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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, December 12, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 12, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

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 two petitions.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. David Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with its mandate under Standing Order 83(1), the committee on finance is now submitting its interim report to the House.

* * *

TOBACCO PRODUCTS CONTROL ACT

Hon. Jon Gerrard (for the Minister of Health, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-117, an act to amend the Tobacco Products Control Act.

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

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

ACT RESPECTING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

BILL C-110—MOTION FOR TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move

That in relation to Bill C-110, An Act respecting constitutional amendments, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage of the Bill, and one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the said Bill; and, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Business on the day allotted to the consideration of the report stage and on the day allotted to the third reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1010)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those in favour of the motion will play say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, is there a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Yes, there is a quorum.

Call in the members.

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 396)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Assad
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bertrand
Bevilacqua
Bodnar
Boudria
Brushett
Caccia
Campbell
Catterall
Chamberlain
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Collette
Comuzzi
Cowling
De Villers
Dingwall
Dromiskiy
Dupuy
Eggleton
Fewchuk
Finlay
Fry
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Gerrard
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Harvard
Hopkins
Ianno
Irwin
Keyes
Knutson
Lastewka
Lee
Loney
Maclaren
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Massé
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)
Milliken
Minna
Murphy
Nault
O'Brien
Ouellet
Paradis
Patry
Peters
Phinney
Pillitteri
Reed
Richardson
Ringuette—Maltais
Robillard
Serré
Sheridan
Speller
Stewart (Brant)
Telegdi
Thalheimer
Torsney
Valeri
Verran
Wappel
Whelan
Zed—151

Alcock
Arseneault
Assadourian
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)
Barnes
Bélaïr
Bellemare
Bethel
Bhaduria
Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden
Calder
Cannis
Cauchon
Chan
Clancy
Collins
Copp
Crawford
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Duhamel
Easter
English
Finestone
Fontana
Gagliano
Galloway
Godfrey
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)
Guarnieri
Harper (Churchill)
Hickey
Hubbard
Iftody
Jordan
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Lincoln
MacDonald
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
Marchi
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick
McKinnon
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Murray
Nunziata
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Proud
Regan
Rideout
Robichaud
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd
Simmons
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Terrana
Tobin
Ur
Vanclief
Walker
Wells
Young

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Althouse
Bachand
Benoit
Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brien
Caron
Chrétien (Frontenac)
Cummins
Davault
Debien
Dubé
Dumas
Epp
Forseth
Gauthier
Godin
Grey (Beaver River)
Guay
Hanger
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Hart
Hermanson
Hoepfner
Johnston
Lalonde
Langlois
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Lefebvre
Loubier
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
Ménard
Meredith
Nunez
Picard (Drummond)
Riis
Rocheleau
Scott (Skeena)
Solberg
Stinson
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Venne
Williams —89

Ablonczy
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Gaspé)
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Bridgman
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)
Chatters
Crête
Dalphond—Guiral
de Savoye
Deshaies
Duceppe
Duncan
Fillion
Gagnon (Québec)
Gilmour
Gouk
Grubel
Guimond
Hanrahan
Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hayes
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jacob
Kerpan
Landry
Laurin
Lebel
Leroux (Shefford)
Manning
Mayfield
McLaughlin
Mercier
Mills (Red Deer)
Penson
Ramsay
Ringma
Schmidt
Silye
Speaker
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)

PAIRED MEMBERS

Blondin—Andrew
Canuel
Culbert
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Marchand
Pomerleau
St. Denis

Bouchard
Copp
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
MacAulay
Paré
St-Laurent
Szabo

● (1050)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or special order, on Wednesday, December 13, 1995, the end of Government Orders shall be 5.15 p.m.

There have been negotiations among all parties and I believe there would be unanimous consent for that motion.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

• (1055)

Mrs. Payne: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I stood in my place just shortly after the vote. I would like to note that I was unavoidably late for the vote. Had I been here I would have voted with my party.

* * *

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ACT

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the issue of Quebec's veto over amendments to the Canadian Constitution and why we in this House should finally recognize that reality.

During the referendum campaign many Canadians were concerned about a possible yes vote but recognized the right of Quebecers to determine their own destiny.

Unfortunately, some on the yes side in the campaign characterized this respect of the Quebecois right to self-determination as ambivalence. When the rhetoric about indifference on the part of the rest of Canada escalated, Canadians were pushed into proving their commitment to a united Canada, a commitment I might add, that I never believed to be in question.

This expression is part of a larger package that the Prime Minister has put forward in the form of a resolution. It is a resolution that will recognize Quebec's distinct society. It offers a veto to Quebec as well as to other regions of the country over constitutional amendments and clarifies the roles and responsibilities with respect to labour force training and to the delivery of programs.

The Prime Minister is right to make this commitment and it is timely because Canada is changing. It was changing before the referendum, it was changing during the referendum and it will continue to change. This is natural. We all need to realize that there cannot always be a sense of finality on every issue. A country lives, changes and evolves. This is natural and progressive, if sometimes inconvenient.

In this case it is not wise to look for a specific date when this debate will be resolved. It will not, nor should it be. It is a healthy, modern and necessary progression that will continue over time.

This perspective is markedly different from those of the official opposition and the third party. Their obvious political agenda is to continue to raise the stakes and make demands within confining time frames to advance their own interests at the expense of our country. This disappoints me.

We on this side are driven by a genuine concern for Canada. I believe that it is testimony to our strength as a nation that we can move forward with the determination that we do in the face of these two parties, one that wants out of Canada and one that is ambivalent about our united country.

As part of the larger package, formal recognition of Quebec's distinct society is long overdue. We are expressing a characteristic of Canada that is on the positive side of the ledger as well as a historical fact. Canada is unique internationally in its multicultural nature, historic recognition of our aboriginal underpinnings and of our more recent two founding nations. We also have the capacity to constantly evolve through the different phases of these relationships.

Quebec's right to a veto has long been supported by this party. We have gone even further in offering a similar veto to the Atlantic region, Ontario, the west, and have recently offered a veto to the province of B.C. These regional vetoes are a reflection of this government's commitment to reach a broad consensus on issues concerning the Constitution.

In offering B.C. a veto, the Prime Minister has taken a leadership role in promoting flexibility and accountability in government. Since it was clear that B.C. was feeling misunderstood and unappreciated, the Prime Minister acted quickly and listened to its concerns. This is an important step in our evolution in recognizing this right as a fact just as Quebec's distinct society is a fact.

The leader of the third party on the other hand did not take advantage of an opportunity to propose a veto in committee. He did not even once in the House call for a veto for British Columbia. Those who view the third party as representatives of the west's interests may want to look at this obvious neglect to perhaps recognize that it is the governing party and our caucus that is listening and responding to every region in the country. I would like to congratulate my colleagues from B.C. who effectively represented their constituents and enabled this important amendment to be made to the original proposal.

• (1100)

There are some who say that the government has not gone far enough in passing a resolution. What they fail to point out is the very real impact several resolutions have had in the past, such as the official languages resolution of 1968, the resolution reaffirming linguistic duality in 1973, and the resolution regarding the language of work in the federal public service.

Coming from New Brunswick I am very aware of the impact of all these resolutions, not only on the country but also on how the country operates inside my province. Those that would have us believe that Ottawa is simply throwing Quebec a bone but avoiding dealing with the issue with any degree of seriousness have questionable motives themselves.

Of course the Bloc members will not accept the seriousness of the resolution because in admitting that Canada can work they make themselves redundant. It is all too easy to point a finger at Ottawa for not doing enough when in fact it is offering exactly those changes that Quebec has rightfully sought in the past.

Government Orders

Is the attitude of Bloc members one that really takes Quebec's interest to heart, the interests of all Quebecers regardless of what language they speak? I think we know the answer to that question.

Canada is not made up only of Ottawa and Quebec. In looking beyond Quebec there are a number of different realities that must be reconciled. In the eastern provinces we find loyal strongholds in regions rich with history. In the western provinces we find many new Canadians with rich multicultural influences and traditions. The ability to bring these regions together is the challenge, a challenge to which I am certain we will be able to rise.

For all of those who are narrowly defining regional interests I ask simply: What region will be better off with a fractured country? There is no region in Canada that will benefit from the secession of Quebec. It is obvious which political party will benefit and that is what disappoints me.

This debate must continue. The Prime Minister has opened the door for Canadians to speak to and of their country, not in a highly structured and regimented way but to simply open the door to opportunity much in the same way as the rally did on October 27.

We must recognize that we need to move forward and not become mired in the past. Canada building should be our focus, not tearing Canada apart. This debate is about values, the values of fairness and acceptance that are integral to the successful resolution of the question.

I would like to mention a forum that was held in my riding two Sundays ago. The topic of discussion was Canadian unity. Many individuals took the time to come and express their views on the subject. I want to commend everyone who helped make it happen and mention a few of their suggestions.

The idea of generating more dialogue among Canadians inside and outside Quebec was brought out often, as well as having our educational system teach more about each other's histories and traditions. One individual felt that information is too filtered by the media and by politicians and someone else mentioned the need for everyone to better appreciate our economic interdependence.

I would like to thank the member for Brome—Missisquoi who took the time to visit Fredericton and participate in this public forum. His insights were very useful to the debate and to our understanding. This forum was a logical progression from the rally that was held in Montreal, a rally that was attended by hundreds of constituents from my riding who were willing to drive in a bus for 10 hours each way to express their desire that Quebec stay in Canada.

When I was asked to speak in the House in the first week on this issue I felt that I should hear from my constituents on that weekend first before attempting to express their views. I appreciate their participation and hope I have been able to transmit to the House the level of their commitment to Canada.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to commend the Prime Minister on his integrity and his broad Canadian vision. I am not

surprised that he has acted quickly on this issue. I support him fully. I feel more Canadian because we have expressed a reality that makes Canada a great country. It is my great pleasure to support the resolution and I close by paraphrasing Lord Acton: A state which is incompetent to satisfy difference condemns itself. It is not our intention to condemn but to construct.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us is one of the steps the government is taking to keep the promises the Prime Minister made at the meeting of the no side in Verdun. The promises were made in the dying moments of the referendum campaign, when, for the previous two years, the government had systematically refused to discuss any constitutional matter.

Only the phenomenal advance of the yes side forced the Prime Minister out of his constitutional lethargy and into giving Quebecers the hope of reform and satisfaction of their traditional claims.

Quebecers, however, are not fooled. Now all of the evidence points to the fact that the Prime Minister's offers were tabled in a mad panic. For example, the last minute press conference. The phoney committee chaired by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs had not even finished its deliberations.

The Liberal caucus had not been consulted either, and was put in the picture only after the Prime Minister's press conference. The offers presented are far from having unanimous support from the other provinces. This is a put up job, and a bad one at that, indicating that the Cabinet was beginning to panic about the challenges to the Prime Minister's ability to lead.

Many political figures on the Canadian scene, particularly in Quebec, gave an extremely chilly reception to the proposal for a regional veto, which was probably a great blow to the Liberal government. What explanation can there be for such an uproar of disapproval in response to the Prime Minister's proposals?

While the Meech Lake accord offered all provinces the right of veto over constitutional amendments, particularly those relating to federal institutions, here we have the Prime Minister reheating an old amending formula dating back to the seventies and the Victoria Charter. There is only one tiny change, the percentage of population required for the maritimes. The reactions were more or less the same in all the rest of Canada. English Canada reacted strongly to a proposal dating back to a distant time we were only too pleased to think had been forgotten forever.

First of all, the premiers of the two most populous western provinces voiced strong opposition to this offer. In British Columbia, Mr. Harcourt was not terribly enthusiastic, and a number of academics in the province even suggested the Prime Minister would cause the birth of a separatist movement in British Columbia. To show you how hard it is to grant these veto powers, the Prime Minister immediately turned around and promised British Columbia it would have a veto too. All in less than 24 hours. If you want a veto, the Prime Minister has a

drawer full and will hand them out to anyone who makes a fuss and does not like his proposals.

That is not the kind of veto Quebec had in mind. The same kind of reaction came from Premier Klein of Alberta, who was not at all keen to see Ontario have a veto while three western provinces had to share. He maintained it was unfair to one of the three richest provinces in Canada and a province whose population was increasing at the fastest rate. Need I recall the position taken by the Reform Party, which is opposed to special privileges for any province and in the case of Quebec refuses to recognize anything, not even a symbolic and meaningless distinct society with no legal validity?

• (1110)

In Quebec, reactions were harsh as well. In one of his speeches, the Prime Minister maintained that Quebecers would recognize themselves in his proposals and that these would respond to the aspirations of Quebecers. Obviously we are not talking about the same Quebec.

His comments now and during the referendum indicate that the Prime Minister no longer knows Quebec and that the fact that he has been living in Ottawa for more than 30 years has probably cut him off altogether from what is happening in Quebec.

His proposals were intended to satisfy Quebecers, but he made the serious mistake of wanting to please everyone. By giving everyone half a loaf, he managed to please no one.

Most political parties in Quebec either reacted very negatively or were not satisfied with the proposals or dismissed them out of hand.

When there is a fire in Quebec, the other provinces panic. They show Quebec a whole arsenal of firehoses, telling us we can now feel safe and sound, protected by the other provinces and this array of firehoses. Too bad there was not enough water in the hoses to put out the fire. What we are being offered is not the real thing, but Quebec wants the real thing.

As I said to a colleague yesterday, we want to be recognized as horses, but they recognize us as little ponies. A horse is stronger than a pony. Quebec claims to be that strong and powerful; it does not want to be seen as small, weak and disadvantaged.

Mr. Dumont's Action démocratique also argues that what Quebecers want is not mere motions or bills but real constitutional reforms.

Both the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois have rejected the Prime Minister's proposals. Labour indicated that it was too little, too late. As for the very federalist Liberal Party in Quebec, all it had to say was that it was a step forward, but without any great enthusiasm. At a regional council held the day before the Prime Minister came out with his proposals, the Liberal Party in Quebec went much further in its constitutional demands.

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The Premier of Quebec, and even Mr. Bourassa before him, would never have agreed to the Prime Minister of Canada's watered down proposals. Beyond partisan politics, however, the media's reaction was the most revealing indication of how the federal government's proposals were received. The editorial writer for *Le Devoir* refutes the federal proposals, arguing that enshrining this veto power in an act of Parliament would not really give Quebec its veto back.

Quebec would not really get its veto back because although its veto was recognized by tradition, the Supreme Court stated that Quebec never had a legal veto. This editorial writer points out that any government could very well revoke this act. Reform would probably make it a point of honour to do so upon taking office. The most telling comments in the newspapers, however, are in *La Presse*, whose chief editorial writer, Alain Dubuc, who is well-known for his pro-federalist positions, wrote that Quebecers want much more than that. He added that, as long as these principles are guaranteed by legislation, all it would take for Quebec to lose its guarantees is a shift in policies or a change of government. The Prime Minister's proposals are held up to ridicule from all sides and considered as plainly unacceptable, both by English Canada and by Quebec.

• (1115)

To conclude, I would like to add that the main problem with this bill is its very essence; after all, it is just a bill. As long as all the provinces do not agree on its principle, it will remain just a bill.

This simple bill has the same force in law as any other bill, which means that it can be repealed by any government, as it sees fit. That is its weakness and that is what we condemn.

[*English*]

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak on this issue. I should like to share my vision of Canada with members opposite, the Canada that I dreamed of as a 10-year old boy in Croatia.

I dreamed about Canada. It was a huge country. I dreamed about Canada when I asked my parents whether there was anything for breakfast. Today as a parent I am asking my children what they want for breakfast.

My dreams became a reality in 1968 when I arrived in Canada. I was by myself and not even 19 years old. The question is why Canada. I cannot answer that question. However today I know that I made the right choice. I had the chance to go to Australia or New Zealand or to stay in Croatia. However I chose to come here. Three years later when I became a Canadian citizen I was the luckiest person on the planet.

I did not know about the differences within Canadian society until I arrived in Canada and I found out about English speaking Canada and French speaking Canada. That was great. There are Canadians in the middle, Canadians like myself, who came to

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build this great country. We cannot ignore that they built it and they made it the best country on the planet.

We do not know how to appreciate that. Sometimes I ask myself what is wrong with us. When we return from travelling abroad and seeing how other people live and how much they have, we really appreciate what we have here and what we are.

October 27 was a historic date for Canada. We gathered in Montreal and told Quebecers that we loved them. The Prime Minister made a commitment which I fully support. It is not just to recognize Quebec as a distinct society. It also recognizes the historical fact that French people in Canada are different. It is not that they are better or worse than anybody else, but that they are different. They have a different language and a different culture. That is great and we have to respect and admire that. We have to tolerate that if we want to be a strong, united Canada.

• (1120)

On October 27 I took my eight-year old son along with 250 constituents from Cambridge to Montreal. He was a part of that historic day. He was proud to be part of that historic day, the beginning of a new Canada. Today he is learning French in school. He will probably share some time in Quebec with his eight and nine-year old colleagues in the near future.

Unfortunately maybe we do not know each other very well. It is about time that we took the effort to know each other, to get to know Canadians from British Columbia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. It is about time we knew about our unique Canadian culture to which many newcomers and I contribute.

By giving this recognition to French people in Canada, I am convinced that Canada will survive. We are facing difficulties today, but it is not the end. It is evident that we have to solve the problem today and continue building a stronger and better Canada for our children and grandchildren.

I urge members from all three sides to work together to make Canada even better, to put our differences aside and work together to build a unique and stronger Canada. We can accomplish that, so help us God.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-110. As we all know, the bill was designed to give a veto to the province of Quebec over the Canadian Constitution.

We thought at one time that we had dealt with the issue during Meech Lake and the Charlottetown accords when we gave all Canadians a say in the matter. Lo and behold Canadians said: "No, we don't accept what politicians have done. We are staying with the way it is". Here we are today after a referendum and the Liberals are right back at it again, on the top down approach.

The bill also gives a veto to B.C., the prairies, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. B.C. was not included originally. Six B.C. Liberals would like to say they had some influence on the acknowledgement of British Columbia as a separate region, so to speak, because of its position in the federation. They would like to take credit for that, but the fact is we are back to the way it has always been. They do what they are told over there. They had little or no influence. The party said: "You will" and they did. They did nothing.

• (1125)

It was the outrage of people in British Columbia and across the country who said: "What are you doing with four regions as opposed to five?" The government changed its mind. The problem is that the government is still talking about the governments of the regions and not the people of the regions. I do not believe that will ever get through to the government, ever, until the government is replaced by a populist party and not a party that works from the top down.

Let us make no mistake. This is once again an act of appeasement to separatists in Quebec. Over the years we have been giving the country away piece by piece. Every time the separatists squawk this government overreacts, as did and the government before it.

Let us look at why we are in this mess in the first place. Over all these years we have had some issues to deal with such as the finances of the country. The Liberal targets at best are weak. Their economic fiscal management, as well as that of the previous government, is a disgrace.

At least the province of Quebec is open enough to say: "Look, if you can't get your act in gear we are going to leave". Other people are saying: "If you can't get your act together, we are going to stay and try to fight it".

Let us look at the battle against crime. The Liberal government still does not understand how bad it is out there. It is still doing a messy, pathetic job at fighting crime in the country. We have one separatist province saying: "We don't like the way you are doing that either, so we want out". Whose fault is it that we have this spoiled child of separatism sitting here? It is the governments that have done very little to help the country since the current Prime Minister was finance minister.

Today the government still appoints its friends and hacks to the Senate. It is still ripping off Canadians with an MP's pension. It voted out recall. All these issues are part of the problem in the country today. They are rubbing everybody the wrong way, from the east coast to the west coast.

What did the Liberals come up with? They came up with a veto power in the Constitution. They said that it was the best a Liberal majority government could do in the country. That is very sad indeed.

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When the Bloc appeared for the first time in the last election in 1993, what happened? How did the Liberal government deal with it? First it agreed to official opposition status. That was the first mistake. It has been dealing with that problem since we have been here. It is not dealing with all the problems across the country. It is only dealing in self-interest.

The referendum came along. We saw a Liberal government with no vision. Its members were stumbling and bumbling through a referendum until in the dying days when it looked like they were going to lose it and they threw out a few carrots. That is a heck of a way to run a country. Now we see the government shelling out veto powers, not to the people but to the governments of the provinces within those regions.

Why do we give vetoes in any event? To my knowledge no democratic country in the world provides vetoes on constitutional issues to a body, particularly to a provincial body that just happens to be a separatist government.

• (1130)

What exactly does the government think it will achieve by doing that? It has not thought about it. It is another knee-jerk reaction to a group of separatists in the House.

Coming from British Columbia, having lived there, with my riding being there, I can see the time is coming when British Columbia needs a very forceful government.

We in the House had better understand why that will be necessary. It seems the only way we can improve a federation is to threaten these guys. That seems to be the game. The separatists show up and give a little more. The separatists speak out and the government gives a little more, piece by piece. They are never happy. What happened last night when distinct society came up in a motion to vote on? They voted against it. That is because they have not been given enough. When they are given enough, it will very likely be too late.

An hon. member: Sovereignty.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): A member says sovereignty. They are really saying separation.

At what point is the government prepared to draw a line and say enough is enough? It proposes there is no point and there is no line; just keep shelling and giving until there is no more to give. That is not a plan. That is acquiescence.

How do the people in my riding feel? If one has a spoiled child, how does one deal with it? A lot of people would say if one has a spoiled child perhaps one has parents who are not running it right.

Here we have governments that do not run it right. That is the problem. We have a Prime Minister and a cabinet with many members from Quebec. There is a conflict of interest when they

sit behind closed doors and make deals about the province they are from.

People in my riding say draw a line, tell these people where the line is. They say not to give a veto to governments. If they have to give a veto, if they will make that decision anyway, give it to the people, not to governments, particularly not to a separatist government.

We have to say in the House and throughout this land to give these people the facts. Draw the line in the sand somewhere so they know what can be given and what cannot be given, not this year after year of saying more for you, more for you, at the alienation of every other province.

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand I have only 10 minutes, unfortunately. I wish I had an hour to respond to the remarks I just listened to very quietly, as difficult as that was.

I heard so much fiction from the member for Fraser Valley West, so many dangerous interpretations of our history and society that I feel compelled to respond to at least a few of them.

• (1135)

The hon. member and members of the third party are repeatedly saying that in the veto bill the federal government is giving the separatists a veto. That is patently nonsense.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): What do you think it is?

Mr. O'Brien: I listened very carefully to the member for Fraser Valley West without interrupting him. I would appreciate if he would do the same for me, as that is the nature of democratic debate in the House. We can disagree without interrupting each other as we speak.

The current Government of Quebec unfortunately is a separatist government. We all know that. We do not need to be rocket scientists to know that. However, the mistake made by the hon. members opposite is they assume we will have a separatist government forever in Quebec. That is ridiculous. All we have to do is review the history of the province of Quebec to know there have been very few years when a separatist was in power.

The bill proposes to give to the province of Quebec, as it does to the governments of four other regions, a veto power. It is not to the people or to the separatist Government of Quebec in a sense that it will be there ad infinitum.

The hon. member mentioned that the six Liberal MPs in B.C. like to say they have influenced the government's change of mind in recognizing B.C. as a region. I think my colleagues did have an influence in that change of decision. One thing I do know for sure is the Reform Party certainly had no influence in changing the mind of the government in giving B.C. a regional veto.

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The ignorance of Quebec and the situation in Canada in terms of our veto power from some members opposite is unbelievable. As a Canadian and someone who taught Canadian history, the degree of ignorance, even by certain members of the House, about our history alarms me.

Where did this idea of veto power for four regions come from? Was it dreamed up out of thin air? It was not dreamed up out of thin air. In the early 1970s at a conference in Victoria a decision was made to give veto powers to four regions in the country. That Victoria formula was endorsed by all 10 premiers of all 10 provinces, including the province of British Columbia at that time, as well as by the Government of Canada.

It is ignorance of Canadian history to suggest that somehow the government and the Prime Minister have dreamed up this plan. It is based in fact and it is based in history. The lack of knowledge of Canadian history by some members in the House is appalling.

My colleague from Fraser Valley West said no democratic government in the world provides a veto. I am almost quoting him directly.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): That is right.

Mr. O'Brien: He is now saying that is right. I am sorry to see him lead with his chin like that. Let me introduce him to a nation to the south called the United States of America in which one democratically elected person, the president, has a veto power.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): That is not a state.

Mr. O'Brien: The last time I checked, I thought the United States of America was a state. I thought it was a democracy. I thought the President of the United States had a veto power. I invite the hon. member for Fraser Valley West to enrol in some basic courses in political science and Canadian history. I would be very happy to recommend some for him.

The United States of America empowers one person, its democratically elected president, with the right to veto legislation. It is incredible for me to hear an elected member in the House say that no democratic government in the world has a veto power. I will put it down to a bad day for my colleague from Fraser Valley West.

• (1140)

The last point I will address from the hon. member is the characterization of Quebec as a spoiled child. The attitude that somehow Quebec is a spoiled child, to generalize and make the blatant characterization of Quebec as a spoiled child on the basis that 30 per cent of the people are separatists, is part of the problem we have. It is ignorance of the real demographics in Quebec. It is ignorance of what the people in Quebec really believe. It is a dangerous generalization that the most basic student of history is taught not to make. Because 30 per cent of the people of Quebec are very hard core separatists, we should

not be foolish enough to characterize the people of Quebec as spoiled children.

What makes that all the more dangerous is that the people applauding the loudest secretly when members like the member for Fraser Valley West make these blatant generalizations are the separatists. Every time a member in the House of Commons spews that kind of logic, every time a Canadian anywhere in Canada makes that kind of ridiculous comment, it only advances the cause of separatism in Quebec. It only makes the job of the Bouchards and the Parizeaus easier in Quebec.

It is a pity we have elected members saying that. I know the member for Fraser Valley West does not like to hear these truths and that is why he interrupts me, even though I did not interrupt him when he made these comments. That is okay. I will debate him now on the point that he does not have his basic facts correct. I will debate him here on the point that he does not have his basic facts of Canadian history straight. I will debate him anywhere he chooses. He does not have the facts of Canadian history, the history of this veto power, or the knowledge that the United States has a veto power.

I am shocked. I am disappointed. Most dramatically, I am alarmed that an elected member would come into the House of Commons and make the kind of statements, the twisting of facts, and display the ignorance I have heard.

I say these things in kindness. I offer them as constructive criticism. I think we can help the member for Fraser Valley West to learn more Canadian history if he has an open mind. That is the problem. One wonders if the attitudes are not so ingrained in some members of the House, if they do not bring the kind of attitudes and the lack of knowledge of Canadian history in such a visceral way into the House that perhaps they are not willing to listen to facts, not willing to learn some Canadian history and not willing to change.

An hon. member: What do you know about the west?

Mr. O'Brien: I have been in western Canada many times. I have an uncle in Quesnel, B.C. I have an aunt in New Westminster, B.C. I converse with them frequently. I know their views on this situation as people living in British Columbia now.

There is some knowledge of western Canada on this side of the House. All wisdom, all logic, all knowledge and all defence of western Canada, thank goodness, do not rest with the party opposite.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak after the hon. member for Fraser Valley West to set the record straight. The hon. member does not seem to understand a thing about what is happening in Quebec right now when he describes the province as a spoiled child. All that we in Quebec are asking is merely for Quebec to be sovereign. We are asking nothing of him and, if he just agreed

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to Quebec's sovereignty, he would have nothing to do with us any more.

I am also pleased to speak here today on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, to establish a regional veto so that no constitutional change can be made without the consent of all Canadians, according to this government.

Is the government for real? No. And the same way I voted against the distinct society motion yesterday evening, I will vote against this bill out of pride and respect for the people of my riding and of Quebec as a whole.

How can Quebec be recognized as a distinct society through a motion that is binding on the federal government but not on all of the provinces, a motion that may be overturned by a new government? And how can the government at the same time introduce a bill establishing a regional veto that is the same for every province? Only our Prime Minister can do such somersaults.

This only meets the election minded expectations of the Liberal Party of Canada. These projects are meaningless; they are a smoke screen and they also show a lack of respect for Quebecers. This government never gave a better illustration of how panic-stricken it is, which explains why it is totally improvising. After saying loud and clear before the referendum that it was not going to talk about the Constitution, the government started alluding to changes one week before the referendum. Then, after a narrow victory, it tabled a motion on the distinct society, followed by a bill on regional vetoes.

After dragging its feet for two years, the government introduces a UI reform which clearly shows that it intends to bypass the provinces, regardless of their distinct nature, and not give them an opportunity to be heard. Then it tells us that we must refer to a Canadian, not Quebec, culture. Finally, the federal government reconsiders its decision and gives British Columbia the status of region, for the purpose of its Bill C-110.

In the meantime, a phoney committee is on standby, waiting for the government to stop its antics and give it a mandate. This is mind boggling. I would be hard pressed to show the logic in all this. The government acts like a chicken running in all directions with its head cut off, trying to save its broken eggs. It does not even realize that it came very close to losing Quebec. Will the government finally realize that, in spite of all its foolish attempts, it clearly shows that it will never be able to come up with a constitutional reform project that meets the expectations of Quebec, as well as those of the rest of Canada?

We are two peoples in Canada, but one country is missing. A worthwhile and possible undertaking would be to accept that we are a people and that Quebec is a country. The Prime Minister

told us here in this House just recently that he was most anxious to see the Bloc members vote against his motion on Quebec as a distinct society, against Bill C-110 and against unemployment insurance reform. I would like to tell him that the people in my riding are equally anxious, but not for the same reasons.

The 58 per cent who voted to elect me in October 1993, and the 58.3 per cent who voted in the October 30, 1995 referendum, asked me to attend the House on Monday, although that is the day I am usually in my riding office. They wanted me to be here to vote against this ridiculously out of date project. It is a matter of too little, too late. The 49.4 per cent of Quebecers who voted in favour of Quebec sovereignty in this referendum were voting for the right to pass our own laws, to collect our own taxes, to sign our own treaties.

• (1150)

They do not want a bill aimed at making it impossible for any government, including the Government of Quebec, to change the Canadian Constitution.

The Minister of Justice has stated, and I quote: "True, this resolution will satisfy neither the Parti Quebecois nor the Bloc Quebecois. As we know, sadly, nothing short of breaking up this country would satisfy them". What a wonderful red herring to push through a bill that will make any in depth changes to the Constitution impossible until the end of time. Canada does not need the Parti Quebecois or the Bloc Quebecois to break itself apart, the Prime Minister and his centralist federalism are doing well enough on their own. Unfortunately, they do not realize this.

On Friday, December 8, a SOM-La Presse poll reported that Quebecers are not satisfied with the Chrétien government's proposals. A meagre 31 per cent of Quebecers now admits to having supported the federalist option. Furthermore, no sooner was the bill tabled than the Minister of Justice made an about-face and agreed to the concept of a fifth region to satisfy British Columbia, which proves this government is playing it strictly by ear.

The minister asked us to trust him, saying it was hard to imagine how the government would support a constitutional amendment that did not have the support of all regions. In other words, the federal government should not support a constitutional amendment unless all regions agree. The minister has a poor memory. He must have forgotten the lesson we learned in 1992. The minister ought to know that once bitten, twice shy.

Remember when in 1982, the Canadian Liberal government patriated the Constitution and amended it and adjusted it in the image of English Canada, without the consent of Quebec. What may seem immoral to the present Minister of Justice did not

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seem so to the then justice minister in 1982, who is now the Prime Minister. All things considered, we are not inclined to trust the cat who tells mousie he loves her dearly, but well done, with stuffing à la Clyde Wells.

This is not about giving Quebec a veto, let us be clear about that. What we have here is a cosmetic exercise that gives a pseudo-veto to four, five or six regions unilaterally identified by the federal government. These regions are both distinct and equal, as far as I can see. The government probably thinks it has found a way to give the impression it is giving Quebec what Quebecers want, while giving the other regions in Canada the impression this does not mean a thing. Not surprisingly, the rest of Canada is not any more pleased than Quebec with this sleight of hand. This extra-constitutional exercise is only an exercise in wishful thinking.

After the first constitutional veto, requiring unanimous consent on any change in the responsibilities of the Queen, the governor general or the Senate, came the veto on amendments involving one or more provinces, such as to borders, then came the veto on general amendments—the rule of seven and fifty: 7 provinces and 50 per cent of the population—and now we have the so-called regional veto, the criteria to be determined by the government, such as: a resolution by a legislative assembly, an order in council, a notice signed by the provincial premier, a notice signed by a provincial lieutenant governor, a provincial referendum organized by a province, a federal referendum in one or a number of provinces or a vote by federal members of Parliament from the province in question.

With such a collection of distinct criteria, the federal government has any number of ways to go over the heads of the provinces.

The last piece the government needed to never again change the Constitution has just been tabled in the House, and all those who voted no believing in the fine promises of the Prime Minister to amend the Constitution to meet Quebec's requirements are, today, in mourning. On their behalf, I will vote against this bill.

I must, nevertheless, in closing, thank the Prime Minister for the 10 per cent of electors we lacked to achieve Quebec's sovereignty. With this sort of understanding of Quebec, the next referendum will be the winner.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 27 the Prime Minister introduced three initiatives for change in how government works in Canada. It is important to remember that these changes are not constitutional changes in themselves. Rather these initiatives respond to how Canadians want their government to respond to the realities of Canada in the 1990s.

Canadians want the government to move forward, to respect the needs of our people, to make government more accessible. In the wake of the Quebec referendum, Canadians expected the federal government to make good on its commitments to maintain a unified country.

Canadians recognize the need for governments to remain focused on the issues of importance; issues such as employment creation, consumer and investor confidence, government spending and control.

Canadians also recognize that initiatives on distinct society, regional veto and manpower training will permit the government to fulfil its obligations to Canadians without allowing the country's agenda to be hijacked by those who wish to further their own personal agenda of destroying rather than building our country.

These unity incentives are a very important first step. These initiatives are also an effective way of dealing with the concerns of Canadians and of building partnerships with all regions of Canada, while at the same time not reopening the whole constitutional debate.

The proposed actions are consistent with what Canadians want and are the most expeditious way of achieving those goals. For many of us, both inside and outside government, constitutional discussions gave rise to concerns of lengthy, protracted debate without meaningful resolution.

Bill C-110, the act respecting constitutional amendments, does not raise these concerns. Evidence of this can easily be found in how government reacted to the issue of regional vetoes. By responding quickly to the concerns of B.C., the government has modified its regional veto to include British Columbia as a separate regional veto. This action flows directly from the commitment to listen to people and to introduce actions that bring people from all regions together.

The act, in its present form, would require the consent of Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, the Atlantic and the prairie regions before any constitutional amendment can be proposed in Parliament by the Canadian government. This is, in effect, a guarantee that each of these five regions will have a general veto in areas where they do not already have a specific veto. This authority, simply put, will allow any one of the five regions to stop an amendment from the outset.

This bill keeps a commitment to all Canadians for increased protection within the Canadian federation and it recognizes the Constitution and its amending process is of interest to all parts of the country. By recognizing a regional veto for the province of British Columbia, the government is recognizing the existence of a uniquely Canadian west coast situation.

British Columbia, with its size, population, location and economic development, constitutes a region of interest that requires its own recognition on regional issues. By extending this regional veto power to British Columbia, the government is reaching out to Canadians, acknowledging the variously unique-

ly Canadian situations and bringing us closer together by helping this part of Canada survive and strengthen its loyalties.

In a recent Regina editorial, the unity initiative was referred to as having solid potential and the Prime Minister's olive branch to Quebec could do what eight years of constitutional debate did not. This is an indication that the prairie provinces recognize the importance of a federal government that actively pursues addressing the regional interests of Canadians. The inclusion of B.C. in a veto power builds on an initiative and a decisive act that can be a valuable component of nation building.

In the same editorial, the Prime Minister's actions were described as swift and bold in the government's accommodation of Quebec. These are again descriptions that could justifiably be used to describe the government's movement to address the B.C. situation.

• (1200)

The unity initiative promoted by the government is much more simple than the Charlottetown accord of 1992. Today's bill is much more concise and limited in its scope, yet it moves to achieve certain goals that have been sought by regions. Even in Quebec, sovereignists like Mario Dumont believe that this is a new, much simpler proposal and should be judged on its own merits.

Before the proposed veto change for B.C., a Vancouver editorial commented on the Prime Minister's unity package by saying: "It is an offer of tangible, substantive change that even Bouchard will find hard to discredit". Now that the B.C. veto is being promoted in this package, one can only assume that certain of those reservations have now been looked upon and completed with B.C. coming into the union with a veto.

In Edmonton an editorial comment suggested that the Prime Minister "did all he could within the powers of his government" in reference to Quebec's uniqueness and the veto rights. Yet it was this government that once again rose to the occasion by finding a way to enhance western Canada's position, not at the expense of others, but in recognition of British Columbia.

One can easily detect the concerns and desires of our Canadian regions. If one listens and acts in a comprehensive way, the same regions will recognize that efforts are for the benefit of the whole and do not jeopardize or favour the position of one region over another. Simply put, the veto proposal and the added recognition of British Columbia says to the provinces that no constitutional change will occur if regions oppose. This is more than any province has today and the inclusion of B.C. as a separate veto does nothing to favour one over another.

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The Edmonton *Journal* noted: "Albertans cannot have something for nothing. Life, as we know it, would not end if Alberta lost the provincial veto it never had".

Many Canadians recognize that unity initiatives are probably about as far as government can reasonably go in the political climate of the 1990s. It is the recognition of the desires of Canadians and a response to the same within the context of Canadian society and will be acceptable by law. It will also give Canadians a chance to view the Constitution before any changes occur.

The proposals for a regional veto try as best as possible to acknowledge that the country has great variation of population densities. It would be much easier to divide the geographical area without the need to regard the population of the regions of the country. But this is not possible in Canada. What is possible is to pursue and find a compromise that will address the regional concerns within the context of national programs. The regional veto is a logical attempt to balance the will of our regions and its populations.

In central Canada editorial opinion suggests that the regional veto is a move that recognizes the reality of the country and its population. It is the recognition of what Canada is and what we stand for and how best the government can deliver these services is the driving force for change. It is not the government proposing change for the sake of change, but rather change for the sake of addressing concerns of Canadians.

There was also an observation in a central Canada newspaper that the unity proposals allowed us to test drive the concepts of them without enshrining them in our Constitution. Perhaps this is the most telling observation of Canadian society. We are a people that do need to be prepared to accept change. We must accept change, not one region over another, not with the idea of the contempt of change, but we must make certain that our drive forward is to unify the country, what we can do to help Canada and Canadians survive in this ever changing society.

• (1205)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I will start by telling the House why I ran for office. Why did I want to come to this place? To sum it up I would say it was because I could add something to this country. I believe in this country. I have travelled extensively and I know what people think of this country.

What is wrong with the country? I thought there was a lack of equality. The political system was one where the message came from Ottawa back to the ridings and the parties were too strong. I was mad because of the GST, because of the national energy program. I was mad at the arrogance of government. I looked at it and thought that this was a very centralist place. In the past as I

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have mentioned the national energy program and the GST were forced on people by Ottawa.

I look at this Parliament and I do not see that much has changed. I see employment equity being forced down people's throats when others are getting rid of it. I see gun control being forced on people without any attempt to change any of the clauses. There was the Quebec referendum where we were told to be happy, that everything was fine and it was not.

Now there is this unity package and I see closure. Closure is the ugliest thing that can happen in this place. People are disenfranchised and are not allowed to speak for their constituents.

Canadians are saying: "We need jobs. We need tax reform. We need somebody to deal with the criminal justice system. We need the reform of Parliament itself. We need more free votes. We need to know that our MPs can stand up for what we believe".

Now we get this veto package, which totally lacks a vision for Canada. This is supposed to be a unity package. It is anything but. It is anything but creating the equality that we all believe in. We all want change and this package does anything but allow us to ever have any future change.

We now will need something in the neighbourhood of 92 per cent of Canadians in order to get any change by a package like this. Our hope of free votes, our hope of getting rid of that other place are gone now. It does anything but provide any kind of unity for the country.

We look at the government listening to the people. The PCs did not listen during the GST. They did not listen during Charlottetown. We saw what happened to them in 1993. We now have a government that seems to be following the same pattern.

I look to an example of a week ago in Edmonton where the member from Edmonton East had a meeting. Seventeen people went to listen to the unity package of the Prime Minister while across town 800 people were telling us exactly what they thought of that unity package.

In my riding I have completed a survey that went out last Thursday. So far we are into the hundreds of returns and 87 per cent are saying not to give special status or the veto to anybody. That is 87 per cent of the people who answered that question.

The people of the west and the people of Canada are mad. Yesterday, Mr. Klein dropped out of Team Canada. Is that building unity? Listen to the message. The government is losing the country. This centralist top down government will lose the country. Even the national polls show that 53 per cent of Quebecers are unhappy with this package as are 58 per cent of the rest of Canada.

Only 23 per cent of Quebecers think this package is worth anything. It is just a rehash of Meech Lake and Charlottetown. They did not get the message last time and now they are going to wait until 1997-98 to get that message. We will never get rid of that Senate.

There are 105 people who came here because their constituents demanded change. The separatists want a different approach than we do but they are asking for change. Not one province is not asking for change. This government has no vision. It is into this centralist philosophy of government.

We need some strong leadership to face Mr. Bouchard, a very credible leader. We do not have it.

• (1210)

We no longer have an amending formula. We have a veto formula drawn up by a centralist government. The veto is not fair, it is not equitable and it was done without the consultation of the people.

How would we get out of this problem? Our Prime Minister had the obvious opportunity to get out of it by giving the veto to the people. Give it to all of the people. Do not put in the hands of the separatists. Do not put it in the hands of provincial politicians. Put it in the hands of the people. We can trust the people. They have shown they are involved and will be involved.

The people have spoken. They spoke in Charlottetown. They spoke in 1993. Of course the people spoke to the referendum. It was not the politicians that helped the yes side catch up, it was the people. Everybody, even on the other side, agrees to that.

We need to show some leadership. We need to show some terms and conditions. What does it mean if a province wants to separate? Tell it. Put it straight. The people will understand it. It is the politicians who want to manipulate it. Talk about what land goes with separation. Talk about the language and the culture, the debt sharing, the citizenship. Talk about all of those things, including the protection of minorities, but talk about it. Talk about it with the people.

We need a vision. We need to fight that separatist dream with a vision. We need to fight deception and untruths with truth and facts. That is what this vision is all about. We need to develop a vision and a passion for Canada. That is what we need.

Many of us felt that in 1967 when we went to Expo in Montreal. There was passion there. We felt passion during the Olympics in Calgary. We felt passion whenever we travelled. Last year my constituency hosted the World Junior Hockey Championship and there was passion and feeling for what it was to be Canadian. We were proud of our Canadian kids who won that championship and who demonstrated what it was like to be Canadian.

Do not whine and cry. Plan a vision. Get a vision for the country. Show that we are listening to the people. This country is worth saving. I implore the Prime Minister to get out of the past, do what is right for Canada. Involve the people. Abandon the centralist governments of the past which did not work. They will never work.

It will destroy this country if we keep following this path. Continuing on this course will truly mean the Prime Minister will go down in history as the Prime Minister who destroyed the country. We must change that.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I too will begin by speaking about why I am in this House.

My sense of this country and therefore my mission as a member of Parliament comes from two main things. First, my father was an immigrant. I do not remember when I first heard how lucky I was to be a Canadian, how lucky I was to live in this wonderful country, to have this as my home and as my future. Having come from Europe my father was very much aware of what a wonderful future this nation has.

The second reason that gives me a sense of why I am here, of what my purpose is and what this country is all about I owe to a grade five teacher whose name I have even forgotten. I was 10 years old and I learned about this country from coast to coast from that teacher. I learned about the Rockies, the west coast, the east coast and the north. I also learned about the voyageurs who had opened up this continent for us. They had travelled on rivers and through mountain ranges nobody had ever travelled before, except our aboriginal peoples. From that I have such a strong sense of the importance of the two founding peoples of this country. Without the French settlers and explorers who came to the country we would not have what we have today.

• (1215)

An hon. member: We would have something far better.

Ms. Catterall: A member opposite says that we would have something far better. I could not disagree with him more. To deny the contribution of the people who came to the continent from France, who had the courage, as Champlain did, to last an entire winter at Annapolis and to continue up the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa rivers into the heartland of the continent, is a denial of what the country is all about.

The country was built by consent and consensus, not by force and not by dominance. The three measures now before the House to reinforce national unity continue the marvellous tradition of moving ahead together by consent and by consensus, not by one exercising power over another.

As we came together as a Canadian family at each stage we made special provisions for newcomers to the family and recognized their special needs. Whether it was the size of Prince Edward Island and the assurances it needed with respect to its

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representation in Parliament, whether it was British Columbia with its need for the recognition of a railway to link it to the east, we have always made special provisions. We respected the fact that we were creating a family.

That sense of family took a thousand people from my riding and tens of thousands from all over the country to Montreal on October 27. The hon. member is absolutely right: politicians could not have created that tremendous outpouring of goodwill and love for our country and commitment to keeping Quebec within Canada. However politicians could make it possible, as many of us did, for the people we represent to have the means of expressing that sentiment.

[*Translation*]

In the last week of the referendum campaign, the Prime Minister of Canada promised Quebecers that Quebec would be recognized as a distinct society within Canada, that no constitutional changes affecting Quebec would be made without their consent, and that changes would be initiated to bring citizens closer to services and to decision making.

[*English*]

It may be unusual for the Reform Party to see in place a government and a Prime Minister that keep their commitments. Just as we did in the 1993 election when we put forward very clearly our commitments to Canadians and our intention to keep them, in the last two weeks we have been doing exactly what the Prime Minister committed to do.

We are not trying to pacify, appease or please the separatists or gain their consent for what we are doing. We know they will not consent to anything that will unify and strengthen the country. We certainly are trying to speak to Canadians across Canada who want to see change, who want to see us moving forward together and not as the western separatists or the Quebec separatists want.

With the recognition of a veto for each of the regions of the country, we are saying that if we are to change the relationship that binds us together we will have to work at building a consensus around it. We cannot have parts of the country imposing their will on other parts of the country. That is not easy to do, but it is important that as we move forward we do it with consensus as we have done to this point in our history.

• (1220)

People have been concerned about distinct society and what it recognizes. First I will talk about the meaning of the word distinct. It does not, as some would have us believe, mean special, better, superior in some way or deserving of special treatment. It means different.

If there is one person in the Chamber who does not feel a great pride or does not accept that Quebec, with its majority French language, its unique culture and its law system that is different

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from that of the rest of the country, constitutes a part of Canada that is different and by its very difference enriches the whole country, I am not sure he or she understands what the country is all about.

Concern has been expressed about how this might affect our attitude to people of different ethnic cultures, backgrounds and origins. I say to them the respect for diversity of the country is found in the original agreement that created the country, that we would respect each other's differences and each other's languages. Without the initial bargain of Confederation we would not have a country that is now a model for the world of how people of different cultures, backgrounds and languages can live together as one while respecting each other's uniqueness.

For the House to simply say we recognize the distinct nature of Quebec within the Canadian family and we undertake to respect that distinctness as we move forward with the business of the nation is not a threat to anybody. It is a reassurance to people who badly need to know that the rest of the country does value and does not intend to try to dominate, demean or diminish the special society that has been built in Quebec. Nor does it diminish our commitment as a federal government or our obligations of fiduciary responsibility for aboriginal peoples everywhere in the country inside and outside Quebec.

I will speak about the veto briefly. Perhaps there are some who feel that the majority simply by its numbers should be able to dominate and have its way. I am not one of those. I believe we can continue to solve our problems and our differences and to change and grow in the future by agreeing together as we have always done in the past.

I am proud to support the changes that have been brought forward. I am proud to look forward to a future for my children in a united Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): As you know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House of Commons passed a motion recognizing Quebec as a distinct society. For us in the Bloc Québécois, this motion was pointless because it was insufficient. Why? Because it does not recognize Quebec's special status and does not actually grant that province any additional powers.

Today we are debating Bill C-110 dealing with constitutional amendments. This bill would give certain provinces a say concerning the federal veto over constitutional amendments.

There have been many speeches so far, and I think it would be a good idea to remind those listening to us of the bill's purpose.

• (1225)

The bill reads as follows:

No minister of the crown shall propose a motion for a resolution to authorize an amendment to the Constitution of Canada— unless the amendment has first been consented to by a majority of the provinces that includes:

(a) Ontario;

(b) Quebec;

This majority must also include the Atlantic provinces, provided that at least two of the four provinces represent 50 per cent of the population; and at least two of the three Prairie provinces, provided that these two provinces represent 50 per cent of the population.

Following the representations made by BC residents, and particularly by the third party, British Columbia was granted a veto. One might think that, had some pressure also been exerted by residents of other parts of the country, for example Yukon or the Northwest Territories, these regions might also have been given a veto.

If Bill C-110 is passed, three provinces will have a veto: Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. The other provinces would have such a veto by groups of two, as long as they represent 50 per cent of the population of their region.

What did the 1982 formula provide? Let us compare the current proposal with the 1982 formula. The 1982 Constitution provides a veto, not only for the federal government, but also for the provinces, although that constitution was rejected by Quebecers, through their National Assembly, in 1982. There is a formula provided in the Constitution.

What does it say? It provides that constitutional amendments require the approval of seven provinces, or 50 per cent of the total population.

In our opinion, Bill C-110 offers less than Meech and Charlottetown. Quebecers thought Charlottetown did not go far enough, while the rest of Canada, and particularly the western provinces, felt that it was going too far. Since Bill C-110 provides less than that, you will understand that the Bloc Québécois, which looks after the interests of Quebecers, is not happy with that measure. The Reform Party, which primarily represents western Canada, thinks it is still going too far. This is a catch 22 situation, and the more we forge ahead, the worse things get.

Another major problem with Bill C-110 is that it only commits the House of Commons. Therefore, it can be assumed that, following a change of government, after an election, the Reform Party could hassle the new government and, if it displayed its current attitude, could prompt that new government to repeal this piece of legislation.

This is not really a constitutional change, but merely a bill that could be superseded by another, as the current government could easily do, given its majority.

But the fundamental problem with the federal system as we know it rests mainly with a distribution of powers that favours the federal government too much. Through its spending power and under special circumstances, it invades provincial jurisdictions from which it never withdraws afterwards.

The Quebecers who voted on October 30 were hoping for a more meaningful veto. They will not buy this bill that may be amended by the next government. The provinces did not consent to this bill being introduced.

Why not have had this veto proposal tested by submitting it to the provinces for discussion? No, the Prime Minister did try to get discussions going, but he was put in his place in no time flat, as they say. So, he consulted only with the members of his party in the federal government.

• (1230)

Now the amendment to include British Columbia in the deal made the people of Alberta and the aboriginal peoples unhappy. As we can see, instead of putting an end to the debate, this bill is keeping it going. If that trend can be reversed, it should be pointed out.

But what matters to Quebecers is that they are a people, one of the founding peoples of Canada. For any negotiations on the future of Quebec to be successful, it must be recognized from the outset that Quebecers are masters of their own destiny. Bill C-110 respecting a so-called veto for Quebec does not meet the expectations of one of the founding peoples of Canada, namely Quebec. This bill responds solely to the electoral ambitions of the Liberal Party of Canada.

This bill is not a satisfactory response to the promises made by the Prime Minister at the meeting in Verdun in late October. No one in Quebec believed the federal government would propose such an insignificant veto to Quebecers, not even the militants of the Quebec Liberal Party who voted no on October 30, 1995. No Quebec government, whether PQ or Liberal, has ever had such an insignificant change to the constitutional amending formula in mind. Quebec has traditionally demanded a true constitutional veto for Quebec, no a mere legislative promise not to proceed unilaterally during the lifetime of this government.

It would appear that the Prime Minister wants to save face by pretending to keep his referendum promises, but Quebecers

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have not been taken in. This sham veto does not meet the needs for change expressed by Quebecers—far from it. It is merely a continuation of the unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982 and the imposition of Trudeau's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and none of this was agreed to by Quebec, not only by the PQ, but not by the Quebec Liberals either. Even Claude Ryan, that die hard federalist, who was then leader of the Quebec Liberal Party, did not agree.

Instead of offering constitutional change, this is one more padlock to prevent future constitutional changes in a process already complicated by the so-called Canada Bill of 1982, which required the consent of the federal government and seven provinces out of ten representing 50 per cent of the population. And now, the federal government will make exercising a veto even more difficult. In addition to the veto powers I just explained, the government's own veto will depend on how it is exercised by five regions, in two of which the consent of at least two provinces will be needed.

Quebec's motto is: "Je me souviens", and we on this side of the House remember that the man who moved the patriation of the Constitution of 1982 is the same person who is now proposing a padlock that will prevent any future changes.

[*English*]

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to speak on such important legislation as Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments.

Many hon. members over the past couple of days have spoken on this most important issue and debate has flowed from both sides of the House. We have heard all the figures and all the mechanics, such as the five and seven ratio. That is fine. I do not want to go over the facts and figures and the mechanics. I want to begin my presentation with a quotation from two distinguished Canadians who gave their heart and soul to Canada.

• (1235)

I quote Sir John A. Macdonald:

If I had influence over the minds of the people of Canada, any power over their intellect, I would leave them with this legacy. Whatever you do, adhere to the union. We are a great nation and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it. We shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken. It is God and nature who made Canada one. Let no person be allowed to put it asunder.

Another great Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, said this:

This cathedral is made of marble, oak and granite. It is the image of a nation I would like to see Canada become. For here, I want the granite to remain the granite, the oak to remain the oak, and out of all of these elements I would build a nation great among the nations of the world.

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Approximately 100 years later the words that were spoken by these two distinguished Canadians we hear today from nations, that Canada is the best country in the world in which to live. I reach out to members in the House and tell them how blessed we are and I continuously remind my family and friends of that.

I really do not know what is going on here. I noticed last week that the new words inscribed in the coat of arms state: "They desire a better country". These two distinguished Canadians desired a better country. Each and every one who came to this country, whether as immigrants, such as our parents or grandparents, came because they desired a better country. People came to build on the foundations that Laurier and Macdonald established for us.

Where do we go from here? Do we have the will to survive? I say we must develop a Canadian soul. We must develop unity and pride and share it publicly. We must share the joy of being Canadian, share the joy of being unique among nations.

I am afraid of what has happened because this whole situation is out of hand. Specifically, there seems to be a shoving match because neither the Bloc Quebecois nor the Reform Party are prepared to say: "Yes, we have made a mistake. Yes, our country comes before petty politics. Yes, there are times for give and take as the Fathers of Confederation did".

The country said yes to the railway in order to appease British Columbia in past years to make the union strong. I really fear what is taking place in the country right now.

I took my family to see the Lion King not too long ago. What I see across the way reminds me of the hyenas and the vultures, just sitting there waiting to grasp on to a situation. It worries me greatly. It worries me because we must be accountable to our children and our grandchildren and their children in generations to come. I am concerned because I do not even want to think of the day when I will sit with my grandchildren, and if God keeps me well, with my great grandchildren and tell them what a great country we had called Canada. There is a possibility that my grandchildren and great grandchildren will need a passport to visit their friends in Montreal or Quebec City. I do not even want to think about that.

Today I want to reach out, not just to members of the Bloc or the Reform Party who say they speak on behalf of their constituents. I do not believe that for a moment. On October 28, at three or four o'clock in the morning many of my colleagues and their constituents, seniors and students came together at Lawrence and Midland to load on to buses and take that six and a half hour ride to Montreal. They did not do it to beg Quebecers to stay in Canada. What they did was show their true love for this country. They tried to tell the nation from sea to sea to love that we are one

strong, united country and it only makes sense to keep it strong and united.

• (1240)

Their only means of getting to Montreal that day was in buses and planes organized by the members of the Liberal Party. I want to take this opportunity to thank the unity committee for its efforts in putting that project together.

I am concerned because there seems to be a falsification of the facts. The leader of the Bloc Quebecois stands up and through innuendo creates strawmen in trying to touch the emotional aspects of an ambiguous question, a question that was full of misleading statements, a question that was full of gaps, a question that had no substance, a question that was misleading.

I walked the streets of Montreal. I visited grocery stores. I visited restaurants. The people were confused right up to the very last minute. They did not know what they were voting for. God forbid if there is another referendum. I certainly would advocate putting a straightforward question to the people of Quebec: Do you want to stay in Canada or do you want to leave Canada? Do you want to continue to be a Canadian or do you want to become something else?

We are a relatively young nation compared to most of the nations in the world. But in that short period of time, we have managed to attain the status of the number one country in the world.

Earlier I spoke about Laurier and Macdonald. They too were immigrants. I am proud to stand in this House 100 or so years later, another immigrant, defending this country. It is a darn shame that we have members from the Bloc, members from the Reform. I was not born here but I am blessed to be living in this country.

There are not words that I can say to the members of the Reform or the Bloc that will change their minds. I am not going to attempt to, but I will be speaking to my friends in Montreal and in Quebec City and I am going to tell them what is the truth.

Members of the Reform Party keep flipping back and forth. The vision of their 20-point plan is this. They say they represent the rest of Canada and the rest of Canada does not want any province to have special rights over any other province. They say that they will never vote for a bill that gives one province more power than another. They forgot they felt this way when they brought out their 20-point new Confederation package. In it the leader of the Reform Party states that his party is in favour of Canada being split into five regions, in favour—

Mr. Johnston: That is rubbish.

Mr. Stinson: Be honest for a change.

Mr. Cannis: Be honest with the people of Canada. Do not get in front of the TV cameras and make a scene trying to score

cheap political points. Members will have to answer to the people of Canada. That day is not too far off.

Mr. Johnston: You bet.

An hon. member: That will not wash.

Mr. Cannis: The debate we are having in this honourable House on this motion is a very unique opportunity. It is an opportunity to lay the groundwork and to send a signal to Quebecers and all Canadians for 1997. It is a signal to the official opposition. It is a signal to the Reform Party to save face and to show solidarity, to work together, to create a climate for economic prosperity.

Working Canadians are happy Canadians. This agenda is about getting Canadians back to work, bringing some dignity into the household.

We must make this Canada the nation that it deserves to be, second to none. I am proud to support this legislation. Yes, I will have to answer to the people of Canada come election time and so will all members. God bless Canada.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am standing today to oppose Bill C-110 for a number of reasons.

• (1245)

I find this bill extremely divisive. After listening to the hon. member from the other side who just spoke I find it even more divisive. Here is a government that had its opportunity during the referendum in Quebec. The Prime Minister said: "Don't worry, be happy. We are happy. Canada has no reason for concern over what might happen in Quebec".

Government members told us and all of Canada that it was only a small movement in Quebec that was looking for separatism, and the Canadian people believed them. The Reform Party never believed them. We told them there were all kinds of warning signs that this was a stronger movement than government members were telling the Canadian people. The Prime Minister likes to play like an ostrich and bury his head in the sand, unfortunately. We almost lost that province through acts such as this. This great government decided to tell the people. It tells them anything but the truth.

Now we stand here today, the day after the vote on distinct society, on which closure was invoked. We stand here today discussing the veto. No matter how we look at this we see a government that has gone on its hands and knees begging a separatist government to please be on board. In order to do this it is willing to sell out the rest of Canada. When government members start talking about veto powers to certain provinces, when they start telling people that because of the regions they live in they will have more power than other people in different regions, they are asking for trouble.

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When I was brought up and in school I was taught the number one law in Canada is equality of all of its citizens, not a select few, not for the few who sit here in government, but for all citizens of Canada. The bills we have seen in the last few days absolutely contradict everything we have been taught about Canada. The government has decided that because of our ethnic backgrounds some of us can no longer be classified as Canadians; they will be distinct Canadians. What does it think this does to the rest of the people in Canada?

We hear from hon. members on the other side that there are two founding nations. That went out over a hundred years ago. There are many Canadian citizens and they want to be called Canadian citizens, not on the basis of their ethnic backgrounds. They came here to be Canadians and yet bills such as this cut that all apart.

The government will create a backlash that will see once again in all probability the ugly head of western separatism rise. Yet the government has no fear of that. It does not worry about that. Its members say: "We gave B.C. the veto. Shouldn't you be happy?"

The Prime Minister was led kicking and screaming to give B.C. the veto. I remind the government there is no way he wanted to give B.C. the veto. It is not so much that B.C. wanted that veto; it was to appease the rest of Canada. It is backfiring.

We heard another member say the Reform Party was in favour of the five regions. Let us set the record straight. We put 20 questions out to be discussed by the people of Canada, not by some high and mighty, so-called little tin god the government thinks it is.

• (1250)

If there are concerns about any part of these 20 questions, please come back to the Reform Party and address these problems. We stand by taking it to the people and letting the people decide what our policy should be. Not one of these becomes policy until passed by our members, not by the elite few like the government members with their policies.

Let us look at what we give up. Under this veto power there will be no change. The status quo will go on forever. One region may decide it is against its best interest or another region will decide it is against its best interest. Therefore nothing will change except the fostering of greater discontent from the Canadian taxpayers' not being able to see change made.

We will not see a centralized government which is what the government is trying to pull here. If anything, it will be torn further apart. We will see the people finally rising up and saying they have had enough of this dictatorial state from a one person government. We will find that people will look at this as a return to the Charlottetown accord, soundly defeated across Canada. Because the accord was defeated, the government will find those

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back doors to open this up, bring it forward and pass it into law. It will pay no attention to how that vote went.

The government does nothing to listen to the people. It has no intention of ever listening to the people of Canada. Its members' only intention is to make sure their plates are full of whatever they need to eat, that they are warm, safe and cuddly while their pay cheques come in on time. That is the only concern I can see that the Liberal government has ever thought about in the last two years.

Look at their vision. The Liberals say they have a great vision, a vision of a united Canada. All Canadians have that vision. It might come as a shock to the government, but it does not really have to go out and sell that. It has to be honest with the Canadian people. It must tell them exactly what it is giving to the separatist government in Quebec. People will understand. The government is selling them out. It is selling out the Canadian public and making a poor job of it.

These proposals will do nothing to promote national unity. We sit here every day and listen to the sell, sell, sell idea from the government. I have to admit, some members over there could sell snow in Alaska. They practise very well. They study this "be happy, it will not hurt". However, every time one of these things is implemented it hurts. The Liberals will come back in about six months and say: "We did not realize there was any concern. Nobody told us there was any concern". That is their standard answer on anything they do.

We came back here thinking we still lived in a democratic country. No, we do not. When governments can put time closure it is no longer a democracy.

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-110.

• (1255)

I will outline some of the salient features of what I consider a sound, innovative piece of legislation. The bill on the regional veto will require the consent of Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and the Atlantic and the prairie regions before any constitutional amendments can be proposed in Parliament by the Government of Canada. Currently only the House of Commons has an absolute veto over any constitutional amendment.

The bill guarantees Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, the Atlantic region and the prairie region a general veto over any constitutional amendment in areas where they do not already have an absolute veto or right of withdrawal. This veto will apply to changes to national institutions such as the Senate, the creation of new provinces and any amendments regarding the distribution of powers.

Under the bill a constitutional amendment will have to receive the consent of at least six provinces, including Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, two provinces from the Atlantic region representing more than 50 per cent of the region's population, and two provinces in the prairie region representing more than 50 per cent of the prairie's population, before it can proceed to Parliament.

The federal government could not proceed to table an amendment if one of the regions refused to give its consent, even if seven provinces or more representing 50 per cent of Canada's population passed resolutions in favour of the amendment. The consent of the provinces and the regions will be expressed in various forms: by direct notice, a vote in the legislative assemblies or by a referendum.

The bill does not amend the Canadian Constitution. Nevertheless, an act of the federal Parliament is a serious measure. This law will become part of Canada's consolidated statutes and will be binding on the current government and on succeeding governments.

In tabling the bill, the Government of Canada is keeping its commitment to Quebecers and ensuring them increased protection within the Canadian federation in a way that should not offend its sister provinces. Moreover, the Government of Canada has recognized that the constitutional amendment process is of interest to all parts of the country. That is why the federal government is lending its veto to the five regions of the country, treating all regions fairly and equitably.

Now is not the time to hold a series of constitutional discussions. The Government of Quebec and its premier in waiting are unequivocally devoted to their secessionist option. If future conditions were to change where Quebec and the other regions were to agree the veto proposed by the bill could be incorporated into the Constitution. This will be for future discussion and future debate; this after due consideration and with the contribution and input from our constituents, the citizens of Canada.

In the past attempts to accommodate Quebec within the Constitution have failed. When the citizens of the country voted against the Charlottetown accord in 1992 they rejected a complex package of changes to the Constitution, including an elected Senate, which I agree with, aboriginal self-government, a veto for each province on changes to the composition of the Senate, the House of Commons and the Supreme Court, and the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society.

The Prime Minister's new, much simpler proposal is easily understood and should be judged on its merits.

In the past in attempts to accommodate Quebec within the Constitution Canadians outside of Quebec were united on one key point, and I agree wholeheartedly with them, that Quebec not be given powers which would make Quebecers more equal than their fellow Canadians. A veto for Quebec alone, even if it

applied only to language, culture and civil law, would have meant very special status, which the majority of Canadians oppose. My constituents would oppose special status for any region.

On the other hand, a veto for all 10 provinces would have enabled situations to exist; for example, the claim that Prince Edward Island, with a population 130,000, could thwart Ontario's democratically expressed aspirations. A provincial veto would be easier to champion if every province had the same number of citizens. They obviously do not.

Some are not thrilled with having their province lumped in with others in a geographical region. If they are honest with themselves they will realize the regional veto recognizes the reality of the country and its population.

The government's regional veto is a logical attempt to balance fairly equal blocs of population so that aspirations of several million people are not thwarted by several hundred thousand. Is this not fair and equitable?

If every province had a veto a national compromise would prove more difficult to negotiate than all of our combined frustrating constitutional negotiations of the recent past.

It is important to point out that until 1982 Quebec had a de facto veto, if not a constitutionally entrenched one, over fundamental constitutional change. The proposed change restores the principle which was done away with by René Levesque in the final negotiations of the 1982 Canada Act.

• (1300)

Despite difficulties, Canada grew and prospered for 125 years with a Quebec veto. We should ask ourselves now how long it could last without one. Canadians now realize that we cannot continue to build a strong, unified federation by trying to force Quebecers to accept a Constitution that is definitely not acceptable to them.

Canadians from all parts of the country began the crusade for Canada at the Montreal rally. We have a responsibility to take up the mantle and seek the final victory. I further point out that we are dealing with an act of Parliament which can be amended and repealed, rather than a binding constitutional change. Let us give it a try. We should think of what we might lose if we do not.

The legislation is a welcome attempt to wrest debate on Canada's future out of the hands of separatists. All Canadians want and are entitled to a say on the issue. It is an offer of a tangible, substantial change that even the Leader of the Opposition and his cohorts have found difficult to discredit. It is one with which the rest of Canada can live, albeit with some reservations.

It was interesting to see how the Leader of the Opposition and his cohorts explained to Quebecers why they were not interested in accepting an offer that Quebec felt it required. The Leader of

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the Opposition and his cohorts say that no federal offer to Quebec would ever be acceptable. Their sights and their egos are set on an independent country. They fail to appreciate that in the most recent referendum Quebecers again rejected sovereignty. Yet these separatists continue to contradict the people who elected them and strive for the goal the majority of Quebecers have rejected. They are democratic when the people agree with them and autocratic when they do not.

The proposals send a clear message to Quebecers that the Reform Party's shrill cries do not reflect the views of the rest of Canada. There is a willingness in the nation to make some reasonable accommodation for Quebec. The Bloc Québécois does not have the appropriate answer. I remind Reform members that western Canadians wish for Canada to stay in one piece. Life will not end if Alberta loses the provincial veto it never had. There is no dishonour in losing a minor disagreement to keep a wonderful treasure: Canada. It is a small price to pay for a united country. The obligation to compromise is not really that difficult or that horrible.

Canada is weary of the Quebec issue, but at the same time it is very concerned about the Quebec issue. Many Canadians will admit to nights of fitful sleep leading to the referendum on October 30 and a collective sigh of relief when the majority of Quebecers rejected separation.

Bill C-110 is a welcome step forward. It is not the end or even the beginning of the end of our constitutional malaise. The separatists who deem it unacceptable should ask their constituents for their opinion and then be honest with themselves and with us, as it gives much of what Quebecers want. At the same time the constitutional veto powers to Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic provinces, the prairie provinces and British Columbia should alleviate concerns that Quebec would have regional powers the rest of the country would not. Have we not struck a reasonable compromise, a compromise with which we can all truly live?

The government has acted in good faith. Although these proposals lack constitutional clout, they could very well represent the best and perhaps the only hope to keep our country strong and united. I urge members of the House to put aside petty regional jealousies and partisan politics. These proposals deserve the support of all who would keep this great country together.

Give unity a chance. Give Canada a chance.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest and a sense of conviction that I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-110 introduced by the government, a bill that would add to our constitutional jargon one more formula to amend a Constitution that the Quebec nation rejected when it refused to sign it in 1982.

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I rise in the House today with a sense of conviction because since yesterday, when the Prime Minister was again heard to deny the very meaning of these meagre proposals for change, I feel I have an even better case for attacking this government's indecent show of irresponsibility on a subject as fundamental as an agreement concluded in the past by two founding peoples.

• (1305)

Yes, like millions of fellow Quebecers, I heard the Prime Minister yesterday renege on his referendum commitments and put on the back burner all the good intentions he served up in a panic to Quebecers towards the end of the referendum campaign.

Those who believed the Prime Minister was sincere, when he promised sweeping changes after the referendum, realized yesterday how thoroughly and rudely they had been tricked.

In an interview on the CBC, I heard the Prime Minister explain the thinking behind the changes he is proposing. I heard the Prime Minister say that he had promised Quebec three little things, and those are his words.

So, if we are to believe the statement the Prime Minister made yesterday to the nation, the government is inviting us to debate one of the three little things—Bill C-110.

What of this little thing for Quebec? Indeed, it is really not much at all. We knew as much, even though, until yesterday, the government members were doing their best to sell this provision to Quebecers like it was the find of the century. In a gesture of magnanimous imperialism, the federal government is trying to show its generosity towards Quebec by lending it a veto.

In fact, the federal government is dangling a veto in front of Quebec, which does not come under the province's jurisdiction, but rather that of the federal government. At any time, the government may circumvent the opinion and the jurisdiction of the National Assembly by imposing its own rules on the use of this bogus veto.

What the federal government claims to be giving with one hand, it is already preparing to take away with the other. In Quebec, we have got used to this sort of double cross in the course of the various attempts at constitutional reform. Never, however, has the affront reached the level of being written into a bill. Never throughout the fruitless constitutional negotiations of the past has anyone thought of serving up such insignificance to Quebec.

In this regard, federalist utterances are fairly paradoxical. To the Quebecers, the return of the veto is being heralded. To English Canada, with the Prime Minister having to justify his poor referendum performance, the bill is being touted as nothing at all. Just enough to cobble together a few sad promises that

they already regret having made, while appearing to formally resolve the big issue of national unity.

This bill must be rejected because it became obvious as soon as it was introduced that it was thrown together hastily. Originally designed, according to the government, to meet one of Quebec's historical demands, it is now so watered down that every province would also get a veto at the same time, including those who never asked for one.

Let us acknowledge right off the bat that the federal offer to give Quebec its veto back is based on false premises. The government accuses Quebec's sovereignist leaders, René Lévesque first of all, of losing Quebec's veto after giving up on it. That is a false premise, as federal mandarins and the Minister of Justice know full well. In 1982, the Supreme Court ruled that Quebec did not have a veto and never had one. In a second ruling following the irreparable patriation of the Constitution led by today's Prime Minister, the Supreme Court concluded that Quebec never had a veto.

It is clear that neither this government nor English Canada want a real veto for Quebec, as demonstrated by the fact that this bill provides for not one but four vetoes, with a fifth one that just surfaced. Since they do not really have anything to give, they are generous: they are willing to give everything to everyone. Yet, when the time comes to give Quebec what it has rightfully demanded for decades, they only respond with pettiness, narrow-mindedness, and a total disregard for the hope for major changes expressed by Quebecers in the last referendum.

• (1310)

It only took a short 40 days for all the solemn promises and demonstrations of love and affection to boil down to three meaningless proposals. First, a distinct society motion of no legal significance, that has already been disavowed by the Prime Minister, who denies the very existence of a Quebec culture. Second, a veto granted, or rather imposed on everyone, a veto no sooner granted than it is taken back, given that the federal government is the only one with fiduciary rights. And, finally, a travesty of transfer of jurisdiction over manpower training, an area in which the government takes pleasure in shifting responsibility without the related financial authority.

Indeed, the interpretation the Prime Minister gave yesterday is accurate: these are three small things that he is giving the people of Quebec to fulfil his promises and meet the expectations of those who voted no in the referendum, confident that the promised changes were coming.

But a great nation makes great things. It refuses to let imperialism impose small things on it. That is what we call pride.

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And I will proudly vote against this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I deem it an opportunity to speak to Bill C-110 which gives a regional veto and to the amendment which changes the number of divisions from four to five.

The question I ask today in rising to speak on report stage of Bill C-110 is why we are here in this situation. Why are we here at this time? What has led us to this discussion?

If we look back to the beginning of this parliamentary session in October 1993 and the spring of 1994 we had certain expectations. I had an expectation of the Liberal government. For nine years it sat in opposition. The rules are clearly set out in Beauchesne's. Any group that sits in the place of official opposition is there to prepare to take over government and to be ready to take on the responsibility.

I asked a question early in this session that I ask again today. Was that Liberal opposition ready to be the Government of Canada? Clearly it was not, for in the first session of the spring of 1994 the government did not move on its fiscal policy. There was no plan to reduce the deficit of the country. There were complaints about what the Conservatives did previously but nothing in terms of a plan to deal with the deficit of the country and on a long term basis to bring the deficit of the country to zero and balance the budget. That was it.

In other areas, for example social policy, pension issues and justice issues, there was a whole string of committee reports, sittings and studies done. The House leader for the Liberal Party mentioned over and over again that he had to study something. It became an item of humour in the current House, in the 35th session, that things were being studied and no decisions were being made. That is what happened and things have been allowed to drift because of it.

It has been a do nothing time since 1994. A huge social policy review has now come forward and produced nothing. There is still a white paper on pension reform that is 20 months overdue. That is the setting in which the discussion on Bill C-110 is placed.

The government made it up as it went along. It has resulted in ill conceived policies that do not work, for example the policies of the human resources minister on employment insurance. The question is: Will it really get anyone back to employment? We question that.

• (1315)

They are hollow, symbolic policies that do not attack the real problems which have been presented to us. The best example of that in this current House is the justice minister's gun control bill which is supposed to stop crime when a gun is registered. As we have said over and over again, that is the most foolish thing we have ever heard.

If we look at the current piece of legislation in that context, we again find that even the Prime Minister's referendum strategy that occurred before October 30, 1995 was a fly by the seat of your pants stewardship. There was no plan for any renewed federalism, only more of the status quo. There was no effort to dispel the separatist myth of a painless divorce, only silence. There was no concept of a referendum strategy, only a hope that if nobody said anything it would turn out all right. We know that the vote was very close. It almost cost us the country of Canada because of the Liberal government being ill prepared and only knee jerk reacting to every one of its responsibilities.

We look at this legislation and the Prime Minister has done it again. Having made a desperate promise in the last week of the campaign that Daniel Johnson would not let him forget, the Prime Minister and three or four of his advisers huddled on the third floor of centre block and came to the conclusion of providing a unity package. They put that proposal before us to study.

The unity package is going to do more to divide Canada than to bring it together. Looking at it within Quebec, what has it done within Quebec? Has it brought Quebec into Canada? No, it has not. The potential new premier of Quebec has said in this House regarding the proposal: Is this all that Canada has to offer?

The federalist cupboards are bare. It has not satisfied that seemingly unquenchable thirst in Quebec at all. It has caused more division. Other Canadians are asking: "Why do you keep giving it things when you are not treating the rest of Canada in an equal way?"

Is this package any better than the Meech Lake or Charlottetown proposals? Many of us have called it Charlottetown light because it promises less to Quebec. As such, how is it ever going to do more for the federalist cause in Quebec?

Outside of Quebec what is it doing? Outside of Quebec we feel this legislation and the distinct society resolution will only divide Canadians, rather than unite them. For example, with this regional veto proposal, even after the government amendments which are being proposed here to change the divisions from four to five, British Columbia and Alberta are still opposing the bill. There must be something drastically wrong when the regions do not accept it, even after they have had a little more say in the outcome of the veto. Through its own actions, the Liberal government is creating what we think are first and second class provinces. This is more of the old style traditional politics of tired old federalists.

Over the course of a week or two the Prime Minister and his cronies cooked up a Quebec package. Now they are trying to shove it down the throats of not only Parliament, but of all Canadians. We must remember that we each stand in our place as representatives of all Canadians.

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We have to recognize that the provinces were not consulted. The people were not consulted. Not even all the members of the Liberal caucus were consulted in terms of the process in reaching a final conclusion or proposals that were presented to the House of Commons.

As my final point, I raise the matter that there has been some confusion over Reform's own proposal on constitutional ratification. Some people have misunderstood the regional aspect of it and have asked about the difference between the government's proposal and Reform's proposal. The difference is that we believe there should not—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry, your time has expired.

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When I rose on debate it was 10 after the hour and it is now 17.5 minutes after the hour. I have been standing for 7.5 minutes. I would appreciate it if you would check your clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I have 1.13 p.m. I will give you another minute and a half. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): You have cut me off on other occasions. I do not accept what you have just done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): You may have the extra minute and a half. I was not in the Chair and I do not intentionally cut off any member of this House.

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the change in the course of events. I have a final point I want to make within the minute I have.

It is very clear what we are attempting to do in this House of Commons is to make an amendment to section 38(1)(a) of the current Constitution Act of Canada. This amendment allows the provinces and their legislatures to make a vote with regard to this matter. The Reform Party clearly wants to have the people of Canada by referendum vote in the regions to determine what constitutional changes come about. That is the distinct difference that we believe in.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I would like to correct the hon. member. You started at 1.09 p.m. and the clerks have you down as being 11 minutes and not 10.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent for a couple of motions. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, immediately after the disposal of the report stage of Bill C-110 this day, the House shall consider the third reading stage of Bill C-108, followed by the third reading stage of Bill C-99, followed by consideration of Private Members' Business, followed by adjournment proceedings;

That, during the consideration of Bill C-108, no member may speak for more than 10 minutes, not more than one member of the Liberal Party, two members of the Bloc Quebecois and one member of the Reform Party may speak, and at the completion of the debate, the question shall be deemed to have been put and a division thereon demanded and deferred until 5.15 p.m. on December 13, 1995;

That, during consideration of Bill C-99, no member may speak for more than 10 minutes, not more than one member of each recognized party may speak, and at the completion of the debate, the question shall be deemed to have been put and carried.

I should also advise there will be no questions or comments following any of the speeches indicated in the motion I have just read to the House. I seek consent of the House for adoption of this motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That, during the consideration of the motion of the Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs concerning the report of the Standing Committee on Finance tabled this day, on Thursday, December 14, 1995, no dilatory motions shall be received and no quorum calls shall be entertained;

That, after the the conclusion of Private Members' Business on Thursday, December 14, 1995, the House shall continue to sit for two hours and thirty minutes for the purpose of considering the aforementioned motion and shall then adjourn, provided that the House may, by unanimous consent, order the sitting further extended for a specified period for the purpose of considering the said motion; and

That the House shall not sit on Friday, December 15, 1995, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, it shall be deemed to have sat and adjourned on that day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill C-110, the bill which provides for a regional veto over changes to our Canadian Constitution.

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• (1325)

The bill provides for a historic recognition that the people of Quebec should have input into and a veto over constitutional change which affects national institutions such as the Senate, and any amendments which might affect the distribution of powers. At the same time with our amendment to recognize British Columbia as a region we are giving historic recognition to the regional make-up of Canada in which our 10 provinces are within five regions.

The bill clearly recognizes the fact that British Columbia by itself represents an identifiable region. This recognition is consistent with the unique geographic situation of British Columbia, the rapidly growing population of British Columbia and the emergence of the Asia-Pacific trading region in which Canada and particularly British Columbia have a major role.

In making this amendment we are also recognizing in law the importance of the prairie region of Canada representing the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta as a region. As the representative from Portage—Interlake in Manitoba, having roots and family in Saskatchewan and having many friends and having visited frequently in Alberta, this seems to me to be a particularly timely and appropriate recognition.

The bill we are discussing today represents one part of a package we are bringing forward in the follow-up to the recent referendum. It has measures which are designed to strengthen and to promote the unity of Canada and the ability of Canadians to be full participants in our planet's global village. In this context I will comment briefly on the place of this bill as part of the whole package of changes which we are bringing forward.

The recognition of Quebec as a distinct society is appropriate and timely. It provides within the framework of our country Canada a vision of the make-up of our component parts. Quebec is distinctive in having a system of civil law which is based upon the Napoleonic tradition. This is different from the rest of Canada which has civil law based on the English common law tradition. Quebec is also distinctive linguistically and has its own distinctive cultural traditions.

I would like the development of this historic recognition to the historic recognition and evolution of English and French as official languages in Canada. The recognition of French and English as official languages provides a recognition of the fundamental nature of our country, Canada. The recognition does not give rights to other languages: Ukrainian, German, Italian, Chinese, aboriginal languages and so on. However it has sent a signal that individuals' historic languages and cultures are important.

That signal has been fundamental to the evolution of Canada as a country which is very different from the nature of the United States south of our border. Instead of the United States model of

a melting pot, we have a pluralistic community in Canada, a country which clearly recognizes and thrives on diversity, a country in which the different regions of Canada can take pride in aspects in which each is distinct.

I will argue that the tolerant diverse country we have built in Canada is ideally prepared for participation in the future of our planet. With multiple global languages around the world, with multiple global cultures in which it is increasingly important that we work together and trade together for our common benefit, our background as a diverse and tolerant society is particularly fitting.

It is in the context of this changing world that we have presented a new employment insurance program to decentralize training in Canada. Individuals will have better access, more freedom of choice and more opportunity to learn as they would desire to learn for their own benefit and for the benefit of Canada.

We are entering the knowledge age, a time when the information highway will dramatically change opportunities for learning, opportunities for work and opportunities for self-expression.

• (1330)

We are moving to a model which people have called a client service model in which individuals will have more choices, more options and more opportunities. Therefore the government in many respects is changing its own role dramatically; changing from the old world in which government tried to do things alone to provide solutions, to a new world in which the government is a facilitator and a catalyst, helping Canadians from coast to coast find their own solutions.

The role of Canada in the world has similarly changed. The Canadian people, a people of diverse backgrounds, are an example to the rest of the world of how to achieve a very high quality of life which we have here, an example of how to work and to co-operate together for our mutual benefit, an example of the benefits of our linguistic, cultural, economic, scientific and technological strengths in Canada, benefits which enable us to reach out to help and to trade with the rest of the world.

In providing in products and services an understanding based on our diversity and our tolerance to others in the world, we can help others improve their quality of life even as we improve our own. Through increasing our exports of products, services and knowledge, Canadians can derive economic benefit and improved quality of life even as we help others to improve their own circumstances.

The tolerance and the diversity, the cultural sensitivity and the linguistic abilities of Canadians provide us with a unique position in the world which we should recognize and celebrate. It is the Canadian paradigm that we have diversity and tolerance even as we have unity and co-operation.

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In this bill we celebrate one further step being taken today: our gradual evolution as a Canadian people and a strong and unified country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise in this House to speak to Bill C-110 respecting constitutional amendments. It seems obvious to me that, by its very substance, Bill C-110 cannot meet the expectations of the people of Quebec and Canada.

Quebecers have always asked for a real constitutional veto for Quebec, not a mere legislative promise. This veto granted to Quebec through Bill C-110 is reminiscent of the 1982 constitutional amending process. If they disagree, the federal Parliament may overrule Quebec's veto.

Under Bill C-110, it is up to the federal government to determine the criteria governing a province's approval. There are at least seven different ways of doing that: through a resolution from the provincial legislature; through an order in council, which means a simple notice from the government; through a notice signed by the premier of a province; through a notice signed by the lieutenant governor of a province; through a provincial referendum held by a province; through a federal referendum held in the province or in a number of provinces; and, finally, as a last resort, through a vote by the MPs representing the province concerned.

The Constitution Act of 1982 includes specific provisions regarding the amending formula, but the government did not see fit to include them in Bill C-110. There is a strong consensus in Quebec regarding the need, for the province, to have a veto, and Quebec's interpretation of that right is totally different from that of the rest of Canada.

Quebecers always felt that Confederation was a pact between the four original provinces and basically an agreement between the two founding nations. Former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau supported that view in 1967, when he said that the BNA Act of 1867, which was proclaimed by the imperial Parliament, was based on an agreement reached by two parties.

• (1335)

Thus, any constitutional amendment requires Quebec's approval, as one of the two founding nations. The Constitution was patriated with a new formula, in spite of the opposition of Quebec, which was not granted a veto over future constitutional amendments.

In his memoirs, former Quebec premier René Lévesque explained why he accepted the right of withdrawal with compensation, instead of the traditional veto power. He felt that a veto could impede development, and that if Quebec got it, Ontario, and perhaps other provinces, would demand it. His view of things was right, since British Columbia in fact claimed a veto and recently got it.

As my colleague for Joliette said earlier, the Prime Minister opened his veto drawer, pulled out a copy and handed it to British Columbia.

The government of Robert Bourassa, premier of Quebec at the time—and this was before the failure of the Meech Lake accord—then wanted to back both horses on the Quebec veto issue. He claimed for Quebec both the constitutional right to oppose changes to federal institutions and the creation of new provinces and the right to withdraw with financial compensation.

The constitutional question was always at the heart of the debate in Canada and, until 1982, no constitutional change affecting the legislative powers of the Quebec National Assembly was adopted in Canada.

The fact that Jean Lesage's Liberal government dropped the Fulton-Favreau amending formula in 1966 and Robert Bourassa's Liberal government rejected the Victoria charter in 1971 indicate that Quebec, the other provinces and the federal government considered Quebec had a veto on constitutional amendments.

However, the Supreme Court of Canada reminded us in 1982 that Quebec had never had a constitutional veto and thus confirmed that the federal government could, with the support of the Supreme Court, circumvent the opinion of the people of Quebec.

And now for a bit of history, let us go back to the time of Honoré Mercier, who has gone down in history as a great 19th century premier of Quebec. From 1887 to 1891 his concerns were the Constitution, education, the public debt, regional economic development and the challenge of industrial change.

His great project was to redefine the Constitution Act of 1867 by totally affirming the principle of provincial autonomy, particularly for Quebec. He said, "Our cause is the cause of our nation, the cause of provincial autonomy. It is the cause for which our fathers fought, the cause of patriots throughout history, the cause of those who do not want the province of Quebec to be a province in bondage, who want it to be self-governing in accordance with the wishes of its inhabitants. We do not want to hear our province referred to with disdain any longer. We wish to be masters of our destiny; we wish the voice of the majority to be heard and respected by all".

I should point out that premier Honoré Mercier governed with a two-party government, the Conservatives plus the Liberals, in a national unity government.

In 1887, 20 years after Confederation, premier Honoré Mercier called a provincial conference in Quebec City. Although Sir John A. Macdonald, the Prime Minister of the day, refused to send a representative, the Quebec conference was a success. Twenty ministers, five premiers among them, affirmed the principle of the autonomy of the provinces making up our confederation. They protested against the centralist approach of

the government in Ottawa and the government's tendency to abuse its power of disallowance, as it still does today.

• (1340)

The conference was a milestone in Canada's political history in that it confirmed the political and constitutional rights of the provinces, thus reminding the central government of what should be the very essence of a confederation's constitution.

Today, as the year 1995 draws to a close, what was said by Honoré Mercier, Premier of Quebec from 1887 to 1891, seems as topical as it was at the time.

Bill C-110 takes us back to the sad realization that there are truly two solitudes, two peoples, two cultures, each with a completely different vision of Canada's future.

On November 30, the Leader of the Opposition reminded the House of the disastrous impact of this bill, and I quote: "This leads me to believe and shows us that Bill C-110, in fact, has a pernicious effect in that, since the Canadian Constitution is so complex and twisted in certain respects, this bill, and that is a paradox, will in no way solve the current problems, but will make it even more difficult to transfer the powers that the federal government might be willing to give to Quebec".

Quebec's demands for more powers have persisted since the beginning of Confederation. The post-referendum promises of the federal government appear in this bill, and this veto is just a lot of smoke and mirrors. A real veto should be in the Constitution and be binding on all parties concerned.

The federal justice minister claimed that Bill C-110 was valid federal legislation, and I quote: "Let me express my sincere conviction that Bill C-110 is valid federal legislation. It does not amend the Constitution in any way. Indeed, it is complementary to the constitutional amending provisions".

In its content, the bill remains silent about the manner in which the provinces will be able to express their position.

This bill, which covers a scant two pages, merely indicates what the federal government means by a majority of the provinces. To the leader of the Bloc Québécois and to most Quebecers, this proposal is a step backward, a proposal that offers far less than Meech Lake or even Charlottetown, which was rejected by Quebec. There has been a succession of offers from Ottawa, but the substance of those offers keep shrinking all the time so that in the end it is just a joke, according to the Leader of the Opposition.

And what about the criticisms from the Reform Party? Reformers are against this bill because it would give a constitutional veto to Quebec's sovereignist government, which should soon be led by the leader of the Bloc Québécois. This brings us back

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to square one, in that it is impossible to satisfy both English Canada and Quebecers.

This vision of Canada compels us to stop these endless demands and deal with the real issues.

Quebec sovereignty will bring about a new climate allowing us to negotiate as equals with the people of Canada. I submit to you that the people of Quebec cannot support Bill C-110. We are still waiting for real, valid offers from the Prime Minister of Canada, in keeping with the promises he made before the October 30 referendum.

I have been a sovereignist for over 30 years and I cannot be happy with a veto that is a mere legislative promise and a total improvisation. That is why I will vote against Bill C-110.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Chair, it was less than two months ago, on October 30, when 50.6 per cent of Quebecers said no to separation and yes to Canada. The Canada votes would have been higher were it not for the fraudulent question, the fraudulent campaign and the questionable counting.

The leader of the Canada campaign was Daniel Johnson and the leader of the separatist campaign was originally Jacques Parizeau. The leader of the Bloc Québécois displaced Mr. Parizeau as the leader of the separatists and proceeded to conduct a campaign of deceit and mistruths.

A week before the referendum the Canada side was 7 per cent behind in the polls, and the Prime Minister became highly active in the campaign. On October 24, to counter the winning campaign of the separatists, the Prime Minister promised at a rally in Verdun that changes would be made to recognize Quebec as a distinct society and to ensure that future constitutional change would require Quebec's approval. The Prime Minister's nationally televised address to the nation on October 25 helped mobilize Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

• (1345)

On October 27, more than 150,000 Canadians gathered in Montreal to express their love for Canada, a Canada that includes the province of Quebec. Among those at the rally, close to 600 were from my community. Had there been more buses available there would have been 2,000 people. People from my community boarded buses at midnight on Thursday and did not get back home until midnight on Friday. They put their lives on hold for a day to go to Montreal to express their love for a Canada that includes Quebec.

The 150,000 Canadians at the Montreal rally supported the Prime Minister's promise for change. They will be the guardians of that promise.

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On October 30, in spite of a fraudulent question, in spite of a fraudulent campaign, Canada won. The Prime Minister was instrumental in taking the pro-Canada side from a deficit of 7 per cent a week before the referendum to victory on referendum night.

The separatists blamed their loss on money and ethnics, ignoring the 40 per cent of French Quebec that voted yes to Canada and no to separation. The leader of the Bloc Québécois and future premier of Quebec has stated that he is not in favour of constitutional change. He wants a Quebec that is separate from Canada.

The Prime Minister introduced a regional veto and distinct society clause through federal legislation, the only way he could keep his promise that there would be no constitutional change without Quebec's support. We approved the distinct society clause on Monday and will approve regional vetoes tomorrow.

The Prime Minister has delivered on his promises. On Monday evening the House of Commons approved the distinct society clause. The Bloc Québécois voted against it saying that it gave nothing to Quebec. The Reform Party voted against it saying it gave too much to Quebec. The leader of the Bloc Québécois and the separatists have been historically consistent in opposing distinct society for Quebec as they worked for the failure of Meech Lake and the Charlottetown accord.

The leader of the Reform Party and his followers have also opposed accommodating Quebec in Canada. While the Bloc Québécois is trying to pull Quebec out of Canada, Reformers are trying to push Quebec out. The Reform Party aided and abetted the separatists before the referendum and is doing the same now.

Reformers would be revisionist historians who would deny the Quebec Act of 1774 where the British Parliament recognized the French language, civil code and the distinct culture of Quebec. The reality is that the formation of Canada was a miracle based on the coming together of two of Europe's leading peoples, the French and the English, with the accommodation of the First Nations. Without this coming together we would likely be part of the United States.

Our willingness to embrace a bilingual society is welcoming to new Canadians. We have evolved as a compassionate, humane and understanding country. Together we have built a country that the United Nations has judged on a number of occasions as the best country in the world in which to live. Canada is the country of choice of millions of would-be immigrants.

When we examine the demographics of Canada, 22.8 per cent of Canadians are of French origin; 20.8 per cent are of British origin; 1.7 per cent are aboriginal and the remaining 54.7 per cent have roots in other countries, with half of those having multiple origins.

Canada represents a beacon of hope in a troubled world. We have built a country that has its make-up from the rest of the

world. Canada is an example of civility and compassion, caring and sharing, tolerance and understanding.

Canada welcomed my family after the Hungarian revolution in 1957. We were refugees and Canada offered us refuge. My wife is a sixth generation Canadian whose roots go back to Ireland. My daughter is nine years old and all three of us are fiercely proud Canadians.

When my family first arrived in Canada we lived for the first five years in Vancouver, B.C. I am acutely aware that B.C. looks on itself as a distinct region of Canada. The fact that the regional veto was extended to B.C. shows the flexibility of the government's approach.

In the past 39 years I have had the opportunity to travel this country from coast to coast. I have watched the sunrise on Signal Hill in St. John's, Newfoundland and have seen the sunset in Tofino on Vancouver Island. I have viewed the majesty of the Rockies and the vastness of the prairies, the wilds of northern Ontario and the beauty of the Great Lakes. For me the Gatineau hills, the St. Lawrence seaway, Isle d'Orleans, old Montreal, the Quebec winter festival give meaning to la belle province. I have enjoyed the quaintness of Prince Edward Island, the beauty of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. I have much more to see and I am awestruck at the beauty of my country.

Early this past October, a delegation from Waterloo, Quebec visited Waterloo, Ontario for a twinning ceremony. Bernard Provencher, mayor of Waterloo, Quebec, informed the people at the twinning ceremony: "If by some magical way we could have all Quebecers experience the hospitality that we have experienced these last few days and do it in reverse and have Canadians outside Quebec visit Quebec then we would not even have this referendum on what we already own".

• (1350)

The two mayors a couple of weeks later exchanged their flags in the Prime Minister's office and stated that they would fly the flags at their respective city halls in the hope that Canada would remain united. The two Waterloos are an example of how communities from across the country need to foster exchanges to promote goodwill and understanding among Canadians. Canada is a miracle we cannot take for granted. We must nurture it, build it and strengthen it.

The distinct society recognition for Quebec which was passed by the House on Monday and the regional veto clause which will be passed tomorrow are federal laws, not constitutional amendments. Constitutional review must take place in 1997. It will be then that the federal government will review the Constitution with the provinces.

Historically, constitutional change has been a point of division among Canadians. It was for this reason that the Fathers of Confederation could not agree on a constitutional amending formula when Canada was founded in 1867. Constitutional amendments tend to bring out regional grievances that test our

mettle as a nation. It is easy for opposition members to criticize, as they can attack everything and be responsible for nothing.

In putting forward the distinct society resolution and the regional veto we did not expect the separatists across the aisle to support it. They want to separate. They want to tear up Canada. Their leader, the Quebec premier in waiting, has already made it abundantly clear that no constitutional amendments will be acceptable to his government.

The neo-separatist Reform Party does not want to support the government's initiative. The Reformers just after official opposition status. They dream of forming a government in a Canada without Quebec. The Reformers helped the Bloc Quebecois before the referendum and they are helping them now.

We believe the majority of Quebecers and the majority of Canadians will support the government's initiatives. Distinct society and the regional veto are issues that have to be dealt with quickly so the government can focus its attention on the economy and getting people back to work.

Last week the media reported on a CROP poll conducted in Quebec. When Quebecers were asked directly whether the government should focus its attention on the economy or the Constitution, 86 per cent said the economy and only 10 per cent the Constitution. Four per cent had no response. Clearly, Canadians from Quebec and Canadians from the rest of Canada have a lot in common.

In July 1982 Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau succeeded in giving Canadians their Constitution. He was assisted in his efforts by the present Prime Minister who was then the justice minister. They were both attacked for their accomplishments by the separatists who would tear Canada apart. Mr. Trudeau and the current Prime Minister are distinguished Quebecers who, during the quiet revolution, helped transform Quebec from a society dominated by Duplessis and the church into a modern society, but the separatists questioned their Quebec roots.

The situation reminded me of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, our first French Canadian Prime Minister, who during the election of 1911 set out the frustrations that beset him as he tried to follow the middle path in politics: "I am branded in Quebec as a traitor of the French, and in Ontario as a traitor of the English. In Quebec I am branded as a jingo, and in Ontario as a separatist. In Quebec I am attacked as an imperialist, and Ontario as an anti-imperialist. I am neither. I am a Canadian".

Canada is an example to the world. It is made up of peoples from around the world who have together built a country which is the best in the world.

Government Orders

Vive le Québec. Vive le Canada. Vive le Canada uni.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt and oppose Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments.

My constituents are proud and eager to have me rise on their behalf to express the anger, outrage and fury over the insult which the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party of Canada have hurled at the Canadian people. The anger, outrage and fury is over the fact that Canadians do not think the federal government's power to veto constitutional changes should be delegated to provincial legislatures. The power to reject or ratify changes to the country's Constitution should be given to only one body, and that body should be the people of Canada. Over and over we on this side of the House and in the ranks of the Bloc Quebecois heard the members of Parliament from western Canada and Quebec yelling at the Liberals to listen to the people. The Liberals just do not listen.

• (1355)

The people of British Columbia, where I come from, are insulted by the antics of the Liberal Party under the dictatorship of the Prime Minister. One morning we wake up and find out that B.C. has not been given the power of veto like the other provinces by the Liberal Prime Minister. This comes right out of the blue. My constituency telephone was ringing off the wall. The mail and fax machine were working overtime and the people were asking what was going on.

Then the Liberals start talking about four regions versus five regions. They are trying to convince Canadians how great a thing a veto is. The Liberals hope Canadians would not understand and the Liberals could hide the fact that they were not giving the people of Canada anything, nothing, zero.

The Liberal Prime Minister became afraid of the people of B.C. like he is afraid of the people of Quebec and so another morning comes along. My constituents wake up and discover the Liberal Prime Minister from Quebec has given B.C. a veto. But it is too late. The people of B.C. saw what the Prime Minister did. He thinks so little of the people from western Canada and he thinks about Quebec, so he inadvertently insulted western Canadians and Canada's most western province.

The people of western Canada know that in the Liberals' proposal under Bill C-110 and under the command of the Prime Minister the federal government is giving the leader of the Bloc Quebecois a consultation prize—no, it is not really a consultation because there was no consultation. It is a consolation prize for losing the Quebec referendum, a veto.

S. O. 31

The Prime Minister could be called the Bob Barker of Canada. Quebec spun the wheel and lost but the Prime Minister turned to his deputy and said: "Sheila, tell them what they have won".

It is unacceptable. The people in western Canada know that this is typical of Ottawa and the Prime Minister. Liberal prime minister or Tory prime minister, prime ministers from Quebec make it a habit to give things to Quebec: the CF-18s, military bases, the environmental secretariat, distinct society, all kinds of things. Western Canadians are used to this.

The Prime Minister, because of his lack of understanding of what the people of Quebec want and are saying, brought the nation to the brink of disaster. Single-handedly he nearly smashed Canada to smithereens.

Before the referendum in Quebec the Liberals were told to sit on their ham hands until further notice: "Don't even talk about the referendum". After months the Prime Minister allowed his caucus to discuss the Quebec referendum but only at the very last minute, within days of the people of Quebec taking their trip to the ballot box.

Then the big mistake happens. The people of British Columbia are watching a pathetic speech by the Prime Minister in Verdun, Quebec one night. Verdun is a very cool place, especially for young people. As a matter of fact Montreal boasts the best night life anywhere in Canada. Unfortunately the Prime Minister got carried away. He forgot himself and he forgot his speech. He started to promise Quebec everything.

I am sure the leader of the Bloc Quebecois was very upset. The Prime Minister on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada started spewing forth a litany of gifts to the political elite, the rulers of Quebec, win, lose or draw. The people of British Columbia changed the channel on the television set because they could not watch it any more. They were insulted.

The next day the people of B.C. got together and commenced a long journey. They have to remind the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister that they exist in British Columbia. They must not be angry or hurt. They have to be diplomatic. We tell the Liberals: "Don't give a veto to the provinces, territories, groups of provinces, premiers, separatist governments, foreign nations, the Ayatollah or anyone else. Give a veto to the Canadian people". The people of Canada deserve a veto. The Liberals do not listen to Canadians.

On behalf of the good people of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, I am proud to stand here today and oppose Bill C-110.

The Speaker: It being almost two o'clock we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the legislative proposal of the Minister of the Environment for an endangered species act.

In our diverse Confederation there is always a danger of government inaction simply because of the daunting prospect of complex, legal and political negotiations. To get things done someone has to have the nerve and energy to take a firm first step.

In the case of over 250 endangered species that do not know or care in which jurisdiction they live, it is most appropriate the federal government take the lead.

The minister has produced a detailed draft of an act that would protect endangered species. If necessary, I urge that she proceed alone with the legislation to the limit of her jurisdiction. However it is my hope that the provinces and territories will move quickly to join her.

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[Translation]

MEMBER FOR CHURCHILL

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the honour and privilege of attending the sacred assembly presided by my colleague from Churchill. Although the themes of this assembly were reconciliation and spirituality, it reeked of politics.

We were quite surprised to read in the hon. member for Churchill's letter of invitation and to hear in his opening speech that the Great Creator was in favour of Canadian unity. The Bloc Quebecois condemned this unacceptable statement on Saturday and wishes to do so again in this House today.

The notion of spirituality transcends politics and the Great Creator has no use for national borders. The next step would have been to come straight out and say that the Creator is a Liberal.

* * *

[English]

SURVEYS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, registered voters in my riding were asked if a national referendum should be held on the reinstatement of the death penalty. The overwhelming response from 919 of over 1,000 voters was that a referendum should be held at the time of the next federal election.

In another initiative my constituents are being asked whether Quebec should be recognized in the Constitution as a distinct society. In just two short days my constituents have rejected

such recognition by a margin of 86 per cent. The survey will be ongoing until the end of December.

It would appear that the days of government imposing its will on the people are drawing to a long overdue close and direct democracy will allow them to be heard.

However members opposite need not take my word for it. All they have to do is ask their constituents, that is if Liberal members have the same belief in the values and principles of democracy as do Reform Party members.

* * *

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is increasing concern among Canadians concerned about nuclear disarmament that the Canadian government, despite its official support of various treaties, is not as serious as Canadians want it to be about bringing an end to nuclear testing, about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and about the destruction of existing nuclear warheads.

The post cold war era was to be an opportunity for the world to put behind it the fear of nuclear war. The public has been lulled into thinking that significant progress is being made.

In reality, the nuclear club permits certain of its members like France and China to continue threatening the planet with nuclear testing. This same nuclear club, with which Canada is associated through NATO, also refuses to countenance the significant destruction or elimination of its nuclear capacity, thus encouraging other countries to seek such weapons.

The doomsday clock is being advanced once more. The Liberals need to wake up and show some courage on the issue instead of speaking out of both sides of their mouths, saying one thing at the UN and another thing through NATO.

* * *

THE LATE HARRY CAVERS

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 7, 1995, St. Catharines lost a great Canadian, the hon. Harry Cavers.

Mr. Cavers was born in St. Catharines in 1909. He practised law until joining the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in the second world war, rising from ordinary seaman to lieutenant. After the war Mr. Cavers practised law as a partner in Cavers, Chown and Cairns.

• (1405)

He was elected as the member of Parliament for Lincoln in 1949 and again in 1953. He was the first Liberal elected in the area in 50 years. He was an effective representative of Lincoln for nine years and worked hard to make a difference for the area.

S. O. 31

Following his time in the House of Commons, Harry Cavers returned to the legal community as a judge for Dufferin County. A former law partner, Mr. Roy Cairns, has spoken of Harry's fair-mindedness and ability to see both sides of an issue.

St. Catharines has lost an excellent ambassador and elder statesman who served his country well and was an inspiration to all those around him.

Our sympathy is extended to his daughter and her husband, Anne and John Carruthers, and their children, Megan and Meredith.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address what I believe to be the essence of Canadianism. We are 10 provinces, two territories, numerous municipalities and many neighbourhoods, but above all we are Canada.

We are a nation that shares common values, a nation shaped by the challenges of nature, a nation forged by war but one that has fought for peace. We are people who have developed compassion and understanding for others in society. Most of all being Canadian means understanding that the issue is not whether we get a fair share of the pie but rather that the pie is shared fairly.

If we are to survive as a nation, those blessed by economic advantage must be willing to help those areas not so fortunate. That is the way it should be. I am proud to live in a society that cares for the least advantaged and whose people share their good fortune with their fellow Canadians.

In Canada, that is simply what we do.

* * *

BANK ACT

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the 1992 legislation there will be a review of the Bank Act in five years or in 1997.

I have received many calls and briefs from insurance companies in my riding of Lambton—Middlesex that are very concerned, as I am, about the potential changes in the Bank Act that could give the very powerful banking sector the ability to retail insurance from its branches.

While it is important to have a strong banking system in Canada, I do not believe it is right or fair to other sectors of the financial services industry to allow the most powerful sector, the banks, to accumulate strength which would likely turn into a virtual monopoly.

S. O. 31

As a government we have already acknowledged that many of the new jobs created in Canada over the last couple of years have come from small and medium size businesses.

Allowing banks into the retail insurance industry could decimate small insurance companies in Canada, many of which are policyholder owned and predominately serve rural communities, like those in Lambton—Middlesex.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILDREN AS WAR VICTIMS

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two million children have been killed, between four and five million crippled, and ten million psychologically scarred by the ravages of war over the past ten years.

That is what UNICEF says in its 1996 report released yesterday. Various conflicts around the world have left in their wake some horrifying and monstrous scenes in which children are all too often the victims.

Confronted with this sad finding, Western countries, including Canada, are forced to give serious thought to their moral obligations. For example, UNICEF does not hesitate to blame this sad situation in part on antipersonnel mines.

Yet Canada remains reluctant to destroy its own mines as long as other countries do not do the same.

In the name of these children who are war victims, Canada should lead the way in eliminating these weapons of suffering.

* * *

[English]

SENATE REFORM

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when Canada is overburdened with old ideas and old institutions the government has come forward with far reaching, regressive veto legislation that will etch in stone for all time parliamentary anachronisms such as the current Senate.

The Prime Minister's outdated, outmoded, traditional political practice of stuffing that institution with patronage appointments has loaded this powerful unelected body with partisan failures, flatterers and pleaders of special interests.

Tomorrow I will be introducing my private member's bill that will give electors of a province a vote on who should be summoned to represent them in that chamber. It is absolutely vital that we remove porky patronage appointments from the

Prime Minister's paws, if we are to have any true legitimacy in Canada's upper house.

Let us make no mistake. The Reform Party always has been and always will be driving toward true Senate reform, that of an effective, elected and equal Senate.

* * *

● (1410)

WATERTON GLACIER INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK

Mr. John Loney (Edmonton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Waterton Lakes National Park in the province of Alberta, together with the American Glacier National Park in Montana, was officially designated as a world heritage site by the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization during a meeting held in Berlin last week. The name of this new world heritage site will be the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park.

Waterton Lakes National Park protects 528.8 square kilometres of land. The Canadian government established the park in 1895.

It is a great honour for the country that the outstanding universal value of the site has been recognized by the international community. It shares this designation with six other Canadian national sites and with other protected areas in the world such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the Equator's Galapagos Islands and Yellowstone.

* * *

INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with representatives of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario. This association represents over 8,000 licensed brokers plus support staff employed in over 1,100 offices contributing to local economies throughout Ontario.

These small business people have valid concerns about the possibility of chartered banks being permitted to aggressively enter the insurance business. On the surface it may appear to be just two industries in competition over a business segment, but it is much more than that. It is about the survival of many hundreds of small insurance brokerage firms. It is about the survival of thousands of Canadian jobs.

I implore the government not to alter the 1992 legislation which is working very effectively. The banks are raking in record profits. They have moved in on the brokerage industry. Now they want to move in on the insurance industry. What is next? It is time the little guy got a break.

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S DISTINCT IDENTITY

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader was quoted in the December 4 edition of *Le Journal de Montréal* as saying: "The Progressive Conservative Party will support the government motion recognizing Quebec as a distinct society within Canada. This is a necessary first step in recognizing Quebec's identity within our federation".

However, the day after our government passed this important motion in favour of Quebec, it is with sadness that the people of Quebec have realized that not all the federalist allies they were counting on were on board.

After so much energy was spent on having Quebec's distinct identity recognized when the Progressive Conservative Party was in office, it is a pity that not one Conservative member took part in the whole debate on this issue in this House.

They could have joined us in taking this major step toward recognizing Quebec within our federation, as the Conservative leader did enthusiastically throughout the referendum campaign.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's rural regions voted yes in the October 30 referendum. Following that, the federal Minister of Agriculture showed up at the UPA congress and said that he got the message. This is quite the change, considering that the last federal budget dealt a direct blow to the agricultural sector.

Producers are asking that Quebec's programs not be tampered with, and that federal spending in the agricultural sector be spread fairly. The minister has his work all cut out, given that he only spends 10 per cent of his budget in Quebec, that he still managed to close three research centres in the province, including the one in La Pocatière, and that he also reduced dairy subsidies by 30 per cent.

I do not know what gimmick the minister will use to try to prove that Ottawa looks after Quebec's agricultural interests. But I do know that the facts speak for themselves and that agricultural producers are not dumb.

* * *

[English]

PENITENTIARIES

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my statement is about this high powered committee consisting of the collections commissioner, parole board chairmen, deputy ministers of justice and the solicitor general's department. They feel there are problems, and these are some of the reasons.

S. O. 31

They say that sentences are longer. Is that a problem? They also say that there are more challenging prisoners, the criminality challenged; increased periods of detention; a growing lifer group; an aging prison society; declining parole grant rates; and the toughening of laws.

• (1415)

Perhaps I can help the Liberal government. Why not look for new ways of doing things? Why not look at privatization of a couple of the prisons? What is wrong with double bunking? Why not restrict some of the ridiculous benefits like golf, project bleach, GST rebates for prisoners, prisoner's ability to sue and the ability to refuse work?

If the government does not like that, resign and let someone else with new ideas and courage take over.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S DISTINCTIVENESS

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member who, for a while now, has seemingly become a part time opposition leader paid us a rare visit yesterday. Unfortunately, the heir to the throne did not come to Ottawa to help build a better country. Nor did he come to protect Quebec's interests.

The Bloc leader came to Ottawa to lead his troops in the charge against Quebec and its distinct society status. Historians will remind future generations that Quebec separatists were always opposed to the recognition of a distinct status for their province, and that it is thanks to the federal government if such status was finally obtained.

* * *

[English]

REFORM PARTY

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Reformers have told Canadians they would restore respect and decorum in the House of Commons.

Imagine the disappointment of Canadians, who believed their promise, following the shameful display of shouting, finger pointing and heckling during yesterday's vote on the Prime Minister's motion.

Canadians are still trying to get used to the idea that Reform's approach to national unity is voting with the separatists. Who could imagine the Reform Party's joining forces with the Bloc? Politics does make strange bed fellows.

We have finally found a promise Reformers have kept. They said they would do things differently in the House of Commons. What they did not say is that it would be different from the promises they made to the people who trusted them. Their idea of different is unacceptable, unequalled and downright terrible behaviour.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[Translation]***REFERENDUMS**

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, on the very day the government was boasting of having met its referendum promises by a simple inconsequential resolution on the distinct society, the Prime Minister was busy making unacceptable and antidemocratic statements, claiming that he reserved the right to use any means available to prevent another Quebec referendum.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Now that he realizes that his phoney offers do not satisfy Quebecers, and since he plans to use all means available to prevent another Quebec referendum, are we to take the Prime Minister's words to mean that the only hope remaining to him for winning the next referendum is to make up the rules himself?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contradiction is immediately obvious. The hon. member says that I want to prevent a referendum, and then he refers to what I will do to win it. Either there will be a referendum or there will be none.

What I said yesterday is that we want a clear question. That is what democracy is all about. We do not need the Bloc to give us any lessons in democracy. As Michel Vastel said not too long ago, "The Bloc is a hereditary monarchy. When it comes down to it, eight people, six men and two women, decided how their leader would be chosen, eight people representing 0.007619 per cent of the total Bloc membership of 105,000".

We need no lessons in democracy from a party accused of all sorts of funny business in the last Quebec referendum.

• (1420)

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister wants to play it that way, I remind him that he and his cabinet ministers were guilty of violating the Quebec Elections Act. To talk about democracy and refuse to recognize the results of a democratic vote is really pushing it.

The Prime Minister stated yesterday that 2.5 million citizens should not be allowed to determine the future of a country with a population of 30 million. Does this mean he denies the Quebec people the fundamental and inalienable right to determine their future?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they have already done so twice. There have been two referendums in Canada in which Quebecers decided to vote to stay in Canada.

All I said yesterday was that the rest of the country has a say in the future of that country. We have twice accepted the results of a referendum in Quebec, and democracy is being denied by those who refuse to take no for an answer.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that a politician of the Prime Minister's stature does not understand one cannot stop a people on their way to becoming economically independent.

How can the Prime Minister expect Quebecers to believe him when he says he kept the solemn commitments he made during the referendum campaign, when he changes his tune in English Canada and refers to his own commitments as three little promises of no consequence?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the promises I made go back a long way. Unlike the Bloc Québécois, I voted for Charlottetown and for the distinct society. They voted against it. Since 1970, I have supported veto rights and the Victoria formula. That has always been the position of my party. In fact, I was merely confirming what our party has supported for a long time.

And talking about democracy, again, their leader said on television a few days ago that they were going to take everyone by surprise. And when he was asked: "Do you intend to ask an honest question"? He said: "No, I will ask a winning question".

The only way to win honestly is to have an honest question, a question that everyone understands. In this way, there can be no confusion about the result.

* * *

CANADIAN NATIONAL

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Paul Tellier has threatened to close the firm AMF in Montreal, if the union refuses to accept the conditions imposed by CN. The union and GEC Alsthom, the company trying to buy AMF, have almost reached an agreement, but CN is blocking any initiative that might lead to a settlement. At stake, let us not forget, are 1,300 direct jobs and 5,000 indirect jobs in southwest Montreal.

In view of the fact that CN's attitude in this matter could end up costing Montreal 6,300 jobs, does the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for regional development in Quebec, intend to intervene in this matter of importance to Montreal, the southwest part of Montreal, in his area, near his riding? Will he bring CN back to its senses?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows that the CN is now in the private sector. We have, however, been trying for months to find a solution for AMF. The CN had agreed to keep the plant open. Negotiations have been very long and hard, but I am confident, given the employees' attitude at the moment, that we will reach a solution.

• (1425)

We will follow this very closely. I know that my colleagues for the greater Montreal area are very interested in this. So are we. I hope that, at the last minute, all those involved in this matter will understand the importance, as the hon. member has mentioned, of keeping the plant in operation with all the jobs involved.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the federal policy on rail transport has always favoured western Canada, will the federal government, for once, make CN listen to reason or will it turn a blind eye?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Duceppe: We will wait—

An hon. member: They do not like the truth.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie may continue with his question.

Mr. Duceppe: I therefore ask the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for Montreal's regional development, if he is still responsible for it or if that is only one of his titles? Will he let Montreal lose 6,300 direct and indirect jobs to Winnipeg?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has never been any question of the jobs of AMF going anywhere else but where they are.

The question we have been trying to address now for several years, as the hon. member should know, is whether through co-operation between Canadian National, GEC Alsthom and the employees we can keep an operation going in Quebec that has between 600 and 1,300 employees, depending on the level of demand within the shop.

The hon. member would be far better advised if he spent his efforts trying to convince the parties to arrive at an agreement rather than raising the spectre of the jobs going somewhere else. If the jobs are not kept in Montreal at AMF by GEC Alsthom and by CNR they will not be going anywhere else, they will disappear. That would be very unfortunate for Montreal, for Quebec and for Canada.

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QUEBECREFERENDUM

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last night the Prime Minister talked about another Quebec referendum after saying he would not talk about another Quebec referendum. He went on to say: "The Constitution has a lot of powers for the federal government to act under peace, order and good government. We have powers and we have to use the powers to make sure the question in the next referendum will be fair to Quebecers and will be fair to the rest of the country".

Precisely what powers under peace, order and good government was the Prime Minister referring to? Precisely how does he plan to use those to ensure a clear question in the next referendum?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to have a fair and honest question if there is another referendum.

I do not want to speculate on when there will be another referendum because the leader of the Bloc Québécois said that when he goes to Quebec his priority will be to run a good government and put the province's finances in order. If he wants to do that we will help because we want Quebec to have a good economy.

However, I said that if there is another referendum the question has to be clear. We will not accept any more ambiguity and we will take the necessary steps to achieve that goal.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard all that. However, my question was what powers under peace, order and good government does the federal government propose to use to affect the question in the next referendum?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he can consult his lawyers. We know what to do.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister got into this discussion by talking about the uncertainty another Quebec referendum would create. These types of comments, saying the federal government has powers to do something about that referendum, and then refusing to explain how and what powers it will use add to the confusion.

• (1430)

I will ask the Prime Minister again: If he knows what he is talking about, how does he propose to use federal powers to effect the fairness of the next Quebec referendum?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Reform Party had a plan with 20 different points to deal with that.

The question was asked of me and I said that the question of a referendum, if there is another one, is not only for the people of

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Quebec to vote on, it is a question for all the people of Canada. I said that very clearly. I said that there are means available to the federal government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, they are always asking political questions.

I said that the federal government has the obligation and the duty to the people who are going to vote to ensure that the question is clear. We will use the power we have to achieve that goal. Do not worry about that.

* * *

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

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

Despite the Prime Minister's promise to completely withdraw from manpower training, the UI reform package tabled 10 days ago would introduce five new labour programs. Faced with this announcement, the National Assembly unanimously reaffirmed the Quebec consensus on the need to transfer all federal manpower programs to Quebec.

With the Minister of Human Resources Development scheduled to meet his Quebec counterpart tomorrow to discuss the issue of transferring manpower programs, can the Prime Minister tell us if his minister will have the mandate to discuss the transfer of all manpower matters to Quebec, without conditions or national standards, as provided for in the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous resolution?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the primary mandate of all government ministers is to help people get back to work, to provide jobs, employment opportunities and to work closely with the provinces, the municipalities, the private sector and all individuals who can be our partners in achieving that mandate.

The Prime Minister made it very clear in his statement that we are withdrawing from the area of manpower training. In the legislation we made it clear that we will be working with the provinces to gain their consent on any measures which would in any way be involved in training. We will work in concert with them as much as possible to develop effective employment measures and partnerships for employment.

I am very pleased to have the initial round of exploratory meetings with Quebec's minister of employment so that we can clarify exactly what is in the bill. Clearly, the Quebec government does not fully understand all the measures, just as the hon. member does not. I look forward to the opportunity to begin a

process of good dialogue and good discussion so we can work jointly to help Canadians become employed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from the minister's comments, I understand that he will continue to decide which agreements he can sign and negotiate.

Since the distinct society motion tabled by the government is supposed to mean something, can the Prime Minister tell us if his Minister of Human Resources Development has received a mandate to make a distinct proposal to Quebec, which has the largest of consensus on the need to transfer responsibility for all manpower issues?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is seemingly odd and strange that the hon. member for Mercier would be citing the decision by this Parliament to support distinct society when the hon. member voted against the bill. It seems to me that the hon. member cannot have it both ways. She cannot be telling us that we have to respect distinct society when she does not have the goodwill and the resolution to vote for distinct society for Quebecers.

* * *

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he has the powers and the means to ensure that the next Quebec referendum is fair.

What powers is he talking about? How is he going to use them to ensure the next referendum is fair? If the Prime Minister does not answer those questions, he gives the impression that he does not know what he is talking about or that he is making vague threats. He contributes to the unsettling nature which surrounds this issue.

I ask him again: What powers is he talking about? How does he propose to use them to ensure that the next Quebec referendum is fair?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if anybody is creating confusion in Canada at this time it is the leader of the third party.

There has not been one day since we have been talking about this problem that he has not been in bed with the Quebec separatists. There has not been one day that he does not want to try to make life difficult for a government that is trying to save Canada. There has not been one day that he is not causing some disturbance in Canada because he has no interest in keeping the country together.

He is dreaming. Perhaps he dreams all the time about becoming the leader of the rest of Canada, but there will be only one Canada from sea to sea.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if we are going to keep this country together, it will only occur by providing clear answers to the questions that are being asked. This type of political rhetoric just adds to the uncertainty rather than to the certainty that Canadians desire.

Let me come at it another way. Last month in Toronto the Prime Minister said that he did not want any more referenda and implied that he would use the federal power to prevent future referenda. Last night he conceded that there will be another referendum. He said that he is going to use the federal power to ensure that it is a fair referendum.

Which is it? Is he proposing to use the federal power to prevent another referendum, or is he proposing to use the federal power to ensure that the next referendum is more fair? Which is it, one way or the other?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is purely a hypothetical question. There is no referendum at the moment. The leader of the Bloc Québécois said he does not want a referendum for the time being. He wants to run Quebec and try to provide good government.

If they were to provide good governance in Quebec, of course the rest of Canada would be very happy and we would help them. At the moment I repeat, if there is another referendum, the question will be clear, do not worry about that. I will make sure it is very clear.

* * *

[Translation]

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health made her intentions known regarding advertising and sponsoring by tobacco companies. Contrary to all expectations, the minister's plan will considerably exceed the scope of the legislation that the Supreme Court invalidated just three months ago.

Does the minister not realize that, with her clumsy measures, she is pushing cigarette manufacturers to put an end to their voluntary moratorium on advertising and to resume advertising tobacco products without any constraints?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I met with tobacco company officials not too long ago, before making this announcement, they told me they were preparing to start advertising again as of January. So, there was going to be advertising one way or another.

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We definitely want to exercise control over this advertising because, as you know, cigarettes are harmful to the health of Canadians. Companies are always looking for new customers and these are often young people just taking up smoking. We will make every effort to prevent young people from starting to smoke, and this is a step in the right direction.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that, by taking action without first consulting the Supreme Court, she could drag us once again into a judicial saga that will cost us \$7 million at the very least and all for nothing?

[English]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it surprises me a little bit that the health critic for the Bloc Québécois is more interested in protecting the tobacco companies than in working with us to ensure that we have the toughest and best legislative package possible, having taken guidance from the supreme court ruling.

* * *

QUEBECREFERENDUM

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, even the Quebec Liberals oppose any use of federal power to disallow a future referendum if the question is unclear. The Quebec Liberals said that. Today, Quebec Liberal constitutional critic Jean Marc Fournier said: "The Prime Minister should have more confidence in the good judgment of the people of Quebec".

The Prime Minister now says that the question will be clear. How can he guarantee that the question will be clear? What powers is he prepared to use?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): If everybody in Canada and in Quebec wants a question that is clear and everybody wants to work to that goal, we will achieve it. We will have to make sure that the question is clear. There will be enough pressure on the government to achieve that. I repeat that the next time the question will be clear and the people will know exactly what they are voting on.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that we are not to worry about it. The country is worried sick about the obsession the government has had week after week after week after the referendum. The point is we want to get on with jobs. The point is we want to get on with looking after the economy, but this Prime Minister has forced the House to be obsessed with this problem.

Plain and simple, why does the Prime Minister not cut his national unity losses, go back to the drawing board and consult Canadians in a nationwide referendum? If he has the faith in the Canadian people, why will he not consult with Canadians and the premiers, not just some of these people here?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hope that some day the Reform Party will try to work with the rest of Canada to make sure that Canada stays together. That type of attitude is not helpful at all for the unity of the country.

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

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

Given the Prime Minister's answers to our questions and to those of the Reform Party leader, we realize that he does not know how to stop the constitutional circus that he put on the road a few weeks ago. Six weeks ago, according to the Prime Minister, Quebec was his homeland. One week ago, Quebec no longer had a culture and, since yesterday, it is no longer entitled to democracy.

Are we to understand that, in order to save his skin in the rest of Canada, the Prime Minister is prepared to do anything, even to threaten Quebecers with using everything within his power to keep them from achieving sovereignty?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not very complicated. I simply asked the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois to be honest and to say that they want to separate from the rest of Canada, pure and simple. They have the answer.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): The Bloc Québécois is very honest.

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, I ask you to choose your words very carefully. We should never question honesty in this House. Therefore, I would appreciate it if members would avoid using that word during question period, with the connotation given to it today.

As you know, some words tend to trigger a strong reaction. Consequently, I ask the Right Hon. Prime Minister to avoid using the word honesty with that connotation.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I said that they should ask a clear and honest question. They will be the ones asking the question. All we want is a very clear question, not one that tries to include all sorts of conditions to get people confused to the point where they do not know whether they are voting for or against separation. All we want is a clear question. If they want a suggestion, here is one: "Do you want to separate from Canada?" This is very clear and everyone will understand. There will be no problem. However, they know that they will lose if they ask a question like this one.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, should the hard line towards Quebec announced yesterday by the Prime Minister not be seen as a metaphor for his entire career, in other words, as consolidating his base in Canada while trying to crush Quebecers?

[English]

The Speaker: The question in and of itself is giving motive to why one person is acting one way or another. A question should be straightforward rather than asking or implying motive.

The question as it is stated is out of order. If the right hon. Prime Minister wants to answer it, fine; if not I pass from there.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will reply, because they do that all the time. If you happen to be from Quebec and you believe that Quebec's future is within Canada, they brand you as a traitor, but the fact is that French was able to survive in North America because of Canada.

* * *

• (1450)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, recently the dollar went down and the interest rate went up substantially. This is not exactly a ringing endorsement of the finance minister's proud announcement that his deficit elimination plan is on track.

Will the minister admit that drifting targets are not enough, that overspending \$4 million an hour is too much and that markets and future generations of Canadians want him to do better like, for example, the eight provinces whose finance ministers he will meet tonight?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well the reasons for the volatility in Canadian currency markets in terms of interest rates has an enormous amount to do with speculation of what action the fed is going to take and what action a number of the European central banks is going to take. The hon. member knows it.

It is a tribute to the budgetary action taken by the government that the spread between Canadian interest rates has narrowed as much as it has.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the provincial finance ministers are complaining, with much justification, that the government has cut them more than it has cut other federal spending. This is a typical Liberal

approach to dealing with problems: Shift the burden, let someone else take the blame.

Will the minister cut other federal spending more, not just to restore harmony with his provincial counterparts but also to send the right signals to capital markets?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when reductions in transfers to the provinces by the government were made, unlike previous governments there was a lengthy period of notice given. The fact is that we cut the provinces less than we cut ourselves. It was less than 2 per cent of provincial revenues.

If the hon. member will take a look at the Fiscal Monitor which came out today he will notice that program spending by the government is down and transfers to the provinces are up.

* * *

CHILD TAX BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Under the child tax benefit program Revenue Canada's responsibilities are to calculate the amount of each benefit, maintain each account and respond to inquiries.

Revenue Canada now has the added responsibility of determining who is entitled to the benefit. Can the minister explain to the House how this change has improved the child tax benefit program?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I respond to the question may I thank the hon. member for her consistent endorsement and championship of the problems and rights of children.

In response to her question, the integration of the program in one department is allowing us to maximize the efficiency and to improve our client services in a number of ways: first, by processing the child tax benefit applications at one stage instead of as was formerly the case; second, by eliminating the duplication of databases and the weekly transfers of information that previously took place between two departments; third, by simply reducing program costs; and finally, by providing clients with a single point of contact.

* * *

[Translation]

RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

On the weekend we heard that the federal government was preparing to shut down Radio Canada International. According to reliable sources, cabinet was to ratify this decision without waiting for the conclusions of the Juneau report which was to examine the mandate of the CBC.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us whether he recommended or intends to recommend that cabinet change the mandate of the CBC, so as to cut the services of Radio Canada International, before the Juneau report is even tabled?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that was short and sweet.

Since the government accepted the recommendation by government members of the foreign affairs committee to make every effort to fully develop the potential of Radio Canada International, what explanation does the minister have for this alleged about-face?

• (1455)

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no about-face. I have said in this House that the future of the CBC would be considered by the government in the course of a review of its mandate. We are waiting for the results of a study of the CBC's mandates made by a special committee. And we intend to determine the future of the corporation within that context.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a minute ago the finance minister made the absurd statement that somehow the government has cut more of its spending than it has cut transfers to the provinces. I point out that it did back flips to preserve Liberal pensions and the finance minister led the charge in that whole argument.

The people who have been showing leadership in the country are those in the provincial governments. The only leadership this minister has shown is in defending his interests.

Will the finance minister commit to taking a page from the book of the provinces? Will he balance the budget and will he hold out the hope of tax relief for ordinary Canadians who actually pay taxes?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, surely there ought to be some connection between the preamble to the question and the question itself.

The hon. member knows that the government's objectives are to eliminate the deficit. It has pursued a very clear track of deficit elimination. It has bettered its targets every time, which is the first time in a long while that that has happened in this country's history. It is focused on the preservation of social programs and on job creation.

Oral Questions

The government is not going to throw the fabric of the country away because of any narrow fiscal ideology as expressed by the members opposite.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is job creation has stalled in the country. The fact is the government is being forced to cut into social programs because the interest on the debt is undermining those programs. The fact is that the provinces are leading the way.

Will the Minister of Finance take a leadership role for a change, go to the conference today and tell the provinces that he is going to undertake to do what they have done and begin the process of balancing the budget? Will he ultimately hold out some hope to Canadians that there will be some tax relief, not in the 21st century but in this century?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the history of the last decade in this country and its deficit projections have been one of missed target after missed target.

Since the government took office, not only has it hit the targets, but it has bettered them. That is very clear. Rounding off the numbers, when the present government took office the deficit was at 6 per cent of GDP. Then it went down to 5 per cent, next to 4 per cent, then 3 per cent and then 2 per cent. That is a pretty clear track and we are going to take it all the way to zero.

* * *

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr. Elijah Harper (Churchill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Last week aboriginal spiritual leaders and elders, representatives of many churches and faiths, political leaders, youth and ordinary Canadians gathered in Hull for a sacred assembly. The assembly asked for a national aboriginal day to recognize the contribution of the aboriginal people to this country and to celebrate a distinct people which has thrived on this land for thousands of years.

Does the minister support a national holiday to recognize the tremendous generosity and contributions of the first peoples to this country?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not speak with clarity yesterday but I hope to today. I support the efforts to make June 21 aboriginal solidarity day.

This was put forward as a vision by the national chief on behalf of his people. We talked about reconciliation, a day when aboriginal communities can celebrate themselves and their contribution. They can organize festivities.

• (1500)

This vision was approved by his people, the grand chief and his assembly, by all the spiritual leaders who were there, not only the native spiritual leaders but the spiritual leaders from the Mennonite church, the Anglican church and the Catholic church, every church, and by this minister.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

On January 1, the Minister of Finance intends to go ahead with a plan that dates from 1991 and has been repeatedly postponed. It involves limiting the deductibility of provincial taxes on capital and payroll from federal income tax. Implementing this proposal would penalize business in Quebec especially, because Quebec takes half the taxes that would be affected by the federal measure.

Will the Minister of Finance agree once and for all to do away with the plan to limit the deductibility of taxes on capital and payroll from federal income tax, a plan that would hit Quebec business hard?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is aware, this measure hits a number of provinces. The member also knows that, when I was in his place, I asked the same questions and had the same view as opposition critic.

It is certainly our intention to resolve the issue, but we want to resolve it as part of discussions on all taxation measures between the provinces and the federal government.

* * *

[English]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES CANADA

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have just received what Correctional Services Canada calls its latest amended version of the commissioner's directives. I quote from that document: "Overtime shall only be awarded where no other reasonable alternative exists". This is in prison.

Government Orders

Would the Deputy Prime Minister confirm whether this ridiculous policy still remains on the books or whether if a parolee is sent back to jail he somehow qualifies for time and a half?

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has informed us of the information he has just received. Therefore for the benefit of members concerned I will take this under advisement. I am sure the minister will answer him appropriately.

* * *

WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Tomorrow the Chinese government will be trying leading dissident Wei Jingsheng, the winner of the 1995 Olaf Palme Award, on charges that could lead to the death penalty.

I ask the minister to tell the House what steps the Liberal government has taken to protest this rushed show trial? He was given five days notice of this trial. Will the minister assure the House that the Canadian embassy in Beijing will send a senior representative to monitor this trial tomorrow?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure the hon. member we will investigate this situation. Our official in Beijing will act according to the spirit of Canada which has been never to hesitate to speak out on behalf of human rights, particularly in China.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, today it gives me great pleasure to introduce a very select group of Canadians. Because I want to join you in applauding them, I ask that you wait until I have introduced all of them.

I want to introduce your very own Canadian space heroes, our first Canadian mission specialist, Major Chris Hadfield, his wife, Helena, and the following astronauts from the Canadian Space Agency Astronaut Corporation: Dr. Steve MacLean, Mrs. Julie Payette, Dr. Dave Williams, Dr. Marc Garneau, Mr. Bjarni Tryggvason, Dr. Robert Thirsk.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1505)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, this is a very special day.

[English]

I invite all hon. members, if their duties permit them to attend, to Room 218, the Speaker's salon, where I will be holding a reception for our astronauts, who have made us so very proud.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There has been some comment on votes taken in the House. I want to make it clear, if only for the record, that with respect to the votes taken yesterday I would have voted against the amendments and in favour of the resolution.

With respect to the vote that will take place tomorrow, for which I will be absent, I would vote against—

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

* * *

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act, the Old Age Security Act and the Canada Shipping Act. I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 1 and 2.

• (1510)

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill C-110, part of the unity package by the Liberal government and the Prime Minister, which appears has created more disunity than any recent package.

As minister Petter from British Columbia recently said, it not only fails to promote national unity but it has impaired national unity, a position with which I heartily agree.

In the north, in particular Yukon and Northwest Territories, and I hope my colleagues from Western Arctic and Nunatsiaq will speak up on this issue, this bill will make it even more difficult for the creation of new provinces. I find it difficult to understand why those two important members of the Liberal government would not be speaking out strongly against this proposal.

Government Orders

The west, as we know, feels alienated. Quebec says no. Clearly this bill is not creating unity. As has been said recently, when you have painted yourself into a corner, you walk out on the paint. The Prime Minister has really walked out on the paint in this case. The footprints are causing reverberations right across Canada. They are not reverberations of unity but of discontent with the actions of the government prior to the referendum in Quebec and with its actions to address issues since then.

I will talk about three issues: the purpose of this bill, the process surrounding this bill and the other two aspects of this package, and the content. As good New Democrats always do, I will give some specific suggestions to what should be done with this bill.

I have listened very carefully to various members who spoke before committee, in particular the Minister of Justice, about why it was important to have this bill. I am left wondering whether there has been someone out there hiding behind a rock, excuse the expression, waiting to leap out and spring some kind of constitutional proposal on us that somehow the federal government has to be protected against and enshrined in legislation such as Bill C-110 so it will know what to do. Maybe that is one purpose, but it was something that was certainly a surprise to most of us.

Bill C-110 instructs the government on how it will use its power to accept or not accept constitutional amendments. It does not change the Constitution. Therefore that was obviously not the purpose of the bill.

The leader of the Liberal Party in Yukon, always with constructive comment, said in the *Whitehorse Star* of December 5 that the Prime Minister is trying to fulfil his promise of coming up with a plan that will satisfy the people of Quebec. He clearly has not done that.

What could be the other purpose? The Minister of Justice said in committee hearings: "This bill is just a bridge to the April 1997 constitutional conference on the amending formula. It can be changed. It is just in place temporarily". Again, we have to ask why. If it is there temporarily, it satisfies no one, what is the real purpose?

The leader of the New Democratic Party, Alexa McDonough, called this constitutional package a fly by the seat of its pants response to yesterday's polls and today's editorials. That about sums up the purpose of this package, in particular this piece of legislation under discussion today.

The Minister of Justice said in terms of purpose that Quebec is acting and so we have to act. I guess by that sense of logic if someone decides to leap off a building, they will decide to leap off a building. There does not seem to be any comprehensive reason for this package other than for the Prime Minister to save

face. He has not succeeded. It is a heck of a way to run a country if the government and the Prime Minister are simply putting proposals forward to keep a promise. These proposals do not keep that promise and they alienate not only the province to which they are destined but the other provinces and territories.

• (1515)

What about the process? There was no consultation with provinces, territories or aboriginal people. Apparently there was no obvious consultation even with members from British Columbia on the Liberal side.

It is fair to say that the process generally in place for constitutional discussions was totally circumvented. Those of us who have been a part of many constitutional endeavours in the House know how difficult it is and are empathetic to it. However, no process is not a substitute. No process is no democracy. That cannot be the essence and principle on which constitutional change is made.

The Prime Minister said that he responded to British Columbia, that it would now have the veto it requested. He added in a recent television interview that he knew the country well and had travelled it for 32 years. If the Prime Minister knows the country and the people so well, why does he not listen beforehand rather than act in an ad hoc manner?

I have to say, because I want to be fair to the government, that there was not a complete lack of consultation. In the same article of December 5 in the *Whitehorse Star* the president of the federal Liberal association is quoted as saying that she received calls from the prime minister's office and was reassured that changes would not be a hindrance to Yukon. The president went on to say that she felt very reassured after speaking with officials from Ottawa.

I would only say it should be so easy. If we have Canadians and members of the Liberal Party in other parts of the country who simply by making a phone call to Ottawa can be reassured by the Liberal government that everything they are doing is fine and there is no worry, I have to say we are in big trouble.

To the people of Yukon and elsewhere I say that a simple reassurance will not do it. It has not done so in this package. It has not done so in Bill C-110. Clearly the Minister of Justice has difficulty defining for Canadians and members of the House what purpose it will actually serve. The process was clearly not respected in any way in the development of the legislation.

In terms of process, the Liberal Party brought in closure on debate. It is something we have great difficulty with because we feel in a democratic system everyone should have an opportunity to speak. Although my party and I did not support closure, in this case I suppose the Liberals are only talking to themselves anyway. We have to wonder how serious that will be.

Now I will refer to the content. How does Bill C-110 relate to section 38 of the Constitution? That is the real question. Section 38 talks about the amending formula of seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population. This legislation would require over 80 per cent of the population to make change. It is clearly a very different intent from the actual Constitution.

The Minister of Justice says that it does not matter, that it is only temporary. Again I ask if there is someone out there lurking, wishing to spring something on us, from which we have to be protected. Why can we not have a process that people are involved in, with full consultation involving all the provinces, territories and aboriginal people?

We ask whether the formula being proposed under Bill C-110 will be the position of the federal government in the talks in April 1997 on the Constitution and the amending formula. The government has been very unclear about that and has not committed at all to what it will do.

In the generosity of spirit for which my party is known I should like to make some recommendations. The first one is to withdraw the bill. It is ill advised. It is not achieving any objective. The process has been illegitimate and the content does not address the real issues of Canadians today.

The second one is to undertake consultations with the provinces, the territories and the aboriginal people to reach a consensus.

• (1520)

The third and most important one is if the bill is simply for the Prime Minister to save face and to be seen to keeping his promises, he should keep his promises and create jobs. Last month 44,000 Canadians lost their jobs. If the Prime Minister wants to keep his promises, he should create jobs and help the youth to participate in the economy. The participation rate of youth in our economy is the lowest in 20 years. He should put in place the 50,000 child care spaces promised by the Liberal Party and ensure cash transfers are maintained so that the national health care system is preserved.

In other words, unity will be achieved by what we do to ensure economic security, safe communities and the rights of Canadian citizenship, which surely must mean good health care, jobs, security for the elderly and the eradication of child poverty. Instead of trying to devise formulas for 50 ways to say no, the Prime Minister must create unity by creating a country in which every Canadian wants to say yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with considerable interest that I rise this afternoon to speak to Bill C-110 concerning a veto for Quebec.

Government Orders

You are aware that, during the referendum, the Prime Minister spoke of major change and promises. What is odd is that immediately after the referendum, the Prime Minister is saying he made little promises and that he has just acted on his little promises.

As regards Quebec's veto and the concept of distinct society, it would be a good idea perhaps to remember that the people of Quebec have a motto, which is: "Je me souviens", or "I remember". We often have to remind the Prime Minister of Canada, a Quebecer himself, to remember a little bit of Quebec's history. We must also remind Quebecers that they have a history that they must never forget.

Quebecers have been claiming rights and privileges that are theirs since Confederation, when they were misled. This Confederation was decided on without Quebecers being asked for their opinion, without a referendum, probably with the help of a few Quebecers who were richly rewarded afterwards. Between 1936 and 1940, Mr. Duplessis was already saying that, of course, Quebec had to "repatriate its booty". The Union nationale, a party of Quebec nationalists, was created as early as 1936. Mr. Duplessis managed to stay in power for almost 20 years by repeating that the federal government must not be allowed to encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction. Then, in the 1960s, Mr. Lesage was elected by talking about being "Masters in our own house".

You must remember that these slogans were very important; Mr. Lesage, a former deputy minister in Ottawa, came to Quebec City after realizing that Quebec was being taken for a ride. He led the Liberal Party to power with a slogan that went like this: "Masters in our own house". A little later, Mr. Johnson senior became Premier as leader of the Union nationale by calling for "Equality or independence". In 1976, Mr. Lévesque won the election on a sovereignty-association platform. As you can see, this is nothing new.

• (1525)

I wish to point out today that this is nothing new and that the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois are not the only forces behind the recent referendum. It has a long history. In 1980, Mr. Lévesque lost his referendum because of Mr. Trudeau's promises that they would patriate the Constitution and amend it in line with Quebecers' legitimate needs.

Again, this promise was not kept, since the Constitution was patriated and amended without Quebec's consent. This is somewhat reminiscent of the Prime Minister's promises in the last referendum.

I was elected here for the first time in 1984 with a mandate for national reconciliation. We wanted to reconcile all that. From early 1985 all the way up to 1987, we worked very hard on what was called the Meech Lake project, which met with the provincial premiers' approval in 1987. But since it had been decided that the consent of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of

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the population was required to amend the Constitution, consent had to be sought. The provinces were given three years to approve the agreement signed by the premiers in 1987.

You will recall that, in 1990, the Meech Lake accord was rejected, by English Canada in particular, once again with the support of the current Prime Minister, who made every effort to have it fail, in co-operation with premier Wells of Newfoundland and Ms. Carstairs, who was leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba at the time and has since been appointed to the Senate. She was rewarded for doing that.

All this to show that, once again, the current Prime Minister was against it, because his only goal at the time was to become the next Prime Minister of Canada. He made every effort to ensure that the Meech Lake project fail because, had it worked, it would have been to the credit of the Conservatives. Since they could not allow that to be, the current Prime Minister, then preparing to become the leader of the Liberal Party, did his best to have this project fail, so that he could have a chance of becoming the Prime Minister of Canada. That is what we must bear in mind.

When the Meech Lake accord failed, they panicked, wondering what to do. That is when the commissions started, the Castonguay-Dobbie commission and all the others. There was also Keith Spicer's travelling commission. That cost us millions. At the same time, Quebec got into the act and established the Bélanger-Campeau commission. That was the most serious exercise ever conducted in Quebec since Confederation.

More than 600 briefs were submitted to the commission. Over 200 witnesses were heard, and 55 experts were hired by the Quebec Liberal government of the time. The commission came to the conclusion that, to thrive and grow, while also preserving its culture and its language, Quebec needed greater powers, more than 20 real powers, to achieve its destiny as a nation.

During that period, as I mentioned earlier, the Castonguay-Dobbie and Spicer federal commissions were working on a project called the Charlottetown proposal. A referendum was held in 1992 and, unfortunately, the project was still not quite complete. It was called a draft and it was truly that.

• (1530)

In spite of all that, English Canada turned down the proposal because it felt that Quebecers would be getting too much. As for Quebecers, they felt that they would not get enough. So, everybody voted against the proposal, though not for the same reasons.

As you can see, it is not possible to reach an agreement. There are two irreconcilable views in this country that must be acknowledged. Following that referendum, Quebecers elected a sovereignist federal party, the Bloc Québécois, in 1993. Out of

75 MPs, they sent 53 Bloc members to Ottawa. Let us not forget that. Then, the following year, another sovereignist party, the Parti Québécois, was elected in Quebec. Finally, a Quebec referendum was held in 1995. This is when the Prime Minister promised major changes. But now he comes up with minor changes and he has the nerve to say: "Here are the small changes I promised you". However, during the referendum, Quebecers were led to believe that there would be major changes.

Unfortunately, we lost that referendum. However, 49.4 per cent of Quebecers supported sovereignty. The two sides were literally neck and neck. Sixty per cent of Quebec's French speaking voters supported sovereignty, but this is not enough to achieve our destiny.

As I said, in 1980, Mr. Trudeau promised major constitutional changes. Quebecers believed him, but he did just the opposite of what he had said. In the 1995 referendum, the current Prime Minister also promised major changes. Everybody was expecting great constitutional amendments. But instead, all we get are not even amendments, just a House of Commons bill, Bill C-110, which gives Quebec a veto and recognizes Quebec as a distinct society. This is a far cry from constitutional amendments.

We know full well that a bill can be amended at any time. Even the present government could amend this act tomorrow morning, next week, next month. The Liberal government could be replaced and its successor could decide to change this constitutional amendment. This does not mean anything. This is an affront to the people of Quebec.

Moreover, five regions are given a veto: British Columbia, the western provinces, Ontario, Quebec and the maritimes. A veto for Quebec would mean, for instance, that Quebec has a veto on account of it being a people who is a minority in Canada. The Quebec people must have a veto. But if it is also given to everybody else, it does not mean anything any more.

The Prime Minister is once again trying to deceive Quebecers, to trick them. He keeps on repeating: "We want to give Quebecers a veto, we want to recognize Quebec as a distinct society". But at the same time, he does not mention that he is giving a veto to the others.

Essentially, what this really means is that the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party have decided that there will never be any constitutional amendment. By giving a veto to five regions, you make sure that there will always be a region which will not agree to the amendments put forward by the federal government or somebody else. There will always be obstacles and the Prime Minister is deceiving the Quebec people by trying to make them believe that they are being given veto power. By giving veto power to everybody he is not willing to amend the Constitution. It is as simple as that.

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• (1535)

It is a trap and I am telling Quebecers that the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party of Canada are trying to deceive them. If we are voting against this veto power and against this distinct society it is because it is a trap set for Quebecers. I want to say that clearly to Quebecers today.

It is an insult to Quebecers and they should remember the little story I just told, because we tend to forget it.

At the present time, what the Prime Minister is doing is making fools of Quebecers. He believes they are not too bright. He seems to think that Quebecers have a short memory.

I remind the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party that in Quebec the motto on the license plates is "Je me souviens", I remember. I often tell my constituents: Never forget to look at the car in front of you, its license plate probably says: "Je me souviens". We should remember our history, it is not that long. If we do, maybe we will not be duped so easily.

During the last referendum, people in English Canada panicked because polls were saying the yes side was leading. They were totally panicked. Why? Because the Prime Minister of Canada had made these people believe that there was no danger whatsoever that Quebecers would ever vote for sovereignty. Yet, it was close. It was very close and I find it regrettable that the Prime Minister had concealed the Quebec reality from the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, you are indicating that my time is up. Is it, really?

The Deputy Speaker: It is the Chair's fault; your time was up four minutes ago.

Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would have a lot more to say, but I think that what I just mentioned will certainly enlighten Quebecers.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the more I hear from the government, and from the Bloc Quebecois and its leader, it begs the question: Why are we wasting time trying to fix the problems of Confederation in Quebec when the leader of the Bloc, the heir apparent of the separatist Parti Quebecois in the province of Quebec, has stated that he will not accept anything that is done? Why not get on with fixing the problems that affect all of Canada, including Quebec? When the Government of Quebec is ready to sit down at the table and discuss its concerns, that is the time to do fine tuning on Quebec's specific problems.

Let us look at our humble beginnings in this country. What is now Quebec and Ontario was thought of as the main part of Canada. The rest was looked on as the colonies. The Atlantic region was mainly considered an east coast access, the prairies

as farm country and British Columbia as west coast access. Each outlying region was expected to harvest its raw materials or produce and send it to the centre for processing and consumption. It was not until the 1930s that the prairies gained control over its oil and gas reserves.

The government of the day primarily represented central Canada and concerned itself mainly with the issues of central Canada. The rest of the country was simple, underdeveloped and relatively unconcerned with the concentration of power at the centre core. That was notwithstanding the fact that there was a certain reluctance on the part of many people in British Columbia to join Confederation. It was not until late this century that Newfoundland on the opposite coast finally agreed to join Confederation.

Overall this worked acceptably but times change. Consider how the average family operates. Within that family there are certain rules by the head of the family, by a parent laying down rules that are appropriate for the time and place of that family. As the younger members of the family become teenagers, if the parent group continues to treat them like preschoolers, there will be a lot of resentment and problems within that family.

• (1540)

As those teenagers grow into adults, as times change and as evolution takes place in their personal development, it will be time for them to move on and become adults in their own right, to stand on their own. If the rules of the family have grown with them and been proper and reasonable, then there will always be close family ties and there will be an interdependence and relationship between family members. However, if the head of the family is unyielding and unreasonable, then the younger family members will flee the family, never to be a part of it again. This is a very fitting analogy to view the way Canada is going at this moment.

Quebec is distinct. No one could or wishes to dispute that. However, the Atlantic provinces are distinct in their heritage and culture. The prairies had a much harder struggle for survival and development than central Canada. That makes them unique, or as the popular buzzword goes today, distinct. British Columbia is geographically and culturally distinct from the rest of this country. Perhaps the most distinct of all is the territories. Their unique geography and climate sets them apart from the rest of the country. It takes a special kind of person to develop the territories and those people and their area are unquestionably distinct.

The only way the concept of a distinct society can be dealt with fairly is to recognize that all of Canada is made up of a collection of distinct societies, each with its merits. Saying this does not diminish the uniqueness of Quebec's language or culture but no province, territory, region or group should have any special powers not bestowed on the others.

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Each of the provinces should have more autonomy to deal with its needs. Most of what Quebec apparently wants should be granted to all provinces. When the federal government finally realizes that not only the 19th century is gone but most of the 20th century as well, perhaps it will start to deal with the needs of the 21st century. It is time to realize that Canada is no longer a central core with supporting colonies on either end.

The whole concept of a constitutional veto is wrong. What is needed is constitutional ratification which is now in place with the seven and fifty formula. The current veto legislation is a knee jerk reaction from a government that felt it needed to do something and frankly did not know what to do.

First it was a veto for Quebec. When that did not sell, it added in the provinces and regional concept. Still no sale, so the government tinkered a bit more. As it now stands there are senior provinces and junior provinces. Reform's position has always been that if there is a veto it is the people of the various provinces or regions that should have it.

When the government first came forward with its ill-conceived veto idea, it could not have gotten it more wrong if it tried. Sometimes I think it probably did try. First and most important, it provided this veto to the regional governments instead of the people. Second, it did not even know the proper concept for the regions. Belatedly it tried to correct its error on the real number of regions but in so doing it continued to provide vetoes to governments instead of the people.

Imagine the horror of people right across this country: a veto on the Constitution in the hands of a separatist government. Bill C-110 is not a unity bill. It is a disunity bill.

The Prime Minister thought he could get away with his standard strategy during the Quebec referendum. That strategy is to do absolutely nothing. What the heck, it has kept the government artificially high in the polls ever since the election so why not continue? The swing to the yes side leading up to the referendum provided the answer to that. The Prime Minister's lack of leadership, which had worked so well for him in the past, proved to be a problem which almost cost us the country.

His continued lack of a real plan and his unwillingness to deal with the real problems may yet destroy the country. For too long divisiveness has been a great problem in Canada: English versus the French, aboriginal versus non-aboriginal as well as cultural issues.

• (1545)

Instead of working to resolve the differences and making all Canadians equal, the government has worked on the basis of divide and conquer. It seems to believe that only where there is confrontation is there a real need for government. It is time for the government to realize that it is not the solution and in fact is the problem.

This latest bill by the government, often referred to as something drafted on the back of a napkin, follows the old divide and conquer philosophy. However the government is losing its ability to conquer. When that happens, all that is left of the old formula is divide.

The Bloc Quebecois and Parti Quebecois are really one and the same. They must be taking a secret delight in the government's latest faulty strategy. Both of them want to break up the country at any cost and the Prime Minister is playing right into their hands. The country's problems cannot be solved by playing one problem against another, and that is exactly what Bill C-110 does.

The Prime Minister knew that offering a deal to Quebec alone would not be accepted so he included another province, Ontario. When that did not appear to be working he added one more, British Columbia. When Alberta protested he suggested that it effectively had a veto over the rest of the prairies by virtue of its population mass.

Indian versus white, immigrant versus citizen, English versus French, east versus west, and now province versus province. When will the government wake up and realize that it is not saving or protecting the country but is destroying it?

Bill C-110 is not the answer to the country's problems. It is a symptom of the problems. Not only should the bill not be passed, it should not even be voted on. If the government had any integrity at all it would withdraw the bill and proceed instead to a process of decentralization.

Not only will I not be supporting the bill, but as a member of Parliament from B.C. and one who has certain unquestioned loyalties to my home province I will also vote against the amendment to give B.C. a veto. To do otherwise would be providing an indication of endorsing a nationally unacceptable concept.

Instead of the continuing policy of divide and conquer, it is long past time that the government started practising a new policy of equality of all people and provinces in Canada. It may be a bit much for me to expect it. However it is Christmastime. Maybe miracles still happen. What a Christmas present it would be for Canada if it happened now.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, we are rushing through debate on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments.

I say rushing, because, as you know, the Liberal government has been attempting in the last few days to speed up the political process to ensure speedy passage of Bill C-110.

Let us first take a look at the general context of this real crab trap the Prime Minister got himself caught in, according to some analysts, and we certainly agree with them.

A few days before the October 30 Quebec referendum, the federal Prime Minister, driven by panic, made an about-face and promised major changes to Canadian federalism. So, in early November, he created two committees made up of federal ministers in order to examine the issue of constitutional and administrative changes. I want to point out that, since then, we never heard anything more about those committees.

Then, on November 27, two weeks ago, even before knowing what these committees were going to propose, the Canadian government announced its intentions on constitutional matters: first, a resolution symbolically recognizing the distinct nature of Quebec, then a bill where the federal government committed itself to never adopt constitutional amendments to which one of the four regions of Canada, namely, Quebec, Ontario, the Maritimes and the West, were opposed.

Finally, the third measure expressed Ottawa's intention to partially withdraw from manpower training programs, while, of course, maintaining control over funds and national standards. One can understand the government for trying to gag any opponent of its constitutional reform package. The utter mess it has created and cannot get itself out of verges on the most grotesque cynicism.

• (1550)

Quebecers have nevertheless seen through its scheme. The results of a SOM poll which was released last Friday show that 53 per cent of Quebecers find the federal proposals inadequate, and a meagre 24 per cent find them adequate.

Interviews for the poll were conducted between December 2 and December 5, two days before the last episode of government bungling over the veto for B.C. and Alberta. Results would be even more critical if the poll were taken today.

As far as improvisation and inconsistency go, in an area as fundamental as constitutional changes, the federal government takes the cake. Even before Quebecers had a chance to say these proposals were unacceptable, the federal government yielded to pressure from the west and granted a veto to B.C. and a veto by default to Alberta.

But the show did not end there. Last week, federal Liberals fell all over themselves to tell us Quebec does not have a distinct culture and there is only one Canadian culture from coast to coast.

We have a government that claims to be willing to grant symbolic recognition of Quebec's distinctive character, but says at the same time that this does not mean anything and that Quebecers do not have a distinct culture. As I already said, these intellectual flip-flops are tragically funny and deceptive.

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With Bill C-110, the roundabout ways of the government are just as difficult to follow. First of all, we are told that this bill gives Quebec a veto power, which Quebec thought it had until the Supreme Court stated otherwise in 1982. Since it is one of the two founding nations, Quebecers had always thought that, in order to maintain a good relationship, both partners had to agree before major changes could be made. However, Bill C-110 does the exact opposite and achieves an incredible feat by annoying all Canadians from sea to sea to sea.

Quebecers have always considered the veto power as, by definition, a kind of constitutional protection, because they did not want to relive the events of 1982 and be excluded from the constitutional amendment and reform process. But Bill C-110 is only a bill. All it will take is a majority of members in this House and Quebec can say goodbye to its veto power.

We are far from entrenching this power in the fundamental law of Canada. This unconstitutionalized veto will not be granted only to the two founding nations.

At first, besides Quebec, Bill C-110 was to grant this veto power to Ontario, the Atlantic provinces and the Western provinces. A week later, after a press conference given by the premiers of B.C. and Alberta, these two provinces also got the veto power. By the end of my speech, the federal government may have granted a veto to Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

As my colleague from Bellechasse put it, in his colourful language, this is the Colonel Sanders' veto power, a big chicken with legs for everybody.

The message the Liberal government is conveying is pretty simple: Quebec is a province like any other and only gets a veto because of the size of its population. With the recent presents offered to us by our federal Santa Claus in this Christmas season, any change will require the support of at least seven provinces representing at least 91.8 per cent of the Canadian population.

In other words, Quebec is not getting a veto, but rather a guarantee that all future constitutional negotiations will have the same fate as Meech or Charlottetown. We have reached a constitutional dead end and there is virtually no way out.

One has to be particularly out of touch—and we thought we had seen the worst of it with the Charlottetown Accord—to add insult to injury.

• (1555)

In a press release dated November 27 of this year, the Liberal government said, and I quote: "Now is not the time to hold a round of constitutional talks since the Government of Quebec is completely dedicated to the secessionist option. If conditions changed, that is if Quebec and the other regions agreed, the veto proposal contained in this bill could be enshrined in the Constitution".

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So the federal government is imposing its own constitutional rules without seeking the approval of Canada's four or five regions—the number varies from one day to the next. Already the government is not respecting the principles of Bill C-110 in its current approach. Like Trudeau in 1982, this Liberal government is trying to impose a formula for amending the Constitution through a process that goes against the very principle underlying the proposed formulas.

In closing, I urge Liberal members to oppose Bill C-110—I know I am dreaming but one more nightmare will not make a difference—for the simple reason that if Liberal members love Quebec so much, as they came to tell us before the referendum, they should understand that Quebecers will never be satisfied with empty shells and constitutional footballs that have no more credibility than the rhetoric that comes with them. The least we can say is that, in the best country in the world, even crabs are laughing their heads off.

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's very important debate which, as you are aware, has grown out of the referendum debate we had not long ago. On October 30, Canada gained more than a mere referendum victory.

History will recall this referendum as one in which not only Quebecers but millions of Canadians renewed their allegiance to our country and proclaimed their pride in being Canadians. From sea to sea, millions of Canadians realized more clearly than ever before how important it was for them to live in this great country rich in resources and in potential.

People everywhere also became aware that the unity of our country is more important than many individual demands. People everywhere said that keeping this country together was a worthwhile undertaking, was worth a few concessions and compromises. The Prime Minister clearly understood what Canadians were feeling on the eve of the referendum. He saw our desire and our determination to continue to see this best of all countries progress even further. He also recognized the desire everywhere in the country for change, concrete and progressive change within Canada.

The Prime Minister kept his promise. Barely a month after his promise to Quebecers to recognize the distinct society, to give Quebec a veto and to decentralize powers, he has made good on that promise. Last Monday, we passed the motion the Prime Minister had promised, recognizing Quebec as a distinct society. Today, we are looking at Bill C-110 on the right to a veto.

A few days ago, my colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, proposed a new employment insurance plan which gives the provinces full jurisdiction over manpower training. This is a real and effective way to bring services and decision making closer to the people.

• (1600)

The Prime Minister's initiative for change is a high point in the recognition of Quebec's traditional claims.

These three elements—the distinct society, the veto and decentralization of powers—form the essence of what Quebec has wanted and has sought for 30 years.

We now know that there is no need to throw everything up in the air or to give up our country, our citizenship or our future for our identity to be recognized with dignity and our place to be confirmed with pride in Canada's confederation.

Obviously, I am under no illusions. The opposition parties do not recognize the immense value of the Prime Minister's proposals. For the members of the Reform Party, the whole thing goes way too far. To them, Quebec is not different, it is insufferable. It is not distinct, it is incomprehensible. It does not need a veto, but rather an ultimatum.

In fact, what the Reformers want is to separate Canada from Quebec and thus rend a most noble fabric that forms the heart of an independent, autonomous and unique Canada.

For the members of the Bloc Québécois, the Prime Minister's initiative does not go far enough. They treat it with disdain and contempt. The leader and the members of the Bloc Québécois should remember that, on October 30, a majority of Quebecers rejected their option of sovereignty. They said no to their plan to separate Quebec from Canada. They said no to the farfetched promises that were made. They said no to the enormous economic risk the Bloc Québécois wanted them to take.

Our friends opposite should humbly recall that on October 30, Quebecers chose Canada. They chose to keep their Canadian citizenship. They chose to keep their Canadian passport, invaluable when you travel. They said they wanted to go on living in the best country in the world.

On October 30, Quebecers chose to go on living in the country that affords them the best guarantees for progress, success and prosperity. And on October 30, Quebecers chose to live in Canada.

Of course Quebecers and Canadians as well indicated they wanted change, but change within Canada. That is exactly what we are proposing. The Bloc Québécois maintains that it is not enough, the Reform Party that it is too much. It should come as no surprise that our position differs totally from that of the opposition parties. The Bloc wants to isolate Quebec. We encourage Quebec to look outward. The Bloc rejects everything we have built in the past 127 years. We are using our experience to make social and economic gains. The Bloc wants to destroy our country. We are working to make it even more prosperous, fairer and equitable.

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What we are proposing to Quebec today and what we have been discussing for the past few weeks is a new way of approaching constitutional amendments that might affect the powers, rights and privileges of the National Assembly and the Government of Quebec. In fact, what we are proposing to Quebecers is the assurance that we will never amend the Constitution without their consent. What we are proposing to Quebecers is an authentic partnership that respects the rights and responsibilities of each partner.

• (1605)

We often said during the referendum campaign that federalism is a flexible and dynamic formula. We said that we were open to change and that change is possible within Canadian federalism.

The Prime Minister is a man of his word who leads a government that keeps its promises. We had further proof of that today. Thanks to the Prime Minister's initiatives for change, Canada and Quebec are turning a new page in our history. This page and the pages that follow will be imbued with the openness, respect and pride shown by so many Quebecers and Canadians during the referendum campaign.

In keeping with the will expressed by a majority of Quebecers on October 30, we are now full partners. Thanks to this modern and strong partnership, we will enter the next century still at the head of the line and we will stay there.

[English]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter this debate with mixed emotions, emotions of sadness and gladness at the same time. I am reminded of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. The opening sentence goes something like this: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". Today we find ourselves with that ambivalence in Canada.

In the last three weeks and the weeks preceding the October 30 referendum we have seen some of the most terrible things happen. We have also seen some of the most wonderful things happen. People have been divided and people have come together on this issue. The Montreal rally was a coming together that we have probably not witnessed ever before in this country, yet the occasion was a negative one. It was one of tearing people apart.

Our country is a democracy. Unlike the words that were used only a moment ago about the mutual respect that we need from one another, the unfortunate part of it is that too often we impute motives to people. People impute motives to members of the Reform Party and say we want to tear Canada apart. Nothing could be further from the truth than that.

I stand here today as a proud Canadian, as someone who was born in this country, as someone who can look back to a grandfather and father who left a country that was being taken

over by a government that was not democratic. The Bolshevik revolution brought about my family's emigration from Russia.

My grandfather came to Canada with his children and they became citizens. They were buried here. Now I stand here and say I am proud to be able to be in Canada. It is a privilege to be able to speak one's mind and not be afraid that one might be stricken down or killed because of opinions that one might hold.

While there are a lot of differences and variations in this country, the real reason we are here is that this nation is free. It is here where we can express our religious beliefs, where we can express our political beliefs, where we can move forward and build a country that is strong, a country that is united.

We saw a few days ago how fragile that peace can be. It reminds me so much of a conversation I had with one of my constituents. He is a person who came to this country seeking freedom, seeking a domicile that would allow his children to grow up in peace and harmony. This person has family in the old Yugoslavia.

• (1610)

My constituent said to me: "I want you to know that I am not so much concerned about what is happening in Bosnia right now where my people are suffering the ravages of so-called ethnic cleansing. I was very concerned. Two years ago when you were elected all I could talk about was the way in which my forefathers' country and the things they built were being taken apart. Now, I want you to pay attention to what is happening in Canada. The very things that are happening in Canada today, in October 1995, are the very things that brought about the division and the terror we now see as the Bosnian conflict in the former Yugoslavia".

That is so serious. Why do we not listen to those people? Why do we think that we must somehow create differences and create a distinct society based on where people live because of a particular language, culture or race? It is wrong. Not only is it wrong, it carries within it the seeds of disintegration of what is a nice country. We should do everything we can to make sure that those seeds do not sprout. We must make sure that we can continue to develop a mutual respect for one another without fear and at times perhaps even express love for one another. I wish we could do that all the time.

I also want to draw attention to the west. The west is a very interesting part of the country. I was born in Alberta and moved across the mountains into British Columbia. Those of us who were born in Alberta can detect the difference. Something happens to all of us in western Canada. We are fiercely independent but we are also very, very patient. We know how difficult it is to eke out a living on the prairies. Quebec and Ontario think they know everything and that they can tell the westerners how to live. They cannot. They do not know how but Ontarians say: "We will tell you how".

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Mr. Harris wrote an article in one of our local newspapers which I think covers it very well. With respect to the unity question he said: "But the sleeping giant in all this may well turn out to be Manning's west". Why it is Manning's west I do not know. I think it is just as much Schmidt's west as it is any other person's west. Nevertheless, that is how it was said.

He went on:

This great and insanely loyal part of Canada has waited for more than 100 years to take its proper place in the Confederation; it is still waiting.

The PC Party died on the prairies because it sold out the notion of a strong and equal Canada in the name of winning in Quebec, just as the Liberals have for generations.

If Ottawa continues to fail the west while it woos Quebec with special status, the country may still fall apart like a soggy jigsaw puzzle starting with the Rocky Mountains rather than the Laurentians.

That is the opinion of one columnist.

If members had been in my riding in the last four days and listened to the comments that were made, particularly when the Prime Minister presented the motion we voted on last night and the bill we are now facing closure on today, they would have heard people ask: "How much longer do we have to put up with this?" They do not want to put up with it at all. Do they want to be part of Canada? Absolutely. They want desperately to be part of Canada, but they want to be part of a united Canada, a part of Canada that says people are equal, the provinces are equal and that no one deserves any special status regardless of language or geography. That is what they want and it is what I want.

I do not think there is one person in the House who is any better than anyone else. I do not think anyone on this side of the House is any better than anyone on that side of the House and vice versa.

We are trying to build a united country. There are those of my colleagues who would say: "Well, those guys over there cannot possibly be as good as we are". In reality and in our hearts we really are trying to do the best we can for our constituents, but we certainly disagree on certain things. In particular we disagree with what happened yesterday.

• (1615)

Yesterday the government had a chance to recognize that special status does not mean unique powers, and what did it do? It refused to accept certain amendments which stated that if we were to recognize special status it should not be conferred or interpreted as conferring upon the Government of Quebec any new legislative or executive powers, priority rights, status or any other rights or privileges not conferred on the legislature or government of any other province.

That was a good step forward and it was rejected. It would have brought about unity. Instead the government did the opposite. It said: "You have special powers and you may indeed have unique powers that other provinces do not have". That was completely unacceptable to me and to my constituents. They have told me 100 times, if they have told me once, that it is not acceptable to them.

The government had another chance. It could have said that it was not to be interpreted as diminishing in any way the rights and freedoms of any citizen of Canada under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by virtue of province of residence. This second chance was turned down. It would have helped. It would have brought about unity but it was rejected.

The final chance was to deny or be interpreted as denying that Canada constitutes one nation. This too was rejected. I went home sad last night because an opportunity to bring about a direction that could have healed the nation was denied. It was a sad day.

Today we are not approached with recognizing Quebec as a distinct society. We are told that society is distinct and shall now have a veto. It is totally contrary to democracy that any one group would have the power of veto when the group cannot constitute a majority. It is wrong in principle.

We are in danger of committing one of the worst possible actions we have seen in a long time. This is where a positive comment can also be made. If the Prime Minister wants to bring about the unification of the country, he would come to the House and withdraw Bill C-110. If the Prime Minister would do that he would recover some of the losses he has experienced in the last little while. We could then respect him as a leader.

Mr. Milliken: He would want that, because then we would win an election with 70 per cent instead of 60 per cent.

Mr. Schmidt: It is possible for the Prime Minister, even though he has a majority, to make a mistake. It is not a sign of weakness to admit an error. It is not a sign of weakness to stop yelling across the floor.

It is important to recognize that we can bring about a positive Canadian unity. We ask the Prime Minister to withdraw the bill. He would re-establish himself as a good thinking, unifying Prime Minister instead of forcing an issue like this one that we cannot even debate as much as we want.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rochelleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to participate as a member of the official opposition in this debate on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, and more specifically implementing what must be referred to as a symbolic veto.

• (1620)

I am very happy to participate in the debate on this bill, because I was immediately struck by both its form and its content. Its form is a beauty.

This bill is being touted as a historic response to the Quebec people's democratic impulse, because, as you know, Quebec is mostly responsible for Canada's constitutional problem.

This bill has six pages, including three blank ones. Including the front page, we end up with the equivalent of about a page and a quarter of text as a response or a semblance of response to the constitutional debate that, as you know, has been hurting Canada for some 30 years.

The content of this bill is also a beauty. As for a symbolic veto, I am reminded of one of our greatest hockey stars, Guy Lafleur, who, when questioned about his reasons for supporting the no side said in 1992—if I remember correctly—that he had interpreted the right of veto as meaning the right to vote. That is about the extent of it. Talking about symbolic, this veto will allow Quebecers to vote, and very soon, in favour of sovereignty.

This bill and this exercise seem totally improvised, like the spontaneous show of love—albeit at bargain prices—made to Quebecers in the last weeks and days of the referendum campaign, and they also lack depth. More importantly, it seems to me that this is a pitiful non-event from an historical perspective.

Let us not forget that this process by the Liberal government is meant to be the answer to the historical claims of the Quebec government and people within the Canadian confederation. As a Quebec voter and citizen who has had an interest in this issue for a number of years, I try to get a better understanding of what is going on by going back to 1954, when premier Duplessis led the fight against the federal government's unconstitutional interference in fields of provincial jurisdiction, eventually winning a hard fought battle to have the province collect a direct personal income tax.

This was truly an historical event, following which Quebecers became more proud, more assertive and more determined to gain full dignity as a sovereign people.

Then came the Tremblay royal inquiry commission on federal-provincial relations in Quebec and Canada. Then, in 1960, just after Duplessis died, we had the advent of a Liberal government, the quiet revolution, with all the good things it brought about, and Quebecers taking their future in their own hands through the government takeover of the hydro sector, the set up of the Caisse de dépôt, the Quebec pension plan, and so on.

In 1964, an eye-opening event took place: the Queen's visit. I was there. The police force deployed was larger than the crowd. That day was later described as the day of the visit of shame, in the city of shame, Quebec City, because the people had remained

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indifferent to this visit, which, unfortunately, led to what came to be known as the samedi de la matraque, or “Billy-club Saturday”, of 1964.

In 1966, still in that historical perspective—and that is what we on this side of the House, let alone the hon. members on the other side, cannot understand—there was this collective surge. As early as 1956, the sovereignist movement, which then became established in 1959, came into play. In 1966, it was represented by Pierre Bourgault in the riding of Duplessis. Few people know that 39 per cent of the voters of this riding voted for Mr. Bourgault, who was the leader of the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale*, the RIN, at the time.

• (1625)

In 1967, a prominent figure dropped by on the occasion of the centennial of Confederation. General de Gaulle sent out the message, for the whole world to hear, that the people of Quebec did exist when he declared: “Vive le Québec libre”.

The next year saw the foundation of the Parti Québécois by René Lévesque. This was a turning point in our modern history. Two years later, with 23 per cent of popular support, the PQ won seven seats in the National Assembly. Three years later, in 1973, it got 30 per cent of the votes and 6 members, because of the well-known incongruities of our British parliamentary system. Three years later, in 1976, a sovereignist party was officially and democratically elected in Quebec for the first time in the history of the province and of the country. The 1980 referendum followed, with, even then, 41 per cent of Quebecers giving a mandate to the Government of Quebec to negotiate. The majority, unfortunately, decided otherwise.

At the same time, on the Canadian side, people were becoming aware that something was wrong. In 1963, the Laurendeau-Dunton commission was talking about two solitudes. We could have taken big chunks of the Laurendeau-Dunton report and read it here. It would have been extraordinarily relevant.

So we had the Laurendeau-Dunton commission, then we had the Macdonald commission at the end of the 1980s and then the Pepin-Robarts commission, an event in constitutional terms, but a dead end, because Mr. Trudeau, the Prime Minister of the time, did not believe in their view of things. Then there was the constitutional bog of the 1990s with the Spicer commission and the Castonguay-Beaudoin-Dobbie-Edwards commission.

As Mr. Castonguay will remember, these people were upset—which should give Quebec federalists food for thought—at the degree of willingness to recognize a Quebec people within Canada that they saw. Mr. Castonguay even withdrew from the commission at that point, and, as you saw in the recent campaign, he remained true to himself and logical, warning everyone that he could not try to convince Quebecers that Quebec should remain in confederation, so shaken was he in his deep convictions.

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Continuing with the major landmarks in the history of Quebec, we arrive at the aftermath to the no vote in the referendum, the great initiatives of Mr. Trudeau, the unilateral initiatives which were condemned by the Supreme Court. Trudeau had to call in the provinces. Quebecers all remember the Night of the long knives, when the Constitution was patriated. One of the instigators of this was the Minister of Justice at the time, then and still the hon. member for Saint-Maurice. He cannot plead ignorance of the harm that has been done historically to the people of Quebec by such actions, yet he does not recognize—it cannot be repeated in this House too many times, a place where the existence of the Quebec people is not recognized—that Quebec as a people and a culture does exist, whether the Prime Minister likes it or not. The Quebecois culture does exist, and this must be said.

All of the efforts now being expended represent one of the three little promises made by the Prime Minister, as he himself qualifies them, to Quebecers and to Canada in the referendum campaign. One of these was recognition of the distinct society, an empty shell; the second was a token right of veto; the third was the Minister of Human Resources Development's nice little present which will make the poor poorer and the rich richer.

A fine country indeed to invite Quebecers to remain part of. Everyone in Quebec is aware, whether our federalist friends like it or not, that they are a people making democratic advances, a people marching toward collective pride, a people prepared to say yes to their very existence.

[English]

The Speaker: I have made a mistake. I should have recognized the hon. member for Vancouver East before the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. I will now recognize the hon. member for Vancouver East.

• (1630)

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments. The bill, which grants a veto to various regions of Canada, has been recently amended to include British Columbia as the fifth region that can exercise a veto to block a constitutional change.

[Translation]

This veto can only apply to a constitutional amendment requiring the support of seven provinces representing 50 per cent of the population.

This amendment to the bill was requested by the people of British Columbia, who exercised a great deal of pressure to obtain this right.

[English]

The amendment is welcome and gives B.C. a well deserved autonomy in the exercise of the veto and the recognition by the government that B.C. is a distinct region in all aspects. B.C., which has a powerful economy and a strong Asia-Pacific connection, sees itself as a region because of its geographical location and a tremendous growth potential both economy and people wise.

Furthermore, British Columbia has been called the Pacific region for many years in many government departments and other agencies. In British Columbia, beyond the Rocky Mountains, we have a vibrant population that is more and more requesting to be recognized for its distinctiveness. Its population of over 3.7 million, almost 13 per cent of the Canadian population, feels more and more a sense of pride in its achievements and successes.

British Columbia has been changing dramatically over the years and has become the home of many immigrants, a large number of them from the Pacific rim, being the closest region to B.C. For a long time B.C. was somewhat isolated, far from Europe and from eastern Canada. It did not seem to attract as many people as Ontario and Quebec. At this point British Columbia is one of the most desirable places in Canada and in the world in which to live.

The growth in population and its variety have made British Columbia a booming place. In 1997 Vancouver will host APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Conference, 10 years after Expo '86, the time when Vancouver and B.C. seemed to be discovered by the world.

Even my family members in Italy often comment on Vancouver. They often see it on television and read about B.C. in the papers. This is quite recent, and we seem to like the attention.

I arrived in B.C. in 1966 and I have seen many changes since then. I saw Vancouver's skyline change dramatically. I saw the composition of the population constantly alter to eventually create a mosaic of cultures and beliefs. I saw these cultures coming together to celebrate a province more and more conscious of its great location and appeal.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice for the change they made in this bill. This amendment gives British Columbia an important place in the history and future of our country.

We know that Canada is a remarkable country where people respect each other and are unique in their understanding of one another.

[*English*]

B.C. remains part of the west. We are in the west but there is a difference between being a prairie province and a province that lies on the Pacific Ocean and which is becoming more and more a part of international trade.

The Prime Minister with his missions to the Orient has strengthened Canada. B.C., being the coastal province, has received many benefits and continues to receive them.

This amendment will help British Columbians feel their rights are being respected and that their voice is being heard because they demanded the veto and they obtained it.

Mr. Cliff Breitreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Okanagan Centre for being happy and sad at once.

• (1635)

I am disgusted with Bill C-110 with its proposed constitutional veto. However, I am pleased as always to honour my commitment to represent the people of the great riding of Yellowhead. They are against this bill. I am against it. I am proud to denounce it here today on their behalf.

The people of Yellowhead are certainly not opposed to national unity. They are not what some prime ministers have foolishly called them, enemies of Canada. A few months ago I commissioned a scientific poll and about 70 per cent of my constituents want Canada to stay together.

What they are opposed to, which came through loud and clear in the poll results, is the strategy of saving Canada by appeasement, appeasing the separatists in Quebec. They overwhelmingly oppose the notion of Quebec as a distinct society and oppose sovereignty association.

As a member of a caucus which listens to the people instead of lecturing them, I do more than take polls. I go on tours in my riding to hear what the constituents are saying and how they are saying it. I just finished doing that again. I want to tell everyone here what they said. That is my job. Some of the members opposite would do well to remember that is their job as well.

My constituents told me overwhelmingly they do not understand, and quite frankly neither do I, why we are even talking about caving in to Quebec, why distinct society and veto powers are even on the table. People in my riding are so sick of this never ending debate. I hear that some are wondering if there is anything they can do to kick Quebec out of Canada. That is how angry they are. That is how frustrated they are.

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It is not ordinary Quebecers they are sick of. It is this constant giving in to the whining and snivelling Quebec politicians, both separatist and federal old style politicians. This weak-kneed policy of giving the spoiled child of Confederation whatever it wants is driving my constituents to despair. I call on my colleagues opposite to listen to the people and stop this policy of appeasement before it is too late.

My constituents want, indeed demand that a line be drawn in the sand. This line should signal a few things: no more favours, no more appeasement, 10 equal provinces, not 9 provinces and Quebec.

I do not think I pay my constituents any great compliment when I say they are smarter than most politicians, especially when I look at the government side across. People are saying that 30 years of appeasement to Quebec has failed miserably. People are saying that 30 years of government by politicians, of politicians and for politicians has left the people of Yellowhead as disgusted as the people of Quebec with the way things are done in this place.

The people are saying to stop already. Enough is enough. Treat everyone as equals. Treat everyone as grown ups, not as some spoiled children. Treat everyone fairly, equally.

The Trudeau Liberals, the Mulroney Tories and now this Liberal administration drifting aimlessly have virtually ruined this once great country. In my riding it is pretty common observation that the three prime ministers responsible for this disaster have all been from Quebec. Yes, it took them only 25 years to virtually bring the country to its knees, to almost wreck it, 25 years of tearing apart our country which took real nation builders centuries of toil and tears and sweat to build; 25 years thrown to the wind.

The common thread here is that people in most parts of the country, the ordinary taxpaying public, the public that pays the bills for big oppressive governments has had it. It will not take it any more. People will no longer sit idly by and watch the concessions, the favours, the appeasements to sell out the country to the separatists in Quebec.

• (1640)

Concessions to Quebec continue to march forward with the government. It is not only with the distinct society motion and the Quebec veto, the matters currently before the House, it is Bill C-89, the act that supposedly privatized Canadian National Railway; major concessions to Quebec by statute. CN's head office must stay in Montreal and by statute the heavy handed provisions of the very undemocratic Official Languages Act must prevail.

I will not go into the litany of favours given to Quebec during the Trudeau-Mulroney years or, more aptly stated, the Trudoney years. One glaring example comes to mind, and it especially sticks in the craw of westerners, the CF-18 contract assigned to

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Winnipeg but which went to Quebec. Air Canada is another example.

Bill C-110 really takes the cake. This will turn out to be the mother of all concessions and appeasements granted since Confederation. The bill enshrines in legislation, not mere discussion or some off the cuff remark, the ultimate in legislative lunacy. It even exceeds the lunacy of Bill C-68, the gun control bill.

Bill C-110 gives the separatist Government of Quebec on a silver platter a veto over all future constitutional change. In effect, there can be no change. With this bill the Constitution would be buttoned up in a straitjacket because it is the intent of the Prime Minister to eventually entrench this loathsome legislation in the constitution.

The Liberal government is so sadly lacking in leadership, as evidenced last night on the Prime Minister's town hall meeting. Even the \$1 billion subsidized federal institution, the CBC, could not make the Prime Minister look good.

The Liberals are stuck with another Chamberlain when what they really need is a Churchill. Look at the ranks of the Liberals. There is obviously no Churchill forthcoming, only little bitty Chamberlains.

With this bill and a dozen or so others the Liberal government, come the next election, will be gone. For a lot of Canadians that cannot be too soon.

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway, Criminal Code; the hon. member for Edmonton East, Medicare; the hon. member for Ottawa West, Pensions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I feel we have been here before as I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments. The purpose is to condemn again the constitutional position taken by the Chrétien government.

I sometimes have the impression I am using that well-known teaching technique which repeats the same message in every possible form, the purpose being, of course, that its content will eventually be understood and retained.

Following the results of the referendum, members of the Bloc Québécois unanimously decided to continue to defend the interests of Quebecers in the Parliament of Canada. Furthermore, since our members decided to continue the dialogue with the elected representatives of English Canada, it is important to repeat the message so that some day it will finally be understood and our Canadian friends will accept our future decision calmly,

with dignity and respect, and be prepared to co-operate with us, albeit within an entirely different framework.

I think it is sad that the present Prime Minister still does not understand his fellow citizens from Quebec and especially what they want.

• (1645)

How can we in fact not get upset at such insipid statements as those made last week to the effect that there was no Quebec culture? How can we expect our Canadian friends to understand our position, if the Prime Minister himself and his Quebec cohort cannot explain the reality of Quebec to their colleagues? On this level, it is really a disaster. So much time and money spent harping on the same ideas.

Unlike the Prime Minister, we in the Bloc Québécois consider good relations with our Canadian friends important. This is why I will try once again to explain Quebec's position in this House. Bill C-110 is unacceptable to Quebec. It is unacceptable for a number of reasons.

First, the veto is not given to the provinces, it is lent to them. Has anyone ever heard of such a thing in constitutional matters? A veto that is not actually granted, but is only on loan. In everyday life, when we lend something, we expect to get it back. Both the lender and the borrower know that there is nothing definitive about the transaction. *Le Petit Larousse* defines the verb "to lend" as to give for a time, upon condition of restitution.

Does the Prime Minister think for one moment that Quebecers will be satisfied with a loan? I think this makes a mockery of Quebecers and resolves nothing at all. Any government can decide to ask for its marbles back, and the provinces have no say, because the marbles do not belong to them. This is totally off the wall.

Is that what the Prime Minister had in mind when he made the people of Quebec the following promise, and I quote: "Any changes in constitutional jurisdiction will only be made with the consent of Quebecers"? As we know all too well, a veto on loan does not give the people of Quebec any guarantee or any security. It is therefore totally unacceptable.

Another problem adds itself to the first, as the federal government could apparently decide that this veto will be exercised either through the National Assembly or by referendum. I say apparently because there seems to be some confusion about this within the government. In fact, Bill C-110 only refers to the provinces. It is not specified whether this means their legislative assemblies or their people.

Also, when he tabled his bill before this House on November 29, the Prime Minister said: "This bill requires that the Government of Canada first obtain the consent of Quebec, Ontario and two provinces from both the western and Atlantic regions representing 50 per cent of the population of each of those

regions before proposing a constitutional amendment to Parliament”.

As we can see, he did not specify either the conditions of approval. We took for granted that he meant the provincial legislatures. Surprise. If you take a look at the documents prepared by the Minister of Justice, in the section dealing with how the bill applies to constitutional amendments, you find out that, after at least six provinces have given their consent (through resolutions, referenda or government approval), the federal government will be released from the obligation to proceed with motions in the Senate and the House of Commons.

There, it is in the bag and the cat is out of the bag. Not only does the federal government only lend its veto, it is set to have absolute control over the process, given that it plans to go directly to the people if it suspects that the provincial government might not take the direction that it, the almighty central government, thinks it should take. That too is taking Quebecers for fools.

I wish to point out to this House that my suspicions were confirmed as recently as this morning, when the Prime Minister was quoted as saying that a referendum is a frustrating process held under provincial legislation and led by provincial politicians. The Prime Minister has no qualms about telling everyone that he fully intends to interfere in provincial matters whenever he feels like it, thus going over the heads of provincial politicians.

• (1650)

This is not a good sign of respect for democracy and the Constitution. It can be said, however, that this undemocratic approach is consistent, in light of the Prime Minister's repeated admissions that he would not abide by the results of the referendum should a majority of Quebecers vote for sovereignty.

I could go on and talk about the other reasons why this veto bill is totally unacceptable to Quebec, but I do not have enough time.

Although, as he himself admits, he had made only three small promises to Quebecers, we and all Quebecers now realize that it is nothing but a sham, nothing but false representations. Rhetoric and crocodile tears will not change anything.

The Chrétien government still does not understand anything and I fear that it has no intention of changing the federal system in line with Quebecers' aspirations. Everyone knows that. The time for deception is over. I therefore urge our Canadian friends to discuss a new partnership that would finally accommodate the aspirations of Quebecers.

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The Speaker: Dear colleague, I did not want to interrupt, but in the future, we ought to have “the Liberal government”, or something similar, instead of “the Chrétien government”.

[*English*]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-110 today. I was next in line when the time allocation ran out at second reading. It is nice to see that the time closure is not going to affect me today.

Since that time the government saw fit to make an amendment to the bill to include British Columbia as a region and give it a veto. It is interesting how the Liberal government seems to be surprised at the reaction it has received from people in British Columbia. This bill and the amendment have united the people in British Columbia as it would appear that they are all against it.

What the Liberal government does not seem to understand is that the people of British Columbia do not want any one province to have a veto. They do not want the veto themselves and they do not want any other province to have the veto either. They understand very clearly that the veto will entrench the status quo.

What the people in British Columbia are looking for and fighting against is the establishment of the status quo and entrenching it. What they want is a Constitution that will evolve, change and recognize the changes that have taken place in this country since 1867. What they do not want is for British Columbia to be left in the position that it is in right now.

British Columbians are not happy that almost 13 per cent of Canada's population lives in British Columbia but it has less than 11 per cent representation in this House and less than 6 per cent of the seats in the other place. Those are the things British Columbians want changed. They want a Constitution that will allow those changes. That is why they see the amendment to include British Columbia as a distinct region as not mattering at all because they do not want a veto. They do not want anybody to have a veto.

What B.C. wants is to gain its rightful place in Confederation. In order to do that, one of the players in Confederation is going to have to give up something. If Bill C-110 passes and we have a veto, it will mean that the provinces which are required to make concessions by giving up something in order to give British Columbia its rightful place will have a veto and will prevent that from happening.

This bill will deny British Columbia its rightful place in Canada. However, Bill C-110 has united British Columbia. The provincial Liberals are against it, the provincial Reformers are against it and the provincial NDP is against it. It is dangerous for

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this Liberal government to create that kind of unanimity among otherwise diverse political parties.

● (1655)

I remind the House that in the late 1870s the British Columbia legislature actually voted to secede from Canada twice. I am afraid that this Liberal government in instituting Bill C-110 has wakened a sleeping giant and it does not have any idea what the results will be from the feelings of deep resentment that are surfacing in the people of British Columbia.

By originally grouping B.C. with other western provinces, the government ignored our people, our history and our geography. I wonder why government members did not read the items in the book they released this past week on the symbols of Canada. I want to share with the Liberal government what the book that it published has to say:

British Columbia was inhabited by the greatest number of distinct Indian tribes of any province or territory in Canada. They were not only different from each other, but also from the rest of the Indian tribes in Canada.

Unlike eastern Canada where the French and English disputed control of the land, the first two countries to contest areas of British Columbia were Spain and Russia.

In 1778 Captain James Cook of Great Britain became the first person to actually chart the land. Having firmly established her right to the area, Britain proceeded to settle disputes with both Spain and Russia.

When gold was discovered in the lower Fraser Valley in 1857, thousands of people came in search of instant wealth. To maintain law and order, the next year the British government established the separate colony of British Columbia. The colony was cut off from the rest of British North America by thousands of kilometres and a ridge of mountains.

I would suggest it is very clear in the Liberals' own publication that B.C. is a distinct region. It was a travesty for the government to completely ignore that distinctiveness and to lump us in with all western provinces.

Then the Minister of Human Resources Development cut \$47 million in federal transfer payments to the province of British Columbia. The government seems to think it is okay to fund only 33 per cent of British Columbia's welfare bills when every other province gets funded up to 50 per cent. That is just one example of how the province of British Columbia is getting shafted.

Last month Business and Industry Development B.C. released the results of a Peat Marwick study which was done on its behalf. The study showed that not only has B.C. not received its share of federal spending, but its proportion of federal spending is continually declining. The province of B.C. receives only two-thirds of federal spending when compared to a composite indicator of its population, GDP and amount of federal income tax paid. While the federal government puts in less than two-thirds of the money it should, it takes out over 10 per cent more in income tax.

This is the status quo the federal government wants British Columbia to maintain. The message I am getting from my constituents and from the people in British Columbia is that they are mad as all get out and they are not going to take it any more. They are going to start to fight back.

When Bill C-110 passes, the Liberal government will be sending British Columbians a message. The message is that they had better get used to this because with all the vetoes that have been spread out all over the country, especially the veto given to the separatist government in the province of Quebec, the constitutional changes, changes in Parliament and changes in the way that government does business will never happen.

The people in British Columbia are being told to sit down, shut up and be grateful for whatever small crumbs are being thrown their way. Members opposite may be surprised to find out that this approach will no longer wash with British Columbians. We will not be denied our rightful place in Canada any longer.

I join with other British Columbians who will fight to see that the government does not accomplish what other governments have tried to do. That is when the people of British Columbia will see no other option than to follow in the footsteps of the province of Quebec.

● (1700)

The Speaker: It does not happen too often in Parliament that we get a new table officer, as they usually stay with us for decades. However, at this time I would like to take a moment on behalf of the House to welcome him.

I would like our new table officer, Tranquillo Marrocco, to please stand. Welcome to the House of Commons. I wish you well and many years with us.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join you in welcoming the new staff member to the House.

I am pleased to participate in the debate, at second reading, on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments.

This bill is meant to embody the commitments made by the Prime Minister during the Quebec referendum campaign, particularly in a speech made in Verdun, on October 27.

The Prime Minister's answer to the results of the referendum is clearly less than what was proposed in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords.

As for the motion tabled by the government to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, it merely provides a symbolic and meaningless recognition, with no real substance. The motion passed yesterday merely describes Quebec's reality: its French-speaking majority, its unique culture and its civil law tradition.

However, a few days after tabling that motion, the Prime Minister refused to acknowledge the existence of a Quebec culture. This is quite the contradiction.

Bill C-110 on a so-called veto for Quebec does not go any farther in terms of meeting Quebecers' expectations. This is a bad piece of legislation, done in a hurry and without any substance. Even some Quebec Liberals are starting to criticize that bill. It is not an acceptable proposal for Quebecers. The referendum results clearly show that people want real change.

It was the government's intention with this bill to put us into an awkward position by forcing us to say no to the veto and to the distinct society. But we have the people of Quebec behind us.

I have met many voters from my riding of Bourassa, in Montreal North, in recent days and I have asked what they think. The vast majority do not approve of the federal government's proposals. They ask: "Why would we accept something that contains less than the Charlottetown accord turned down by 56 per cent of Quebecers in the 1992 referendum?"

As I have said, the concept of a distinct society is even less than what was in Meech.

First of all, neither the concept of a distinct society nor the right of veto will be entrenched in the Constitution. Recognition of the distinct society will be nothing more than a simple statement by the House of Commons.

If Bill C-110 becomes law, it can easily be amended or repealed by the present government or any other in the future. The Reform Party has come out clearly against this bill. If they were to win the elections—not that I would wish it—this law would most definitely disappear.

Certain provinces, such as British Columbia and Alberta, have already expressed their opposition to the concept of Quebec as a distinct society.

As I was saying, this bill on the right to a regional veto was poorly drafted. Initially, the federal government was committed to not proposing any constitutional amendments without setting itself the obligation of obtaining the consent of the four major regions of Canada: Quebec, Ontario, two eastern provinces and two western provinces, provided that in each case those two provinces accounted for more than 50 per cent of the population in their region.

• (1705)

However, 24 hours after excluding such a possibility, the federal government has now included a veto for British Colum-

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bia. Ottawa seems to be improvising its policy as it goes along. Practically speaking, this decision also gives Alberta a veto, since two provinces in the new Prairies region with at least 50 per cent of the population will have to give their approval for an amendment to the Constitution.

According to the 1991 census, Alberta has 54.6 per cent of the population of the Prairies. Because of this double veto, from now on any amendment to the Constitution becomes virtually impossible. Tomorrow the federal government will give a veto to all the provinces including Prince Edward Island. I wonder what the criteria are, demographic or otherwise, for obtaining a veto. Does this bill have any serious purpose?

In the past 35 years, successive governments in Quebec have requested the patriation of legislative powers essential to the economic, social and cultural development of the province. Since I arrived in Montreal in 1974, I have found that all governments, the Parti Québécois as well as the Liberal Party, have demanded a real constitutional veto for Quebec and not a mere legislative measure that can be easily changed or abrogated later on.

We can assume that, in the case of a major conflict between English Canada and Quebec, the federal Parliament will override the veto given to Quebec in this bill. That is why this insignificant veto is even rejected by many people who voted no in the referendum on October 30.

Furthermore, Bill C-110 does not guarantee that the Quebec National Assembly will be the sole possessor of this veto, as demanded by all Quebec governments. The federal government reserves the right to seek the consent of the provinces by means of a national or regional referendum, as required. It will be able to consult citizens directly, without going through the provinces.

The main weakness in this bill is its failure to recognize the Quebec people and the status and powers that would accompany this recognition. The bill refuses to recognize one of the founding peoples of Confederation.

This bill has raised a ground swell of opposition from almost all parties, the Bloc Québécois, of course, the Reform Party and even the Conservative Party, which was a meek ally of the federal government during the referendum campaign.

The government hurriedly changed its mind to give a veto to British Columbia and, indirectly, to Alberta. By doing so, it is trying to please everybody, but the effect is exactly the opposite.

A recent poll shows that a majority of Quebecers consider Ottawa's proposals inadequate. The constitutional amending formula providing for the agreement of seven provinces with 50 per cent of the population was already considered particularly restrictive. With this bill, we will need the initial consent of seven provinces with 92 per cent of the population.

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For all these reasons, all the members of the Bloc Québécois and I will vote against Bill C-110.

Mr. Milliken: Oh, what a disappointment.

Mr. Nunez: I hope this is what the hon. member was expecting.

An hon. member: It is an empty shell.

Mr. Nunez: It is an empty shell, and I will be happy to vote against this bill along with all my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak against Bill C-110.

Mr. Milliken: Not another one.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Yes indeed.

Ontario feels very strongly about what is happening here and I am pleased to be able to stand up and represent that voice. We are here because of a promise that was made in panic, a knee jerk reaction. It was a reaction to what was a dishonest question. It was a dishonest question that never at any time had the Canada response. What was Canada's response to the dishonest question that was being posed by the separatists?

To indicate how much of a panic the government is operating in, the fact that British Columbia was originally excluded from this bill is unbelievable. However, it is testimony to the complete lack of thought and planning that went into this and attests to the fact that all of this has been nothing but a knee jerk reaction to the separatist agenda, rather than standing up to them.

I would like to go back and cover a little of the history that has brought us to this point. In June 1994 Reformers wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking 20 questions that needed to be answered in advance of a separatist referendum. The Prime Minister never answered those 20 questions and when we raised them in the House they were dismissed as hypothetical, "it isn't going to happen, don't worry, be happy".

Mr. Milliken: And it didn't.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): No thanks to this government it did not. It was thanks to the Canadian people that it did not. Had those 20 questions been responded to the people in the province of Quebec that voted no thinking they were going to have it all ways would have known better.

It was interesting that the don't worry, be happy response is still being used by the Prime Minister. It was used in response to my leader's question today about how the government is going to ensure that the question will be fair in the next referendum, about what powers the government is going to use. That question

must have been asked three times today with the standard response of don't worry, be happy. Don't worry about it.

Canadians have had that don't worry to the point that the country was almost lost. I do not know when the time is to start worrying but I suggest that it is long overdue.

Not only did the government not respond to the what ifs, the share of the debt, boundaries, dual citizenship, passports, but at no time did it accept Reform's challenge to put forward a positive agenda, to give the people in Quebec who wanted to reject the separatists a reason to do so and not try to fight the leader of the Bloc Québécois' dream with a bunch of negatives.

I am proud to say that we put forward 20 proposals for positive change that would have gone a long way to addressing the concerns of Canadians inside and outside of Quebec.

The other tragedy in the referendum was the failure of the government to respond to the 50 per cent plus one which was first introduced by Mr. Johnson in Quebec. He was prepared to accept the democratic will of the people of Quebec and was going to accept 50 per cent plus one, as was the Minister of Labour, the government's point person in the referendum. They were both prepared to accept 50 per cent plus one as the democratic will of the voters of Quebec.

The Prime Minister was not prepared to accept that and without indicating what he was prepared to accept, he made it easy for those people to vote no on the basis that there probably was a better deal coming. That was one of the tragedies of the referendum which the government did not address. The Prime Minister played right into the hands of the separatists in not drawing a line in the sand, in making it clear to them what the consequences of separation were. As a result of that failed tactic, 30 per cent or one-third of the people in Quebec voted thinking that they were going to have it all ways.

Canada is a blessed country. That was indicated in an article in the *Globe and Mail* just a couple of weeks ago. The headline was that Canada is blessed but stressed. All Canadians are stressed both inside and outside of Quebec. This bill just adds to that stress. It does nothing to address it. It is a disunity bill and not a unity bill. Make no mistake about it, we must change because Canadians are demanding change. The 1993 election, when 205 new members were elected into the House, and the referendum on October 30 were strong messages that Canadians want change. More than that, Canadians want a voice in what that change will be. However, this bill denies that Canadian voice.

The separatists were given 30 days to spread their break-up Canada message. In the House because of closure the Canadian voice has been given three days. The separatists had 30 days. Because of closure, after only three days of debate the government is cutting off debate and ramming it through in spite of the Canadian people, who have already rejected it. The Liberals tried this at the front door and Canadians said they do not want it. Now they will bring it in through the back door. So much for open government, listening to the people, freer votes in the

House of Commons and members of Parliament who represent the people in their ridings.

The majority of Canadians do not want this bill. Quebec does not want this bill. Who are we doing it for? The bill will not unite us. The bill gives a veto to a separatist government. It is unbelievable that the government would do this. If it is to give a veto, give it to the people of that province. Trust the voters. That is what has been missing in this place. We need to restore the level of trust that has been lost. This bill does nothing to restore that trust. It alienates the voters.

The Deputy Speaker: I regret the time has expired.

[Translation]

It being 5.15 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to the order adopted earlier today, to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of report stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The first question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion 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: Pursuant to Standing Order 76, the recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

Government Orders

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 76, the recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions on Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments. The first vote is on Motion No. 1.

Call in the members.

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 397)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Benoit	Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Bridgman
Chatters	Cummins
Duncan	Epp
Forseth	Gilmour
Gouk	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Hanger
Hanrahan	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Hart
Hayes	Hermanson
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hoepfner	Jennings
Johnston	Kerpan
Manning	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)	Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)	Morrison
Penson	Ramsay
Ringma	Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)	Silye
Solberg	Speaker
Stinson	White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)
Williams —45	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Althouse	Anderson
Assad	Assadourian
Asselin	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bachand
Bakopanos	Barnes
Bélair	Bélangier
Bélisle	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Bernier (Beauce)
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bertrand	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Blaikie
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brien
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Brushett
Bryden	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Caron	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Chan	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clancy
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Copps
Cowling	Crête
Dalphond—Guiral	Daviault
de Savoye	Debien
Deshaies	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dingwall
Discepola	Dromisky

Government Orders

Dubé	Duceppe
Duhamel	Dumas
Dupuy	Easter
Eggleton	English
Fewchuk	Fillion
Finestone	Finlay
Flis	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Gagnon (Québec)
Galloway	Gauthier
Gerrard	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)
Grose	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Harb	Harper (Churchill)
Harvard	Hickey
Hopkins	Hubbard
Ianno	Iftody
Irwin	Jackson
Jacob	Jordan
Keyes	Kirkby
Knutson	Lalonde
Landry	Langlois
Lastewka	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Lebel	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lee	Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)	Lincoln
Loney	Loubier
MacDonald	Maclaren
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marleau	Massé
McCormick	McKinnon
McLaughlin	McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)
McTeague	McWhinney
Ménard	Mifflin
Milliken	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	Nunez
Nunziata	O'Brien
O'Reilly	Ouellet
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Payne	Peric
Peters	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Rideout	Riis
Ringuette—Maltais	Robichaud
Robinson	Rocheleau
Rock	Sauvageau
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Serré
Shepherd	Sheridan
Simmons	Speller
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Taylor	Telegdi
Terrana	Thalheimer
Torsney	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Venne
Volpe	Walker
Wappel	Wells
Whelan	Wood
Young	Zed—196

PAIRED MEMBERS

Blondin—Andrew	Bouchard
Canuel	Copps
Culbert	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	MacAulay
Marchand	Mercier
Paré	Pomerleau
Skoke	St-Laurent
St. Denis	Szabo

● (1745)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it perhaps you would find unanimous consent that members—**Some hon. members:** No.**The Deputy Speaker:** There does not appear to be unanimous consent.

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

(Division No. 398)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Adams
Alcock	Althouse
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélair
Bélangier	Bernier (Beauce)
Bertrand	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Blaikie
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Calder	Campbell
Cannis	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Chan	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clancy	Collenette
Collins	Comuzzi
Copps	Cowling
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dingwall	Discepola
Dromisky	Duhamel
Dupuy	Easter
Eggleton	English
Fewchuk	Finestone
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Forseth
Fry	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Grubel	Guarnieri
Harb	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Churchill)	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Harvard	Hickey
Hill (Macleod)	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Iftody	Irwin
Jackson	Jordan
Kerpan	Keyes
Kirkby	Knutson
Lastewka	Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)

Lee	Lincoln
Loney	MacDonald
Maclaren	MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Massé	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)	McCormick
McKinnon	McLaughlin
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Milliken	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	Nunziata
O'Brien	O'Reilly
Ouellet	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Payne
Peric	Peters
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Rideout	Riis
Ringuelet—Maltais	Robichaud
Robinson	Rock
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Serré
Shepherd	Sheridan
Simmons	Speaker
Speller	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Taylor
Telegdi	Terrana
Thalheimer	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Walker	Wappel
Wells	Whelan
White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)	Wood
Young	Zed—164

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Asselin
Bachand	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Benoit
Bergeron	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Bridgman
Brien	Caron
Chatters	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Crête	Cummins
Dalphond—Guiral	Daviault
de Savoye	Debien
Deshaies	Dubé
Duceppe	Dumas
Duncan	Epp
Fillion	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier	Gilmour
Godin	Gouk
Grey (Beaver River)	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Hanrahan	Hart
Hayes	Hermanson
Hoepfner	Jacob
Jennings	Johnston
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Manning	Ménard
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Nunez
Penson	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Ramsay
Ringma	Rocheleau
Sauvageau	Schmidt

Government Orders

Scott (Skeena)	Silye
Solberg	Stinson
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	Venne
Williams—77	

PAIRED MEMBERS

Blondin—Andrew	Bouchard
Canuel	Copps
Culbert	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	MacAulay
Marchand	Mercier
Paré	Pomerleau
Skoke	St-Laurent
St. Denis	Szabo

• (1755)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 carried.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-110, an act respecting constitutional amendments, as amended, be concurred in at the report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

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

(Division No. 399)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélar
Bélangier	Bernier (Beauce)
Bertrand	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Bodnar
Bonin	Boudria
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Brushett
Bryden	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clancy
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Copps
Cowling	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dingwall
Discepola	Dromisky
Duhamel	Dupuy

Government Orders

Easter	Eggleton
English	Fewchuk
Finestone	Finlay
Flis	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harper (Churchill)	Harvard
Hickey	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Iftody	Irwin
Jackson	Jordan
Keys	Kirkby
Knutson	Lastewka
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)	Lee
Lincoln	Loney
MacDonald	Maclaren
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marleau	Massé
McCormick	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Milliken	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	Nunziata
O'Brien	O'Reilly
Ouellet	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Payne
Peric	Peters
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Rideout	Ringuette—Maltais
Robichaud	Rock
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Serré
Shepherd	Sheridan
Simmons	Speller
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi	Terrana
Thalheimer	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Walker	Wappel
Wells	Whelan
Wood	Young
Zed—147	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Althouse	Asselin
Bachand	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Benoit
Bergeron	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Bridgman	Brien
Caron	Chatters
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond—Guiral
Daviault	de Savoye
Debien	Deshaies
Dubé	Duceppe
Dumas	Duncan
Epp	Fillion
Forseth	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier	Gilmour
Godin	Gouk

Grey (Beaver River)	Grubel
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Hanrahan
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hart	Hayes
Hermanson	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hoepfner
Jacob	Jennings
Johnston	Kerpan
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Manning	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)	McLaughlin
Ménard	Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)	Morrison
Nunez	Penson
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Ramsay	Riis
Ringma	Robinson
Rocheleau	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
Silye	Solberg
Speaker	Stinson
Taylor	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Venne	White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)
Williams —95	

PAIRED MEMBERS

Blondin—Andrew	Bouchard
Canuel	Copp
Culbert	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	MacAulay
Marchand	Mercier
Paré	Pomerleau
Skoke	St-Laurent
St. Denis	Szabo

• (1800)

The Deputy Speaker: I declared the motion carried.

[*English*]

Mr. Williams: A point of order. While I understand that the current motion has been carried, I was wondering if it is the intention of the House to keep the final tally open for another day until we hear from the leader of the Tory Party—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

* * *

NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.) moved that Bill C-108, an act to amend the National Housing Act, be read the third time and passed.

• (1805)

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-108, an act to amend the National Housing Act.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

I would like to point out at the outset that Bill C-108 deals with a purely administrative matter. It is essentially aimed at setting the maximum amount of all outstanding loans insured by the mortgage insurance fund.

This bill will amend the National Housing Act by increasing the authorized ceiling of outstanding loans from \$100 billion to \$150 billion, thus allowing the CHMC to continue offering mortgage insurance services throughout Canada.

I want to stress that this \$50 billion increase is not an expenditure and is not costing the government anything. The bill also stipulates that any future increase in the aggregate amount of outstanding loans is subject to parliamentary approval.

[English]

While the amendments contained in the bill represent administrative matters, passage of the bill is essential to the continued operation of CMHC's mortgage loan insurance.

The federal government provides mortgage loan insurance to all Canadians regardless of where they live in Canada, at the smallest feasible down payment and the lowest possible cost. Due to the success of mortgage loan insurance, the current ceiling needs to be increased to allow CMHC to continue to insure new mortgages.

In 1994 CMHC's total mortgage insurance activity was over \$24.7 billion, representing over 300,000 units. Approximately 40 per cent of the mortgage stock in Canada has involved financing with CMHC mortgage insurance. As well, approximately one-third of the housing stock in Canada was built with the help of National Housing Act insured financing.

Allow me to take a minute to explain why this bill is so important to Canadians.

[Translation]

Housing is a basic need. It is generally recognized that access to affordable and adequate housing is essential to individual well-being and therefore to a healthy, productive society. It goes without saying that a well-housed person is more inclined to contribute to the community.

For these reasons, the desire to own a home remains strong among Canadian people.

[English]

CMHC mortgage loan insurance allows Canadians to access affordable housing. Homebuyers can secure up to 95 per cent financing from an approved lender because CMHC insures the

loans that are made by the approved lender. Because CMHC will assume the risk should a borrower default, mortgage lenders are able to make available more money to finance mortgages for Canadians and at a lower cost than would otherwise be possible, thereby making home ownership more affordable.

With CMHC assuming the risk of borrower default, lenders are able to reduce the mortgage financing rates. Lower mortgage financing rates mean more affordable homes for Canadians.

One of the most important aspects of CMHC's mortgage loan insurance is its public policy mandate to provide equal access to mortgage financing at the lowest possible cost for all Canadians regardless of where they live in Canada. This equal access is made possible through the pooling of higher risk business with lower risk business.

Without access to CMHC's mortgage loan insurance, Canadians in some parts of the country would have to come up with the conventional 25 per cent of the value of the house as a down payment.

Needless to say, many Canadians would hardly ever be able to purchase a home if this were the case. CMHC's mortgage insurance is therefore critical to helping Canadians access home ownership.

[Translation]

The CMHC's mortgage insurance fund is self-financing and therefore is not costing the government anything. Under CMHC policy, the fund must become self-financing in the long term but only through the premiums and fees paid by borrowers.

Premiums are equal to a percentage of the loan, which varies according to the amount borrowed and the ratio between this amount and the value of the property. Premiums are set so that there is always enough money in the fund to cover any claims.

• (1810)

[English]

The government introduced the first home loan insurance initiative in 1992 and reduced the minimum required down payment to 5 per cent for first time homebuyers. This 5 per cent initiative has been a tremendous success in helping to increase home ownership in Canada.

Since November 1993 over 235,000 Canadian households have taken advantage of the lower down payment to become the proud owners of either a new or existing home. First home loan insurance is an excellent example of CMHC's ability to adapt its mortgage loan insurance activity to ensure that Canadians can enjoy the benefits of home ownership.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Some have suggested that the government should get out of the business of mortgage loan insurance and leave it to private industry. But it is important to know that, without CMHC providing mortgage insurance, Canadians would be forced to deal with a private sector monopoly, which would result in higher prices and fewer choices.

We must also bear in mind that the NHA mortgage loan insurance provides Canadians with equal access to mortgage insurance in whatever part of the country they live in.

GE Capital Mortgage Co, our competitor, does not provide similar services in 18 areas in the country. Competition is the best way to keep prices at the lowest possible level to encourage innovation in the mortgage industry to meet the changing needs of Canadian consumers.

[English]

It has been suggested that CMHC should get out of the mortgage loan insurance business and leave it to the provinces. I would like to point out that the federal government has a constitutional responsibility for banking and finance. CMHC mortgage insurance and guarantee are a demonstration that the federal government is fulfilling this responsibility.

Without CMHC, there would be a federal policy vacuum in the system of housing finance. The result would be unequal access to home loans across the country. Furthermore, borrowers of modest means could pay more for low down payment mortgages or have no access to financing altogether. Housing constitutes an engine of economic growth responsible for creating many thousands of jobs and business opportunities in communities across the country.

Housing accounts for about 7 per cent of the world's domestic product, over half of all construction and one out of every 12 jobs in Canada. House construction and renovations create jobs and business opportunities. For every \$100 million of construction spending, 2,310 person years of employment are created on site and in directly related supply and service industries.

The federal government through CMHC has been providing national mortgage insurance for four decades in Canada. CMHC has remained a significant player throughout this time with a mandate from the federal government to provide mortgage insurance to support loans to all Canadian homebuyers regardless of where they live in Canada at the smallest feasible down payment and the lowest feasible cost.

In conclusion, today the private housing market is able to meet the housing needs of the vast majority of Canadian households. There is no doubt that CMHC's mortgage loan insurance has played a critical role in that achievement.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to participate in this debate on Bill C-108 to remind the hon. members how important social housing is.

Social housing is an issue of great concern to me because I know how much some of the people in my riding who are living under the poverty line—50 per cent of the people in my riding are living under the poverty line and 28 per cent are on welfare—rely on social housing.

That is why, in April 1994, I presented in this House a motion requesting that several major measures be initiated, such as entering into agreements with the Government of Quebec to reactivate the co-operative housing program, putting in place a rental housing renovation assistance program and restoring the public housing program, and that Quebec oversee, of course, every aspect of these programs.

• (1815)

In response to that motion, government members assured me that social housing was a laudable and important principle. In particular, the parliamentary secretary to the solicitor general told me, with a hand on his heart, about the great co-operation between Quebec and its big brother, the federal government. He even criticized me, sardonically, for asking that the province be given back the moneys allocated to social housing, given the harmony that prevailed.

Nothing is settled yet. Worse still, particularly for a government elected on the basis of its commitments to social justice and dignity, nothing was even done. Nothing at all. As we say, nothing not. Sure, the nice principles remain nice. They are still used occasionally to illustrate the virtues of certain policies, particularly federal ones. We no longer believe them. But, for my constituents, for other Quebecers, and even for Canadians, nothing has changed.

Figures do not lie. They do not indulge in nice rhetoric. They do not wax eloquently on noble feelings. Figures are there and they tell the story. What do they tell us or, rather, what do they keep telling us? They tell us that nothing has changed. Last year, the federal government did not build a single social housing unit. This year, it is a repeat performance, zero. You heard me right, zero. The federal government is no longer involved in building social housing units. It is content to express noble feelings.

Figures also tell us that, from 1989-90 to 1993-94, Quebec received barely 19 per cent of the total money spent by the CMHC. Yet, 25 per cent of the country's population live in Quebec. Moreover, during that same period, Quebec accounted for close to 30 per cent of Canadians living in inadequate dwellings.

Government Orders

Then they tell us that the federation is good for Quebecers. They try to make us feel guilty for wanting to leave such a nice family, a family that is so fair to one of its children. The facts speak for themselves, and eloquently so. For five years, the federal government acted in an absolutely unfair manner towards Quebecers living in inadequate dwellings. Then, it totally withdrew its support to social housing. It did not care at all. The results are tragic for Quebec: an estimated \$1.3 billion shortfall, taking into account existing needs.

In the meantime, our Ontario neighbours, who were so fond of us just before the referendum, took considerable advantage of the federal manna. Now, let us look at figures. In 1991-92, Quebec received 19.3 per cent of the expenditures of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Ontario got 34 per cent. This is a difference of 14.7 per cent. I am not making it up, these are the figures.

In 1992-93, the difference between Quebec and Ontario was 16.8 per cent and, in 1993-94, it was 14.1 per cent. As I said a few moments ago, the figures speak very clearly. For those in my riding with housing problems, the figures do not count for much. What counts is results. In their experience, public housing is becoming a very rare commodity, especially in Quebec.

My constituents know that, for many of them, public housing is often their only means of getting decent and affordable housing. The 4,300 single mothers waiting for public housing in my riding know this to be so and do not find the situation amusing. The federal government got out of public housing without transferring tax points in exchange. Quebec is now stuck, as is happening in more and more instances, with needs to fill and no money to do it. So much for their great federalism, we have no use for it.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-108, an act to amend the National Housing Act.

Bill C-108 proposes to increase the aggregate amount of outstanding Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, loan insurance from \$100 billion to \$150 billion, plus any additional amounts that may be authorized by Parliament. Put simply, Bill C-108 increases CMHC's liability limit by \$50 billion.

Many members on the government side seem to think that \$50 billion in liability is not a big deal and they are affronted that Reform is questioning the bill. They are in such a hurry that they pushed clause by clause consideration of Bill C-108 through standing committee in a record 30 seconds, a record 30 seconds for \$50 billion. This is hardly the fiscally responsible approach that Canadians expect from their government.

Our deficit continues to be a reality that will not go away until something constructive is done. The debt load that each taxpayer has to carry is immobilizing the nation. Yet the Liberals continue to overspend. The Liberals are not cutting back; they are spending more. For example, last year alone their spending increased by \$2.8 billion.

The national debt is presently at \$566 billion and is increasing every second. Canadians are so strapped with debt that they cannot move forward. It is little wonder, given this situation, that the housing market has slowed to a crawl in Canada. The average person simply does not have the money or financial security required to invest in a long term mortgage. Increasing the loan liabilities for CMHC will not change the hard financial reality that many Canadians are facing today.

The government promised jobs and it promised deficit reduction. Yet Canadians are facing higher unemployment and more taxes. Things are not getting better, and the government refuses to make the changes necessary to turn things around.

The Liberals are still practising the same old politics that got Canada into this deficit in the first place. Liberals are spending, buying jobs, artificially propping up private industry and messing up private markets. All this does is drive us deeper into debt.

Increasing the CMHC liability limit for insuring mortgages is nothing more than government speculation without money. The government has done this on several occasions. For example, Bill C-91 expanded the loan liability of the Federal Business Development Bank from approximately \$4 billion to \$22 billion. Bill C-75 increased government loan liability for farm improvement and marketing co-operative loans from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion. Outstanding loans under the Small Business Loans Act rose from \$3 billion to \$6 billion in 1995 and is now up to \$12 billion. This is only a small segment of Liberal initiatives to increase federal loan liability.

Although liabilities may not involve borrowing money, they are a risk that if defaulted will cost taxpayers money. The government has grown accustomed to handing out grants left, right and centre. Accordingly government liability simply increases our chances of going deeper into debt.

In addition, Canadians should be particularly concerned that the government does not know what its outstanding liabilities are at this time. CMHC could not tell me its outstanding liability at this time or 10 or 15 years down the road. This is not acceptable.

Liabilities are risks. When mortgages are defaulted these liabilities fall back on the taxpayer. When the bill was in the House for second reading a few weeks ago, Reform members asked the Liberals again and again who pays on defaulted mortgages.

Government Orders

Mr. Forseth: Who pays?

Mr. Gilmour: The taxpayer pays. Let me make that perfectly clear to members on the government side because there was a great deal of confusion with government members on the Reform position on the bill. We are not advocating an end to CMHC mortgage insurance. We are saying that \$100 billion worth of liability is enough. The government does not need to add another \$50 billion in liabilities.

• (1825)

The fact that the government is asking for the additional liability to be retroactive to 1994 indicates that CMHC has already overextended its liability limits. Canadians should be concerned that CMHC needs to increase its liability funds, not only because there is no guarantee outstanding liabilities will not cost taxpayers but because there are obvious problems with government management of CMHC programs and funding.

I mentioned earlier that CMHC does not know what its outstanding liabilities are. This should concern many Canadians because CMHC does not appear to be keeping records of its outstanding liabilities to the expiry of its term 10, 15 or 20 years into the future.

To illustrate, access to information requests reveal, first, that CMHC does not have records of how much money it has forgiven under its residential rehabilitation assistance program. Second, it does not keep records of past contracts, only of current contracts. Third, it has no centralized records of the financial subsidy amounts and operating agreements for many of its programs, including its public housing program. Fourth, no centralized records were kept of moneys going into its aboriginal programs, which is a major component of CMHC. This is only the tip of the iceberg.

If the government through CMHC is to be doling out money and insuring loans, surely it should keep track of what it is spending, how much it owes and how much it is liable for. If the corporation cannot keep track of its fiscal activities, we should not be increasing its liabilities, especially by another \$50 billion. This is not only irresponsible, it is absolutely ridiculous, particularly when we consider our debt situation.

The bill is not only a step toward deeper fiscal uncertainty. It is clearly a move in the wrong direction. The government should not be leaning toward a greater federal role in housing but rather toward a more decentralized government role.

Whatever happened to the Prime Minister's promise to decentralize federal powers? It has obviously gone out the window with many other Liberal promises.

Canadians do not want a bloated federal government. They do not want the federal government meddling in every level of provincial, municipal and private enterprise affairs. Canadians want a leaner, more efficient federal government.

The minister responsible for CMHC claims that his department is moving toward a smaller organization. Yet if the federal government is downsizing and moving away from the housing market, why is it asking for another \$50 billion in mortgage money? It does not fit.

This will not downsize federal responsibilities. On the contrary, it will strengthen and increase the federal role. It is time for the federal government to realign its responsibilities with other governments. Canadians are taxed beyond belief from all levels of government. They have simply had enough.

The federal government is long overdue in easing out of a number of responsibilities duplicated at the provincial level. Canadians want a clear separation of responsibility between levels of government. They want a shift of power away from bureaucrats toward the people who pay for the programs in the first place. Canadians want an end to federal interference in the private sector. They do not want or need big brother meddling in their affairs, and Bill C-108 allows CMHC to significantly increase its presence in the mortgage market.

It is time for the government to allow private industry to do what it does best: offer consumers competitive mortgage rates. It is time for the government to stop interfering in the housing industry. Canadians want a clear separation of responsibility between levels of government and they want responsibility toward the people.

• (1830)

It is time for the government to get out of the face of private industry. Reformers are saying we do not want an increase of the \$50 billion. We are not saying CMHC should get out of the market, but \$50 billion is too much and because of that we will oppose this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many petitions have been submitted in the House since this government took office, and several of them, from all over the country, concerned social housing.

I personally submitted a number of such petitions. The former Conservative government gradually withdrew from the social housing sector by adopting various measures.

In 1989, it withdrew from the rental housing rehabilitation program. In 1992, it took another devastating measure in that it reduced by 21 per cent the number of new housing units. In 1993, it ended the long term financing of new low-cost housing

units. As well, the RRAP, which provided assistance to repair social housing units, was abolished. Quebec thus sustained a major shortfall.

This Liberal government made promises during the last election campaign. In October 1993, several Liberal candidates, including the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended a meeting with officials from the Confédération des coopératives d'habitation de la grande région de Montréal, and made commitments regarding social housing. Among other measures, they were supposed to unfreeze the CMHC budget, so as to make it possible to build 5,800 new co-op housing units in Canada. They were also supposed to re-examine the percentage of investment required of the municipalities. Hooray for this wonderful platform. But after October 25, 1993, as if by magic, the Liberal government forgot its commitments.

Let us look at what the Liberals have done since they came to power. They have dashed all hopes of new housing units being built. They have required CMHC to turn back to the government close to \$270 million saved in current operating expenses which could have been ploughed back into the community.

In 1995, this government pressured the provinces to raise rents in social housing. Six provinces gave in, while Quebec made it clear that it would not. The present government is quite simply continuing along the same political path as the Conservatives before it.

Yet, the last time they campaigned, the Liberals condemned the brutal cuts in subsidized housing. Even the Minister of Finance, the same gentleman who predicted that one million jobs would disappear if Quebec voted yes in the referendum, himself pledged to ensure secure, guaranteed funding for social housing. Nothing has come of this. In Quebec, the losses over the past five years are estimated at very close to a billion dollars.

The Bloc Québécois cannot tolerate such a situation. Social housing is more than a roof over people's heads. It is a vital element of economic and social policy. A good housing program must enable people to acquire a feeling of social identity and must provide them with the opportunity to control one of the factors influencing their lives.

For example, a co-operative housing project allows its members to live within a co-operative framework. Often various recreational activities are organized. Furthermore, members have to get involved in running their co-operative. Without their social housing, many of them would live in isolation. By dropping social housing, the government aggravates housing conditions. That, in turn, substantially increases other problems such as poverty and hunger. Indeed, poverty, hunger and housing are closely linked.

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• (1835)

Consider the situation in my riding. In Chicoutimi, more than 9,000 households or 44 per cent are tenants. Of that number, 3,000 have to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. This is unacceptable. This percentage is critical. Thirty-five per cent of tenants face this kind of situation. And more than 16 per cent spend half their income on housing.

This is a situation that has dramatic consequences and must be corrected. To pay the rent, an increasing number of tenants are forced to cut back on essentials like food. In many households, even that is not enough. The statistics of the Régie du logement show that the number of tenants behind in their rent is increasing, not because they are more reluctant to pay but because the proportion of their income they must spend on rent is too high.

In its health and welfare policy, the Quebec government stated in 1992: "The cost of housing is a major item in a family's budget. If the cost of housing constantly causes major cuts in the budget for food, clothing and recreation, the quality of physical and mental health will be affected".

In 1993, the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights published a report on poverty in Canada. The report paints a damning picture of the housing situation. That committee was surprised to learn that social housing expenditures did not exceed 1.3 per cent of public spending.

In this era marked by a lack of permanent jobs and basic social rights, social housing is an important problem and will become increasingly so. The very health of those living in inadequate housing is at stake. We know who these people usually are: women who are the main breadwinners in their families, people who live alone, single parent families.

To tackle the problem, the government must substantially increase investments in housing, which would result in significant savings in health and social services. We must also consider the considerable impact on employment, which would be very beneficial at this time.

The government should develop an ambitious housing policy focused on building new social housing units by the year 2000, with a view to offering quality, environmentally sound housing, with adequate services and facilities for handicapped and mobility impaired people, among others.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made earlier today by unanimous consent, the question is deemed to have been put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until tomorrow at 5.15 p.m.

*Government Orders***SMALL BUSINESS LOANS ACT**

Hon. Sheila Finestone (for the Minister of Industry) moved that Bill C-99, an act to amend the Small Business Loans Act, be read the third time and passed.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Again, under the terms of the agreement, a member from each party will be allowed to speak to this bill for 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on third and final reading of the amendments to the Small Business Loans Act.

I will review some of the initiatives we have accomplished in the industry committee over the last year. It is important to do this because I see in the House tonight the member for Okanagan and the member for Trois-Rivières, the members who led the debate on behalf of their parties.

• (1840)

The industry committee in the last year was one of the most unique committees on Parliament Hill. When the public sees members of Parliament getting together, especially in the Chamber, all it sees is the adversarial debate. It sees by and large the experience of question period, which is such a misleading image of what the Parliament of Canada is all about.

This will be my last speech in the House for this year on matters related to industry and on the whole issue of access to capital. To the members for Trois-Rivières and Okanagan, it was a real pleasure.

When I leave the House to go back to whatever I will do when it is all over and reflect on my experience in Ottawa, I will say one of the most productive years in Ottawa was working on this committee when our focus was so united on the whole issue of access to capital for small and medium size business men and women.

I believe with all of our differences on distinct society and veto and so on, and goodness knows there are a lot of other issues we differ on, there is one common cause shared by every member of the House: the small business community represents the greatest hope for putting Canadians back to work.

The number one issue or the number one difficulty that community faces is the issue of access to sufficient capital to support its risks, to support its basic business activity. If we move the banks an inch, and I think we have moved them only an inch, it is because banking institutions have not been able to break up or divide the industry committee. We have worked as a team.

I have to confess to Canadians that the best lobby system on Parliament Hill is the financial institutions. They have a way of lobbying and intimidating, but we held firm in our convictions, in our cause in the last year. I hope that over the next year we can keep that type of commitment. Whoever else is on the industry committee, I hope they carry on with the torch and keep that cause moving forward.

I am optimistic about this. Last night I watched the Prime Minister in the second national town hall meeting. Canadians from across the country asked the Prime Minister many questions. I remember vividly the question from a small business entrepreneur who ran a grocery business. He asked the Prime Minister when he was going to get serious about his commitment to take on the banks.

• (1845)

I was pleased that question was put to the Prime Minister and for a split second it caught the Prime Minister off guard. The Prime Minister is well aware that we are working hard on the issue. Because we are working as a team one would think we would be moving the banks forward, but it is such a small movement that it has not really impacted yet. The Prime Minister said that we have been working on that.

The idea was put forward by the member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina. He has been pushing, debating and arguing for the past year and a half that all banks in Canada should have a target of approximately 30 per cent of their total corporate loan portfolio devoted to the small business sector. I was stunned that the Prime Minister mentioned that objective. Many members of the committee thought that the member for Trinity—Spadina was being overly aggressive in directing the banks on to whom they should lend money. I opposed the member's recommendation that these targets be put in writing.

I am beginning to think that maybe the member for Trinity—Spadina was right when he told us a year ago that the banks were not really going to deal with the issue unless we gave them a specific benchmark. The member for Okanagan remembers how we almost ganged up on our fellow member saying that we cannot go quite that far, that we cannot dictate 30 per cent of the total loan portfolio.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. My hon. colleague does not seem to realize that the agreement was said to be a maximum of 10-minute speeches for anybody from the three parties speaking on the bill.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, in summary, the bill before us tonight is a reinforcement of the government's commitment to support small business loan activity. We have accepted amendments to the bill from the Reform Party.

I hope that as we head into the new year which is just around the corner, that the signal all members of the House have sent to all the financial institutions through speedy passage of bills and through the speedy and united recommendations in our "Taking Care of Small Business" report will be recognized.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to participate in the debate at third reading on Bill C-99, an act to amend the Small Business Loans Act.

Before going any further, I would like to make a few comments about what our colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, said. If I understand correctly, our colleague told us that he was leaving at least—unless I misunderstood—the Standing Committee on Industry, if not the House itself.

• (1850)

In any event, if he is indeed planning to leave the industry committee, I would like to tell him again—I say again because I already had the opportunity to tell him through the Speaker—how much I appreciated working with him and what a distinguished parliamentarian the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood is. I was in a position to appreciate his many fine qualities and his great contribution to the work of the committee. As a man, I have always considered the hon. member to be a liberal in the noblest sense of the word and a humanist as well. I hope to have the pleasure of continuing to work with him.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): A true liberal.

Mr. Rocheleau: A true liberal. The personification of distinct society.

I shall now turn to Bill C-99, and try to make the most constructive criticism possible. We must bear in mind that Bill C-99 was introduced as a result of one of the measures announced in the last budget speech, when the finance minister expressed hope that the Small Business Loans Act would become self-financing. As we know, in 1993, the administration of this act is said to have cost the public purse in terms of coverage—let us call it a bad debt for the sake of discussion—nearly \$32 million on a \$4 billion small business envelope.

This \$32 million in lost income for the government is expected to grow to approximately \$100 million this year on an envelope now totalling \$12 billion; that is how much can be loaned to small business through lending institutions.

We agree that this is a burden that must not be overlooked, a burden on the taxpayers. But at the same time, we believe that, before limiting in any way the scope of this bill, which is a good bill, the government should conduct—and this is one of the

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recommendations made by the official opposition that was almost approved by the industry committee—a cost-benefit analysis of administering the act. Because, if the \$32 million or \$100 million in question are considered as money injected by the government in the economy, then we have less trouble talking about this shortfall.

Talking not only of cost, whether it be \$32 million or \$100 million, but also of benefits, would give a better idea of the jobs created, the direct and indirect taxes collected by the government because of such job creation and the survival or expansion of companies as a result of incentives provided by this act.

We know the social and economic importance of jobs—there are consequences, we will never say it enough and this is a particularly good forum to do so—and of lower unemployment; it may be better education for children, less family violence, less violence against women, less violence against children. It may also lead to a lowering in drug consumption; it may be workers more inclined to do their bit to get the economy rolling, that is for sure.

Coming back to this act, before amending it in a significant way, we should bear in mind all the benefits. Unfortunately, the government did not accept the recommendation of the official opposition which had been approved by the industry committee.

Now for the particular provisions of the bill we do not agree with. There are three of them. The first one is the liability, whereby the government guarantees 90 per cent of the loan provided by a lending institution. This liability will be reduced from 90 per cent to 85 per cent. This is our first objection. The second one deals with the fact that personal securities are still required. Thirdly, administration fees will be offloaded onto borrowers through higher interest rates.

• (1855)

As I was saying, our first objection deals with the reduction in liability from 90 per cent to 85 per cent. We argue that it will have particular significance for smaller lending institutions. In Quebec, this means the caisses populaires you find in every village and which make only a few dozen loans per year and which, seeing their protection lowered, will be inclined to lower their risks, and therefore limit their loans to the most secure businesses. Therefore, the effect on smaller lending institutions will probably be felt rather quickly.

Our second objection is even more important, because this bill will have particular impact on high tech businesses, which are the future of our economic development. These businesses are based on the knowledge, the expertise and the skills of the employer, the owner-manager, who cannot offer tangibles guarantees to the credit institution. All he can offer is his skills, which are impalpable, intangible. Therefore, there is a higher risk for the credit institution; the same is true for businesses

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which are starting and have no background, which have nothing to offer.

Since they have no records to show, these businesses cannot reassure the bank. Consequently, the banker's risk being higher, it is expected that it will be the high tech businesses on which we are counting increasingly, as well as the new businesses, that will be most affected by these new provisions.

Particularly if the government sees, in the coming years, that only 85 per cent coverage is still not sufficient, it may further reduce its risk. It will be able to reduce it to 80, 75 or 70 per cent, by way of regulation, without holding a debate in the House, without permitting us to talk about the borrowers' interests, without permitting us to face the executive branch and either applaud or condemn the government's policies. To act by way of regulation in such a matter is not very nice.

The second major objection relates to maintaining the personal guarantee that could be required by the lender. In that regard, a commitment made in the red book of the Liberal Party of Canada was conveniently forgotten. This makes us sad, because we believe that, because of the guarantee that the lender enjoys through the involvement of the federal government in the transaction, personal guarantees could have been applied instead to another transaction between the banker and the borrower, who could have offered his home, his car or part of his personal wealth as a guarantee to develop another type of project that would not be covered by the Small Business Loans Act.

Finally, we are concerned by the establishment of an administration fee the percentage of which could be set through regulation, again without any debate, surreptitiously, arbitrarily by the government, and also by the fact that the fee provided for in the legislation can be passed on to the borrower through interest rates, so that the lender can get even richer.

Therefore, for these three reasons, we will vote against this bill.

[English]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to debate Bill C-99, an act to amend certain parts of the Small Business Loans Act.

I too was rather impressed by the parliamentary secretary's comments as to how the industry committee functions. From his description of that committee I cannot help but say I have to be one of the most fortunate MPs in the federal House of Parliament. My first experience in Ottawa was to be made a member of the best committee on the Hill. That is really something. My hon. colleague has been on other committees and if this is the best committee, that is great. The committee has worked well.

• (1900)

What has happened with Bill C-99 is an example of what can be done and how Parliament should function because all members put aside their partisan differences, their political affiliations and came to an agreement on some very significant matters that are exemplified by the provisions of the bill.

Members of the Reform Party are going to support this bill, despite the fact we have some rather grave reservations about the whole concept of the Small Business Loans Act. The Small Business Loans Act is based on the provision of a form of subsidy of certain kinds of financing to private enterprise. The reason we can support the bill is because the amendments bring about an accountability of that program and it is supposed to have 100 per cent cost recovery. If that in fact happens, then some of our concerns are going to be mitigated to the point where they do not exist.

We also want to support this bill because the Reform Party motions that were presented in committee were accepted by the committee and by the minister. It is necessary to recognize the significant role the Minister of Industry played in this decision. Communications went back and forth about the provisions, especially the one which removed the authority of Parliament and shifted it to the cabinet. This took authority away from the representatives of the people and put it in the Privy Council committee to make decisions behind closed doors.

The committee, as well as the minister, saw that was probably not the most democratic thing to do and went so far as to say that it should be taken out. An amendment to that effect was presented to the committee by the Reform Party and it was accepted.

Members need to recognize that these are the kinds of things that Parliament really should be doing. In certain instances we should put aside political and partisan differences and say that for the good of the people of Canada, for the business development of Canadians, we need to do something that will help all of us. In this instance that was accomplished and it was to the credit of all those who had a part in it.

I want to talk about the concept behind the Small Business Loans Act. Reform Party members do not think that the government should take risks on behalf of the taxpayer. Those risks should be taken by the private sector. That is why we object to the principle behind the Small Business Loans Act. However, that is not our concern at this point. Our concern is to make the act better and the amendments do that. That should demonstrate to all and sundry that the Reform Party is a reasonable party.

We recognize there are certain gaps that need to be filled from time to time and we have done that. In this instance that has happened. I want to credit the committee, the Minister of

Industry and the parliamentary secretary on recognizing that and getting to work and doing it.

The House needs to recognize that the financial industry in particular is one of the most difficult industries or institutions to move. The parliamentary secretary suggested that maybe we have moved the banks an inch. I am not so sure. Almost I think that is optimistic.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): I was exaggerating.

Mr. Schmidt: Maybe we only moved them a quarter of an inch. The important thing is we moved them and that is significant.

I recall the first day I met the hon. member at the committee meeting. Members of the committee were deciding what to make our focus. I remember so clearly the absolute commitment that this member of Parliament had when he said: "Mr. Chairman, there is only one thing that this committee should deal with and that is the access to capital by small business. That has to change and that has to be improved. If we achieve nothing else in this 35th Parliament, that is what we have to achieve". He turned to the chairman and said: "Mr. Chairman, that is your job as chairman, to make sure that this committee gets that job done". He did not ever deviate from that focus. His enthusiasm infused other members of the committee. They too said: "Yes, that is what we want to do".

• (1905)

It has been successful. We have moved the banks maybe a quarter of an inch. I hope that a year from now we can say that we have moved them a half inch or three-quarters of an inch. I would like to move them a mile. If a good idea, an innovation of an entrepreneur wishing to establish himself is supported by the financial institutions, that would be a great step forward.

I know there are all kinds of words being used. One of the banks recently announced a \$300 million venture fund which it was going to establish so that innovative ideas could take root and businesses could develop. Three hundred million dollars. That bank made almost \$1 billion in profit last year. That is not even one-third of its profit. That is not a very great concession on the part of one institution.

We have to go much further than that and I believe we can. If the financial institutions were as concerned about building small business and about supporting the high tech industries as they are about lobbying MPs, Canada would grow. Canadians would begin to do the kinds of things that we imagined, which the banks often stopped.

When will we see the kind of co-operation from the financial institutions which was evident from the various parties that were represented in committee? Surely the imagination of the members of the committee is not restricted to them. Surely the financial institutions can also use some imagination and say: "If 85 per cent of new jobs are created by the small business sector, then we had better get on the ball. Then we will make even more

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of a profit than we are making now". Sometimes the financial institutions think as far as the end of their noses and no farther. It leaves me dumbfounded.

On the other hand, we also have to say that the banks agreed to do something. They actually agreed to provide to the committee on a quarterly basis numbers which will allow us to compare their performance from one quarter to the next. That is wonderful. If this results in them moving the next inch so that the building and growing process for small business can be achieved, the task and purpose of the committee will have been rewarded.

This committee has demonstrated that it can be done. The amendments to the bill indicate that the parties can co-operate. Reformers support the bill, however, I would like to make it clear that does not mean we like the idea of subsidizing business, whether it is through the banks or in any other way. That being said, we will support the bill because of the things which I have outlined.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Dear colleagues, pursuant to the order made earlier today, the motion is deemed to have been put and agreed to.

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

[English]

Under the same order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION OBTAINED BY CERTAIN CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from November 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-315, an act to complement the present laws of Canada that protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves obtained by certain corporations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-315, put forward by the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin, proposes to improve the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information obtained by corporations. I wonder why he is interested in that. Is privacy important?

As our society advances, new technologies are available to us. Let me talk about two of those new technologies. One I favour is a technology called a smart card. A smart card is designed to have information encoded on it to prevent abuse of our health

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care system. Abuse of our health care system is something that most Canadians would like to see addressed. A smart card would allow the individual to present themselves to their physician. The card would be encoded, recent medical information would be accessible which would prevent double doctoring, double testing. In fact, it would prevent some overspending of significant amounts of money. A smart card sounds like a good idea for that purpose.

• (1910)

Let us take that idea one step further. I have seen cards used in the grocery stores where an account can be debited very quickly. I heard someone say that those cards could be made smaller and implanted under the skin. It could have a significant amount of personal information on it. It would be scanned, some numbers punched in and bills could be paid that way.

I also heard it said that the little implanted chip would allow a satellite system to know someone's location at any time. Now you could never get lost. That is the final step in the use of the smart card for those of us who are too dumb to figure out where we are.

Are there pitfalls on the issue of privacy with these new computer technologies which are available to us? Are people aware and concerned about computer technology? I believe they are. I can give two recent examples. Ontario is bringing out an omnibus bill in which one of the concerns is the issue of privacy of information. The omnibus bill looks as though it will make information more available to legislators and there has been an outcry about that issue.

Bill C-7, recently passed in the House, had significant components which related to privacy. There were a number of very public concerns about the information being made available. I believe this bill has some component of public concern to it and the interest is reasonable.

When can we go overboard with information that should not be made publicly available? That is my question. When do we go overboard?

I would also like to step back a bit and say that there are times when I do not think information is made publicly available which should be made available. I would like to use two examples.

Across from an elementary school in my riding is a house called the drug house. The teachers say that drugs are sold from that house. They have watched this going on for eight years.

I went to a meeting with the RCMP, the mayor and some community activists to find out what could be done about this drug house. Apparently people arrive at the house, quickly go in and out, having made their drug deal and off they go. It is known

to the police and the principal and it is now known to the MP. Surely this can be stopped. This is not a great thing to have across the street from an elementary school. Also the junior high school is not far away.

The RCMP told me their hands were tied. My reply was that surely they could go to a justice of the peace and say that there are reasonable grounds to suspect and search this house. I was told that the rights of the individual in that house would be trampled on if we did that. I said that surely the rights of the kids in that elementary school would take precedence. I was told: "No, doc, that is not the way it works. Our legal system has put the rights even. The kids and the people in that house have equal rights". I was puzzled by that. I do not agree with that.

• (1915)

I have another example. A man raped a young woman, was caught and sentenced to jail. She in her wisdom wondered whether he could have infected her with a disease. She went to the court and asked that the rapist have a blood test because she was living in fear that she may have AIDS. His reaction was: "No chance. My rights of privacy say you cannot touch me".

I say wait a minute, if the rights of the victim collide with the rights of the criminal, and in this case they do and she has a legitimate need to know, whose rights should take precedence? The victim's rights take precedence over his.

When I tell that to students in high schools, you should see how upset they get. I challenge members opposite to ask students in high schools whose rights should take precedence: his privacy or her need to know. They will say very quickly whose rights should take precedence.

There is another side to the privacy issue, the charter of rights and freedoms, which today does not talk about responsibilities and puts those rights side by side. It needs an adjustment.

In a previous conversation there was talk about banks. Banks have information that is profoundly private. Banks want to get into the insurance business. There has been quite a lobby in that regard. They have a monopoly in the banking interests. They now want to get into the insurance business. Since Reformers are really interested in free enterprise, why would I be concerned about banks stepping into the insurance business?

If they are to step into the insurance business they had better be willing to open up the monopoly they have in other businesses. They had better let the insurance companies in there. They had better let the insurance companies have access to Interac. They had better let the insurance companies have access to the private information on an individual's account, where they spend their money, how they spend their money. It is a very unfair advantage if they are competing with the private insurance business.

On the issue of privacy where the banks are concerned great caution needs to be exercised. There is a need for Bill C-315 by the member for Cariboo—Chilcotin. There is a need for a look at privacy in relationship to the electronic age we are in. I would like it considered very carefully.

I suppose the government should bring in its own bill which would get the stamp of approval of the government. The member for Cariboo—Chilcotin might well be a little disappointed that his bill did not get in, but probably he would accept that change is needed. I will watch with interest for those changes.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in the event that a recorded division is demanded on Bill C-315 later this day, that such a division be taken tomorrow, December 13, 1995 at 5.15 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members have heard both the terms of the motion and the request for unanimous consent to introduce it. Are both acceptable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate on Bill C-315. I wish to acknowledge the initiative put forward by the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin in his desire to see the privacy of Canadian citizens protected. However, I feel there are several weaknesses with the bill. As a result, I will not be lending my support to its passage.

The issue of privacy is perhaps a very central one in the technological society of today. However, we must not confuse the broader issue of privacy protection, an issue which we are pleased to see debated in the House in the context of this bill, with the reality of Bill C-315. While it is designed to protect privacy in the context of the sale of marketing lists, it will scarcely achieve that because it is so narrowly crafted.

• (1920)

Here again are some of the features of the bill. It is designed to stop the sale of marketing lists without the consent of individuals whose names are on the list. Before selling a list containing names and personal information of individuals, a federal corporation must send a notice to the individual seeking consent for the sale.

The firm must ensure it receives consent and has not received a request to remove the name from the list. If it has, it must remove the name or particulars pertaining to the individual within 10 days.

A firm which buys a list must also send a notice to the individual informing the person of what is on the list, where it came from and that he or she may request to have their names or data removed from the list. Requests for removal of names or

data must be processed within 10 days and corporations must send confirmation to the individual.

Contraventions of the act are punishable by fines of up to \$5,000 for the first offence and up to \$10,000 for subsequent offences.

[*Translation*]

I do not support Bill C-315, because I feel that it is flawed in several ways. The definition of "personal information" is not comprehensive and does not meet the current standards of related federal and provincial acts. Marketing lists are not sold, they are rented. In its present form, this bill would not affect customary business practices.

It would be inconsistent with the Quebec privacy act, which includes a carefully drafted section on the use of name lists. Moreover, the bill only applies to a limited number of federally regulated corporations. It would not prevent the vast majority of list sales and would affect only a fraction of the problems of protecting personal information, thus giving consumers a false sense of security.

The cost to businesses would be prohibitive, and consumers would view notices seeking their consent as another wave of intrusive advertising.

The government is considering various aspects of the protection of personal information. Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about what will happen to their personal information in the interconnected world of the information highway. They want the government to react and legislate.

Canadian businesses want to enjoy the advantages of an electronic business environment where bureaucracy and paperwork can be reduced, where they can create a closer relationship with their customers and business partners, and where administrative processes can be simplified and computerized.

If there are to be rules regulating the use and protection of personal information, businesses want those rules to be consistent and predictable.

[*English*]

The Information Highway Advisory Council presented a number of recommendations in its final report, including a call for the federal government to table flexible framework legislation based on the Canadian Standards Association model privacy code. This model privacy code is the product of a consensus committee of consumer representatives, key industry players such as the banks, telecom companies and the direct marketing association and provincial and federal government representatives. It makes a sound basis of consensus for us to start from when we are thinking about the protection of privacy.

We are studying these recommendations now with a view to action and to presenting a much more comprehensive approach to the problem. The Minister of Industry will be making an

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announcement for the protection of personal information in the context of the government's response to the report of the Information Highway Advisory Council.

While I agree with the spirit of Bill C-315, I believe the points which I have outlined clearly explain why the scope of the bill is too narrow and why it cannot be as effective as the hon. member would like it to be.

• (1925)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Caribou—Chilcotin for the introduction of his private member's Bill C-315.

The bill will protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves obtained by certain corporations. There have been many times when my mailbox at home is literally stuffed with so-called addressed junk mail. We all get it and I think it is safe to say most of us do not like it. In most cases it is a request for money for an obscure organization or it is an ad for a product we know will not be exactly how it appears in the picture.

We file this mail in the circular file, file 13, in a place where it rightfully belongs. However, what is it exactly that I am throwing out in that situation? Is it just a letter or a notice from some organization that happened to get my name and address out of the phone book? Chances are it did not come from a phone book but rather from some corporation that had me on its computer list and that corporation probably sold my name as a part of a mailing package to some interest group that has an interest in me as part of a targeted marketing scheme.

What could it know about my personal information? It can include a variety of things and could be gathered from several different sources. It could include a home address, business address, unlisted telephone numbers, physical characteristics, health records, education, employment, financial history, social insurance number, the magazines we read or even what political party we belong to.

Every Canadian who uses credit has their credit rating and related information stored in American computers and filed under their Canadian social insurance number.

Members should recall what was said in the House by the government of the day when the social insurance number was introduced. The government of the day misled us. Canadians, as it is now commonly observed by the commentators, were lied to about the scope, the use and the implications of our social insurance number. However, we cannot now turn back the clock of history. However, we can remember what group broke faith with Canadians on this subject. It was the Liberals.

It is an old story, the social insurance number debate in the House with the solemn promises made, especially in stark contrast to the current state of affairs. Are we any wiser now in this techno age? Are the Liberals? That is why we need much more protection in this general area. This private member's bill is a useful part of that developing awareness.

Opponents might say disseminating such information is not serious. I point out some examples that caused me to believe the issue is quite serious. In a recent *Globe and Mail* article a story was raised about a computer company that recently sent samples of its Internet browsing software free to four million people. However, when it was used the sample software automatically dialled up the company's home page, gathered information about users without their permission, gathered Internet addresses, types of software being used on the computer and who knows what else.

There are people who are geniuses with computers. They are capable of breaking encrypted codes and getting access to top government information. If they are able to get this type of information with ease there is no question what type of information they can obtain from me all without my knowledge or my permission yet still completely legal. This bothers me and I am sure that when more Canadians are made aware of this it will trouble them as well.

The Internet is something completely new I am sure to most members of the House. Computer technology seems to be updated hourly, too fast for me to keep up. Last year I purchased a new laptop computer and at the time it was the latest technology. A week after I bought it a newer and better model was available. It is the same with the Internet. Every day someone has a new way of tapping into someone else's information.

Control of access on the Internet remains an unanswered problem. With more and more people accessing it everyday, concerns certainly rise. People have expressed a concern to me and therefore I believe something must be done. We cannot sit around and do nothing. If we do, the technological world will overrun us and could literally prevent any protectionist measures from being eventually implemented.

The computer is only one of many ways of retrieving confidential information. I have heard of a hospital employee who supplied a computer disc of names of terminally ill patients to a local funeral home. There are no clear rules surrounding our privacy. The result is a clear lack of individual security.

The largest problem with parallel provincial privacy acts is they do not cover any federally regulated institutions. Bill C-315 affects all corporations as outlined in section 2 of the Canada Labour Code such as air transportation companies,

maybe a radio station or banks or any other work deemed under the Canada Labour Code.

Today I stopped by the Bank of Montreal and picked up an application for an air miles MasterCard to check the terms of application. At the bottom of the application is the fine print that should be read before we sign our life away, so to speak.

• (1930)

I want to read what it says:

By signing below I accept as notice in writing of and consent to you obtaining or exchanging any information about me at any time from any credit bureau, my employer or other person in connection with any relationships between us or those which you or I may wish to establish.

It is incredible. This disclaimer allows the financial institution to exchange my information, so basically other corporations may know what I purchased on my last trip. If any transaction has a name or a number attached to it, it is in the computer. The disclaimer does not indicate what information they can exchange. They simply say any information. Since most of us need a credit card, we sign off on the application and send it in. There is no getting around it. In other words, the banks have us in a catch 22. A credit card is needed to operate in the business world but complete exposure is the price of the card. Obviously all this needs to be changed.

However, the banks are against any federal changes and for obvious reason. They have their own privacy code, so they say. Linda Routledge, director of consumer affairs for the Canadian Bankers Association, said:

The association's voluntary privacy code is already used as the basis for rigorous safeguarding of consumer information by the banks.

The banks say: "Why regulate; we have a code that works just fine". The problem is that with the code it does not allow the consumers the legal right or opportunity to complain. The power of banks is enormous and obviously they will do everything in their power to ward off federal regulators from intervening.

Canadians ought to have a right to control what is done with their personal information. I know my constituents would be completely behind me in that regard. Sure there are people out there who could not care less if anyone in the world knows who they are, what they earn, who they owe and what they owe. I am confident in saying that an overwhelming majority of Canadians are not comfortable with this type of knowledge being freely disclosed. It seems our whole lives are stored on a chip to validate who and what we are. It all comes from the computer. There is a movie playing with a plausible premise, that personal computer information could be put in the wrong hands and used in a sinister manner against the person.

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The bill proposed by my colleague is an excellent foundation. It is vitally important that the bill make it through second reading and on to committee. If members have problems with the bill, they would have the opportunity to amend it in committee. We understand bills are not always perfect. That is why we have committees in this place: to make legislation better and to have successive review.

My colleague from Cariboo—Chilcotin has done his homework and produced a good bill. Along with my colleagues who have spoken before me, I too support the legislation and urge my friends from across the floor to do likewise, if not for themselves, then for the personal security of the community that has sent us here as their representatives.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing the issue before the House. Even though I cannot support the bill at this time, the protection of personal information is a matter of concern for all Canadians and deserves a comprehensive response.

The bill the hon. member has put forward does not do enough to stop the kinds of privacy invasion Canadians are complaining about. While I share the concerns expressed by the Reform Party about the abuse of personal information in the context of direct marketing, if Parliament is to intervene with new legislation, we had better be sure that we are doing that which addresses the most broad problem of fair information practices.

Here are some areas where I feel we need change. The bill would only apply to corporations. Businesses that engage in the practices are often individuals or small partnerships and would not be covered by the legislation. It applies only to a narrow range of corporations engaging in the federal regulatory activity. It includes those in the banking, telecommunications and broadcast industries but not small entrepreneurs. Consumers want similar protection across a range of provincial and federal jurisdictions. They do not want to figure out who would be responsible.

The bill does not resemble anything now available in the provinces. It gives us no basic model to suggest to the provinces and would be an odd patch on the already spotty quilt of privacy protection. It does nothing to solve the problem of operators setting up outside our jurisdiction, such as in the United States. Technologies are changing and developing quickly these days and information is being collected and massaged in new and different ways.

• (1935)

The bill addresses only the issue of people's names appearing on lists or nominative lists as the practices are referred to in Quebec privacy legislation which covers the private sector. With information management systems changing daily it may soon be out of date to talk about lists.

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Information travels everywhere and can now be vacuumed up automatically. It is no longer necessary to hand someone a computer tape to trade information. We can simply configure a computer system to make the required links.

When we address the protection of personal privacy we want to talk about the use of personal information in the broadest possible ways. The rules we come up with should address every sector of the economy, not just the direct marketing industry. Personal information is a vital commodity in just about every business from banking to telecommunications to health care.

We need necessary rules for all sectors tailored to meet the special needs of each one. Instead of working on the bill we should support the work that has been going on for several years at the Canadian Standards Association or the CSA. A consensus committee passed a model of privacy code in September of this year, the result of three years of work in the committee with representation of industry, consumers and federal and provincial governments.

The concept behind this model code is that each sector of business industry would take this set of fair information practices and apply it to its own information holdings. They would be accountable for what they did with personal information but they would have some input into the process.

The Standards Council of Canada will soon publish this code of fair information practices as a national standard for Canada. This is a first among developed countries that have addressed the issue of data protection. It is the first time that protection of personal information has been looked at in the context of standards. In this information age that is a very useful way of looking at the matter.

The CSA privacy code has the support of a broad range of private sector organizations, including the Canadian Direct Marketing Association. On October 3 the president of the Canadian Direct Marketing Association called on the Minister of Industry to produce legislation in the House that would use the CSA standards as the basis for legislation federally. He suggested that the federal government encourage the provinces of Canada to do the same in their own jurisdictions.

Much of the information that Canadians are most concerned about is information over which provinces have direct control. For instance, medical and educational records are provincial matters. The privacy commissioner of Ontario released a letter to the Minister of Health last week wherein he expressed deep concern regarding the provisions of the omnibus Bill 26 now before the Ontario legislature. That bill would permit the opening of private medical records and release officials from liability for their disclosure.

As the commissioner pointed out in his letter, 92 per cent of Canadians are expressing concern about the misuse of their personal information. It is of great concern to them. Unfortunately it is not all protected by law. We in the federal government must do our part to protect consumers' personal information, but we must also start a much broader discussion with the provinces about the issue. Only Quebec, as my colleague from the Bloc has pointed out, has moved to protect personal information held in the private sector.

Canadians deserve and want more protection for their personal information than is offered in the bill. I understand the issue is being studied by the departments of industry and justice with a view to developing solutions that will work for the protection of personal information in all sectors of the economy across the country.

• (1940)

It is a huge and complex issue because the increasing availability and use of personal information and consumer files to target service delivery affect virtually every sector of our economy. Protection of personal privacy is identified as one of the foundations vital to the network world into which we are moving.

The Minister of Industry established the Information Highway Advisory Council to advise him on how to make the most of new possibilities brought to us by the communications network. It focused on the issue and Industry Canada has produced a number of studies. The council consulted experts and produced the following recommendations on privacy.

The federal government should act to ensure privacy protection on the information highway. This protection shall embody all principles of fair information practices contained in the Canadian Standards Association draft "Model Code for the Protection of Personal Information". To this end the federal government should continue to participate in the development and implementation of effective national voluntary standards based upon this model code.

The federal government must take leadership in the implementation of these principles through the following actions.

In co-operation with other levels of government that share responsibility for various sectors of activity on the information highway, it should establish a federal-provincial-territorial working group to implement the privacy principles in all jurisdictions.

It should create a level playing field for the protection of personal information on the information highway by developing and implementing a flexible legislative framework for both public and private sectors. Legislation would require sectors or organizations to meet the standard of the CSA model code while

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allowing the flexibility to determine how they will refine their codes.

In co-operation with the CSA working group on privacy and other interested parties, the government should study the development of effective oversight and enforcement mechanisms.

The government should establish a working group to co-ordinate the development, demonstration and application of privacy enhancing technologies for the provision of government services and information.

The government should update and harmonize appropriate privacy protection policies, legislation and guidelines applicable to its operations and to the delivery of government services and information.

Industry Canada should establish a working group—

The Deputy Speaker: I might indicate to the member for Lincoln that we only have 10 minutes left. Perhaps he would wish to divide his time with his colleague so that both of them could speak.

Mr. Tony Valeri (Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the issue of the protection of personal privacy. It is an issue with which we are confronted every time we open a newspaper or turn on a television. It is entirely appropriate that our laws be revisited on this subject.

When we brought in the current federal Privacy Act in 1982, it was decided that we should address the issue of personal information held by government first, so the act only applied to federal holdings. When the provinces passed their bills they did the same.

It is now time to revisit the issue. The work is well in progress. When the Minister of Industry set up the Information Highway Advisory Council to advise him, he stipulated that privacy be considered as one of the four operating principles. The council was set up to advise the minister on how Canada should meet the challenge and opportunities ahead of us in the global networks of the future.

Industry Canada released a discussion paper to sound out public opinion to see what the Canadian public and Canadian business wanted to see. The response was overwhelming in its recognition of the problem. Consumers and industry did not necessarily agree on the solution, with business pushing for voluntary codes, with most stressing the good work done on the Canadian Standards Association model code, and with consumers demanding that government act and legislate.

The Information Highway Advisory Council combined these two comments and recommended framework legislation based on the CSA standard. The Canadian Direct Marketing Association has added its voice to the debate, calling on the Minister of Industry to table framework legislation based on the CSA standard, and urged the provinces to do likewise in their jurisdictions.

• (1945)

This is the kind of flexible compromise position that is good for business and good for consumers. Business wants to be involved in crafting of marketplace rules and so do consumers. We should recognize this and work on the basis of the consensus that has been built around the CSA model privacy code, soon to be published as a national standard by the Standards Council of Canada.

There is no way that Bill C-315 however worthy in its intentions could be confused as a piece of framework legislation. I am afraid that it falls short of what we need. However the debate that we have had here in the House, thanks to the hon. member of the Reform Party who tabled this bill and so ably defended it, has been a very useful introduction to what promises to be an important and complex issue when it comes before the House.

I recommend that we urge the minister to return to us and report on the progress that has been made. I look forward to that and to the opportunity to bring about the kind of broad based protection for personal information that Canadians are expecting of this government.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the few minutes that are left in this debate to commend the member for Cariboo—Chilcotin for bringing Bill C-315 forward.

I regret that I am unable to support this bill. The issue is an important one but the approach is far too narrow. I believe that if we send this bill to committee and try to correct it we would lose valuable time trying to redirect an approach which simply does not address the concerns Canadians have in regard to the protection of their privacy.

Every time we open a newspaper we see another story about the abuse of personal information, about the potential that new technology has to invade our privacy and provide surveillance of our every movement.

Even the chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, in an article which appeared in the *Ottawa Sun* on September 20 of this year pointed out the need for government action and indeed legislation to protect privacy in the face of new technologies. He used the example of software programs which would replace human travel agents and track customers' tastes and preferences to give the best possible service.

While I applaud the hon. member for bringing the issue of privacy protection to the attention of Parliament, I believe that we could follow Mr. Gates' advice and start the process of unrushed debate leading to intelligent public policies, not by accepting this bill and fixing it, but by building on the work that has been done in Canada. We have among other initiatives the first data protection legislation in North America to cover the private sector. I am referring to Bill 68 in the province of Quebec as an example.

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We need a far more comprehensive approach to these issues. This government has been doing the groundwork necessary to provide greater privacy protection.

I would like to ask the hon. member to consider the work that is presently being done. It is important that we look at the teeth that have to be given to any specific bill that is in the House, who will be responsible to hear and act on complaints and what resources they will have. I am suggesting that although this bill is laudable in terms of its focus on the fundamental issue of free and informed consent of the individual as a key issue in data protection, it is not clear how this would work out for other types of information and other types of business.

I commend the member. It is not often that the industry itself asks for legislation, but at this specific point in time the industry has been asking the minister responsible to pay some attention to details in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has two or three minutes to sum up.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to do that. I would first like to thank those members who took part in the debate on my private member's bill on personal information. The debate has been most instructive for me as I continue to consider this very important issue. Out of the debate I realize there are some aspects that do need amendment in the bill, particularly the area regarding sales. Leases were not mentioned in the bill.

With regard to the narrowness of the crafting of Bill C-315, I do believe if members did the same research that I did, they would find there are federal and provincial jurisdictions that limit how widely this bill can have influence. It has been purposely crafted in such a narrow manner so that it would not impede provincial influence. It is my anticipation that if this bill were passed it could be a model and a forerunner for the provinces in bringing in their own individual pieces of legislation for the protection of personal information.

I would like to ask fellow members who are being asked to keep in mind what is fair to commercial interests also to keep in mind what is fair to the people whose names and personal information are being used for commercial gain without their knowledge, without their consent and frequently to their own personal disadvantage, if not their jeopardy. While it may seem burdensome for a commercial enterprise to seek the permission of every person whose name they record, buy, sell or lease, as the case may be, why should companies be able to use this information simply because the rightful owners cannot prevent them from doing so?

In summary, I am asking colleagues to consider first the needs of the protection of their constituents as well as themselves and to support Bill C-315 at this second reading stage.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7.50 p.m., pursuant to our standing orders, the time provided for debate has now expired.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: According to the order made earlier today, the vote stands deferred until tomorrow at 5.15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

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

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was on February 16 of last year, four days after the death of Sue Rodriguez, that the Minister of Justice promised Canadians that this House of Commons would have an opportunity to vote in a free vote on the important issue of possible changes to section 241 of the Criminal Code.

The Minister of Justice said that he would be meeting with the government House leader as soon as possible to find out when he could arrange a debate and he said that they were not going to sit on it. He went on to say: "We will find a way to put the question before the House so that it is not academic. It will be meaningful and if that involves a proposal for changing legislation with a free vote, then that is exactly what we will do".

He pointed out that the Supreme Court of Canada had unanimously agreed, although it was divided on the substance of changes to section 241, that this was a matter that elected

representatives must deal with. The Minister of Justice said on February 16 that he would make sure this House had an opportunity at an early date to deal with this matter. Some months later at the national convention of the Liberal Party of Canada, delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution urging the government to allow for a free vote on the issue of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide.

• (1955)

In September of last year the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, who will be responding today on behalf of the government, said during the course of a debate on my private member's bill to change the Criminal Code: "We have been assured by the Minister of Justice that all parliamentarians will be given the opportunity to consider these issues in a meaningful way. I am confident that in due course we will be presented with the opportunity to do so".

On February 16 of last year the Minister of Justice said: "In emphasizing the urgency of this question, I am sure doctors could tell us there are a number of people right now facing terminal illness who want to have clarification". He was right then and he is right now.

It is unconscionable that the government, almost two years after having promised to allow the House to seriously deliberate on this issue, to vote in a free vote, is still not prepared to allow that decision.

One of those who is seeking a change in the law is Austin Bastable. Mr. Bastable has written twice to all members of the House. He wrote in late September and again at the end of last month, pointing out that the quality of his life is continuing to decline. He does not wish to endure the prolonged natural death that awaits him.

Mr. Bastable points out that palliative care is not a meaningful option for him. He pleads with the House and he pleads with the government to honour the commitment made to allow a free vote, to allow debate on this issue of fundamental conscience.

The member for Vancouver Centre also assured Canadians and her own constituents there would be a free vote. I call on her to honour the commitment made by the Prime Minister, by the Minister of Justice and by the parliamentary secretary to ensure Canadians have a voice in this fundamental issue of life and death.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway has not said anything which I would contest with respect to me or the Minister of Justice. It is still the intention of the Minister of Justice to allow this debate.

The hon. member has requested that the Minister of Justice advise the House when members will have the opportunity to

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review the issue of physician assisted suicide, including the provisions of section 241 of the Criminal Code.

Both the hon. member and the Minister of Justice have referred to the important work undertaken by the special committee on euthanasia and assisted suicide which tabled its report in June of this year. The terms of reference provided that it examine and report on the legal, social and ethical issues regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The report is lengthy and contains recommendations concerning palliative care, pain control, sedation practices, withholding and withdrawal of life sustaining treatment, advanced directives, assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Of the recommendations presented in the report, there are a number of legal implications unanimously agreed on by committee members. This was not the case with respect to their recommendations concerning assisted suicide.

While the senators were unanimous in their view that counseling suicide, subsection 241(a), should remain an offence, they were not unanimous in respect of the provision of subsection 241(b). As the Minister of Justice has indicated, there was difficulty in achieving consensus with respect to some of the most fundamental questions that arose in the course of the committee's study.

Specifically, with respect to the issue of assisted suicide, a majority of the committee recommended that subsection 241(b) of—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton East.

MEDICARE

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in discussions with people in Edmonton East over the past number of months, one concern keeps coming up with increasing regularity: where is medicare headed in Canada?

Canadians value the system of universal health care. Medicare is one of the fundamental elements of our Canadian identity and of our shared commitment to fairness, equity and compassion.

• (2000)

However, Canadians recognize that the health care system must adapt and evolve within the guiding principles of the Canada Health Act. It is not enough to say that we spend \$72 billion on health care without knowing whether we are spending it in those areas where it makes the most difference to Canadians.

Residents of Edmonton East want governments at the national and provincial levels to work together to ensure accessibility and quality in health care and to sustain a health care system that respects the five principles of the Canada Health Act: universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration.

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How do we renew our health care system to meet the needs of consumers in a cost effective and efficient manner? What are the implications of allowing greater private funding in our health care system?

There is concern in Edmonton East that private funding competing with a public system will create a two-tier system where access and quality will be based on ability to pay rather than medical need.

To the ideologically driven in Alberta, an increased private presence in the funding and delivery of health care is the answer to controlling costs and improving accessibility. But is it? In the industrialized world, the United States is the best example of a health care system which relies extensively on private funding.

Let us examine the U.S. health care experience in more detail. More private money in the U.S. health care system should result in a better standard of health care for Americans but clearly that is a myth. A significant amount of health care spending in the United States is to support an extensive bureaucracy that has evolved under a multiple player system. The average American under a private insurance scheme pays \$150 a year in administrative costs alone, compared to \$23 for the average Canadian.

Respected Canadian health care economist Robert Evans put it most succinctly when he stated: "Canadians provide care. Americans shuffle paper". Not only is the U.S. health care system plagued by skyrocketing administrative costs and a bureaucratic jungle, it is also plagued by inequities and lack of access.

For older Americans, 65 years and over, out of pocket costs consume 23 per cent of their household incomes. For older Americans with family incomes below the poverty line, out of pocket expenses consume 37 per cent of their incomes. Most telling, the number of Americans who are uninsured continues to grow at an alarming rate. Nearly 40 million Americans or 15.3 per cent of the population had no health insurance coverage at all. The total number of uninsured American children under the age of 18 is 9.5 million or 24 per cent of all American children under the age of 18. The total number of uninsured Americans earning an average family income of \$15,700 is nearly 15 million.

This leads me to a second element that private funding components have failed to address adequately: the ability to control health care costs. Cost containment is a necessity if

health care is to be sustained and preserved in today's fiscal climate but cost containment in health care is not achieved by shifting the cost burden on the Canadian consumer through de-insurance, de-listing or user fees.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the hon. member asked this question. As she said before, medicare is a defining value of Canadians. Eighty-nine per cent of Canadians support medicare. All the ministers of health in every province support medicare, with the exception of Alberta.

Medicare is unique to this country because it is based on clinical need and not on the size of your wallet. It is a Liberal value. Medicare was brought in by a Liberal prime minister. A Liberal minister of health, Monique Bégin, brought in the Canada Health Act which defined the five principles and set a series of limits on how they are used.

One of the important things about medicare is that the government, being a Liberal government, is committed to medicare. We are committed to a predictable funding of medicare in the new Canada health and social transfer. We are committed to working with provinces to ensure that we find innovation and creativity in dealing with some of the pressures that are now facing medicare.

We will work in a consistent, cohesive and coherent manner to find all of the answers within the Canada Health Act.

I want the hon. member to know that this government is the first since the enactment of the Canada Health Act that actually has taken non-refundable deductions from provinces: British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and finally, Alberta.

We have a concern about the growth of two-tier medicine. User fees are not on for this government. The program is based on clinical need. If we are going to continue to make medicare important, we are going to have to look at issues such as evidence based medicine such as moving from prevention, from lifestyle based diseases and—

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House is adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 8.04 p.m.)

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