a survey, they would be labelled as racist and accused of planning some sort of racial persecution. As it happens, all available statistics indicate that young Caucasian men are the ones who are in the disadvantaged group.

When we take a look at the employee make-up of several prominent groups that promote employment equity, we find some very disturbing situations. The Ontario government's office of employment equity in 1994 had a workforce made up of 90.5 per cent women, 52.9 per cent racial minorities, 5.6 per cent aboriginals, and zero able-bodied white males.

The workforce of the Ontario Rights Commission is 67 per cent women, 38 per cent minorities, even though these minorities represent just 9 per cent of the general population; there are no white males in the senior management group or the policy branch of this commission.

In an article she wrote for the August 26, 1994 edition of *The Toronto Sun*, Christie Blatchford said: "It is quite clear that if the commission is a glimpse of the future for Ontario under employment equity, the face of the future is female and non-white".

The Employment Excellence Organization asks whether the only difference between the racist agendas of the Heritage Front and the Ontario Rights Commission is that the latter is funded with taxpayers' money. That is a pretty extreme statement, but that is the sort of thing these employment equity provisions are making people say.

The government does not want to hear these things because their entire argument is based on emotion rather than facts. The fact is that one cannot fix discrimination by imposing a different type of discrimination.

The Sri Lankan-born author and economist of a 1992 report from the Economic Council, Arnold deSilva, found no correlation between wage levels and a person's country of origin. He also concluded that there is no significant discrimination against immigrants in general and that there is no systematic employment discrimination on the basis of colour.

Another study done for the Government of Canada in 1992 by Daniel Boothby involving a sample size of 115,000 people and entitled "Job Changes, Wage Changes and Employment Equity Groups", concluded that: "Visible minority status had no significant effect on the probability of job loss and, all else being equal, women are less likely to lose jobs than men".

(1745)

In 1992 Statistics Canada reported that 56 per cent of all undergraduate degrees earned at Canadian universities go to women. In 1990 they took 45 per cent of the degrees in traditional male territories of business management and commerce. They accounted for 47 per cent of the law degrees, 46 per cent of medical diplomas and 63 per cent of those in veterinary medicine. Fazil Mihlar, a senior policy analyst with the Fraser Institute says that evidence of discrimination in the workplace is scant and isolated.

In my riding of North Vancouver I have been unable to confirm a single case, even though each time someone has called or written to me in support of employment equity, I have asked for any specific example of discrimination in North Vancouver so that I could make that situation public.

I challenge other members of the House to do the same before they support the ongoing use of employment equity programs or the inclusion of those requirements on government employment and training forms.

Bell Canada falls under the Federal Employment Equity Act of 1986. In 1989 Bell Canada had 61 more female employees than males. On a numbers basis that is pretty well balanced. Just two years later there were 2,058 more females than males employed by Bell Canada and the number of males employed had dropped by almost 2,000. No one could possibly argue that women are not adequately represented at Bell Canada but the trend in male employment with that company should be a cause for grave concern for believers in forced employment equity. They had better start insisting that Bell Canada place a special category on employment forms for the under-represented group, in this case males.

While I am talking about job loss I should mention that a number of my constituents have been asking me whether there will be affirmative action firing practices during the downsizing of the civil service announced in the budget. Will this whole exercise end up distorting the civil service employee base with enforced equity quotas that fail to recognize individual skill levels and the value to the taxpayers that are picking up the cost?

I already receive complaints from constituents who say that some employees at the front counters and on the phones at federal government departments hardly speak English and cannot be understood. Some of the members opposite will not like hearing that message but I have an obligation to pass on the concerns of my constituents to the House.

The federal government in the United States is considering the introduction of legislation to end affirmative action and an initiative has been started in California to place affirmative action on the ballot at the next election.

Polls indicate that affirmative action is going down to defeat in the United States in the interest of a fair and open mar-

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ketplace. As one man put it on an interview on CNN, employment equity is a bit like the Vietnam war. It seemed like a good idea when we started it, but it turned into a nightmare.

Sadly, the government is still living in the past, trying to enact an agenda that is 20 years out of date, well-meaning and soft-hearted, but definitely soft-headed at the same time. On top of that it discriminates against skilled people who cannot label themselves as a visible minority.

I wonder how many Liberal members would be prepared to step down from their seats today, right now, so that a member of a visible minority could step into their place. I see no volunteers, no doubt because each of them would take the position that he or she has earned the right to be here. Why should they give up their seat to someone else who has not been through the election process? That is exactly what it is like in the real world job marketplace too.

People all across Canada oppose employment equity programs and every MP on the government side should admit that the programs are unfair and discriminatory. At the very least, they should admit that they would not like to see such programs applied to their own MP jobs. They should also agree to put an end to discrimination by refusing, as I do, to approve any grants or job creation programs which make employment equity a condition of the project.

Finally they should show courage and give their constituents true representation in the House by voting against any future employment equity bill.

(1750)

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the chance to debate this motion. I want to say this loudly for the Canadian public. I am sure those who are watching the debate today or who will be reading *Hansard* will mourn the occasion this member stood in the House to ask the government to immediately end employment equity programs and the inclusion of employment equity requirements on employment or training forms because such requirements encourage candidate selection, et cetera.

What a sad opportunity it is to stand in the House to debunk some of the myths we heard a few minutes ago. The public record presents a completely different picture. It suggests hiring practices have very little to do with ability but a lot to do with discriminatory attitudes toward women, visible minorities, aboriginal people and people with disabilities.

I frankly believe the focus of the debate is on the wrong side. Rather than questioning why we need the employment equity we should be asking: Why do visible minorities, women, aboriginal people and persons with disabilities experience significantly higher rates of unemployment, sometimes twice the national

level, even when they prove themselves to be eminently qualified for jobs? That is the question.

Documents and research tell us these individuals are frequently better educated and trained at proportionately higher levels than the general population to take on work opportunities. In addition to their advanced university degrees, they often come equipped with special knowledge or personal attributes that can also contribute to the job.

Let us look at it from a strictly pragmatic, business perspective. Visible minority members, for example, may be immigrants from other parts of the world. They bring with them firsthand knowledge of foreign market conditions which may be invaluable to Canadian exporters.

We heard quite a few businesses cited and we heard some misinformation given in terms of statistics. Women who make up more than half the population know better than anyone the needs of Canadian consumers, their families and themselves. Aboriginal people have a wealth of experience in traditional approaches to a multitude of disciplines, from the earth sciences to holistic healing to dispute resolution. With advanced education they are well positioned to marry traditions with the best of the contemporary economy.

Who better than persons with disabilities to offer insights into the specialized needs of people who are physically or intellectually challenged, one of the growth markets of the next century.

The member across the way threw out a case study. In that diatribe we were subjected to, the member mixed so many things together, the apples and the oranges and the myths. Too many employers continue to erect barriers to employment of these talented, work-ready people.

We can take statistics from Max Yalden, the Canadian human rights commissioner. He has publicly stated his concern about a growing mean-spirited attitude in Canada. He has warned of a backlash against members of society's most vulnerable groups by critics that claim they enjoy special workplace and hiring advantages. The statistics clearly show nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Yalden noted that while white male Canadians make up just 45 per cent of the workforce, they account for 55 per cent of all hirings. Men constitute nearly 95 per cent of corporate board members and more than 90 per cent of senior managers. They also earn an average of 20 per cent more than female workers. A study was recently done and published in the local media.

A study recently completed by Statistics Canada also concluded systemic discrimination explains much of that wage gap. Many women consider themselves lucky just to be hired. Women's share of all hiring declined from 1988 to 1992 and has improved only slightly since then.

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(1755)

Women are frequently members of more than one designated group, what we call the double disadvantaged and maybe in my case triple disadvantaged. Imagine how much more difficult it is for women to compete who are aboriginal, a visible minority or someone with a disability. People in these groups are particularly subject to prejudice in hiring.

Bias is the only apparent explanation for the fact that the unemployment rate among visible minorities, aboriginal people and people with disabilities with university degrees is much higher than for white males with the same education. In fact, it can be more than double.

Reports submitted by employers under the Employment Equity Act show some worrisome trends in the hiring rates of individuals in designated groups. The same reports show that the situation for persons with disabilities is even worse. I can go on and cite other instances, but I ask the House if these figures suggest that members of designated groups enjoy preferential treatment? The answer is self-evident.

The hon. member cited the fact that in his riding he could not find one individual who was subjected to inequity. I would remind the hon. member that the Employment Equity Act is designed to ensure that an employer's hiring and promotion decisions are based solely on the bona fide requirements of an occupation and not on any other job related criteria.

The Employment Equity Act ensures that only qualified individuals be considered for a job, but most important it requires employers to remove barriers to employment for capable candidates who are members of the designated groups so we can turn these unacceptable unemployment figures around, which is only fair.

The Canadian human rights commissioner, Mr. Yalden, has reason to be concerned. The anachronistic thinking associated with this motion certainly will do nothing to advance us toward our goal of preparing Canada for the global economy of the 21st century.

It ignores the reality that we will soon experience a severe skills shortage in the country that will demand that we put every capable Canadian to work. It disregards the fact that two-thirds of new entrants to the labour market will be members of the designated group by the year 2000, a large percentage of whom are more than qualified to meet the challenge. It overlooks the importance of capitalizing on these people's diversities in an increasingly specialized, interconnected and international economy.

It is lucky for us that this is not a votable motion because it would have been voted down by members on this side of the House. The motion could have had the opportunity to, if, heaven

forbid, there was an opportunity for it to be a votable motion, condone racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, all of which we know exist in the workplace. It would permit prejudice to go unchecked and may even encourage outright acts of physical or sexual harassment of the most vulnerable.

The Employment Equity Act is not about counting numbers as the member would have us believe. It is about instituting irritating rules and regulations that somehow stand in the way of individuals in this society from being contributing members and full participants in Canadian society.

I ask every member of the House to stand firm the Employment Equity Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am both disappointed and disturbed that today members are asked to consider a motion which seems to be totally removed from reality and that, with all due respect for its author, appears to be based on a completely erroneous interpretation of the Employment Equity Act.

I would like to point out that the hon. member seems to associate the existence of the Employment Equity act with a tendency on the part of some employers to hire incompetent people. To make this kind of connection encourages prejudice and is entirely absurd.

Before going any further, I would like to recall for the benefit of our listeners and of our colleagues in this House that the sole purpose of the Employment Equity Act, which has existed since 1986, is to ensure that our labour force is more representative of Quebec and Canadian society.

(1800)

To achieve this, we ask employers to try, as part of their hiring practices, to include four so-called designated groups, namely women, aboriginal people, visible minorities and disabled people, in view of the fact that in the labour market, people do not all have the same opportunities, and there are people who are discriminated against and who have trouble getting the jobs for which they are qualified. To think that because we have an Employment Equity Act like the one we have had since 1990 and which we are in the process of reviewing, there is some connection between the existence of this Act and the practice of some employers to hire incompetent people, is patently absurd.

I may recall that section 6 of the old and the new Employment Equity Act clearly says:

the obligation to implement employment equity does not require an employer

(a) to take a particular measure to implement employment equity where the taking of that measure would cause undue hardship to the employer;

(b) to hire or promote unqualified persons.

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That is made very clear in the Act.

We believe it is important to have an Employment Equity Act because we know perfectly well that the labour market alone is not likely to provide this equality between various groups. My proof is our colleague for North Vancouver, who began his remarks by saying that legislation on employment equity was no longer necessary. Let us have a look at the comments of groups that have studied the legislation, specifically, the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It is almost dishonest to say that Whites are victims of reverse discrimination. This prejudice must be stopped, fought from the start.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Human Rights, and, since January, we have been trying to improve the Employment Equity Act, as we realize there are gaps in it. Let us remember what Commissioner Max Yalden, who is as critical as a person can be before the government, said. As you know, he is well versed in the workings of government, having been in government since 1956, even before I was born. He said that, in 1993, able bodied caucasian males accounted for approximately 55 per cent of all workers newly hired for permanent full time positions by employers covered under federal legislation on employment equity. This is significantly higher than the proportion of able bodied Whites on the labour market; the figure in this case is 45 per cent.

So, people who try to convince us that Whites without disabilities are discriminated against are not aware of the statistics or of the reality of the labour market.

The Employment Equity Act says that some people are systematically discriminated against. That means that, if corrective measures are not taken, some groups will continue to receive unequal treatment. What form does this inequality take? It works by forming the five following groups: groups with higher than average rates of unemployment; groups with lower than average incomes; groups which are over-represented in lower paying professions and groups with less opportunity for advancement.

(1805)

This is particularly true, as we will see, for aboriginal people and handicapped people. Lastly, there are also groups which are under-represented in higher paying professions, with good job prospects and which are in expansion. That is the general picture of discrimination that the designated categories face, groups like handicapped people, aboriginal people, members of visible minorities and women.

Let us take a look to see whether discrimination against these groups has really ceased over the last few months, as the hon. member claims. Let us look at each category. Women make up 52 per cent of the population of Canada, but in 1993—that is not

very long ago—they accounted for only 45 per cent of the Canadian labour force. Last year, women continued to be paid about one third less than their male counterparts. This means that, in the labour market of 1993, a woman doing a job of equal value, for which she was equally qualified, earned two thirds of what a man earned to do the same job. If that is not discrimination, I wonder what the hon. member for North Vancouver calls it.

Second, 52 per cent of the time, women, who, as we know, make up 52 per cent of the population of Canada and 45 per cent of the Canadian labour force, end up in jobs in the lower service echelons, as office clerks or secretaries, jobs which are naturally lower paid.

It should also be pointed out about career women with a university degree that 18 per cent of White females who graduated in commerce, business administration or industrial management and were hired in the past few months were assigned positions below their professional qualifications. That is 18 per cent of women university graduates whose positions are below their professional qualifications, as compared to only 5 per cent of men, according to Statistics Canada.

I think it is to refuse to recognize the reality of the target groups, i.e. the female population, to think and to tell us that labour market equilibrium has been reached and that we no longer need an act like the Employment Equity Act.

Another situation is that of the aboriginal people. The Employment Equity Committee heard many witnesses on that issue. Our friend from the Reform Party certainly did not mention it, and I am sure you will be very surprised to learn about this, but the native people represent 3.8 per cent of the total population of Canada. Up until now however, they have succeeded in getting only 1.4 per cent of all the jobs available to the workforce. These are recent data and they show clearly that, not only do native people have a hard time entering the labour market, but their unemployment rate is exactly twice as high as the national average.

These data also show, Mr. Speaker, that the income of native people is \$10,000 below that of other Canadians. I will conclude by saying that these examples of discrimination are still very much current and that Parliament must pass a legislation as this one on employment equity to promote a better balance within the Canadian labour force.

[English]

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address this House regarding Motion No. M-372 proposed by the hon. member for North Vancouver. This motion advocates that employment equity programs and the inclusion of employment equity requirements on employment or training forms be terminated.

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(1810)

In the recent past a backlash has occurred against employment equity. This is unfortunate because the principle behind employment equity is a noble and valid one. It aims to correct discrimination, both intentional and systemic, directed toward designated groups, in other words, persons with disabilities, aboriginal people, visible minorities and women.

Critics of employment equity charge that it is reverse discrimination against white males. They argue that it lowers standards and promotes mediocrity. This is clearly a simplistic and unfair assessment of employment equity.

This is not to say that employment equity programs are perfect and are not in need of some refinement and fine tuning. Presently there are some potential negative consequences which may result from employment equity policies. These concerns need to be taken into account and addressed.

An example is the instilling of deep resentment among non-designated groups. Another one is the decrease of the workplace morale for employees from non-designated groups when the mistaken belief occurs that designated groups receive preferential treatment for promotions.

The above are some factors which need to be overcome in order to ensure that employment equity is implemented in an equitable and fair manner. It is very clear that in order to correct these backlashes more public education and workforce education programs are absolutely essential. Also, we should attempt to implement enrichment programs for disadvantaged persons from designated groups at all levels of formal education so that they may obtain the tools to become more competitive.

When implementing an employment equity plan, we need to keep in mind that the existing workforce did not create the discrimination that employment equity is attempting to eliminate. If the rights of the existing workforce are respected, one can avoid resentment upon the implementation of an employment equity policy.

An alternative solution which could be employed to fine tune employment equity would involve instituting a program that would be representative of how qualified persons from designated groups are distributed in the local labour market.

For example, if 5 per cent of the country consists of persons with disabilities and only 1 per cent of a local community consists of disabled people with engineering degrees, it is clear that only 1 per cent of the workforce in a local engineering company should consist of disabled engineers. Certainly, it would not be fair to non-designated groups if 5 per cent of the engineering company's workforce included disabled persons drawn from other communities, unless of course the very best people were available in this specific group 5 per cent of the time during hiring.

By keeping the above in mind, it could be ensured that local communities are not prejudiced, that the most qualified are always chosen and that discriminatory hiring practices are eliminated.

Despite some very minor fine tuning, the evidence clearly indicates that employment equity is beneficial to both employers and Canadian workers. Studies have demonstrated that substantial gains have been made by members of the designated groups since the introduction of the federal Employment Equity Act. We will continue to work toward full employment parity for these groups.

The intent of the act is not to provide preferential treatment. It is designed to ensure equal access to opportunities for all qualified work ready Canadians, regardless of their race, physical attributes or gender. It is about removing, not erecting, barriers to employment.

The act was not developed overnight. It was a product of a comprehensive review of the Canadian workplace in 1984 by the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment headed by Judge Rosalie Abella. In the course of its review the commission looked closely at affirmative action programs in the United States. Canadian commissioners wanted to learn from the American experience in order to avoid some of the problems associated with that legislation.

Judge Abella quite correctly concluded that Canadians would resist the American approach, given its overly interventionist government policies and the imposition of quotas. She recommended instead that Canadians adopt the employment equity model which focuses on the elimination of discriminatory employment barriers.

(1815)

In the United States, affirmative action targets particular groups for special treatment because of a previous history of discrimination. Employment equity, on the other hand, attempts to ensure in Canada that all qualified job applicants receive a fair shot at available jobs. The employment equity program in the United States, and rightly so, is to be destroyed simply because it is a destructive model, a model that has been introduced based on a former model that was introduced regarding the discrimination of certain classes of people, a model of desegregation that tore the very fabric of American society, a model that destroyed community after community, all because of a quota system.

Our approach to achieve equality is far more progressive than the American model. It has led to greater partnerships among groups pursuing fair access to employment opportunities and has also led to far greater success.

For example, often workers, union leaders and employers will work together in unison to establish a fair equity plan. In this way, employment equity works as much to the advantage of employers as it does for the members of the designated groups.

Private Members' Business

Organizations that take advantage of and capitalize upon the rich composition of Canadian society will come out ahead. Organizations that are able to manage a diverse and dynamic workforce are bound to be more competitive in today's marketplace. Given demographic trends we cannot afford to overlook any under-utilized source of talent.

By the year 2000, the very time when we will experience a severe skill shortage because of an aging workforce, two-thirds of the entrants to the Canadian labour market will be women, visible minorities, aboriginal peoples, and persons with disabilities. This is the face of the future workforce and we must integrate them, whether the Reform Party likes it or not.

In conclusion, I do not believe that government should base their policies on the media coverage of the backlash against employment equity. In reality there are no losers under Canada's employment equity legislation. There are only winners when each and every citizen is given a fair chance for employment and then given equal opportunity to advance within the organization.

Ensuring that qualified minorities are not discriminated against is a worthwhile and noble goal. As a nation of caring, compassionate people dedicated to dignity and justice, we are determined to build a country where all Canadians can take pride in employment and their contribution to the community.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure indeed today to rise to speak on the motion presented by my colleague from North Vancouver. I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech, which outlined the purpose of his motion.

The motion deals with a sensitive issue, the practice of employment equity. I am pleased to have seconded the motion and to support the motion, which calls for the immediate end to employment equity programs and the end to the inclusion of employment equity requirements on employment or training forms. Such requirements encourage candidate selection to be made on the basis of sex or ethnic origin rather than merit and as a result foster a sense of resentment among applicants. The whole concept of employment equity is flawed. As my colleague pointed out, it advocates the hiring of individuals based on designations, not merit.

The hon. member for Fraser Valley West also expressed it quite well. He said the concept of employment equity will subordinate the principle of merit to the politics of race and of gender. This is made clear by a number of factors, one being the sense of dissatisfaction with employment equity by those it claims to help.

Members of targeted groups who supposedly benefit from employment equity face two difficult questions, the first from themselves. Were they chosen for the position they now hold

because of the target group they belong to, or was their hiring based on merit? It is a question that is always there.

(1820)

Second, there is a question from their colleagues. Do the individuals they work with have doubts about whether they were hired based on the fact that they are a member of a visible minority or a member of a disadvantaged group, or did they truly deserve the position?

This brings me to my second point. When people in a workplace really do not know why they or their colleagues were hired, whether it was based on merit or because of a specific category to which they belong, it fosters a sense of inequality and divisiveness among co-workers. This sense of inequality, as a result of astute hiring practices and quota filling, can lead to a split in the workplace because they create an atmosphere of distrust and doubt. This does not make for a productive or a happy workplace.

I would like to tell a story that was told to me by a staff member of a member of Parliament on the Hill. She had a friend at university, a very bright individual and a member of a visible minority group, who often spoke out very strongly against employment equity programs. Many people questioned his position. They asked why he, one who could obviously benefit from such programs, was so vocally and so strongly against these programs. His reasons were that he did not know, and was afraid that he would not know, if he was hired based on his skills or his skin colour. His co-workers would not know either. This individual said he wanted to be judged solely on the basis of merit and on nothing else.

Indeed, even hon. members opposite have expressed similar views and have shared similar stories. The hon. member for Waterloo stated in committee, with regard to the government's employment equity legislation, that an individual from his own riding did not want people to think he got his job based on preferential treatment. This constituent was also speaking out against employment equity.

Looking at this concern from another point of view, from a point of view based on productivity in the workplace and from the employer's point of view, I would like to tell another story. This story was told to me personally by a gentleman who owns a fairly large business that he built from scratch in my constituency.

This gentleman's company bid on government contracts on a fairly regular basis. He had been very successful in winning these contracts over the years. He was expressing a deep concern to me that his company was no longer eligible to bid on these contracts. The reason was that he did not have the proper quota allocations within his company. More than 50 per cent of his employees were women. He had always hired a considerable number of women because they could do the job best. He had some members from visible minority groups. But his company could not successfully keep enough employees from the abori-

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ginal group to be able to bid on this contract. Because of this, this business person was disqualified from bidding on these contracts. Any way one looks at that, it is discrimination.

Why does the government then feel that we need employment equity? I guess its reason is to correct perceived injustices in the workplace, an honourable motive. However, when we look at numbers we see that these injustices are often only perceived, and mostly perceived by government.

I would like to present a few more stats to add to those presented by the hon. member for North Vancouver a little earlier.

There are 570,000 people currently regulated by the present Employment Equity Act. Women make up 45.6 per cent of those covered. When looking at women in the overall Canadian workforce, we find that 45.9 per cent of the workforce is female. There is a difference of .03 per cent between those who work under the bodies that are covered by the Employment Equity Program and those in the greater workforce. That is .03 per cent. We have to ask ourselves if this .3 per cent is enough of a difference to warrant the cost and the damage done by these employment equity programs.

(1825)

According to StatsCan for example, in 1992 single women made about 99 per cent of the salaries of single men. Many salary differences between men and women can be explained by lifestyle choices, for example, the choice to stay at home and raise a family. Of course, that is a very honourable choice indeed.

As well, the Economic Council of Canada released a study in 1992 that found no correlation between wage levels and a person's country of origin. The same report also found that immigrants have a lower unemployment rate than Canadian-born workers. The conclusion reached in the council's report was that there is no significant discrimination against immigrants in general.

In 1994 the employment equity report said that in total, women occupied 47 per cent of government jobs while 47.3 per cent were available to work. Jobs held by women increased by a full percentage point in 1993-94. They took a full per cent more of the top jobs despite the fact that the executive category declined by 6 per cent. Again, would government have us bring in costly programs to adjust for a difference of .3 per cent?

I have a few more statistics. The civilian staff at the RCMP is 82.6 per cent female. At Citizenship Canada, 74 per cent are female. However, in Transport Canada more than 75 per cent are male. Are we to assume that this under-representation of

women in the transport department is caused by discrimination? I would say no. However, that is what the report wrongly assumed and this illustrates the fundamental flaw in the report. It is difficult to determine why there are differences, but we cannot automatically assume that it is due to rampant discrimination.

Again I ask the question: Why do we need employment equity programs and legislation? The answer is: I do not think we do. Then why do we have them? I believe we have them because the Liberal government's agenda has been and in fact is set too much by special interest groups and these special interest groups support employment equity. They are not driven by public interest.

We have had too much government based on the vocal input from a minority and too little government based on the less vocal input of the majority. We have had government by the minority instead of the majority. What we have with employment equity is a playing field that is tipped in favour of special interest groups. That is not what Canada is all about.

The motion today calls for the immediate end to employment equity and I fully support the motion. In keeping with the Reform practice of proposing positive alternatives, I will explain the Reform Party's position on employment equity by making five short statements:

One, all Canadians are equal before and under the law and all workers have the right to be free from discrimination in the workplace. Two, the market will provide solutions to a representative workplace in the private sector. Three, it is the role of government to ensure equality of opportunity rather than to determine equality of employment outcome in the public sector. Four, the workplace should be free from arbitrary obstructions to hiring or promotion. Merit must be the sole hiring criterion. Five, employment equity legislation is coercive, discriminatory, unnecessary and costly. It should be discontinued.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have very little time and I will use it as well as I can.

To quote a longtime good friend: "I will be happy that equality has arrived when an unqualified, incompetent woman has as good a chance of getting hired and promoted as an unqualified, incompetent man". That is equality.

Employment equity is not about special treatment; it is about equality of opportunity. History proves and the figures prove that in fact a minority in our population have had preference in hiring and promotion. How else does one explain that 84 per cent of clerks in the federal government are women, the lowest paid? Even within that category of clerks, men rise to the top more often than women.

Adjournment Debate

(1830)

Numerous statistics demonstrate clearly to us that the merit principle has not been applied in hiring and in employment in this country and, shamefully, in our own public service. The statistics make it very clear that women have been at a disadvantage and have been kept at low levels of employment. People with disabilities are totally under-represented in our workforce, notwithstanding their qualifications. Aboriginal people are shamefully under-represented in our workforce. People who are visible minorities are also shamefully under-represented and in fact have far less chances of getting hired, one-quarter of a chance just a couple of years ago, compared to a white applicant.

These are not necessarily conscious discriminations. They are built into our system and our value judgments. I say to the white males of this country: "You have nothing to lose but your privileges". This Canada of ours is not about privileges. It is not about preferential treatment for a minority of the population which has existed for a long time. It is about using the full, rich—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, the time provided for Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1) the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

TURKEY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month I had the honour of leading a delegation to Turkey to look into the very serious situation of human rights violations in that country. In particular, I was looking at the appalling human rights violations affecting the Kurdish community in Turkey.

Some 12 million Kurds live in Turkey. They have been denied any democratic rights whatsoever to express their fundamental cultural and linguistic heritage.

Following my return from that delegation, I raised a question in the House last week. I asked the Prime Minister to explain why the Canadian government is seriously contemplating sending a delegation led by a minister of the government to celebrate 75 years of Turkish parliamentary democracy.

It is absolutely appalling that the government would seriously consider sending a delegation of that nature when six members of the Turkish Parliament are locked up in the Ankara prison solely for have spoken out for human rights, democracy and justice.

When I had the privilege of meeting with these members of Parliament, including a Kurdish woman, Leyla Zana, who has been sentenced to a term of 15 years, they were astonished and deeply concerned that our government would seriously contemplate sending that delegation.

Second, I raised the issue of the possible sale of 39 CF-5 fighter aircraft to Turkey. We know of the human rights abuses. We know of the burning and destruction of villages. We know of over two million Kurds who have been made homeless in southeastern Turkey. We know of the attacks on journalists. We know of the very profound attacks on many other minorities in Turkey.

This arms deal is fundamentally immoral. I call on the Government of Canada to join with Norway and Germany, two of our strong NATO allies, in imposing an arms embargo on Turkey. Far from selling fighter aircraft, we should be imposing an arms embargo. Look at Turkey's record in Cyprus for example: the illegal invasion, as well as its current appalling human rights record.

Canada's policy is supposedly not to sell weapons to areas of conflict and not to sell weapons to countries with questionable human rights records. The government says: "No problem, we will get a promise from Turkey that they will not use this against civilians". The Turkish government made a similar promise with respect to tanks sold to them by Germany. That promise was broken as well.

(1835)

I call on the government to say now, categorically, that it will not participate in this charade of the celebration of Turkish democracy, that it will cancel the Canadian delegation, that it will not sell CF-5 fighter aircraft, that it will impose an arms embargo and call on the Turkish government to arrive at a peaceful solution through political dialogue and peaceful means instead of attacking the Kurdish community.

Finally, the PKK has called on the government to recognize that the time has come for dialogue, not for separation but as General Secretary Ocalan said: "The time has come to live side by side on free and equal terms". The way to achieve this is to be open and honest.

I hope the parliamentary secretary will take the opportunity to set the record straight on this issue.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to set the record straight. The hon. member has raised three important issues. One is the Canadian delegation participating in the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Parliament on April 23. The other is the human rights violations against the Kurds in northern Iraq and against some parliamentarians, that he explained in detail. The third issue is the sale of the CF-5 aircraft to Turkey.

Adjournment Debate

I would like to begin by addressing the first two issues. The hon. member received an excellent answer from the Prime Minister when he asked the question on March 28. The Prime Minister in his reply said: "It might be a good occasion for the ministerial delegation to raise the issue of human rights with the government when it is there". He also said: "Perhaps one way is to cancel the delegation or the other way is to send the delegation with a mandate to talk about it".

It is interesting what the member does when he sees human rights violations. He hops a plane and gets out there, whether it is the Middle East, China, Africa. He makes the headlines. He is the champion of fighting human rights violations. I compliment him for it.

In this case, for other Canadians, he says: "Don't go there. It's okay for me to go there, but don't go there. You Canadians stay home; don't go there". I think the hon. member would agree with me that the best way to address these human rights violations with Turkey is to go and present it to them face to face.

We have continually made representations to the Turkish government through our ambassador in Ottawa, through the embassy in Ankara. As far back as last June the Minister of Foreign Affairs raised the issue with his then Turkish counterpart, Mr. Çetin, who is now the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey.

I am sure these kind of direct interventions, face to face interventions, go a long way. Boycotting that country and not talking to them is not going to give them the message. We have to get there and approach them eyeball to eyeball on this situation. That addresses the first two issues.

As far as the sale of the CF-5s is concerned, again I do not know why the member is making such a fuss over the issue. Just after question period today I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs about this. There is no sale of CF-5s to Turkey. That is as recent as today. I hope the hon. member will pass that on to his constituents and to other Canadians. Yes, we have surplus planes. Yes, countries are interested in purchasing them. The price is a little lower because they are surplus and used. As of today, there is no sale of CF-5s to Turkey.

I thank the hon. member for his intervention, but I hope he will not be hypocritical—

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired.

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked a question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration regarding the deportation of a family of Romanian refugees, Carmen and Alexandru Dima and their daughters Simona and Diana.

Once again, the minister refused to intervene in this issue, and showed a blatant lack of sensitivity, humanism and compassion.

The public, as well as the groups and the individuals who supported that family, were frustrated and shocked by the minister and the government's refusal to use discretionary power in this case. The Dima family arrived in Quebec on February 27, 1992, and immediately claimed refugee status. To everyone's surprise, the IRB and the minister rejected all the representations made.

The Dima family was very well integrated to the community. Mrs. Dima, who was a teacher in Romania, worked as a volunteer at the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce school. She was promised a job with the Montreal catholic school board. Her husband, a computer technician, received a job offer from Avtech company, in Dorval.

One daughter, Simona, got 97 per cent in French and is in a class for advanced or gifted students at the Saint-Luc high school. As for Diana, she goes to Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and only speaks French. The family also has relatives in Montreal. I saw the Dimas cry on television before their deportation, and I was very moved by that drama.

I want to congratulate the Quebec minister of Immigration, Mr. Bernard Landry, who promised to deal quickly, and with compassion, with the immigrant applications which will be submitted at the Canadian consulate, in New York. This is another example of the open-mindedness of the Quebec government towards immigrants and refugees. Quebec is truly an exceptional land of adoption.

I want to mention the solidarity expressed by ordinary citizens, parishioners from the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce church, reverend Fernand Patry, teachers and students from the two above-mentioned schools, as well as by the Brothers of Christian Schools, who will look after the family in Plattsburgh.

The minister, who is afraid of the Reform Party, and who is becoming increasingly hard on immigrants and refugees, should take into account these spontaneous expressions of human solidarity by the public. I do hope that he will take the necessary measures to expedite the processing of the immigrant applications of that family, as regards the elements which fall under federal jurisdiction.

I am convinced that Quebec and Canadian society will benefit from the contribution of the Dima family. I am the last speaker and I want to take this opportunity to wish you, Mr. Speaker, as well as all the members of this House, a Happy Easter.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question to the hon. minister and for his concern for the Dima family.

I would like to inform him that the family has co-operated with immigration officials by returning to the United States where they can apply through the normal channels. The Quebec government has indicated that it will interview the family when they apply from outside Canada.

Adjournment Debate

They have had full benefit of our refugee determination system and they were found not to be refugees. Their case was reviewed under our post-determination risk assessment criteria and the Dima family were found not to be in danger if returned to Romania. They have also had a humanitarian and compassionate review which was negative.

Over 2,900 people immigrated to Canada from Romania in 1994, the vast majority having applied in the normal manner from outside Canada. In fact, in 1993 there were 3,300 entrants into Canada from Romania.

I want to respond to the member's greeting by also wishing you, Mr. Speaker, the member, and everyone else in the House a very pleasant holiday and Easter season.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier the motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until Monday, April 24, 1995 at 11 a.m.

Happy Easter, Joyeuses Pâques to everyone as well.

(The House adjourned at 6.44 p.m.)

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