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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 16, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

OFFICIAL REPORT

In the right hand column at page 2814, second paragraph of the answer of the Minister of Industry, the second line should read “of a provincial government if one were to choose to intervene in the,” not “federal”.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 16, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Paul Zed (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 four petitions presented during the first session.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary delegation to Chile, from April 8 to 11, 1996.

* * *

• (1010)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations between the parties on a travel motion. I move:

Pursuant to its mandate in relation to the comprehensive review of the Young Offenders Act, phase II, and specifically, to observe how the youth justice system operates in practice, that six members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, four from the Liberal Party, including the chair, one from the Bloc Québécois, and one from the Reform Party, be authorized to travel to Toronto, London and Windsor, Ontario from Sunday, June 2 to Thursday, June 6, 1996 in order to hold public hearings, visit sites, young

offender facilities and programs, and meet with officials, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

PETITIONS

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to present a petition signed by 25 residents from different ridings in the city of Calgary.

The petitioners note that section 43 of our Criminal Code allows schoolteachers, parents and those standing in the place of a parent to use reasonable physical force for the correction of pupils or children under their care. The petitioners call upon Parliament to end such legal approval of this harmful and discriminatory practice by repealing section 43 of the Criminal Code.

MERCHANT NAVY VETERANS

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have a petition to present on behalf of 75 Canadians regarding the merchant navy veterans of World War II.

These petitioners are asking Parliament to consider extending the same benefits armed forces veterans receive to merchant navy veterans.

HEALTH AND DENTAL BENEFITS

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition signed by 25 Canadians in B.C.

The petitioners are concerned with the government's consideration of taxing supplemental health care and dental care coverage. The petitioners call upon Parliament to refrain from implementing a tax on health and dental benefits and to put on hold any future consideration of such a tax until a complete review of the tax system and how it impacts on the health of Canadians has been undertaken.

[*Translation*]

MINORITY RIGHTS

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition this morning on behalf of 45 citizens of Mattice, who are greatly concerned about clause 17 and the resolution the government will have to adopt in future.

Routine Proceedings

There are serious concerns that this would create a precedent which would allow any provincial government to suppress the rights of a minority.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 28 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 28—**Mr. Forseth:**

Regarding the spraying of gypsy moths by Agriculture Canada in the McBride/Sapleton area in New Westminster, British Columbia: (a) what is the exact ingredient of the formulation Btk, (b) what were the gypsy moth counts before and after spraying over the past 10 years in the general urban area, (c) what specific notification procedures and what education programs have been conducted over the past six months to constituents living in the affected area, and (d) what alternative forms of dealing with the gypsy moth are available and what is the cost-effectiveness ratio of each?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): (a) Btk: Due to proprietary information exemptions in the Access to Information Act, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) cannot disclose the total contents of Foray 48B, the particular formula of Btk used for the eradication of gypsy moths. What we can say is that the active ingredient is a bacterial insect disease, *Bacillus thuringiensis* Kurstaki—Btk. Small amounts of chemicals are used in the commercial fermentation process, and the bacteria metabolize these into complex and simple sugars and water in the final formulation. The final formulation has been examined by Health Canada and Environment Canada and has been proven safe; it is even certified for use by organic growers.

(b) Treatment Effectiveness: European gypsy moths (also known as North American gypsy moths) have been accidentally moved to British Columbia on household effects numerous times in the last 17 years from infested areas of eastern North America and elsewhere. Thirty-nine male moths were caught in pheromone-baited sticky traps in B.C. in 1994 and again in 1995; prior years moths trapped have numbered over 200 males. (The pheromone is a sexual lure used to attract male gypsy moths only.) When gypsy moths are trapped at low density (one or two in a trap with no moths in surrounding traps), the figures do not necessarily indicate a sustainable population and therefore eradication is not necessary. However, the area surrounding such finds is always closely monitored for two subsequent years to determine whether the population is increasing or has failed to develop.

British Columbia is uniquely placed in that it has the pressure of introductions of North American gypsy moths by land and air from eastern North America and of Asian gypsy moths by sea and air

from countries to the west. The Asian gypsy moth threatens its habitat far more than the European gypsy moth, being a more aggressive feeder, feeding on a wider host range, and having females capable of flying before they deposit their prolific egg masses. It was multiple catches of the Asian gypsy moth on the Vancouver waterfront that launched the intensive spray program in 1992. Asian and North American gypsy moths are capable of cross-breeding, the result of which is a North American gypsy moth with females capable of flying. Prior to determining a treatment response, it is thus essential to determine whether the gypsy moth is of the Asian, European, or hybrid genotype; this is done through genetic fingerprinting.

The following shows the number of male gypsy moths trapped before and after spraying during the last 10 years in the greater Vancouver regional district.

Vancouver waterfront (includes areas of North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Burnaby):

- 1988—1 male was trapped¹;
- 1989—6 male gypsy moths were trapped²;
- 1990—10 male gypsy moths were trapped³;
- 1991—33 male gypsy moths were trapped inside the spray zone (27 Asian gypsy moths introduced from Russian freighters in Vancouver Harbour)⁴;
- 1992—area was treated with Btk for Asian gypsy moth; following treatment 2 male gypsy moths were trapped, one just outside the treatment zone;
- 1993—0 male gypsy moths were trapped;

Burnaby

- 1992—9 male gypsy moths were trapped (3 of these were outside the treatment zone);
- 1993—area was treated with Btk; following treatment no male gypsy moths were trapped in treatment area;

Richmond

- 1991—3 male gypsy moths were trapped (just outside what later became a treatment zone);
- 1992—61 male gypsy moths were trapped;
- 1993—area was treated with Btk; following treatment 2 male gypsy moths were trapped outside the treatment block;
- 1994—0 male gypsy moths were trapped;
- 1995—1 male gypsy moth was trapped⁵;

1 Singleton moth not requiring immediate treatment.

2 Singleton moths not requiring immediate treatment.

3 Singleton moths not requiring immediate treatment.

4 Information pertaining strictly to treatment zones was forwarded to MP's Ottawa office as a result of a request to Gypsy Moth Information Line.

5 Singleton moth not requiring immediate treatment.

South Vancouver

- 1991—1 male gypsy moth was trapped⁶;
- 1992—5 male gypsy moths were trapped (1 just outside what later became a treatment zone);
- 1993—20 male gypsy moths were trapped;
- 1994—area was treated with Btk; following treatment no male gypsy moths were trapped in treatment area;

New Westminster (Sapperton)

- 1993—1 male gypsy moth was trapped⁷;
- 1994—1 male gypsy moth was trapped;
- 1995—8 males gypsy moths were trapped in what is the proposed treatment zone;

New Westminster (other than Sapperton)

- 1995—4 male gypsy moths were trapped⁸.

(c) Notification/Education:

- (i) Gypsy Moth Open House public information session on February 15, 1996 in New Westminster;
- (ii) mailout to residences in treatment blocks;
- (iii) newspaper advertising of pesticide use permit application;
- (iv) newspaper and television education and interviews;
- (v) door-to-door contact with homeowners during egg-mass searching;
- (vi) resource materials in local libraries;
- (vii) information letters to the school in the New Westminster treatment block;
- (viii) frequently-asked question list sent to the newspaper (this list was not published);
- (ix) telephone 666-MOTH line to answer questions on a one-to-one basis;
- (x) presentations to city Councils in treatment blocks;
- (xi) consultation with local medical health officers;
- (xii) detailed information sent to B.C. Environmental Appeal Board in response to appeals against AAFC's pesticide use permit.

(d) Alternative Treatment Information: An aerial application of a chemical insecticide is the most cost-effective and efficacious method of eliminating gypsy moths. However, these chemicals tend to affect a wide range of non-target organisms and to raise public concerns about human health. While AAFC chooses not to use these alternatives and therefore does not know the cost-effectiveness ratio for such a treatment, it can be deduced that the treatment would be cheaper because chemical insecticides are cheaper than bacterial insecticides and only one spraying is needed to eradicate the moths.

Mass pheromone trapping is a non-viable alternative for eradication because of the fact that it is not a legal option in Canada. It is an experimental approach of using huge numbers of traps to interfere with mating: 5,000 traps per square mile are set out two years running at a current cost of around \$100,000/square mile.

For the eradication of the gypsy moth population indicated in Sapperton, the British Columbia Regional Office of Food Produc-

Supply

tion and Inspection Branch of AAFC has chosen to use an efficacious ground-spraying program of Btk to take into consideration public discomfort with the aerial application of a pesticide. This year, the cost-effectiveness ratio of a ground application compared with an aerial application of Btk is 8:1, though this varies with the size of the areas.

6 Singleton moth not requiring immediate treatment.

7 Singleton moth not requiring immediate treatment.

8 Moths not requiring immediate treatment.

[English]

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Breikreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader when I will receive answers to Questions Nos. 2 and 4. It was not clear to me yesterday. I have been waiting for 80 days for these replies. Prior to the prorogation of the House, I waited for 71 days without an answer.

The answers are a matter of public safety. They include government liability for injuries suffered by prisoners under its care and the unsafe storage of firearms by police and armies. When can I get an answer to these two important questions?

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, as I explained to my colleague yesterday, both of those answers are being finalized. I regret there has been a delay, but we are attempting to make the answers as fulsome and as responsive to the member's request as possible. He will be familiar with the fact that neither issue can have just a yes or no answer. They deal with policy matters and need appropriate replies.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—DECLARATION BY PRIME MINISTER CONCERNING QUEBEC

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ) moved:

That the House endorse the declaration of the Prime Minister of Canada, who stated in 1985, "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

He said: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, as the Standing Order allows, I would like to request that all speeches from here on be split into ten minute segments.

Now, to explain the context of this motion before the House, let us say that, recently, the Prime Minister has acquired the bad habit,

Supply

if I dare describe it as that, of going back on his word about certain things he has said, explaining to the public that, of necessity, in political life sometimes commitments cannot be met, and that politicians must not be required to keep their word.

We have seen that in the GST matter, where the PM had promised to scrap the GST and where, finally, the government's decision was quite different. It was the opposite, in fact: to expand the GST. Since the federal government is digging itself further and further into a constitutional hole by cosyng up to Guy Bertrand in contesting the legitimacy of a Quebec referendum, we thought it worthwhile to review the statements the Prime Minister has made.

For this reason, we are submitting the matter to the House, and are asking our hon. colleagues, both those in the Reform Party and more particularly those in the Liberal Party, to join with us in ensuring that the House deals with a statement made by the Prime Minister, when he said in 1985 that "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

This is a quote from *Straight from the Heart*, written by the Prime Minister himself. In 1985, the Prime Minister waxed most eloquent, saying: "We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win". It is normal for a politician to believe in what he is proposing, normal for him to think that he can win in his political undertakings. But he ends up saying: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

That is the quote, and the book, behind today's motion. The question being asked of our colleagues across the way is this: Are we going to take steps to ensure that the House in its entirety, through a majority vote or, who knows, even by a unanimous vote, endorses these words by the Prime Minister? Is what the Prime Minister promised, stated, in 1985, still endorsed, first of all, by himself—something we might well wonder—and then by his ministerial colleagues, of whom solidarity is required, and his caucus colleagues, who are also supposed to be in solidarity with their Prime Minister on a matter as basic as this?

To facilitate the decision, I shall be making use of some more quotes by the Prime Minister, for this is not the first time the Prime Minister has made a statement on this matter. Doing so may perhaps help them see that this was not just an unfortunate slip of the tongue that got past the Prime Minister in an angry moment, or in some speech or other, but indeed something that he felt profoundly, or at the very least, something he wanted to get across to his fellow citizens by writing it down and repeating it in a variety of ways.

• (1020)

During the proceedings of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, on December 17 1990, which is even more recent, the Prime Minister declared, and I quote: "I am a democrat. I said in

numerous speeches in 1980 that if we had not recognized that Quebec had the right to opt for separation, we would have acted differently. There were powers we could have used but we decided not to".

Therefore the hon. members across will appreciate that the Prime Minister formally recognized for a second time that Quebec has the right to separate. By saying that there are powers which could have been used but were not, he also excluded resorting to legal guerilla warfare as a means to challenge the referendum.

We feel concerned because unfortunately the Prime Minister went back on his word, on this point. We all know that this government decided to team up with Guy Bertrand in a legal war which could result in denying Quebecers the right to make a decision on their future. In 1990, the Prime Minister repeated his statement of 1985 according to which Quebec has the right to separate.

Even more recently, on October 24 1995, the Prime Minister declared in the speech he delivered in Verdun on the eve of the referendum: "Next Monday we will have to decide if we are ready to abandon a country which personifies them better than any other country. Think twice before voting". This means that the Prime Minister explicitly recognized that the referendum vote was decisive. Indeed, he declared: "Think twice before voting. Next Monday we will have to decide if we are ready to break away from our country". Therefore, on the eve of the referendum, on October 24 1995, the Prime Minister repeated what he had written in 1985 and reiterated in 1990.

On October 25 1995, in his address to the nation, the Prime Minister said: "The vote on Monday will determine the future not only of Quebec but also of Canada as a whole. This is a serious and irreversible decision". Once more he recognized what he had already admitted in 1980, 1985, 1990 and on the previous day, on October 24 1995: "Canada, our country and heritage, are in danger. Breaking Canada apart or building this country, remaining Canadian or becoming foreigners, staying or leaving, those are the issues at stake in the referendum. When we make our choice, we all have the responsibility and the duty to understand the impact of our decision".

In the mind of the Prime Minister, therefore, a referendum in Quebec is legitimate and its results are binding. The outcome of the referendum must be respected.

The Prime Minister has the support of one of his colleagues in cabinet, the super minister of the Quebec referendum, the present Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who said: "We have always said that Quebecers were entitled to have their say on Quebec's future inside or outside Canada. Ours is a democratic country, and we will respect the outcome of the vote". So the minister supports the Prime Minister.

Supply

In closing, since my time is running out, any doubts the Liberals may have had as to a vote in favour of this motion calling for the House's endorsement of the Prime Minister's declaration: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate", are fading.

I will close by saying that, if it might reinforce their conviction that they must support what the Prime Minister has said, I will quote his speech to the nation on October 25, 1995.

• (1025)

In this last quote, the Prime Minister said, and I suggest they think about it: "My friends, we are facing a decisive moment in the history of our country. And people all across Canada know that decision lies in the hands of their fellow Canadians in Quebec".

In all that he has said since 1980, in 1985, 1990 and 1995, he has been consistent repeatedly. He has always said that Quebecers had the right to decide their future themselves and that a referendum would be decisive, binding and would change the nature of things in Canada.

Accordingly, there is no reason for the Liberal members to think the House will not endorse the statement he made in 1985. We could have taken all the ones he has made since then, but we chose 1985: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate". We will see whether the GST is the only issue where the Prime Minister reversed himself or whether, in the constitutional matter as well, he will suddenly deny all he has said on different occasions over a very long period of time.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the Chair to rule on an issue which was brought to our attention a few moments ago, whether it is either customary or even procedurally acceptable that members share their time on the original motion.

It has been customary in the past for the length of speeches of all members to be 20 minutes. Later on, for subsequent speakers, in particular during the second round, the whip can rise, and I believe under the rules only the whip can do it, to invoke Standing Order 43, by which he or she will then state members can from that point on share their time.

What occurred this morning was irregular in two ways. I would like the Chair to consider this and rule on it later. The initial speaker indicated to the Chair that he wished for all Liberal members to have their time shared. I believe that proposition is in itself irregular and that it must be done by the whip.

Occasionally members have between themselves agreed to share their time, but that was not the proposition advanced this morning. That proposition was put forward by an MP who is not the whip.

He asked that all members of his party be allowed to share their time. I do not believe that is provided for in Standing Order 43.

The second point is that I do not believe the Speaker has entertained that proposition in the past at the request of the initial speaker on any particular motion. It has always been done with subsequent speakers.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, I ask that you consider the two points I have brought to the attention of the Chair and to rule whether the suggestion by the hon. leader of the opposition is acceptable under our rules. I contend it is not and I ask the Chair to rule on that issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking of custom, I will not go back to times immemorial in this House but simply to March 20, 1996, which is not so far back. The same thing happened then. The hon. member for Medicine Hat shared his time. He was the first speaker, and the issue was the GST. Imagine that. He shared his time with the member for Capilano—Howe Sound who moved an amendment. This was on March 20, 1996.

• (1030)

The Chair did not see anything irregular in that. That time, our Liberal friends did not rise to protest. I understand that they may have regretted it afterward. They had some problems with the GST, but this was on March 20, 1996. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this double standard is unacceptable. Even a triple standard, a rule for the third party, a rule for the party in power and another one for the Bloc Québécois.

On March 20, 1996, everything was clear. Unless there is an error in *Hansard*, nobody spoke up. I note that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was present. He made no objection. The member shares his time, the member with whom he shares it amends the motion. This was on March 20, 1996, not so long ago.

Beauchesne did not deal with this issue, he did not have the time. I suppose that if he had, people on the other side would have risen to protest that it did not make sense. Let us not try, by devious means, to prevent the opposition from holding a political debate of great importance.

[*English*]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, there are a few points I want to bring to your attention.

First, it is well-known that one case does not make a precedent. The Speaker has not ruled and so no jurisprudence can be invoked. If Mr. Speaker does not rule on the previous case no one can claim that it is good precedence.

Supply

I would argue the following and invite you, Mr. Speaker, to consider this. If this—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Plamondon: Your French is very good.

Mr. Boudria: I want to tell the member opposite that I have no reason to be ashamed of the chance, the honour and the privilege I have, in this country, to speak both official languages. I do not have to apologize to him. I think I am competent in both languages and I am free to choose the one that pleases me. As a Canadian, it is my privilege and my right, a concept—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I ask all those who want to speak to this matter to be co-operative and to stick to the point of order.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Chair to consider this proposal: if what was just done is allowed under our rules, it could—and I invite the Chair to think about this carefully—make it impossible to amend this motion or any other opposition motion in future. The first speaker could table his motion and the following one, from the same party, could ask the previous question, which would preclude all amendments.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to do whatever is necessary to invalidate what the opposition leader asked for this morning. Otherwise, it would completely change the rules of the House of Commons.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, since this concerns me primarily, I would like to make a few points for your consideration. First, our Standing Orders are full of provisions which, when used properly by the House, shorten debates or prevent the taking of a vote, make it compulsory to have a debate or prevent debate.

The Standing Orders are full of provisions which, when used properly by parliamentarians, as is usually the case here, have an impact on the nature and the course of the proceedings.

• (1035)

Therefore, it is not justified to strike this particular provision from the Standing Orders or overturn the ruling already made, otherwise the Standing Orders would have to be reviewed entirely and many provisions amended. If the hon. whip wants to embark on such an operation, he should consult his House leader, and we will see. But for the time being, this cannot be taken into account, otherwise it would also apply to a lot of other provisions.

Second, I would like to respectfully point out to the hon. government whip that, before going ahead in this manner, mindful as I always am to follow not only the spirit but also the letter of our Standing Orders, I consulted the Chair and the Principal Clerk of the House, and they both confirmed, rightly I must say—they could

just as easily have ruled otherwise—that the ruling already rendered and the practice of the House allowed me to ask that we all share our time.

Therefore, I followed the directive of the House, on the recommendation of its principal officer and on your recommendation, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I do not know why—

Mr. Bellehumeur: The Liberals had no objection.

Mr. Gauthier: Indeed, there was no objection from anyone when I did it. Moreover, the hon. whip raised his point after I had finished speaking. If he had any objection, some of his colleagues were there across the way when you agreed to my request and everybody thought it was all right.

Why all of a sudden, once I have finished my speech, would I no longer be allowed to do it? Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to take these elements into consideration in your ruling.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I understand the comments made by my hon. friend, it is important to mention that it was out of respect for the fact that he was in the middle of making his speech that no one rose at that time. It was a courtesy to the hon. member. We felt that it was important not to get up in the middle of his speech over one comment. Otherwise, we would be always standing.

While I accept the point that my hon. colleague made, I do not think that the Chair should take it too seriously. The points that the chief government whip made amply demonstrate some of the difficulties that we would endure if the Chair were to rule in a different way.

My hon. friend, the opposition House leader, has talked about a recent decision, but there was no decision of the Chair. It was a practice; not a decision of the Chair. It is only one practice. It does not make a ruling. There has been no ruling of the Chair.

There is no ruling and the chief government Whip has made that point. There is no precedent. If there were a precedent, then I would suggest that the chief government whip would not have risen at all.

I believe respectfully that the Chair should consider this matter in due course and we should be given an opportunity to hear what the Chair's ruling might be in this matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I think you authorized it by allowing the Leader of the Opposition to split his time. It is done regularly by members of the House. The whips do not always say: "Our members will be doing that". The members just rise and say: "I will share my time with my colleague". Liberals do it regularly.

Supply

If the member is so courteous today, I imagine it is only because, as a former leader of the rat pack, he experienced a special surge of politeness.

Nobody objected. They could have done so before the beginning of the speech and they did not. They realized later on that, since nobody had offered any opposition, a second member would speak. This member has the right to present amendments or not, just as much as any other member in this House.

• (1040)

I repeat there should not be two sets of rules, one for the party in office and one for the opposition. Next time, be prepared; that is all I can say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I will take the question under advisement and the Chair will rule on it later today.

[*English*]

I want to thank the chief government whip and the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on the government side for their interventions on this point of order.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the House leader of the official opposition for their statements on this very important issue. The Chair will study those statements very carefully.

An hon. member: We should suspend our proceedings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I do not think there is reason to suspend the proceedings of the House at this time. I do not have a crystal ball, but if the scenario suggested by the chief whip occurs and the second member to speak does present an amendment to the amendment, I will then take that new amendment under advisement, just as I will do so for the statements, as I said before. The Chair will then come back to the House with its final ruling as soon as possible.

Resuming debate. We were at questions and comments following the first statement of the Leader of the Opposition.

[*English*]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to ask a question of the leader of the Bloc. This is a major problem which at some point has to be addressed.

Within Quebec there are aboriginal peoples: Abenakis, Montagnais, Cree, Innu, Algonquin, Mohawk, Huron, Micmac, Malecite. According to Mr. Turp, the former adviser to the Bloc, they have the superior right to self-determination. Everyone knows about the outcome of the referendum taken by the Montagnais, Cree and

Innu. They are Quebecois. They are aboriginal people living in Quebec.

Within Montreal, for instance, there are 450,000 Italian Canadians. These are Canadian citizens living in Quebec. Twenty-three of the 30 ridings in Montreal voted no. The people in Hull, the Pontiac and eastern townships want to remain part of Canada.

How does the Leader of the Opposition intend to deal with this? Is he saying that 50 per cent plus 1 takes away the rights of all these people who want to remain Canadian citizens? It is a very difficult question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to get a question from the minister of Indian affairs because, for once in an exchange between the two of us, an answer will be given.

It is unacceptable for a politician, all the more so one invested with ministerial responsibilities, to continually disrupt major political debates with remarks which do not make any sense. Let me explain.

First of all, Quebec is an entity, Quebec is a territory, and Canada is made up, as far as I know, of ten provinces and two territories. When Canada was founded, it was not by the reunion of pieces of land to form Canada, leaving the rest to form a separate country. Recognized territories in their own right, provinces joined together to form the Canadian confederation. The last example is Newfoundland. Newfoundland joined as one, not as separate pieces, even though it had to go through a second and third referendum which passed with a majority of only 52 per cent.

• (1045)

When the Minister brings up the concept of partition, he knows full well that, should he venture on such grounds, what is true for Quebec would also be true for the rest of Canada. Canada is a collection of entities, Quebec being indivisible, just like Newfoundland and Ontario are indivisible. These complete entities constitute a whole, they are not the amalgam of small pieces of regions which form Canada.

When Newfoundland held a recent referendum to put an end to denominational schools, did the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, with his wonderful logic, rise to say that we should not take religion out of all Newfoundland schools? Some regions voted for it, some massively against it, and others were almost evenly divided. Did he rise to say: There is a problem in Newfoundland, we cannot take religion out of all schools, because there was not a majority everywhere?

He should understand that, in Quebec, the same logic applies. The people of Quebec, as his leader said on several occasions, has the right to decide its future. Should it decide to separate, so be it. Besides, what we are asking him to support is what his own leader said: "That the House endorse the declaration of the Prime Minister of Canada, who stated in 1985: 'If we don't win, I'll

Supply

respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate". The Prime Minister did not say: "I will accept the separation of small parts of Quebec", he said "I will—let them separate.

I quoted that statement on several occasions, and the Prime Minister always said the same thing. If the Indian affairs minister has difficulties with his leader's statements, that is his problem, but I would simply remind him that, on October 25, 1995, not long ago, his leader said: "Dear friends, Canada is now at a decisive moment in its history and people throughout Canada know this decision is in the hands of their fellow citizens in Quebec". The Prime Minister never used the logic of the minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and he never said Canada's future was in the hands of some citizens in some small parts of Canada that will go. Never. This is only the minister's logic.

The referendum that brought Newfoundland into the Confederation brought the whole province into it. The last referendum in Newfoundland to make schools non-denominational will bring about measures throughout the province of Newfoundland, even though there are some places where people did not vote in favour of that.

And the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development would want it to apply to only bits and pieces. That does not make any sense.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is very important. The big fuss made by the government this morning about the way we are proceeding shows how significant and important this motion is.

Later this afternoon we will see if the Prime Minister will vote against his own democratic philosophy. We will also see if Liberal members will disavow their own Prime Minister's statement by voting against the motion. Above all, we will know where the Prime Minister stands between his fine rhetoric and his concrete actions.

For us, democracy is sacred. It is one of the greatest political legacies we can leave to our children, and we will fight for this democracy, as our ancestors did in Quebec. That is why we are saying straight out that democracy has precedence over the law. The rule of law does not stand up to a democratic verdict.

• (1050)

When a people hands down a democratic decision, no government, no court, not even a constitution can stop this people. This kind of decision is so important that the federal government has intervened in both Quebec referendums. In 1980 and again in 1995, the federal government felt the need to intervene in Quebec's referendum debate because it knew that, in making a decision, the

people of Quebec were showing how important the democratic action of casting a ballot was to them.

In 1980—I will not insist on this because I think we all know our history, but it is still worthwhile to remind the members across the way who seem to have forgotten—in 1980, democracy was so important, the referendum was such an important event that the federal government had to intervene. Seventy-four out of the 75 Liberal members at the time put their seats at stake and made promises to Quebecers. Why? Because democracy is important, because the referendum results were important.

In 1995—a very recent event in everyone's memory—the federal government intervened once again. Once again, it made promises to the people of Quebec, including three major promises: distinct society, a right of veto, and the decentralization of powers. Everyone in Quebec knows that what was said in November and in the days following the referendum is rubbish; they did not keep the promise they made, in October 1995 for example.

Democracy will judge this government as it did following the unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982. It is democracy that will judge this government. It is also democracy, at the level of the Quebec people, that will decide whether or not Quebec will become a sovereign country.

What this means, I guess, is that the federal government took these two referendums seriously. It was fully aware of the implications. Moreover, just days before the last referendum, the Prime Minister of Canada addressed the nation, saying: "The decision the people of Quebec are about to make will be irreversible". That is quite a statement.

Indeed, in a democracy, when the people have spoken, it must be acknowledged and taken seriously, without interpretation. You do not come out and say that the result is not valid, because the question was not clear or what have you. You speak up when it is time to speak up. In 1980 and in 1995 for instance, the members opposite were involved in the debate. They participated in it. They should acknowledge the result, as they will have to acknowledge the result of the next referendum, which, this time, the people of Quebec will win.

The Prime Minister knows it. In his 1985 book entitled *Straight from the Heart*, he clearly stated: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate". There is no room for interpretation in there. This is the same man and he will accept separation if that is what the people of Quebec wish.

Why would he change his tune? In Quebec, we are used to hearing the Prime Minister make contradictory statements. But this week, he really surpassed himself. He has one version for Quebec, another one for English Canada and we learned he has yet another for the international community. Interviewed on an American program rebroadcasted in Mexico and Australia, he held a totally

different view of democracy, a view which may be more in keeping with international law and with the statement he made in his book in 1985.

The Prime Minister's rhetoric changes depending on the circumstances: before or after a referendum. He does not give the same definition of democracy in the days leading to a Quebec referendum and in the days following a Quebec referendum. His rhetoric and his definition of democracy change when he is the one planning a unilateral move, as in the case of the patriation of the Constitution in 1982. As far as I know, he had not been given any democratic mandate to patriate the Constitution, but he did just the same.

• (1055)

Now, when a majority of Quebecers decide through a democratic referendum that they want a country called Quebec, the Prime Minister will say it is illegal, or that Quebec cannot unilaterally decide to become independent. This makes no sense.

It did not really surprise me to hear the Prime Minister tell Quebecers, on the eve of a referendum, that their choice would be irreversible. Nor was I surprised to then hear him say that Quebec could not unilaterally declare its independence, and to find out that there is another version for international affairs.

What surprises me though is the government's strategy to take Quebecers head on. This surprises me. I am also surprised to see the Prime Minister join forces with a character such as Mr. Bertrand. This surprises me, considering the declaration made by the Prime Minister about the motion moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I would like to propose an amendment to the motion. I move:

.TPC Amendment

That the motion be amended by adding the following, immediately after the word "stated":

in Straight from the Heart,

Why do I move this amendment? Simply because I want the government to know exactly where the quote comes from. When we make a claim, we can prove it. When the official opposition makes a claim, it can prove it. The declaration referred to in our motion is in the book *Straight from the heart*, which the Prime Minister may have written at a quieter and less emotional time, probably when he was getting ready to run against John Turner for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

This statement is undoubtedly a more accurate reflection of the democratic spirit of the Prime Minister. I do not doubt for one moment that the Prime Minister is a democrat and that he really means what he wrote in 1985 in *Straight from the heart*. Given the

Supply

motion moved by the leader of the opposition and my amendment, members opposite have all the necessary information to make their decision.

I hope they will not disavow such an important statement from the Prime Minister. I hope the Prime Minister will not go back on his own word and will support the Bloc Quebecois motion, which reads:

That the House endorse the declaration of the Prime Minister of Canada, who stated in *Straight from the heart*, in 1985: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate."

This is what democracy is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The Speaker takes this amendment under advisement and will inform the House of its decision as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what my hon. colleague said, as I always do. In his view the Prime Minister has three different speeches for three different audiences.

Did his former leader, the now premier of Quebec, Mr. Bouchard, not have a different speech or a different commentary when he was in California trying to explain the concept of sovereignty to the American audience? In describing the concept of sovereignty in the United States he was trying to liken it to the sovereign state of California, and the Americans could not quite understand that.

• (1100)

I am wondering whether my colleague wishes to comment on the confusion which occurs. Perhaps it is planned with crooked questions that are being put to people, with questions that are confusing, with questions that in fact supplant democracy. We believe in democracy, as my hon. colleague knows. However, when my colleague talks about different kinds of speeches he might want to reflect in the mirror or have his leader reflect in the mirror about the kinds of speeches his leader is giving to the ethnic communities and business communities in Quebec City and Montreal, the Toronto business community or to the California community.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's comments regarding Quebecers are quite scornful. Quebecers have made the distinction and they have no trouble understanding the words of the present Quebec premier, Mr. Lucien Bouchard.

The hon. member referred to Mr. Bouchard's visit to California. What the premier said there was consistent, for it was exactly what he said in Quebec, which is: "Yes, we must separate from Canada

Supply

to become a sovereign country." A sovereign country is never tied to another country.

Quebec does not wish to be more sovereign than France or England. To become a country, it must separate, of course. It is obvious from the speech of the member opposite that history keeps repeating itself: as they do not know history, Reform members have no idea of what is really at stake or, rather, they did not follow the referendum debate in Quebec.

I remember the hon. member in the Jacob case. Here again, Reform members do not know the background. They are unaware of the Referendum Act and of the tripartite agreement. They do not know what the question was, and now they criticize us.

No part of Mr. Bouchard's speech can be compared with the contradictory and inconsistent speeches made by the Prime Minister who, within one week, on the same subject, on an extremely important issue concerning democracy, said three totally different things. The hon. member would benefit from reading his leader's speeches to see how different they are.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to begin my speech by noting that the government has passed up its own first slot in terms of speaking in this debate. Obviously it wants to gauge what all the parties are going to do before it has a position. This is fairly typical of the government and on this particular question it is totally irresponsible. Let me make that absolutely clear.

The motion states that the House recognize or adopt as its own the statement by the Prime Minister in 1985: "If we do not win, I will respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate". I draw the attention of the House to the French version which reads "will accept separation".

I am rising today on behalf of my party to oppose this motion. However I do want to thank the official opposition for bringing this motion before the House for a couple of reasons. It will allow some frank discussion of what is an important subject. There should be a clear communication between Quebecers and other Canadians on this. I also thank the official opposition for drawing the attention of the House to the inconsistencies of many Quebec federalists on these matters, particularly the inconsistencies of the Prime Minister.

• (1105)

The Prime Minister's position on these kinds of issues over the year has been an absolute mishmash of confusion. During the referendum itself he said, as has been pointed out, that the referendum result would be irreversible and that it would lead to separation. Then he also insisted that separation could never actually happen. He even suggested it would never be tolerated.

The Prime Minister has said recently that he opposes a unilateral declaration of independence. Then of course there is the aforementioned quote and others which suggest he would be open to accepting it. There is a pattern by the Prime Minister in particular of very dangerous vagueness, of a lack of clarity and outright contradiction on a subject that probably more than any other subject before the House requires absolute precision.

Instead, over the years, when it comes to relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada, between English Canadians and French Canadians, we have seen from many traditional federalists dishonesty, vagueness and the outright manipulation of political and ethnic symbols. Probably the best example of that is the entire debate on the distinct society clause, which I hope to address in my remarks today.

The history of contradiction and mixed messages reached a dangerous crescendo in the last referendum. The Prime Minister was asked by the leader of the Reform Party at the beginning of the campaign whether he would take the results of the referendum seriously, whether he would recognize that the vote would be either yes or no, one way or the other. The term was 50 per cent plus one. The leader of the Reform Party also asked if the Prime Minister would recognize that the vote had important and lasting consequences.

The Prime Minister, who only days before had said the vote was irreversible, in a sudden about face refused to give a straight answer to that question. Instead he attacked the leader of the Reform Party saying that it would be irresponsible to break up the country on a single vote, et cetera. He went on to suggest that he would not even recognize a vote to separate under any circumstances, although of course he was vague on that.

That was a very interesting response. It set the tone for the entire referendum campaign. It is so typical of the way the Quebec Liberals have handled this debate. In making that kind of an answer he was, as he always is, deliberately sending mixed messages to an English speaking audience and to a French speaking audience.

In English speaking Canada he was taking the position that the country was indivisible, that it was certainly not divisible by this tiny vote and that he would stand up against it. He would stand up against the Bloc and the Reform Party to ensure that the country stayed together. However, in French Canada he sent a very different message. The message was that voting for separation really would have no consequences. It was a message that undermined the entire federalist campaign. As we know, every street corner in Montreal had a sign that said "separation". All of a sudden they could vote yes and there would not be separation.

It ultimately led to the Prime Minister's complete about face at the end of the campaign. Far from waging a campaign simply against separation in Verdun, he began to make all kinds of promises about constitutional and other changes. Actually, he did

Supply

not promise constitutional change, as he has pointed out. He sort of hinted at it. He was actually just promising change, but he wanted people to think it was constitutional change. Then he tried to get out of that after the referendum. That is his pattern of behaviour.

More important and something the Prime Minister still does not seem to realize is that he sent a mixed message on both sides of the question. It is impossible for him to get up and say that he does not recognize 50 per cent plus one, without sending the message that he does not recognize it either way. When in the end, the result was a very small victory for the no side, the Prime Minister's message that small votes do not count meant that he had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. It is not surprising that no one accepts the result of the referendum as final. He himself said it was not, especially when it was by a small majority.

• (1110)

The contradictions do not end there. Since the last referendum the Prime Minister has made a statement to the Government of Quebec which does reflect the views of Canadians both inside Quebec and outside Quebec. He said that the Government of Quebec should forget about sovereignty, get on with the economy and respect the results of two referendums which have rejected sovereignty. I would agree with that.

However, the Prime Minister himself insists on resurrecting elements of his own constitutional agenda which have been twice rejected. The distinct society clause was rejected in Quebec and outside of Quebec in a national referendum on the Charlottetown accord. In the case of the Meech Lake accord, it was rejected without a referendum vote because nobody in the Conservative government would even dare put that to a referendum. It is important to note it was rejected in the Liberal leadership race by the Prime Minister himself who ran against it and got elected by being against it. He now wants to resurrect it. It is absolutely incredible. And we wonder why there is mistrust among Canadians on subjects like this one.

The government has intervened in the Bertrand decision, the case that brought this matter to the fore. My party and I have said that we support the intervention on the narrow issue that the Minister of Justice is intervening on. That is the issue that the Constitution and Canadian law must be respected and do have a role to play in any process of secession by a province. Even here there are contradictions.

I asked the Minister of Justice, what is the precise role laid out by the Constitution? What is the process of separation which they are defending? He said that he did not know. Experts have different opinions, the government has none. There is a role for the Constitution although we do not know what it is.

It is even more contradictory than that. I asked the government this very question in October 1994. I posed questions to the then Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who is now President of the Treasury Board, on October 17, 1994. On October 19, 1994 during the adjournment debate, I received an answer from the then parliamentary secretary which contained this statement: "The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, for whom I am answering, believes that the Constitution acts do not provide any rules or procedures for secession of one of the provinces".

In other words, the government then had a position which was almost identical to the position of the Government of Quebec: that the Constitution is silent on these matters, and it is a political question. If we read the rest of the answer that is precisely what the government stated, although now it has changed its position. It has changed its position to the correct position, nevertheless it has changed its position once again.

Yesterday the leader of the Reform Party moved a motion in the House to assert that this House will not recognize a unilateral declaration of independence. Unbelievably, I was asked by members of the press why we would possibly want this motion moved and voted on. It is for the simple reason that this government and the Prime Minister cannot stick to a line on this issue for more than a month. That is why. Let us get it on the record.

My view reflects the fact that I believe there is a serious split in cabinet on the entire issue. It is not a split only between soft liners and hard liners. It is a split between certain ministers from Quebec and certain ministers from the rest of Canada who I will not name.

• (1115)

It is a dangerous game. We have had this problem from the Quebec Liberals, not only federally but provincially, for some years. They want to take a position that is federalist and pan-Canadian, but only from Quebec's perspective. It is the dangerous game of being very unsure whether we defend the rights of Canada as a country and as a nation.

That is why we have, as we see once again this week, Mr. Johnson in Quebec City and the Quebec Liberal Party constantly being led into position where they are parroting the constitutional framework of the Parti Quebec, the framework of self-determination.

This has led particularly to the Quebec Liberals and traditional federalists in Quebec putting all their eggs in the basket of the distinct society clause. This in itself is a perfect example of why we have misunderstanding and distrust in this country.

It is a nationalist slogan. What would be the purpose of putting the distinct society clause in the Constitution? The purposes are unspecified. When we say it means special status, the government

Supply

says it does not mean special status. When we amend it to make it clear that it does not mean special status, the government says it would have no legal weight. We ask would it unify the country. Yes, but it would be a first step. A first step to what?

The basic reality is, as we have seen so many times with this assertion of the separatist movement that Quebec's language, culture and civil code have never been recognized in Canada. That is absolute nonsense. Nevertheless it is the very basis on which the proposal for the distinct society clause is made.

In the process Quebec federalists repeat in effect the very assertions of the separatist movement that Quebec's language, culture and civil code have never been recognized in Canada. That is absolute nonsense. Nevertheless it is the very basis on which the proposal for the distinct society clause is made.

Let me move to our position. It is clear. As Reformers, we would not accept simple separation on a simple majority vote. We voted on this issue in the House in December 1994 when we voted on the concept of self-determination. Only a few months ago we had a debate on whether Quebecers constituted a people under international law and therefore possessed the right to self-determination.

In both cases we took the position that Quebec does not have a unilateral right to separate on its own terms. This has always been our position. We took that position consistently.

At that time the government in those votes and debates also took that position. It is important for English Canadians to understand that the Progressive Conservative Party has not taken that position. It has taken the opposite position. It has consistently skipped debates and votes whenever that issue has arisen.

Although we do not accept a referendum result in Quebec as a mandate to separate, we accept it as a mandate to negotiate separation. We would expect the federal government to respond in good faith. We would go farther. Canadians, including Quebecers, are fooling themselves if they believe a yes vote would lead to anything other than separation.

It would begin an inexorable path that would lead to separation in one form or another. We would maintain one probably not satisfactory to either Quebec or to the rest of Canada. It would probably damage our interest. Nevertheless it would lead in that direction.

We have also made clear that we would accept majority rule as the basis for that mandate to negotiate. No other position will really be tenable as a practical political matter.

Let me make some reference to the last referendum. I would qualify it to this degree. In the last referendum the Government of

Quebec was measuring 50 per cent plus one. It was measuring a majority as a majority of the valid votes cast.

• (1120)

We say a majority should be measured as a majority of all votes cast. In other words, a majority cannot be attained through the elimination of ballots or through invalidating ballots. That must never be allowed to happen. The majority must be absolutely clear in the sense that it must be a majority of all votes.

Let us recognize the political realities. We know the demographics in the province of Quebec. The majority of votes cast for a sovereignty mandate should be the majority of the population, which represents not only the majority of the people and the majority of the Government of Quebec but a majority of the ridings and, I know this is heresy, a majority of the ethnic base of the francophone Quebec voter.

Not that I consider that any more legitimate than anybody else's vote, but we have to face facts here. No matter what the Bloc Quebecois says, we are dealing with an ethnic nationalist movement and it is seeking an ethnic nationalist mandate. That is a political reality.

I also point out for those federalists who accuse me or the Reform Party of being weak on Canada by accepting a majority vote, it is not Canada which suffers from this position. It is the government and the people of Quebec who suffer from this position, as I pointed out during the referendum debate.

If the Government of Quebec chooses to go into a negotiation in which it has 51 per cent or 52 per cent support, it puts itself into an extremely weak bargaining position with the rest of the country. The rest of the country does not want separation. Many people, if not most, are extremely hostile to Quebec's separation. Therefore Quebec will face the rest of Canada which is united. It will bring Quebec to the table in a position where Quebecers are extremely weak and divided.

The final deal would have to be ratified by all partners to the Constitution. Our preference is that it would be through a referendum. However, let me be clear this is not to stop Quebec from leaving. It is my opinion that if Quebec ever voted to leave the rest of Canada would want Quebec gone. That would be the attitude that would take hold after a few weeks.

What the rest of Canada would insist on is a settlement that respected its interests. The rest of Canada has lots of bargaining chips if it would choose to go to the table and would receive a settlement that would reflect its interests. Ultimately Quebec would be in a far worse position than it would be if it simply stayed in Canada and negotiated a renewed federalism.

Canadians and Quebecers should back away from extreme positions on this. One extreme position is that we can respect

democracy without respecting the rule of law. Some sovereignists say that. Some federalists say we can respect the rule of law and somehow work around the democratic will. That is also a dangerous position and the thinking of some Liberals.

The only position if we ever get into this secession thing deeper is to proceed by respecting both. Even Mr. Lévesque in 1980 insisted there had to be a mandate to negotiate and there would have to be a second referendum. I ask the sovereignists to look at their own history on this matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member opposite has just said worries me. I wonder if he has seriously considered the implications.

The hon. member told us that if an unspecified majority of Quebecers were to vote yes in a referendum, he would prefer Quebec to leave Canada as quickly as possible, or something of the kind.

Has the hon. member seriously considered the implications of what he has just said? Does he not think those are irresponsible comments, especially on the part of someone who claims to be a federalist, and that comments such as these are almost as difficult to swallow and as contemptuous as those made by the Bloc Québécois? Would it not be appropriate for the hon. member to reconsider his remarks to the effect that, in a matter of weeks after a referendum, Canadians in the rest of the country would like to get rid of Quebec as a member of the Canadian federation?

• (1125)

Does he not think a close association that lasted more than 130 years is worth more than a few weeks before we decide to get out of it? Does he not think, after reconsidering, that his remarks should at least be left out of the Debates of the House of Commons?

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to the attention of the Chair the fact that the whip has used the word “contemptuous” about the Bloc Québécois, and therefore about members in this House. Could he please withdraw these words?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): With all due respect, I think the hon. member for Richelieu is on a point of debate.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, this position is in no way different from the one I have expressed in the past, even on national television. I am saying that we have to abide by the rule of law and the democratic will. If a majority of Quebecers vote for separation, it will be impossible to ignore that reality.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): But the same thing holds true for Quebec. Even if separatists are applauding, it is just the same for

Supply

Quebec. If a large proportion, if millions of Quebecers vote no, that political reality cannot be ignored in the separation process, and that is why there is a partitionist movement. That is a reality.

[*English*]

I am surprised the member finds this shocking. Of course Canadians want to keep their country together. They do so on the assumption that all Canadians want to be a part of this country. We have been told for years, and I think the majority of Canadians believe it, that in spite of the separatist movement and its power the majority of Quebecers want to remain Canadians.

However, if the majority of Quebecers express themselves in a democratic referendum and make it absolutely clear they do not want to be Canadian, it will change the attitudes in the rest of the country.

If we have intelligent leadership that cares about the interests of the rest of the country, we will then negotiate sovereignty in a way that is quick, peaceful and in the best interests hopefully on both sides but particularly in the best interests of Canada.

We will not go to the barricades and have civil strife and unrest so that we can keep a bunch of Liberals sitting in power in Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the speech made by the hon. member for Calgary West reminded me why the referendum results went from 40 per cent in 1980 to 49.4 per cent in 1995. Why is it that Canada has not been able to adapt to this change?

Does the hon. member think that the results were affected somewhat by the message the current Prime Minister has been sending for some time now, when he says that there is no constitutional issue to be resolved in Canada, and that the problems between Quebec and Canada will solve themselves if we have a good government?

Is it not also the result of trying to hide the fact that the Canadian Constitution is outdated and needs to be changed, from a federalist point of view—need I remind you that I am a sovereignist—but from a federalist point of view, after 16 years of inaction on the part of the federal government?

Is it not the best message that could be sent to Quebecers to let them know that the system cannot be changed from the inside, but more importantly, outside Quebec, in the rest of Canada, does the message sent by the current Prime Minister not lead Canadians to believe that there is no problem, when in fact we are still faced with a problem and all we see are the Prime Minister's efforts to create a diversion?

Supply

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as a federalist reformer, I have said several times that we do recognize the need to overhaul the federal system.

• (1130)

That, by itself, cannot explain the influence of the sovereignty movement, because there is also dissatisfaction with the federal system in Western Canada, although there is no sovereignty movement. Of course, the situation is different over there.

I agree that the message the Prime Minister sent during the referendum campaign was a factor in the increased support for sovereignty. What I am saying is that if Quebecers had voted No, they would have obtained nothing. It would have meant the status quo, of course, the end of everything, but no reform and no promises.

In his speech in Verdun, the Prime Minister said that if Quebecers were to vote No, they would get some constitutional concessions, and that a Yes vote would not be dangerous since separation would never occur.

With messages such as these, we can easily explain, I think, why the undecided voted Yes. I hope we can change things around, but it will not be easy. We will try to convince Quebecers of two things: first, that the federal system can be significantly changed for all Canadians, and second, that sovereignty will not change the important stuff and will not be in the best interest of the province of Quebec.

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): I want to thank the hon. member for Calgary West who at least understands and is honest enough to say that he does not agree with referendums that lead to separation but that he would accept that kind of outcome. If Quebecers really vote for Quebec sovereignty, he will respect their decision. What is important to him is not simply a fistful of money or his own job as a member of Parliament but the will of the Quebec people, and I want to thank him for this.

However, he has encouraged us to continue negotiating. I want to remind him that we have been trying to change the federal system since 1763, since 1838. Only recently, as he said himself a moment ago, the Prime Minister promised real changes during the referendum campaign. Everything was recorded but we did not get anything.

Does the hon. member really believe that it is possible to change the federal system? I do not.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, this is not an easy question. We suggested reforms to the federal system and I note two things. The Prime Minister made commitments for reform during the referendum campaign but he did not have a mandate from the rest of Canada to do so. Moreover, do not forget that it was

Lucien Bouchard himself who spoke about a partnership with the rest of Canada. This was his basic platform during the last referendum campaign.

To have a partnership you need partners. A partnership is negotiated among partners. It is impossible even for the sovereignist movement to go on with its own plan without negotiating or getting the consent of the rest of Canada.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having had the honour of being elected by the citizens of Saint-Laurent is particularly relevant to what I am about to say in my maiden speech in the House of Commons.

• (1135)

I will never be able to express my gratitude sufficiently to the constituents of Saint-Laurent—Cartierville for having chosen me to represent them. This diverse and harmonious community inhabited by over 50 different nationalities fully integrated into Quebec society intends to exercise its right to remain in Canada.

I dedicate what I am about to say to all the young people I met during my election campaign last March. Sometimes speaking in French, sometimes in English, and often in one or two other languages, a sign of how well equipped they are for the next century, these young people sadly told me that they were not sure their future lay in either Saint-Laurent or Montreal. They belong in Montreal and to the surrounding area, that is their home.

And rather than leave, they must convince their fellow Quebecers that belonging to more than one group is a source of strength, not a contradiction. They must convince their fellow Canadians in other provinces that recognizing the distinct nature of Quebec is not a threat to Canadian unity, but, on the contrary, a wonderful way to celebrate one of Canada's fundamental characteristics.

The theme of this first speech will be democracy, which the opposition invites us to consider this May 16, 1996, by presenting the following motion:

That the House endorse the declaration of the Prime Minister of Canada, who stated in *Straight from the Heart*, in 1985, "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

This quotation is taken out of context by the official opposition. It goes back to 1970, and was repeated by Mr. Chrétien in 1985. In the same passage, the current Prime Minister also said: "We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win". We'll put our faith in democracy. This reliance on democracy is an invitation to us to consider the meaning of the word, and to ponder the teachings of the classics.

Let us begin with that great prophet of democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville, and I quote: "I consider unjust and ungodly the maxim that, in matters of government, a majority of the people

Supply

have the right to impose their will". De Tocqueville is saying that democracy cannot be limited to the rule of the majority, because it also includes the rights of minorities, and of the smallest minority of all, the individual, the flesh and blood citizen.

The second classical author I call on is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. I will quote him in English.

[*English*]

The more important and serious the decisions, the closer the prevailing opinion should be to unanimity.

[*Translation*]

What Rousseau is setting out here is not obviously the rule of unanimity, which clearly is impracticable. What he is showing us is that the more a decision threatens the rights of individuals, the more irreversible it is and the more it involves future generations, the more stringent must be the procedure democracy selects for the adoption of this decision.

This brings me to the fine quote of Montesquieu linking democracy tightly with universal solidarity. And I quote: "If I knew of something that could serve my nation but would ruin another, I would not propose it to my prince, for I am first a man and only then a Frenchman—because I am necessarily a man, and only accidentally am I French.

Tocqueville, Rousseau, Montesquieu. With these three French authors, no one can accuse me of distancing myself from francophone tradition. In fact, however, the principles these three set out are universal and have guided constitutional democracies in establishing their rules of law. These principles are the reason that the supremacy of law is a vital component of democracy.

Let us apply these principles to the issue dividing us in Canada: secession. It is defined as a break in solidarity among the citizens of a common country. This is why international law in its great wisdom extends the right of self-determination in its extreme form, that is the right of secession, only in situations where a break in solidarity appears *de facto* to be incontrovertible.

Let us quote, in this regard, the five experts who testified before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. I quote: "Legally, Quebec's eventual declaration of sovereignty cannot be based on the principle of the equality in law of peoples or their right to self-determination, which permits independence only to colonial peoples or to those whose territory is under foreign occupation".

• (1140)

The secessions that have taken place to date have always arisen out of decolonization or the troubled times that follow the end of totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. It is not simply a matter of chance that no well established democracy with a minimum of ten

years of universal suffrage has ever faced secession. Such a break in solidarity appears very hard to justify in a democracy. International law and democratic principles encourage the people to remain united, not to break up.

While democracy infers that a group of people cannot be forced to remain within a country against their will, it also sets strict rules, which, under the law, maximize the guarantees of justice for all. That is what we learned from near-secessions that have taken place in stable democracies. It may be a good idea to review the procedure by which Switzerland, a fine example of democracy, managed to separate the Jura from the canton of Berne while being fair to all. We could also look at how the U.S.A. intend to consult the Puerto Ricans on their political future. Closer to home, we might consider the approach taken recently by Canada to transfer title, in all fairness, on lands in the north.

Now it the time to calmly set, under the law, mutually acceptable secession rules. Not two weeks before a referendum. The Government of Canada does not deny in any way the right of Quebecers to pull out of Canada, if such is their explicit wish. However, the Government of Canada does object to the Quebec government's plans to unilaterally set and change as it pleases the procedure according to which this right will be exercised and expressed. A unilateral declaration of independence would fly in the face of democracy and the rule of law.

What is not known is whether the secessionist leaders are able of entering into a calm, level-headed and reasoned discussion process. The coarse language used recently by the Premier of Quebec, who compared Canada to a prison, or Quebec's Minister of Finance, who compared the Canadian government to former totalitarian communist governments, is an insult to the memory of the East German and North Korean people who were killed trying to escape totalitarian prisons. Independentist leaders must take a grip on themselves and make responsible statements. Otherwise, they should be prepared to call every constitutional democracy a prison, as well as the separate entity they want to make of Quebec, whose territory they consider indivisible and sacred.

With mutually consented rules in place, Quebecers could then examine with some clarity the argumentation used by secessionist leaders to try to convince them to break their ties of solidarity with their fellows citizens of the maritimes, Ontario and western Canada. It is my belief that Quebec will find this secessionist argumentation very shaky.

Exploitation cannot be used as an argument to justify secession, when the Canadian federation is one the most generous for have-not regions. Neither can self-determination, or the lack of it, be used as an argument, as few other federal components in the world benefit from as much autonomy as Quebec does within the Canadian federation.

Supply

The only argument secessionist leaders could put forth is the fact that, according to several established criteria, Quebecers could be considered as a people and that each people must have its own state. This idea that any group of people that is different from the others must have its own state is terribly untrue.

• (1145)

The flawed equation “one people, one country” would blow up the planet. Experts have estimated at around 3,000 the number of human groups with a recognized collective identity. But there are fewer than 200 states in the world.

Quebecers and other Canadians should reflect on this fine statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and I quote:

[*English*]

If every ethnic region or linguistic group claimed statehood there would be no limit to fragmentation, and peace, security and well-being for all would become even more difficult to achieve.

[*Translation*]

Canada is the last place in the world where identity-based fragmentation should be allowed to prevail. In the eyes of the world, this country symbolizes better than any other the ideal of how different people can live together in harmony in a single state. In this regard, let us listen to President Clinton, who said, and I quote: “In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that literally tear nations apart, Canada has stood for all of us as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity and understanding. Canada has shown the world how to balance freedom with compassion”.

Many others have said the same thing about Canada. I will give just one other quotation:

[*English*]

Canada is a land of promise and Canadians are people of hope. It is a country celebrated for its generosity of spirit, where tolerance is ingrained in the national character.

[*Translation*]

“A society in which all citizens and all groups can assert and express themselves and realize their aspirations”. These words, which have the ring of truth and could have come from Sir Wilfrid Laurier or Pierre Trudeau, were pronounced on July 1, 1988, by the then Secretary of State, the Hon. Lucien Bouchard.

The Canadian government’s priority is to help Quebecers and other Canadians reconcile. They must speak to one another, stay in

closer contact, clear up misunderstandings, find ways to make their federation work better, and celebrate Quebec’s distinctiveness within Canada. They must reconcile, not only as fellow citizens but also as inhabitants of this poor planet. Let us bet on democracy.

Therefore, if the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm is deemed to be in order, I, seconded by the hon. member for Simcoe North, move:

That the motion be amended by deleting the words “in 1985” and by substituting for those words the following:

“in the 1970s and in 1985 as outlined on page 150 of his book *Straight from the Heart*: “We’ll put our faith in democracy. We’ll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we’ll win”.

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit that one cannot move an hypothetical amendment, like my colleague just did, because he said “if”. The issue is under advisement.

• (1150)

It is under advisement and as long as you have not ruled on the original amendment, the only thing one can do is to move an amendment to the amendment by the member for Berthier—Montcalm. In this sense, you have to rule on that matter.

Should you decide—and I do not think that your ruling will be along this line—but should you decide that the amendment is out of order, another amendment could then be moved by a member. This is very clear when you look at citation 581 which deals with amendments to amendments; it says that you cannot move an amendment when there is already one that has not been disposed of. This is the case now, and the issue is under advisement.

You must make a ruling. Once this is done, the whole series of amendments and amendments to amendments will start over again.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that there can be only one amendment. However, must I remind the Chair and the House that the Speaker has not yet ruled on the amendment? If the amendment is out of order, which it is not at this very moment, the minister is certainly allowed to propose another amendment.

The Chair, with the help of the Table officers, is considering whether the first amendment is in order, for two reasons: first, with regard to the substance of the amendment and, second, with regard to the point of order I raised as to whether the member had the right to propose an amendment when he did. Once the Chair rules that the first amendment is in order, if this is indeed the case, then the minister’s amendment will clearly be out of order.

But until the Chair rules on the first amendment, there is no amendment before the House and, therefore, the minister has the right to propose an amendment as he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Once again, I thank the House leader of the official opposition, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, and the chief government whip, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

First of all, I want to address the amendment brought forward by the official opposition. I believe it is in order in terms of substance. As for its timeliness, that issue is being considered as we speak. Therefore, there is no amendment before the House at this moment.

As for the amendment proposed by the minister, I will take it under advisement based on the ruling I will give in the first case and also on whether it is in order.

I will read to you the text of the amendment proposed by the minister: "That the motion be amended by deleting the words "in 1985" and by substituting for those words the following: 'in the 1970s and in 1985 as outlined on page 150 of his book *Straight from the Heart*: "We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win". The whole matter is being considered, and the Speaker will give his ruling to the House as soon as possible.

• (1155)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister and the House that the Prime Minister's answer followed a question which reads as follows: "At a town meeting—a Liberal got up and said 'Chrétien, when will you tell the separatists that there will never be independence, that the federal government will never allow it to happen?'" And the answer was: "But I did not agree—it is Mr. Chrétien who is speaking—. 'We'll put our faith in democracy,' I said. 'We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win. If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate'".

Can the minister explain to us why, in the amendment which he proposed and which may be in order, he deleted the part of the quote which appears in the Prime Minister's book: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

Why did the minister delete that part of the quote? In that quote, there are two parts: if we win, we will do this; if we lose, we will do that. That is how democracy works, it is making a choice between the two.

That is the question I am asking the minister, but I have one last comment to make.

In his speech, he said that Canada is practically the best country in the world. I would like to submit to him, for his consideration, a

Supply

few examples of what Quebecers and French speaking Canadians experienced in Canada.

The first example is the assimilation process in Manitoba, where the French language was forbidden for many years, with the acceptance of the rest of Canada for a very long time.

The second one is conscription, which was imposed on Quebecers despite their decision not to take part.

The third one is that, ever since unemployment rates have been calculated, unemployment in Quebec has always been 2, 3 or 4 per cent higher than the national average. Is that an interesting economic result? Is that acceptable?

For the fourth example, I will ask why, since 1982, all the successive governments in Quebec, whether federalist or sovereignist, never accepted to sign the Constitution that was patriated without Quebec's consent? Do you really think that this makes for an interesting country for Quebecers?

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, the moment you mention the possibility of winning, it infers the possibility of losing.

As I said before, what is at issue here is not the right of Quebecers to leave Canada if they so desire and clearly state it, but the Quebec government's claim to unilaterally choose and change at will the process through which this right will be exercised.

Let the official opposition name one constitutional democracy that would accept a unilateral process of this kind.

As far as the examples mentioned by the hon. member, countries have their problems, but it is no reason to split. If you want to go to the UN and explain why you want to secede, you will have to come up with more serious reasons than this. You will not get anybody to shed any tears over the problems we have had with the 1982 Constitution. As a matter of fact, other countries will be very surprised to hear your objections, since Quebec representatives in the federal government supported the new Constitution, since we can produce polls showing that at the time Quebecers tended to support Mr. Trudeau rather than Mr. Lévesque, since Mr. Lévesque, instead of calling a referendum, appeased his own party, since in the following elections the separatist party got only 2 per cent of the votes; if you add up all this, you will not get anybody in the UN to shed any tears with your arguments.

All they will say is that Canada is a normal country, a democracy where there are disagreements, and that these disagreements must be settled through mutual consent and within the law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before continuing with questions and comments, I would like to remind all the members that they are to address their comments to the Chair.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say that I am outraged at the lack of respect shown by the

Supply

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to 49.4 per cent of Quebecers who voted yes, when he said that it would not make anyone cry.

To exercise a democratic right is not to try to make people cry.

• (1200)

But to try to sell an idea such as that of secession is more serious. Still, I should thank the minister for his excellent "Politics 101" lecture and for referring to three great classics: Tocqueville, Rousseau and Montesquieu. His speech took me back to my university years. I want to quote someone whom the minister probably considers to be a great classic too, the current Prime Minister.

Let us put things in their proper context with this more recent statement from the Prime Minister: "I am a democrat. I said it in 1980 in many speeches to that effect. If we had not recognized that Quebec could make the decision to separate, we would have acted differently. We could have used some powers. We did not use them". This is from the Bélanger-Campeau report, December 17, 1990, page 1515.

I have a question for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Is he now telling us, after two referendums, after saying twice that the rules were fair and legal, after recognizing that we were democrats, that this is no longer the case and that the federal government will use the other powers alluded to in 1990? If so, what are these powers?

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's ideology makes him incredibly touchy. It is an ideology based on paranoia, an ideology that makes people feel constantly insulted, humili—

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The minister, who just recently arrived in this House, should not only learn its rules, but also the basic rules of politeness and respect for others. It is unacceptable on his part to use such words, first because he is insulting a colleague and, second, because he is insulting those who suffer from this disorder. It is unacceptable and the minister should retract himself and show that he was well brought up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I did not hear anything that would lead me to ask the minister to retract. However, I will take a look at the blues and deal with the issue if need be. I think we are engaged in a very important debate.

Both sides of the House stressed the importance of being respectful of each other. It may be even more important in the case of debates such as this one, on the official opposition's motion.

I am giving the floor back to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, I talked about an ideology based on paranoia. I will never say that the people themselves were paranoid and I do not want the hon. member to believe that I was talking about him personally. I just wanted to say that the ideology he supports makes people feel constantly insulted and under attack. I would say that the members' reaction and their request to have me gagged and to make me apologize show that I am right to point out how paranoid their ideology is.

• (1205)

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the minister explained what he meant by "an ideology based on paranoia" by saying: "Your ideology makes you feel paranoid", so that refers more—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Again, this is more a matter for debate than a point of order. I would remind the House that when some expressions or words are aimed at a group, they are deemed acceptable. However, when they are directly aimed at another parliamentarian, that is, as we say in Cornwall, a horse of a different colour. So, with due respect for this debate being held in the House of Commons during the 35th Parliament, I would ask the minister to resume his speech.

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, to say that some part of my speech was insulting to Quebecers is really paranoid, because, the 49.4 per cent of Quebecers who voted Yes did express their views. What was unfortunate during the last referendum is that we did not know exactly what a Yes vote would mean, because the rules of the game were not quite clear, as evidenced by the fact that the leader of the Yes side, Mr. Parizeau, on the night he lost the referendum, said that the 49.4 per cent was the result of the indépendantiste vote, an expression he never had the fortitude to use during the campaign itself. Rest assured that the Government of Canada is very worried about such a process that any constitutional democracy would find irresponsible.

As regards the quotes the opposition likes to use, which are in essence its only argument, I would like to point out that all the quotes the opposition have come up with show that Canada is quite ready to respect democracy but would never accept what any constitutional democracy would also find unacceptable, which is the violation of the law and a unilateral declaration of independence.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister can test the theory he has just described on the public to find out if they see it the same way. I put my seat on the line and invite him to try and get elected in my riding with its francophone majority. In order to get elected, the minister had to go through the side door. But let him face the people, let him try his luck in my riding. I wager my seat against his theories. He will see just what the public thinks of his wonderful philosophy. Democracy is a majority vote, the desire of a people to become sovereign or

remain in a federation. When the Russian federation broke up, the first government in the world to recognize all the small sovereign countries was the Canadian government. But when the same thing happens at home, it is a different story? Come on. What sort of respect for democracy is that?

• (1210)

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, the first government in the world to recognize the new republics created after the fall of the soviet empire was the Russian government. If I were happy with the state of opinion in Quebec and in Canada, I would be at the university today.

I am well aware that numerous francophones in Quebec believe that it is a contradiction to identify themselves both as Quebecers and as Canadians, and that they must resolve this contradiction by leaving Canada.

I intend to do everything in my power to convince my fellow Quebecers that they must not give up on Canada. If ever I fail, after rules expressing clearly and unambiguously what the people of Quebec want, we should take steps in a manner that is fair to everyone to bring about what for me would be a very sad thing, the secession of Quebec.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville just made an interesting speech in some respects, even though parts of it were rather shocking. It was interesting because this man, who has his own vision of Canada, concluded his speech by saying that if he cannot convince Canadians that his vision is the right one, he will be sad.

The problem is that, since 1960, Quebec's premiers of all political stripes have repeatedly tried to find a real place for Quebec through negotiations with the rest of Canada. And they have repeatedly failed to obtain satisfactory results.

The Deputy Speaker: I am told the member for Mercier will have the floor to resume debate after questions and comments. The minister has 30 seconds to respond and I will then give the floor to the member for Mercier.

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, from what I understood, the member just said that Quebecers and Canadians have had an ongoing dialogue for 30 years, which is normal in any federation, and that, according to her, this dialogue would justify the break-up of Canada.

Well, I will repeat what I have been saying since the beginning. We are talking about Canada, one of the most decentralized federations in the world. In my mind Canada is the most decentralized. Experts recognize that it is one of the most decentralized federations.

Supply

When we talk about one of the most independent federations in the world, if Quebecers let themselves be persuaded that it is not enough and that they have to separate from the rest of Canada, one of the problems they would face is that they would have to explain to their own minority that they refused one of the most generous independent status in the world without even being able to give them the same status. It would be sad and very difficult to swallow. A reconciliation within Canada would be so much better.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville is not the first to enter politics and to think that, because he is a politician, he will convince Canadians. I also have a great perception of Canada.

I came to the conclusion that the best way for this country to continue to give an example it has often given is to recognize, given its nature, that it cannot and does not want to give Quebecers the place they believe is necessary and, consequently, that it is better at this time, as many authorities in English Canada are starting to say, to make preparations to recognize that Quebec can become sovereign, and to negotiate an agreement with it. This agreement is called a partnership in Quebec and can be called otherwise elsewhere. This is where the real solution, the real hope lies. Not in plan B which the minister himself has flirted with.

• (1215)

Not in plan B that, unfortunately—and I was extremely sad about this because I know many colleagues opposite—the Liberal caucus discussed in Vancouver. The latest episode in plan B is the government's involvement, I do not know on whose advice, in lawyer Guy Bertrand's case.

I would like to point this out: for all lovers of democracy, what is Mr. Bertrand's logic? It is that Quebecers, who are a people, used their right to self-determination in 1867? So much for democracy. What referendum took place in 1867?

Guy Bertrand is saying: "Quebec used its right to self-determination once, when members of Parliament voted for Confederation", but we know that Confederation was a colonial act, the British North American Act. This Constitution was only patriated in 1982 and Quebec parliamentarians unanimously voted against it.

When Guy Bertrand says Quebec used its right to self-determination, when only members of Parliament voted for Confederation, he is leading the government down a road it may not wish to take, as it has spoken of letting Quebec clearly express its will.

This issue of democracy is central to the evolution of the sovereignist movement in Quebec. And I can even tell you that, over several years, I heard Guy Bertrand say repeatedly and eloquently that the 1982 Constitution was loathsome and that the National Assembly of Quebec could declare independence alone, without a referendum.

Supply

On the contrary, the sovereignist movement is the full embodiment of democracy. Over the years, it has, to quote a prominent French politician "accepted that its progression is the progression of the slowest". This was said by Michel Rocard, who, at that time, confessed that he had great respect for our way of doing things. Yes, Quebec's sovereignist movement accepts all the demands of democracy. And its behaviour has been exemplary in that regard.

Quebecers are becoming increasingly aware that they have no future for them unless they become masters of their own destiny, because they cannot take it any more, as many Canadians are tired of constantly discussing the basic conditions required for Quebec's recognition. Canadians are fed up, Quebecers are fed up, but this situation must be resolved once and for all.

We are a people and a nation. This is an inescapable fact. This is a historical fact. This is a fact the hon. member recognizes when he says that, sadly, it must be acknowledged that sovereignty is desirable, because the people of Quebec are the ones who will choose to become sovereign. The inescapable fact is that we are a pluralistic people and nation, which accepts and includes everyone living on its territory.

We equate sovereignty with the quest for the majority's approval, an approval that has been sought long and hard, with all the difficulties we went through.

• (1220)

To come out with statements to the effect that Quebecers would not make anybody cry is to ignore the emotions felt worldwide during the last referendum, where, I would say, the world admired the open and honest debate that went on and the way people accepted the result. Even if it was extremely close, there was no expression of indignation from the many Quebecers, not only francophones but also people of other origins with whom I have worked for a long time, from all those people who, for years and years, have dedicated their life to this cause in which they strongly believe.

The government has to stop trying to prevent Quebecers from proposing to Canada the ideal image that the minister should commit to, and that is to ensure that Quebec and Canada, once sovereignty is achieved, negotiate a partnership that will allow everybody, both Canadians and Quebecers, to address the most pressing issues that we have to set aside until this situation is resolved.

I have a series of amendments. If the Bloc amendment is rejected, I propose the following amendment to the amendment proposed by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville:

That the following be added after the word "win":

"adding that he would recognize the independence of Quebec if he lost".

If the amendment put forward by the member for Berthier—Montcalm is deemed to be in order, I move an amendment to the amendment.

That the amendment be amended by adding the words "the book" between the words "in" and "*Straight from the Heart*".

If both amendments are defeated, I move:

That the motion be amended by adding the following immediately after the word "stated":

"in his book, *Straight from the Heart*, on page 150".

The Deputy Speaker: My colleagues, this is becoming very complicated. We will consider the matter and give an opinion as soon as possible. In the meantime, we can talk about any other subject related to today's debate.

• (1225)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member quoted a well known French political figure, Michel Rocard, to support her argument. I am always pleased to hear the extraordinary variety of points of view that come to us from that great pluralistic democracy, the Fifth French Republic, which proclaims itself an indivisible whole, and whose Prime Minister was recently quoted as finding the very idea of holding a referendum in Corsica on the future of Corsica ridiculous.

The truth is that the Canadian government's position on the right to secede is more conciliatory than that of many other western democracies. It is not saying that secession is always forbidden, but rather that a decision such a secession by one province cannot be made unilaterally. It must be done with the consent of the parties concerned and within the law. That was the position of the Government of Quebec and of the Government of Canada in 1980, and it is still the position of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Bouchard needs to get hold of himself. Instead of insulting the East Germans and the North Koreans who lost their lives in escaping totalitarian regimes, instead of saying that Canada is not a real country, he ought to keep in mind that, in free societies, in democratic and peaceful societies, the usual way to arbitrate disagreements and to settle conflicts is to plead one's case before the courts and to recognize the right of one's adversaries to do likewise.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. minister, who no doubt is much more aware of this than I, having taught political science for a long time, that facts come before laws, and that before there were constitutions there were peoples who constituted themselves before creating constitutions.

The people of Quebec are a people and a nation, one which, I repeat, has never subscribed to the Constitution. The Constitution began by being colonial, and when it was brought to Canada through the good graces of Trudeau, the National Assembly in its

entirely rejected the 1982 Constitution. Since that time, in Canada, in Canada outside Quebec, there has been a debate on how Quebec will, or will not, be allowed to rejoin the ranks of the Constitution.

During his term, Prime Minister Mulroney, regardless of what other qualities or shortcomings we ascribe to him, tried to make room for Quebec in the 1982 Constitution. This gave rise to Meech, this gave rise to Charlottetown.

This is the truth, a fact, not just a notion. What needs doing is not to convince Quebecers that Canada is an ideal country, but to find a concrete solution so that Quebec will at last have the powers it requires to develop as it is entitled to develop.

Mr. Dion: Mr. Speaker, the whole basis is there. What law is the hon. member speaking of? It is not international law, which extends the right of secession only in cases of decolonialization or manifest exploitation. It is not Canadian law, which does not give a province the right to secede unilaterally.

So, if she is not speaking about a formal law, she should recognize that it is high time we talked calmly about rules that would be acceptable to everyone in order to ensure that Canadians are treated fairly in all circumstances.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, never in this fairly long stretch separating us from the two referendums has the Government of Canada said such things. It always distinguished between politics and the Constitution.

Why, when we almost won the latest referendum, did it change its opinion? I hope with all my heart that my colleague opposite is not the person advising this government to change its attitude, which was the right one in a democracy.

• (1230)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to start with I would like to recall the thrust of the opposition motion. In the seventies the Prime Minister of Canada said, as reported in his book *Straight from the Heart*, “We’ll put our faith in democracy. We’ll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we’ll win. If we don’t win, I’ll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate”. The aim of the opposition motion is to have the whole House repeat this statement. It is to have the Prime Minister confirm that the rules he believed in in the seventies, and stated in his book, will still apply tomorrow. This is the objective of the motion.

We can safely say that when the present Prime Minister made that statement in the seventies, he probably had data telling him that the sovereignist side would never win a referendum. This is probably what he had in mind, given the numbers he had. But the inability of the federal system to reform itself has resulted in the

Supply

sovereignist vote increasing from 22 per cent in 1970, during a Quebec election, to 40 per cent in the 1980 referendum to 49.4 per cent last year. Each time we make progress because federalists make promises they do not keep.

Obviously I understand the fear of the present government when it says that it cannot change the structure and come up with a proposal that will please Quebecers. If the present government were to say that it was going to negotiate between peoples, that it was going to enshrine in the Canadian Constitution the recognition of the two founding peoples of Canada, and that it would allow Quebec to develop—

Quebecers have been making these claims for a long time, but proposals never came to anything because they did not meet the needs of both peoples of Canada. We can understand this and there is a solution to it, which is what we are proposing. The aim of today’s motion however is to make sure it will be done democratically.

I would like to clarify something the Prime Minister keeps on repeating. He says: “You lost the referendum twice, now respect democracy”. Democracy does not mean we have to stop believing what we believe in when we lose an election, democracy is keeping on trying to convince people we are right and they are wrong. To do this, you need tenacity. Evolution of thought is important also. In Quebec, mainly at the suggestion of René Lévesque, we gambled on the profound belief that we would solve the issue democratically. We accepted the 40 per cent result of 1980 and the more recent 49.4 per cent.

The current premier of Quebec was the first to accept the results. We play according to the rules of democracy. We are sovereignists and we say so very clearly. We will call an election, we will win and we will prove to Quebecers that this is the right solution, because you cannot make a flower grow by pulling on it, you have to nurture it. We are ready to follow the pace of the people and to present arguments to convince them.

What we need now is for the government, and particularly the Prime Minister, to confirm their respect for democracy because, over the last few days, we have heard all sorts of contradictory statements saying that it cannot be done with just over 50 per cent, that other conditions will have to be met. The federal government and Quebec must agree on the question.

There is a paternalistic attitude now, just as there was in 1982. The rules of democracy were followed then. In 1982, the government said: “We are legitimate, we have 74 federalist Liberal members out of 75 seats. Therefore, we have the right to do so. And we will put our seats on the line during the next election”. Democracy prevailed because after the following election, they were all gone. Since then, the movement has gathered momentum.

Supply

We went from nationalist members within the Conservative Party to the 53 sovereignists we now have, because of the Meech Lake accord demise.

There will be sovereignists until Canada solves the problem with Quebec and, for us, the solution is sovereignty. If the government has another solution to propose, it should put it on the table and let Quebecers judge its relevancy. At the present time, the game is not played on the rink. The federal government is trying to change the rules and the players' position on the rink. That is no solution. It does not solve anything. It is like negotiating a collective agreement, when, instead of agreeing at the negotiating table, people start negotiating the back-to-work protocol, the strike issue, etc. That is irrelevant.

• (1235)

So, the objective of the opposition motion is to allow the Prime Minister, the current government, to reaffirm what he said in the 1970's and 1980's, that is, if they do not win, they will let Quebecers separate.

The current Prime Minister made that statement. When he says: "I'll let Quebecers separate", which in his vocabulary is about the most terrible thing that could happen, there is a fundamental recognition that, if the results make sovereignty possible, it will have to be accepted by the Canadian government.

It is also important to let everyone see clearly that we do not live in a society that has always existed as such. Canadian Confederation is not timeless, it did not come into existence at the same time our planet did. It is the result of compromises that led British colonies to become allied in a kind of organization in 1867. It was finalized by a vote in their respective legislative assemblies. That is when it was decided to found Canada.

In a sense, Quebecers could be said to be overdoing it. They have developed an acute sense of democracy. After joining the Canadian confederation by a vote in the legislature, they saw fit, in light of the evolution of political thinking, to impose upon themselves as a requirement that a democratic vote be held in which more than 50 per cent of the population should vote in favour.

Come to think of it, the result in 1995 was fantastic. Ninety-three per cent of Quebecers voted in the referendum, a participation rate unsurpassed anywhere in the world. It was a tight vote. The verdict came in. And we said: "We shall continue to be a part of Canada according to the wishes of the majority". The majority expressed its wishes and we acknowledged the referendum results.

We also tolerated, without displaying any violence, having 20,000, 25,000 or 30,000 persons—the exact number was never determined—come to Montreal to tell us in an ultrapaternalistic way that they would decide in our place what we want. I think that

we can be proud of our democratic process in Quebec. It is fair to say that this may be behind the largest consensus in Quebec.

While realizing there are differences of opinion, we are prepared to live with them and to defend them. We are even prepared to take up the fight once again and to accept what comes of it. We are asking the Liberal government to take our lead. It should simply respect whatever decision Quebecers make and stick to its guns.

In conclusion, I move as follows:

That the motion be amended by adding, immediately after the word "stated", the following:

"in his book entitled *Straight from the Heart*, on page 140".

I also move the following:

That the amendment moved by the hon. member for Mercier be amended by adding the word "autobiographical" immediately before the word "book".

I move this amendment to an amendment.

I hope that members will rise in this House to tell us that, first and foremost, they are liberals and democrats and that they will respect whatever democratic decision is made. Being a democrat must take precedence over being a federalist or a sovereignist. In the decisions facing us, it is of paramount importance that the wishes of the people be respected.

I expect the current Prime Minister of Canada to do so and to reaffirm by voting in favour of this motion that he still holds the same views on the matter, that democracy will prevail in his decision and that he will accept the result of the next referendum, which will see Quebec become a sovereign state.

• (1240)

The Deputy Speaker: We shall carefully consider the official opposition's latest initiatives. We will settle everything at the same time, and as quickly as possible.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief to compensate for the length of the official opposition's speeches and their repetitive, rhetorical arguments as they pretend not to realize they have lost this debate.

In this matter, the Government of Canada defends the right of Quebecers and other Canadian citizens to be treated fairly under the law whatever the circumstances. As I just said, the official opposition is pretending it does not realize it has lost the debate. They can quote the Prime Minister of Canada as much as they want; all this would do is show that, as a good democrat, the Prime Minister has no intention of keeping a people against its will once this people has clearly expressed its desire to leave Canada.

At the same time, it has been clearly demonstrated in this debate that a unilateral declaration of independence would violate the rule

of law and go against democratic principles and would not be recognized by any constitutional democracy on this planet.

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, I have an interesting proposal for the minister. If, as he claims, the Prime Minister is indeed a good and great democrat, then let us hear him reassert his position. He simply has to vote in favour of the motion. The Prime Minister simply has to tell his government colleagues that he is not afraid of repeating what he said in 1970 and wrote in 1985. This is what we are asking him to do on this opposition day.

The minister also says that we lost the debate. The fact is that the democratic and political debate is not over in one day. This is not the society of a thousand years, as former Prime Minister Trudeau once said. We have a right to democratically discuss ideas. We had a good example of that last week. The debate on the issue of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground for discrimination lasted for over 25 years in Canada.

People maintained their position and, thanks to their tenacity, finally got what they wanted. This is how changes are brought about in the political process. This is what we were taught in the past by very democratic people, in Quebec and in Canada. We learned that political debates are the way to go, that battles are won by convincing people with good arguments.

Right now, new arguments come up every day and more and more people are in favour of Quebec's sovereignty. It is so because, in the days that preceded the October 30 referendum, the Prime Minister, speaking for the current federal government, said to us: "We will make major changes". It is the second time in 15 years that we are told major changes will take place, and this time again there are no changes. Each time, some people realize they made a mistake by voting no, and the next they will vote yes. This is the reality. This is the real political debate, and we will win it.

The people of Quebec has been forging ahead for a long time. The fact that sovereignists have been here for over two years is not a coincidence. For a long time, we believed that we could become sovereign by simply forming the government in Quebec City. We realized it was important to send a message to Canada and to make the country realize that sovereignty was not a folksy thing in Quebec, but a deeply rooted feeling. Such was the message sent by Quebecers to all federalists at the 1993 election.

Quebecers said: "We want to be represented by a majority of sovereignists, and we want Canada to know that. We will make decisions accordingly and we will always do so in the respect of democracy".

• (1245)

Today, we are merely asking the Prime Minister to say that, yes, he will continue to respect the rules of democracy. The decision rests with him.

Supply

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has used the pronoun nous or we many times: We in Quebec want this, we in Quebec want that. He and I both agree there is a lot of democracy going on here now and then.

When he uses the term "we" is he not also trying to speak for the majority of Quebecers who voted no in the last referendum? How is he able—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. Crête: I can tell my hon. colleague that when I say "we" as democrats, I am referring to the vast majority of Quebecers. Last October's referendum, in which 93 per cent of the population went to the polls, shows very clearly that we Quebecers are democrats. I would add that Canadians, too, are democrats. What we are asking today is for the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to reaffirm that they still stand for democracy and that they are always ready to accept the rules of the game, even though they are feeling the heat.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague, the hon. member for St. Boniface.

[English]

I am very pleased to take part in the debate today. I am glad the hon. member from Scarborough asked the hon. member from Kamouraska the question about to whom the term we refers. When I look at the quote in the original motion, I remind hon. members opposite that in 1985 we did win, just as we did win in 1995. As far as I am concerned we refers to all Canadians, whether you live in Quebec, British Columbia, or the Yukon, whether you speak French or English, the we includes all of us from sea to sea to sea.

The Bloc motion seeks to sow confusion once again among Canadians, then blame it on the federal government. I draw to the attention of the House and the attention of Quebecers in particular to the true intention behind the words of the secessionists. I will deal briefly with a number of myths that they enjoy circulating.

First, let me talk about transfers to the provinces, the first myth we have to deal with. Quebec's current finance minister said when he tabled his last budget that Quebec is the most indebted province. Indeed, its economy generates revenues for the provincial government which fall below the Canadian average.

It is precisely to remedy the inequalities this situation could cause over time that the federal government provides Quebec with generous and completely unconditional equalization payments every year. A federal system can afford to do that, unlike a separate and separated heavily indebted country.

Supply

Quebec is not the only province that receives federal transfer payments. My province of Nova Scotia does, as do Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and New Brunswick. It is because we are a federation, it is because as a federation we believe in assisting each other.

Mr. Speaker, you will remember there was a time when Quebecers and maritimers, eastern Canadians in general, paid \$5 a barrel over the world price for oil in order to get the Alberta oil industry moving. That is what a federation is about, helping one part of the federation when it is needed.

Transfers to the provinces represent a substantial part of the federal government's program spending. We could therefore not reasonably streamline the spending in the last budget without touching those transfers, but they are still there and will continue to be there.

• (1250)

Nevertheless, the cuts in transfers to the provinces that were made are far from disproportionate. They will require from all the provinces an effort to adjust that is well below the one that the federal government is imposing on itself. Thus, in the next two years the federal government intends to reduce its own spending by 7.3 per cent while the main transfers to the provinces will be cut by only 4.4 per cent. In other words, the federal government is being much easier on the provinces, Quebec included, than it is on itself.

The Bloc is also trying to make people believe that cuts in federal transfers affect Quebec more than the other provinces. However, it has taken pains not to mention Le Hir study which stated that Quebec's share in that regard has remained stable for 15 years at around 30 per cent, which is clearly greater than Quebec's proportion of the Canadian population.

Moreover, the Bloc is also not mentioning that the reform announced in the last federal budget in this regard even gives additional protection to the seven less wealthy provinces, which include Quebec, because equalization payments to these provinces will continue to increase in the next four years. Equalization payments to Quebec will thus increase by around \$200 million for a total of \$4.05 billion in 1996-97. Yet another myth that just does not cut it.

The Bloc Quebecois and the Parti Quebecois refuse to respect the will of Quebecers, a majority of whom have twice chosen to stay in Canada and work to renew it.

However, the Bloc and the péquiste keep singing the same tune. For example, their unsubstantiated inflating of the cost of overlap and duplication to \$3 billion is another deliberate attempt on their part to discredit Canadian federalism and to hoodwink the people in the province of Quebec. Yet they will never admit that.

In the vast majority of cases where the two orders of government are active in the same field of activity, their actions complement one another because they serve different clientele or provide different services to the same clientele. This federalism works and works well for the people of Quebec as it works and works well for the people of every province and territory in this great country.

Furthermore, they are very reluctant to tell people that the few serious analyses of the subject show that the savings achieved would be less than \$1.7 billion and that those are gross savings which would be offset in the event of secession by the loss of economies of scale and by higher interest rates on government borrowing.

The overlap being described to Quebecers is much less than our friends across the aisle would have them believe. It certainly is not worth destroying a country for. We intend to minimize unnecessary overlap while ensuring that we effectively manage overlap that is inevitable.

There are other myths too. Our opponents across the aisle like to suggest that Canadian federalism is responsible for the high unemployment in Quebec. That has nothing to do with the Canadian system. Everyone, except it seems the Bloc, seems to know that unemployment is a problem for all western countries. Some unitary states have unemployment rates much higher than Canada. Canada is taking the necessary measures to implement the fullest employment policy possible.

The IMF forecast of a 2.9 per cent economic growth in 1997 is good news for all Canadians and for the Canadian government, whose main objective is to revitalize the economy and improve our economic union. The standard of living of all Canadians depends on it.

The secessionists may not like it but Canada actually works a whole lot better than their highly speculative smoke and mirrors. If federalism is so harmful to the economy and jobs in Quebec why do economists unanimously conclude that the job situation in Quebec would worsen considerably following separation?

The secessionists like to suggest that the Government of Canada gives Quebec money only for unemployment insurance, social assistance and seniors. Yet the federal government has always invested considerable sums of money in Quebec year after year in a large number of projects that are essential to its social, economic and cultural development. Furthermore, statistics show unequivocally that Quebec within Canada is very profitable for Quebecers. In fact, Quebec provides 21.7 per cent of the federal government's revenues and receives more than 24.5 per cent of federal spending.

• (1255)

Let me give a few examples of that spending: 47.5 per cent of Canadian industrial milk quotas go to Quebec farmers; 32 per cent of Canada Council funding is distributed to Quebec, specifically in the literary and publishing field, Quebec receives 40 per cent of

Supply

council funding; more than 50 per cent of financial assistance from the Department of Canadian Heritage for publishing and distribution of publications goes to Quebec; 37 per cent of Telefilm Canada funding is distributed in Quebec; 33 per cent of federal funding for the reception and integration of immigrants goes to the Government of Quebec, even though Quebec receives less than 20 per cent of the immigrants who come to Canada each year; \$204 million is earmarked for the economic development of the regions of Quebec by the Federal Office for Regional Development—Quebec.

How can the Bloc seriously claim that federalism is hurting Quebec's development and keeping it in a state of dependency? It is beyond understanding. It is smoke and mirrors. It is a sham and one that I do not think Quebecers believe any more than other Canadians do.

Canada is seen as the jailer of Quebec. That is the latest outrage, to compare Canada to a prison in which Quebec is being held against its will. Is this a strange sense of humour, or are the secessionists serious? Indeed, how can Quebec want to separate from their jailers today and yet want to reassociate with them tomorrow?

Belonging to an political and economic union brings with it the obligation of co-operation and consultation. In today's interdependent world, doing what I like is not the objective of any responsible government. It is not even feasible.

Quebecers have twice chosen with their hearts and with their heads not to mortgage their future and their children's future when they benefit from economic and political association with Canada and are part of the country with the best quality of life in the world.

If our friends across the aisle want to help Quebecers, they will have to do their part, abandon their completely unrealistic ideology and work with the majority of their fellow citizens who want and will help us all to build a better Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the hon. member had to say. I can tell you that her speech will not go down in history since she constantly changed subjects and contradicted herself. Let me quote some of her comments. She talked about confusion. If there is someone who is confused in this House, it has to be the Prime Minister. We were given an example earlier. We were told that in 1970 he did not do the same thing as he did in 1985.

One day, he says something, the next he goes back on his word. Let me give you an example. Not so long ago, the Prime Minister said in this House that we would "have to face the music" at the next referendum. At the time, he was sure he was going to win. When you are sure to win, there are rights, no such considerations. He was sure to win, so he could say anything.

The situation has changed since then, with the growing popularity of the sovereigntist movement, the results of the last referendum and the things yet to come. After the next referendum, it will be over. Why? Because the federal government has not been able since 1867 to deal with federalism as it should have. Initially, within the federal system, the federal government and the provinces were supposed to share Canada's sovereignty. Little by little however, the federal government got involved in areas of provincial jurisdiction, so much so that we now have a dominating and centralizing federal government.

As for the hon. member's conclusion, we will come back to that. I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are indicating I have only one minute left. I will not be able to say much, but let me sum up what I wanted to say. When we are told that we lost the last referendum, I always answer that federalism did not even exist in 1867.

• (1300)

Everybody agreed more or less with what was put on the table. But in 1980 the results were 44 per cent and in 1995, 49.6 per cent. Quebecers are becoming aware that, within the current system, we are not progressing, we are moving backwards, and at the next referendum, I am convinced we will get between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of the votes.

I just wish people would understand one thing: the only way to put an end to the constitutional debate is for federalists to propose a real program if they have one, but unfortunately, they do not have any.

[*English*]

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I understand our difficulty. The hon. member suggested that I was confused and contradicted myself. He did not give any examples, ergo I cannot refute his utterly ridiculous charge.

He said that we do not share. I gave eight examples of where the federal government not only shares but shares most generously in federal funds with the province of Quebec without even getting into the transfer payments.

Finally, our federation certainly has its problems as do other federations. I know we can overcome these problems because on this side of the House we have faith in the sense and sensibility and the good hearts of all Canadians whether they live in Quebec or anywhere else in the country. I am sorry the hon. member over there does not. However we will prevail.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice to those trying to describe the ties of affection that have long existed, and that still exist, between Canada and Quebec.

[*English*]

I am adding my voice in the House today to those of my colleagues in the government, first to set the record straight for

Supply

Canadians, especially Quebecers, and at the same time to respond to the disinformation that is continually being put forward by the Bloc Quebecois.

The Bloc would have Quebecers and other Canadians believe that Canada is a prison, that the federal government is a jailer keeping Quebec bound and gagged and thus preventing it from expressing itself on issues that are important to its future. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is the type of hysterical rhetoric we have become used to hearing from the Bloc as it defends its now secessionist position.

Let us look at the motion tabled by the Bloc today which is yet another example of that kind of disinformation. The Bloc would like the government of a country that has flourished for 129 years to remain mute, absolutely mute with regard to a unilateral declaration of independence that would flout the Canadian Constitution in the courts.

Accordingly, the Bloc would like to see the 23 million Canadians outside of Quebec stand idly by and give the secessionist government a blank cheque by abstaining from discussing this matter. It is now the secessionist government itself that has brought us to this point. The Government of Canada now has an obligation to respond even though a majority of Quebecers have expressed yet again their desire to remain within the Canadian Confederation.

As Mr. Daniel Johnson, the leader of the opposition in Quebec has said, this is a phoney problem. But because the PQ has instigated this legal debate, let us do it calmly and coolly. That is the position of the Canadian government. Anger and emotion must not win out over reason. Unfortunately that is how the BQ and the PQ are reacting.

[Translation]

Let us talk about some myths. I will read you a quotation: "We must separate from Canada, this prison, and fly on our own. Once separated, we will re-establish our association with our good partners in Canada". This is what is really behind the Bloc's motion. We are accused of hiding our true motives, while, for them, duplicity and camouflage are the order of the day.

The motion introduced by the Bloc Quebecois today is proof yet again. The public is not fooled. It is well aware that the official opposition enjoys in this House considerable freedom of expression that only a country as democratic as Canada would tolerate. It can also tell the difference between reality and the myths the Bloc Quebecois delights in spreading.

• (1305)

I will now speak about the vitality of the federal system.

[English]

The Bloc is trying to make people believe that Canadian federalism is outmoded, that it has not changed at all, that it is keeping Quebec in a straitjacket. The truth is very different. Members opposite may not like it but the federal system is doing very well indeed.

The Fathers of Confederation who came from Quebec and three other provinces wisely chose for Canada in 1867 the model of a federal state in order to pool the assets and channel the energies that existed in our wide geographic space. Above all, they wanted as a population to be able to live and evolve within a political system that would be able to adapt, improve and renew itself over time and as needed. It was a system in which each part preserved its distinctiveness but the whole was more than the sum of its parts.

The evidence has been in for a long time that the flexibility of the Canadian federation has allowed and still allows all provinces to develop in accordance with their priorities and their specific characteristics while ensuring that they enjoy the benefits of belonging to this great country of Canada.

Throughout our history the sharing of powers, which has been revised on an ongoing basis, has yielded many benefits in the form of flexibility, innovation and initiative. For example, it has allowed the federal government to set national goals and standards which apply to all Canadians, while leaving it to the provinces to ensure that services best correspond to their own realities.

Quebec has been no exception to that rule, as evidenced by the tremendous progress it has made particularly in the past 30 years. The quiet revolution took place inside a united Canada, yet in all that time Quebec was indeed a part of that same Canadian federation the Bloc is now denouncing.

[Translation]

The distinct nature of Quebec. From its very beginnings, Canada has always striven to improve, to modernize and to secure for its citizens the best possible quality of life. Quebec's contribution to this process has been unflagging and unique, especially because of its French roots. But it has also derived benefit from belonging to Canada, through such things as the support of federal institutions in matters of culture, which has given it considerable influence on the world scene.

Quebec is an asset to Canada, a treasured part of our country. Canadians are attached to the distinct character of Quebec. It is recognized and encouraged by the Canadian government.

It is therefore in this spirit that the Prime Minister asked Parliament to make commitments regarding Quebec and to pass in this House a resolution recognizing Quebec as a distinct society. By

so doing, the Parliament of Canada made official one of the Prime Minister's commitments and, as the only body that can speak on behalf of all Canadians, gave a solemn undertaking. It thus recognized an obvious reality, the distinct character of Quebec, based on its language, its culture and its legal system.

This open-mindedness of the federal government with respect to the distinct character of Quebec is part of what distinguishes Canada from its neighbour to the south.

I would now like to look at the division of powers, because this is an area in which we differ greatly from a number of other federations.

[English]

In the wake of significant changes it initiated to modernize the federation, the government announced in the speech from the throne that it intended to open a new chapter in federal-provincial relations. From now on the watch words will be respect, dialogue, consensus and co-operation. We will be partners in serving Canadians.

Those are not just empty promises. The federal government's commitment has already been translated into tangible measures, such as the approval of detailed action plans to improve federal and provincial services, an action plan that has been rejected by the secessionist government whose avowed aims are to make people believe that the federal government serves no purpose and to break up Canada.

• (1310)

The same secessionist government wanted us to withdraw from labour market training. After investing \$1.5 billion in that field in 1995-96 and \$433 million this year, we agreed that we would withdraw from labour market training. We did not want to do that to make the secessionists happy. What was important to us at the end of the day was for the governments' actions to complement one another so that high quality services are delivered at the lowest cost to taxpayers by the government in the best position to do so.

The Canadian government has also indicated its firm intention to withdraw from other fields of activity, such as forestry, mining and recreation and to transfer its responsibilities to local or regional organizations or the private sector.

The federal government will respect provincial jurisdiction by limiting its own spending power with regard to co-financed or shared cost programs in fields of provincial responsibility. Together with the provinces, it is also seeking out new forms of consultation and joint management in certain areas, such as environmental management, social housing, food inspection, tour-

Supply

ism and freshwater fish habitat. It is also actively pursuing the establishment of a Canadian securities commission.

[Translation]

I see that my time is up. In closing, I therefore invite my colleagues across the way to reconsider this federation, to look at what it has done for us and what it can still do if we work together with the goal of improving it.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, what stands out from my hon. friend's intervention is that he regrets that Quebecers do not see Canada his way. Indeed, the 49.4 per cent of Quebecers who voted Yes in the referendum already knew what the hon. member wants them to be convinced of. This is not the issue.

When the hon. member talks about the distribution of powers, he should remember that the main power, which makes the constitutional power sharing illusive, is spending power. Spending power radically changed the distribution of powers originally negotiated by the Fathers of Confederation.

Finally, the hon. member should recognize that, when the Prime Minister wants to limit the use by Quebec, which is not just another province but a people and a nation in its own right, of its democratic right through a referendum, the 1867 Constitution was originally an act passed by Great Britain for its colonies, achieved through negotiations between politicians from each colony, mainly because, after the 1837-38 rebellion, in the so-called union of Canada, that is, a forced union of what is currently known as Ontario and Quebec, nothing worked any more.

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I feel that I have nothing to regret in what I have said. What is happening is that we have two totally different views. What I am calling for is a look at what a federation is. Twice, the majority of Quebecers have agreed with what I have said, every bit of it.

What I find regrettable is that I have heard nothing good said about this federation. I find it incredible that even an Opposition member cannot say "Here are three or four very good aspects".

Now, about the Prime Minister again, he has said: "We will be democratic, we will respect Canadian law and international law".

• (1315)

As you know, in his 1985 book *Straight from the Heart*, on page 140, the Prime Minister says "We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win". That is what he says.

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the floor, and I would like to ask my colleague opposite to explain, since he has been talking for a while now about the

Supply

beautiful great country Canada is, why their popularity in Canada has dropped by 7 per cent compared to last month, according to the polls.

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleague will admit that this is a beautiful great country, a country held in esteem by everyone on this planet. I trust that he did not want to indicate that it was anything other than that.

As for the polls, I would be prepared to compare our polls and yours across Canada, if that is what you want to do. We must pay some attention to polls, but we must not let ourselves be led by them. The most important poll of all is the one held on election day itself.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am both proud and sad to take part in today's debate on the motion moved by the official opposition, which reads as follows and quotes the prime minister: "We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win. If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate." This is the subject of our motion based, you will have understood, on a quote from page 150 of a book written by the Prime Minister entitled *Straight from the Heart*.

I am proud because this is a very important debate, and sad because this debate is part of the constitutional debate, which today takes a threatening turn, as it has for some weeks now. Indeed, the situation is extremely serious and these are difficult times for the Canadian democracy.

Both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice told us these past few days that, in the event of a yes vote in a democratically held Quebec referendum, the Canadian government would not recognize it because the present Constitution makes no provision for one part of Canada to secede.

What is important to remember is the underlying meaning of such statements. This means that, in the mind of the Prime Minister of Canada, the wishes expressed by Quebecers will be subject to an amending process requiring the unanimous consent of the provinces in order to be recognized. This means that the wishes of Quebecers will eventually be subject to the will of Canadians, and this supports the argument in favour of not recognizing the existence of a Quebec people on this planet.

This is in keeping with the evolving federalist thinking. Over the last 30 years, we have been a bit annoyed by the growing sovereignist movement which English-speaking Canadians have a hard time explaining and understanding; then there were different theories like cooperative federalism, flexible federalism, asymmetrical federalism, cost-effective federalism, the age-old renewed federalism, which the Prime Minister mentioned again recently, and now we have carping federalism. Carping federalism is based

on confrontation, on the B plan we could now call the Bertrand plan.

• (1320)

This confrontation is the antithesis of the other movement which briefly prevailed and which, after referendums in Quebec, could have created a momentum whereby English Canada would have found ways to implement the changes promised by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1980 and by the present Prime Minister in 1995. They would have come up with offers acceptable to the majority of Quebecers and would have made space for Quebec in the new 1982 Constitution. But that movement did not endure.

There were a few efforts, like the distinct society, but it was a distinct society without any content or powers. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said it himself after a conference in Vancouver where he almost whispered to his audience that the expression "distinct society" meant nothing. Maybe he forgot he was being filmed, but we saw him on TV in Quebec. This killed the rose in the bud because Quebecers quickly caught on that the distinct society concept was an empty shell.

There was also the term "principal homeland" which appeared, again through the initiative of the new minister, but it was short-lived. Right from the beginning, it sounded fishy.

Finally there was a vote on a veto, but giving a veto to each and every province meant essentially that they were refusing to acknowledge the specific characteristics of Quebec and to recognize Quebecers as a people.

It is very important to keep in mind the significance of plan B. With plan B, instead of encouraging Canadians to think, the federal government prefers to attack Quebec. It prefers to attempt to make Quebec smaller. It prefers to attack its institutions, its laws, its democratic traditions, its right to self-government, which is, once again according to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, only valid within Canada. We see he has studied the issue for a long time and is very generous toward Quebecers.

With plan B, the federal government prefers to go to court instead of going to the people of Quebec, especially to a court that does not fall under the Quebec government, but under the federal government, even though it is called the Superior Court of Quebec, a court where judges are appointed by the federal government. So, given the process by which judges are appointed, these people are part of the federal government and of the federal system. These judges will have to make a decision based on the Canadian Constitution, which was almost unilaterally repatriated by Ottawa without Quebec's consent, a Constitution Quebec does not recognize and which it did not sign. By this Constitution, these non-elected and non-accountable judges are being given, no doubt sometimes against their will, major political and decision-making powers.

Conversely, when a referendum is held democratically, the opposing forces, both from the yes side and the no side, have equal financial means, at least when Quebec law is respected. When it is violated, as the federal government did in October 1995, we get the results we have seen.

So, a referendum held democratically is called a consultation exercise, the will of the people being subjected to the colonialism of the courts.

It should be pointed out that, for Guy Bertrand, the new ally of the federalists, the mere idea of holding a referendum on Quebec's future would be illegitimate, undemocratic, abusive, immoral, fraudulent and anarchic. With such allies, who needs enemies. This is as quoted by Mrs. Lise Bissonnette.

• (1325)

I will conclude by quoting an editorial writer with *La Presse* of Montreal, who is far from being a sovereigntist. Mr. Alain Dubuc wrote on May 14, two days ago, in his last paragraph: "Beyond their disagreement on Quebec's future, Quebecers agree on believing an honest referendum is not merely a consultation exercise and also, that Canada cannot legitimately prevent Quebec from leaving Canada if it chooses sovereignty. It is this consensus the federal government has attacked through its silences and contradictions."

Given the attitude the government has taken by sanctioning plan B, the Bertrand plan, I dare hope the Liberal Party of Canada will pay the political price one day.

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to respond to the comments made by my hon. colleague from the Bloc.

I believe the majority of the constituents of Prince George—Peace River, whom I am pleased to represent in the House, want to see Canada remain united. They want to see Quebec stay a part of Canada.

However, from conversations I have had with them over the last couple of years, they are sick to death of this issue. It is dominating the agenda of the entire country and dominating the agenda of this place.

My constituents want Quebec to decide once and for all if it is in or out. They have a universal cynicism that the issue will never be settled or decided. The Reform Party, the constituents of Prince George—Peace River and I are in favour of referenda. We have demonstrated that.

However, the Prime Minister, the Liberal government and the separatists have fuelled the cynicism that exists. When the Prime Minister and the government say they will honour and respect 50 per cent plus one provided it is a no vote, and the separatists say they will honour and respect 50 per cent plus one if it is a yes vote,

Supply

but neither side will respect the results if they do not go its way, what will be accomplished by holding a referendum? This is what was asked last fall. What is the point? What does it solve?

Last fall's referendum proved there is a lot of confusion in the minds of Quebec voters. There is a lot of confusion in that province about what exactly people were voting on. The hon. member referred to an honest referendum, which is what we would all seek.

What result will it take? How many times do Quebecers have to say no before the separatists give up on their foolish agenda to try to destroy the country?

[Translation]

Mr. Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, some questions are made to seem basic but they mean nothing. The people of Quebec have always had respect for the democratic process. When a question is decided by a 50 per cent plus 1 vote, as it was just recently, we accept the referendum results.

What we hope and expect is for Canada to do the same, should a referendum result in a majority voting in favour of achieving sovereignty.

I also detect in the remarks made by my hon. colleague from out west a lack of understanding of how the sovereigntist movement has developed. Sovereignty is nothing new in Quebec, it was being contemplated long before 1993. The movement emerged in the early 60s. In 1963, the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, chaired by two distinguished Canadians, concluded that two solitudes coexisted. At that time, there were a few hundred Quebecers who advocated Quebec's sovereignty.

From a few hundred, our numbers have grown to thousands and now a few hundred thousands. When asked to vote on the matter, millions of Quebecers vote for sovereignty.

• (1330)

It would be wise not to apply the Ostrich Principle and think that Quebec's will to become sovereign is something that sprang up overnight, a creation of the mind. Probably ever since the events on the Plains of Abraham, there has always been a desire in Quebec to self-govern and to take charge of our destiny, throw off our shackles, our British shackles in this case.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although I am extremely pleased to rise today to speak to this motion, I do so with some sadness.

I do so with some sadness because I cannot imagine how this debate can take place in this Parliament where sat Henri Bourassa, in this Parliament whose members, especially those on the government side, extol the merits of democracy in detail at every opportunity. What is democracy if not our collective ability to decide what we are?

Supply

Do you think that, if Henri Bourassa, Lionel Groulx, André Laurendeau, René Lévesque were taking part in this debate, they would not say that each of them worked in his own way, in accordance with his own philosophy and through his own contribution to political life, so that in the end we Quebecers can democratically—repeat, democratically—determine our own future?

I cannot imagine for a single moment, even during my most eccentric musings, that there are Quebecers in this House who, like us, received a public mandate under the election process and who do not fully agree with the underlying philosophy behind the motion put forward by the official opposition, which we are reiterating very clearly. The fact that the official opposition in this Parliament was democratically elected on the basis of a very clear program, which, as you know, is still to promote Quebec's interests and ultimately to achieve statehood, is quite meaningful.

I hope that all of us tonight will have a sense of history and agree with the current Prime Minister's diagnostic at a public meeting in Alma in the early 1970s, when he said: "Let us be democratic". He was right to say that. The intensity of constitutional options can never compete with what should be the purpose of communities, namely the ability to recognize a democracy freely expressed through its most legal forum, a referendum.

That is what the Prime Minister said in 1970 and that is what we want to see recognized. That is why, in our opinion and in the opinion of others—But I challenge any member of this House, including Quebec members, to find a single decision maker—be it an editorialist, a journalist or a member of the business community—who supports what the Canadian government is about to do by getting involved in the Bertrand court case.

No one supported this decision. Even *La Presse*, which is not known for its sovereigntist sympathies, said, through some of its editorial writers, that this approach was stupid. Why is it stupid? Because we know full well that international treaties recognize the right to self-determination.

The people on the other side are proud to say that Canada contributes \$200 million to the operations budget of the United Nations, they are proud to uphold international law along with its main supporters at the United Nations, and that reminds me of what the Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said when he came to Montreal. He said that the most accomplished type of collective organization, even though we are at the dawn of a new century, is still sovereignty.

• (1335)

Here is what he said and what caught our attention. He said: "Sovereignty is the basic principle of universal organization. It is the art of making equal powers that are not equal." That is what we

have in Canada, two nations within the same political organization. There cannot be two nations within the same political organization, because one is then subordinate to the other.

In essence, with this motion today and with the message it has conveyed here for the last three years, the Bloc has remained loyal to these principles and to the principles of international law.

The principles of international law and international covenants stipulate two things concerning human rights, and especially the right to self-determination. When one reads about international law, it is interesting to see—and I have the privilege of sitting next to a legal expert—that it is always subject to human rights. This is so true that this issue is always discussed, year after year, at the International Conference on Human Rights in Geneva.

So there is a very important relationship between human rights, collective rights and the right to self-determination which, according to the UN charter, is the first attribute of peoples.

If we follow the government's logic, it means that, by the end of the day, unless the Liberals are hypocrites, which is always a possibility, they should, if they are logical with themselves, rise in this House and say that they do not believe Quebecers are a people. From the moment it is recognized that Quebecers are a people, it means that they have a right to self-determination even under major international law.

The right to self-determination is not always but often exercised through a referendum. But the law also says, and I think this should be our first consideration in this House, that the right to self-determination, in addition to the legal considerations, is first and foremost a matter of political legitimacy, which can be exercised under certain conditions.

Of course, you need to have a history. You need to control a territory. You need to have the will to live together collectively. You need to have a legal tradition and, once sovereignty is achieved—and this was said clearly by the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and was repeated many times during the referendum debate—you need to have effective control of a territory under the state continuity rules.

Which member will rise in this House, whether he is from Ontario, Newfoundland or the Magdalen Islands, and say that Quebec does not meet these conditions?

What interest does the government have in joining forces with the man who will no doubt go down in history as the greatest crank of our times?

I remember very well that in 1987, just to give you a few biographical details, I was responsible for running Francine Lalonde's campaign for the leadership of the Parti Québécois, and I came into contact with Guy Bertrand, who had just been campaign-

ing all over Quebec telling us that we had the right to decide our own future.

This man ran for the leadership of the Parti Québécois on a single theme, Quebec's right to decide its own future. He was so all over the map that, had we been in a different century, he would have been sent to see a doctor. But we are not in another century, and everyone has the freedom of expression.

That being said, there is something deeply offensive and hurtful in the action taken by the justice minister, who has always seemed a courteous man, and the approval given by this government, in trying through legal subterfuge, to deny Quebec's right to decide its own future. If the action by the Government of Canada is taken all the way, I can certainly promise you that something very serious will happen in our political society, both for Quebec and for Canada, and that will be the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of this decision.

• (1340)

It is not true that since 1960—there are even people who trace the quest for sovereignty back to the 18th century—well, certainly for 30 years, Quebecers have been preparing themselves as they have, only to be denied the right to self-determination, now that they have democratically elected representatives to this House.

Still, it is sad that the government has been so lacking in judgement, perception and the most basic political tact, that it has failed to recognize that this is a profound question of political legitimacy. It is not by trying to transfer the debate to the legal arena that the government will achieve its ends.

You know, not more than two years ago, there was a declaratory judgment, because a member of the First Nations, Ovide Mercredi, not to name names, also tried to have a possible referendum declared unconstitutional. The judiciary was extremely clear on this subject, by virtue of what democracy is, but also by virtue of what should prevail in a society such as ours, that is the distinction between the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature.

So let us hear from these Liberal MPs with ridings in Quebec, in the coming days, in a public forum—they can choose the time, the date, the place—let them tell Quebecers they do not have the right to decide their own future. Let them come and say it in Montreal or in the regions. Let them for one moment tell Quebecers that they do not exist as a people, that what they have accomplished over the last 30 years is all in their heads, a political fantasy.

It takes a justice minister from Toronto, a Prime Minister like the one we have now with his own very personal view of history, to support a motion such as the one before us, which is profoundly irresponsible and profoundly disrespectful towards Quebec.

Supply

[English]

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member talking about separation and self-government. Not long ago in this Chamber, I remember a vote supported by all Bloc members under aboriginal self-government and self-determination.

Will the hon. member respect a vote if the aboriginals in Quebec decide to deal with self-government and allow them to stay with whomever they choose democratically?

Another question I have for the hon. member is this. When he has a chance to go forward with this referendum, will he be looking at population? Is he more inclined to go poll by poll? This would make a big difference in how the rest of us would look at the situation.

[Translation]

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I believe what the Bloc says is logical and consistent. Once we recognize the right to self-determination, we also recognize that this right can be exercised by any group having the characteristics of a people.

If we finally recognize that legally speaking native nations have the characteristics of a people, this means implicitly and explicitly that they also legally have the right to self-determination, within the legal territorial boundaries set for Quebec.

This being said, I am not sure I fully understood the second question.

• (1345)

The hon. member wishes to add a supplementary because, as we know, there is a fair amount of excitement in the ranks of the Reform Party, these days. Does he want a supplementary, Mr. Speaker? I am always ready to answer.

This being said, it seems to me that my friend's second question creates some confusion because one thing is very clear and clearly affirmed by all leaders of Quebec: Quebec's right to self-determination will be exercised in a referendum. The rule of 50 plus one will apply. The hon. member was asking if we would proceed by way of a vote. I believe you understood the same thing. Of course, the referendum process requires that we count the votes and the final result will bring us victory or defeat.

Hon. members will recall, and I think this will be my most important moment today, the famous words of the current Prime Minister immediately after taking office. He said something I will never forget. He declared that for Quebec, a no means no. I would like to tell the Reform Party that if one day the answer is yes, it will mean yes.

*Supply**[English]*

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise on debate on today's opposition motion. I to make a comment on behalf of all of my constituents. It refers to a comment made by the former leader of the Bloc Quebecois. He basically said Canada is not a real country.

On behalf of my constituents and I believe the vast majority of Canadians, I state clearly and unequivocally Canada is a country, Canada is a nation and will remain so, absolutely, not only in the months and weeks ahead but in the years, decades and centuries ahead. It will because we are a nation.

Despite what we hear from the other side, Canada is a nation. It is a nation because we share many things in common and we share this great land is Canada. We share a common geography from coast to coast. We share our natural resources such as mining, whether it takes place in Quebec or in Ontario, and the development of energy and the development of agriculture. These natural resources are things we share as a nation.

We have a common history on the north side of the North American continent where together Canadians of all stripes, of all ethnic origins, have built a strong distinct Canada, a distinct nation with values and beliefs unique to us as Canadians.

We share some very important concepts from one end of Canada to the other. We believe in the rule of law and we share this belief among all Canadians. We believe in social justice. We believe as a nation, as a government and as a people there are responsibilities we hold to each other. We believe as Canadians that below a certain level we will not allow people to fall.

When people walk into a hospital they are not asked how much money they have. They are simply asked how sick they are. People do not go hungry for a lack of food or shelter. We help those people. Those are values we share as Canadians from coast to coast whether one happens to live in the English speaking part of Canada or in the French speaking part.

We believe in certain freedoms. We believe in the freedom of thought, belief, expression and assembly. We share those core beliefs as Canadians and they make us a nation.

We have differences in Canada, but they are not differences that need divide us. They do not separate us one people from another people. They are differences which make this country unique among nations.

• (1350)

Canada in its history, for 130 years, has shown the nations of the world what can be accomplished, what can be done with a nation of several peoples. We have shown the world our success. We have shown the world we are a nation that works and can sustain itself.

As a nation Canada recognizes that it has differences. The people of Canada recognize there are two founding peoples, the English speaking Canadians live in Quebec and francophone Canadians live outside of Quebec. We are an integrated nation, English and French from coast to coast. We have been joined by many peoples from around the world to make the fabric of Canada strong, a nation which is integrated, open to change, one which accepts and evolves over time.

As a nation, as a government, as Canadians we recognize we need to make accommodation for different peoples. We recognized and made the clear statement that Quebec is a distinct society. We have recognized the importance of regional variance and evolved a veto system. We have come to understand that different institutions work differently in different parts of the country. We understand there needs to be a division of power, that some things are done better at the provincial level as opposed to the federal level.

When Parliament as recently as December made these suggestions and showed we will evolve as a nation, that we will accommodate our differences, the Bloc voted against it. Members of the Bloc voted against the fact that Quebec was a distinct society. They stood in the House and said: "No, Quebec is not a distinct society. No, Quebec should not have a veto. No, Quebec should not have its own institutions". Those statements were made by their votes. That was terribly wrong.

What is at stake here? Canada. What is their base argument for wanting to destroy the country? Politics is a big part of it. They want to destroy the country over whether Mr. Bouchard is to be called a premier or a president. Those are grounds to break up the country? I think not. Those are not valid grounds for breaking up the country.

Members of the Bloc said we need to have a more efficient federation. Are we to break up the country because of the mathematical formula for transfer payments?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I assure the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka he will have the time remaining after question period to conclude his remarks.

The chair is now ready to rule on the point of order raised earlier today by the chief government whip relating to the interpretation of Standing Order 43(2), which provides for a 20 minute speech to be divided in two.

A cursory review of our practice shows that motions have been moved by both members sharing a 20 minute period. I refer members to cases that occurred on March 25, 1993 and April 19, 1993.

[Translation]

It has also been common practice for a period of time now for members to share the first speech on supply days. A quick check of our proceedings reveals that the first speech was shared on February 10, 1994 and subsequently on May 3, 1994, November

22, 1994, March 16, 1995, March 26, 1995, May 11, 1995, November 22, 1995 and, most recently, March 20, 1996.

• (1355)

What has changed since March 20, 1996 is that the second speaker from the same party has proposed an amendment to the motion tabled by the first. This is the reason for the chief government whip's point of order. The question he raised with the Chair is whether, under the spirit of the Standing Orders, the main motion may be subject to an amendment from a second speaker in the same initial period of the debate.

[English]

I quote from Standing Order 81(22), which provides the time limit on speeches for supply days:

During proceedings on any item of business under the provisions of this standing order, no member may speak more than once or longer than twenty minutes. Following the speech of each member, a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto.

Furthermore, Standing Order 43(2) provides for periods of debate to be divided in two:

The whip of a party may indicate to the Speaker at any time during a debate governed by this standing order that one or more of the periods of debate limited pursuant to section (1) of this standing order and allotted to members of his or her party are to be divided in two.

[Translation]

It is clear from Standing Order 81(22), that the first speech on a supply day is limited to 20 minutes. If we apply the letter of Standing Order 43(2), we may logically conclude that the first speech on a supply day may in fact be divided in two.

[English]

The Chair has reviewed the standing orders and has been unable to find any other standing order which would imply the first speech of a supply day cannot or should not be divided in two.

Consequently, in light of the practice that an amendment may be moved when a 20 minute period is divided and in light of the well established practice that the first speech on a supply day has many times been divided, it is difficult to accept the argument advanced that it ought not be done today.

If the House considers this to be an anomaly, then the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has the means to address the review of the wording of the standing orders.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

That said, the Chair allows the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm, Mr. Bellehumeur, and I will put it to the House. The other amendment proposals made earlier in anticipation of this ruling will not be put to the House.

[English]

I thank all hon. members who have made a contribution on this point.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm, seconded by his colleague for Laval-Centre, moved that the motion be amended by adding the following, immediately after the word “stated”:
Straight from the Heart.

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify the matter of the Chair's acceptance of the amendment by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville in the event the amendment by the member for Berthier—Montcalm was not allowed.

Is this indeed what happened? Logically, therefore, it seems to me that the amendment to the amendment by the member for Berthier—Montcalm is also allowable, since we said that, if one were not, the other would be. Since an amendment to an amendment was tabled, it seems to me that it—the one taken under advisement—is the logical conclusion of the amendment tabled, in the logic of the ruling we have just been given.

The Speaker: My dear colleague, I heard what you said. I will take the question under advisement and will return to the House with another ruling after question period.

It being two o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to statements by members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ST. STEPHEN, NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 1996 marks the 125th anniversary of the incorporation of the town of St. Stephen, New Brunswick.

This Friday, May 17, the mayor, council and citizens of St. Stephen in recognition of this special anniversary have planned a re-enactment of the first town council meeting in full era costume. Following the re-enactment a special dinner will be served with food customary of the 1871 era. Dessert will commence with a cake constructed of 125 smaller cakes made by local St. Stephen families.

It is also interesting to note that the member of Parliament in 1871 was Mr. John Bolton, also a Liberal.

S. O. 31

I commend Mayor Gillmor, the municipal council and the citizens of St. Stephen for taking such pride in the 125th anniversary of their town. They exemplify a true symbol of community spirit and unity.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's image was built around its participation in numerous peace missions, its efforts to help developing countries and its commitment to the fight for human rights and democratic development.

In this regard, we must remember the important contribution of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. At a time when several governments, including the Canadian government, have a tendency to build a wall between trade relations and human rights violations in the world, the Centre's mission is all the more vital for people who see their fundamental rights violated by their governments.

I want to salute and thank Mrs. Côté-Harper and Ed Broadbent, who will shortly leave their respective positions as chairwoman and director of the centre.

Thank you, on behalf of human solidarity.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today the federal government is in court attempting to get fishermen ejected from fisheries offices in British Columbia.

The place for the minister to talk to fishermen is across the negotiating table, not in the court room. Despite infrequent visits to B.C., the minister is imposing a plan on the commercial fishery which will seriously impact the lives of fishermen and the economies of coastal communities. What is even more disturbing is the minister's refusal to go to British Columbia and seriously defend his plan.

The minister's newly appointed adviser has recognized shortcomings of the plan. He notes that the plan contains no support for local communities, no protection against concentration of control of the fleet, and uncertainty about the commercial share of catch in the face of treaty negotiations.

Substantial change without serious consideration of stakeholder input and without genuinely seeking consensus is impossible.

MINING

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, mining is vital to the Canadian economy. The minerals and metals industry provides some 341,000 direct jobs to Canadian men and women and more than \$20 billion to our economy.

I am pleased to rise today to draw attention to National Mining Week and to acknowledge the importance of mining to our economy.

Ontario accounts for 30 per cent of Canada's mineral production and contributes more than \$4.5 billion to the provincial economy. Some 14,000 people are employed in mining nickel, copper, gold and other minerals in the province.

I am pleased to acknowledge the importance of the minerals and metals sector during this 1996 National Mining Week. I salute those Canadians in Ontario and across our great country who have contributed to building and sustaining this valuable industry.

* * *

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 1967 was a defining year in our nation's history. At the time of our 100th birthday every province, city, town and village joined together to celebrate Canada's accomplishments. A wave of national pride swept across this country as we took stock of our blessings and our nation's future.

● (1405)

Western Manitoba's wordsmith, Mr. Fred McGuinness, has suggested that we repeat this centennial experience by giving national recognition to the approaching millennium. I agree. We have the leadership, the commitment and the creativity. Let us get on with the show. Let us fasten our attention on the future and let us celebrate being Canadian.

* * *

CHINESE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week in Ottawa we are being visited by 14 young ambassadors from Vancouver.

Every year the Chinese Canadian Association of Public Affairs sends a delegation of young people to Ottawa for them to become acquainted with the political and parliamentary process. This year there are 14 young ambassadors between the ages of 16 and 22. All 14 of them are top students and all-round good citizens.

The Chinese Canadian Association of Public Affairs is a non-profit, non-partisan organization committed to promoting full

citizenship participation by all Canadians. The organization is interested in promoting various initiatives such as the annual trips to Ottawa and seminars on important issues such as health care and constitutional reform.

I was pleased to meet these young ambassadors both last year and this year. I want to congratulate them for their commitment to causes and their outstanding qualities.

I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to help me welcome the Vancouver young ambassadors.

* * *

[Translation]

THE DISABLED

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Minister of Human Resources Development has shown us his insensitivity, his thoughtlessness and his blindness with his decision to eliminate subsidies to agencies that help the disabled.

Yesterday, in this House, he even had the audacity to state that he considered it more important to help the disabled than the organizations that represent them. In the same breath, he added that these organizations do a good job. Where is the logic? I do not know.

The minister talks about the federal government's willingness to negotiate with the provinces to find a solution. It is one thing to negotiate transfers, but it is another thing to cut subsidies without giving any consideration to the adverse consequences of such a decision on the organizations and the disabled.

"Let us cut and we will see later on what the consequences are". That seems to be the minister's theme song. Yet he ought to know that gagging people will not make them disappear.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the last five months I have received a number of complaints that FCC's agri-land division is manipulating land prices in my riding.

I provided the minister of agriculture with two specific examples in which to support my complaints I quoted recent sale prices for nearby land. In each instance I received a robotic ministerial reply stating, without any reference to my evidence, that agri-land does not engage in such practices. If the minister or his buddy Don Jackson make dogmatic statements, they are holy writ regardless of any contrary evidence.

S. O. 31

With its huge land base, the FCC is in a better position than any conventional financial institution to raise the price of its asset base by manipulating the price of land. There has to be an investigation into this.

* * *

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate St. Thomas University's graduating class which held its convocation this week in Fredericton. The day was the culmination of many years of hard work and dedication by those students who received their degrees. I wish them success in their chosen career paths.

I would also like to congratulate this year's honorary degree recipients: Dr. Louis Dudek of Montreal, Dr. Eric Garland, Mr. Frank McKenna and Mrs. Julie McKenna, as well as Rabbi David Spiro, all of whom have contributed tremendously to their communities.

All of this week's graduates worked hard to reach the goal they set for themselves and I commend them. I applaud St. Thomas University on its selections for honorary degrees. The choices do credit to the university, to our communities and to the recipients themselves.

* * *

OPTIMISTS IN ACTION

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 1 Optimist International will celebrate Optimists in Action Day around the world.

With the motto "Friend of Youth", Optimists strive to set a positive example for youth. In addition to helping youth develop those characteristics which they will require for future success, Optimist clubs provide funding to the community for the purchase of special medical equipment for children with special needs and personal welfare for children in need.

• (1410)

In Brampton the Optimist Club has put over \$1.6 million back into the community to service the needs of its young people. Among the programs run by the Optimist Club are respect for law, bicycle safety and oratorical contests. Some of its projects include Canada Day, the audiology room at Peel Memorial Hospital, students against drunk driving sponsorship and other worthy causes.

On behalf of all members I would like to congratulate the organizers and participants of Optimists in Action Day and wish them the best for their future success.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

ALLIANCE OUTAOUAIS

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hand held out by Lucien Bouchard to the members of the anglophone and allophone communities of Quebec was, in reality, only a sham.

That, unfortunately, is the conclusion we are forced to reach this morning after the Bloc Québécois' insulting refusal to take part in a meeting organized by Alliance Outaouais.

In response to their invitation, the Alliance Outaouais organizers were told by the staff in the Bloc whip and leader's office that he would not be taking part because, and I quote, "all anglophones think the same way, anyhow".

Such an attitude must be decried, for it feeds the discrimination and intolerance present in Quebec society. Once again, with this latest escapade, the Bloc Québécois has—

The Speaker: I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has run out.

* * *

CENTRAL AMERICA

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a member of this House of Latin American origin, I would like to call attention to the visit to Canada of the presidents of Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, and of the Prime Minister of Belize.

Central America has made great strides in the areas of peace agreements, human rights and demilitarization. Canada has worked actively for peace in that region. Its economic assistance, however, is constantly decreasing, at a time when the region requires outside support to consolidate its process of pacification and democratization.

The Canadian government must step up its diplomatic, trade and cultural relations with our Central American partners, particularly by opening embassies in places where there is no direct representation.

Senores presidentes, bienvenidos a este pais y mucho exito en sus funciones. Gracias.

[English]

THE SENATE

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has thwarted democracy once again. Earlier today he appointed another new senator from Alberta.

The Prime Minister was fully aware that Alberta Premier Ralph Klein intended to hold an election to fill Alberta's vacant Senate seat. Rather than wait for Albertans to elect their own senator under Alberta's Senates Election Act, the Prime Minister has used an iron fist and smashed Alberta's right to have a democratic election. This is tantamount to a dictatorship.

In a recent response to the leader of the Reform Party, the Prime Minister stated in this House: "I will name a senator who I will choose and who will represent my party in the House of Commons". We can only assume this is exactly what the Prime Minister has done in his latest patronage appointment which occurred earlier today. This is aggressive arrogance on behalf of the Prime Minister. It is an injustice to all Albertans and all Canadians.

Allow me to remind the House that the late Senator Stan Waters would be ashamed of this appointment. He was the only truly legitimate accountable senator in Canada's history. I say long live the memory of Senator Stan.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I appeal to you once again. We should as much as possible refrain from making comments about the other place as such.

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NORMAN INKSTER

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I wish to take the opportunity to congratulate one of my constituents who was recently decorated with the Order of Canada.

Mr. Norman Inkster of Cumberland, Ontario served as commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from 1987 to 1995.

[Translation]

He was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and joined the RCMP in 1957. His first posting was in Alberta, followed by Montreal and, finally, Ottawa.

[English]

During his tenure, Commissioner Inkster provided invaluable services to our national police force and served our country in a most exemplary manner. I have no doubt that many Canadians, indeed all Canadians, would join me in congratulating Norman

Oral Questions

Inkster who is more than worthy to have earned the very prestigious award, the Order of Canada.

* * *

LLOYD ROBERTSON

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night in Ottawa Mr. Lloyd Robertson received the 1995-96 Gold Ribbon Award for Broadcast Excellence. This prestigious award was presented at the broadcast excellence dinner which was attended by over 300 people, including Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

• (1415)

As vice-chair of the Canadian heritage committee and on behalf of all members of Parliament and Canadians everywhere, may I extend to Lloyd Robertson our warmest and sincere congratulations.

[Translation]

Congratulations, Mr. Robertson, on behalf of all of the members here and all of the people of Canada.

[English]

In accepting his award, Mr. Robertson, who is chief news anchor for CTV, praised the calibre of Canadian broadcasting. At the same time he also called for a redoubling of efforts by Canadian broadcasters in telling the story of Canada to all Canadians through every means available.

In congratulating Lloyd Robertson we recognize and salute his excellence and dedication to broadcasting in Canada.

The Speaker: My dear colleague, I would again ask you to please refrain from using our names in here. The titles that we bear are quite sufficient.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

CAPITAL GAINS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the minister of revenue refused to suspend the decision of Revenue Canada on the taxation of capital gains, which led to the transfer of \$2 billion to the United States tax free. In total contradiction with the deputy minister of finance, the auditor general said this morning that action in this matter was urgently needed in order to prevent the loss of millions of dollars in tax revenues.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will he acknowledge the urgency of acting to prevent the flight of capital on the basis of the precedent set by Revenue Canada?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that even though this decision was one made by a government previous to ours, we have acted in an urgent fashion. We have asked the finance committee to review these concerns the auditor general has drawn to our attention. We asked the committee to do it the very day the auditor general's report came down.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about billions of dollars, and the minister of revenue talks about the previous government and about convening the Standing Committee on Finance, but not in any hurry. That takes the cake.

This morning the auditor general said action had to be taken immediately, whereas the deputy minister of finance thinks September will be time enough.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Since this is a matter of urgency and the decision by Revenue Canada has yet to be suspended, who is the Minister of Finance going to listen to: his deputy minister or the auditor general?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that the case is urgent. I would therefore ask him why one of his own members walked away from the committee saying there was nothing important to do there.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past two weeks the opposition finance critic has been calling for the committee to sit, and the government is interested in having it sit only for minor matters.

I do not know if the minister of revenue is aware, but we are talking about dollars leaving the country untaxed, billions of dollars leaving the country untaxed. When ordinary people are involved, there is a great rush to nab them, but when billions of dollars are involved, there is no cause for alarm.

Given the urgency of acting and as a show of good faith, will the minister of revenue, the Minister of Finance or a responsible minister in this government undertake to put a stop to these flights of capital in order to stop billions of dollars going to the United States?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand why the hon. member would deny that the best place for these questions to be reviewed would be in a very public forum where members who are elected by Canadians

Oral Questions

across the country have a chance to look at the law and make recommendations to the Minister of Finance.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, who, I hope, is much more familiar with this issue.

On March 16, Revenue Canada made public its advance ruling allowing rich families to move their assets to the U.S. without paying Canadian taxes. This morning, the auditor general reiterated that the government needed to act quickly to avoid losing hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes once again.

Does the minister confirm that, since the decision was announced, it has been possible to move large pools of capital out of the country every day and that this situation will prevail until the minister finally decides to act?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed this is not the case.

Let me repeat the tax law is very arcane and complex. It needs time to be reviewed, understood and the implications determined not only for Canadians who have \$2 billion in assets but for those who may have only \$2.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the government and its ministers are skating around the issue, rich families are consulting with their lawyers, their accountants, their tax experts, and preparing to tax-shelter their assets by moving them out of Canada.

My question is for the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Revenue. Would one or the other agree to suspend Revenue Canada's advance ruling, which could be used as a excuse to move major assets out of Canada? Would he or she agree to suspend this decision, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are too few Canadians who have \$2 billion in assets. I suggest that if Canadians continue their confidence in us, there will be more money in the country.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Constitution, secession and the rule of law require precise interpretation. But the Prime Minister continues to muddy the

constitutional waters with his off the cuff comments about possible guidelines for future referendums on secession without saying what those guidelines are.

Yesterday the Prime Minister said: "If ever we have a referendum by any province, I hope there will be a discussion beforehand to make sure the rules are known by both sides".

I am wondering if the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs can explain what the Prime Minister was trying to say. In particular, what discussions or negotiations was he talking about, who would take part, and precisely what would be discussed?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada during the 1970s delivered a speech that is reported in his book in 1985. I have the quotation in French:

[Translation]

"We'll put our faith in democracy. We'll convince the people that they should stay in Canada and we'll win. If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

I am very proud of my Prime Minister and proud to show what a great democrat he is. A unilateral declaration of independence would not be acceptable in any way, shape or form in a democratic system. Democracy implies a mutual agreement to respect rules of law. And we will work with all Canadians to ensure that these rules are established in a context of calm co-operation between all concerned.

[English]

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said there will be negotiations on ground rules for the next referendum but provides no details at all.

He says 50 per cent plus one is not enough to separate, but he does not know what percentage would be acceptable. He says the federal government would never acknowledge a unilateral declaration of separation but cannot seem to outline the grounds for a democratic and legal secession.

Either the Prime Minister is making this up as he goes along or the federal government does have ground rules governing the next referendum on secession and is not disclosing them.

Which is it? Does the government have firm ground rules for governing a future referendum on secession? If it does, will it table them in the House?

• (1425)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Oral Questions

The point is for now the debate is, yes or no, whether a unilateral declaration of independence is supported by international law and accepted by Canadian law? The conviction of the government is that the answer is no.

When this is clear that will be the time to look at the specific issues which the hon. member is speaking about. However, for now the priority of the government is to work with all Canadians in order to reconcile Quebecers with Canadians to ensure they will improve the federation, that they will celebrate Quebec's specificity within Canada and that they will stay together for the next century.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if I understand the minister correctly, if that is the only guideline the government is firm about, will the minister then introduce a motion in the House declaring the House will not recognize a unilateral declaration of secession by any province in Canada?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the conviction of the government that a unilateral declaration of independence would not be supported by international law and would be against Canadian law.

* * *

[Translation]

SOMALIA INQUIRY

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

They are at it again. In an internal memo, Lieutenant-General Armand Roy urged 140 or so senior officers to get cracking to help the chief of defence staff, General Boyle. The memo also states that a political decision had been made to muzzle the general and that only the minister of defence would be allowed to make public statements about the Somalia affair.

Does the minister realize that silencing General Boyle—a fact confirmed by his spokesman, Steve Wills—is not only an act of political interference but, worse yet, in direct contravention of the military rules and procedures behind which he hid on Tuesday and which state that the chief of defence Staff is the only official spokesperson of the armed forces?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stated in the House some time ago—I think it was back in the fall of 1994 when this issue came up—that all members of the armed forces are not, as a condition of service, entitled to make public comments about their duties.

With respect to the incidents in Somalia, I advised the House that anybody who had anything to add to the situation, any evidence to give, should do so before the commission. That is consistent. That applies to everybody in the armed forces. It applies to the chief of defence staff.

However, the chief of defence staff has the unfettered right to communicate with his troops at any time. General Boyle exercised that right a few weeks ago but has since taken the position, the correct position and the one I directed in the House of Commons, that any commentary on Somalia should not be made in an external forum such as Parliament or in the news media but to the commission of inquiry.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when will the minister come to the realization that a serious conflict of interest does justify suspending the chief of defence staff on a temporary basis, since he is personally under investigation by his own military police for allegedly having authorized the falsification of documents?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we dealt with this question a few weeks ago. The chief of defence staff is doing a very good job and is working extremely hard. At the appropriate time he will come forward to the commission to answer all of its questions.

* * *

QUEBEC CONTRACTS

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Tuesday the Minister of Foreign Affairs tried to justify excessive awards of CIDA contracts to Quebec entities by citing cultural and linguistic ties to francophone countries receiving Canadian aid. However, public documents show that Quebec companies have major contracts in Central America, Indonesia, South Africa, China, Egypt, the Philippines and Bolivia.

• (1430)

Why will he not admit these deals have absolutely nothing to do with our ties to the francophonie and everything to do with trying to buy the loyalty of Quebec?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many of the companies and NGOs who work out of Quebec have been very effective in providing aid and assistance around the world representing this country as Canadians.

In the government we do not buy into the kind of regional divisiveness the hon. member and the hon. member from the Bloc

Oral Questions

buy into. We think it does not matter where you come from in Canada; if you do a good job, you get the contract.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I take it from the hon. minister's answer that Canada has only one region.

What we have over there is a government that is absolutely adrift. It is scrambling to find a national unity strategy and it is coming up empty handed.

Why will the minister not stop trying to explain away this blatant attempt at vote buying and admit his government has no policies that will convince Quebecers to stay in Canada and is trying to resort to bribing them instead?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Colleagues, a few weeks ago the word bribe was used in the House. I think it is the kind of word which causes us to escalate the rhetoric on both sides. I wonder if the hon. member would withdraw the word bribe.

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to withdraw that word.

Will the government stop trying to curry favour with Quebec by providing it with money?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will overlook the primitive nature of the hon. member's remarks and instead focus on the central issue which is what is the development program about.

Today the Prime Minister is hosting a meeting of the six heads of state of Central America who in the last five or six years have fought valiantly to establish democracies in that region of the world. Canada has been a full partner using its development programs. There have been Canadians from Quebec, Canadians from Alberta, Canadians from the Atlantic provinces all working in Central America to help those countries find democracy. That is the point of development.

* * *

[Translation]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Yesterday, when I asked him about cuts imposed on advocacy groups for the handicapped, the minister said he would keep on talking with these groups regarding their future and their funding.

Since the minister seems to be confirming his intention to resume the dialogue with these groups, is he prepared to go one step further and to restore their funding?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several organizations are in a position to continue operating, because funds are still available to them. As we said on many occasions, we made a commitment. We informed the organizations concerned that the government intends to withdraw its financial support to several of them.

Originally, several agreements provided for funding over periods of one, two or three years. We will, as usual, continue to consult all our partners and discuss the issue with them.

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, considering that these groups are often the only voice for handicapped people, can the minister tell us with whom he intends to discuss if, through his own fault, these groups disappear?

• (1435)

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most of the services available to people with problems of one kind or another are provided by the provinces.

Day in day out in this House members urge us to respect jurisdictions. When we do so and make sure that we do not interfere in areas such as health and so on, we are told that we should continue to fund organizations.

For example, we provide funding for Experience Canada and we are told we should not do so. Should we get involved or not? Make up your mind.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this morning the deputy minister of revenue, under oath, was less than categorical in saying there was no political interference in the movement of \$2 billion offshore, tax free.

Will the Minister of Finance dispel the perception of Liberal collusion in this decision by closing this loophole today?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question. However, I will just point out that one of the critical differences between our government and the previous government is that we take action. When we take action we take it in a very public way.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue said this was an arcane and complex problem, yet the deputy minister of finance said it was so simple he did not even have to take notes on the issue. Either the minister is slow on the uptake or the deputy minister is too fast for his own good.

Oral Questions

Again I ask the minister will he stop the billions of dollars moving offshore today and restore Canadians' faith in the Income Tax Act, or is the government to allow more billionaires to take advantage of this loophole before it closes it?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that supposition is not at all what the deputy minister said in committee today.

I point out yet again the public accounts committee is the second public venue in which this information is being reviewed. I again congratulate the hon. member for being part of that committee. We do look forward to its recommendations.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: My colleagues, in a departure from our usual procedure, I now draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of visitors from the western hemisphere. I will introduce six heads of state and I ask you to hold your applause until I have introduced all of them.

I would like to introduce to you His Excellency Dr. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez, President of the Republic of Honduras; His Excellency José Maria Figueres Olsen, President of the Republic of Costa Rica; His Excellency Dr. Armando Calderon Sol, President of the Republic of El Salvador; His Excellency Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala; Her Excellency Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, President of the Republic of Nicaragua; the Right Honourable Manuel Esquivel, Prime Minister of Belize.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REFERENDUMS

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the week, the Prime Minister has told us three things: first, that Quebecers would not be allowed to decide their future on their own, that all of Canada would have to get involved; then, that the majority at a referendum would now have to be more than 50 per cent plus one; and lastly, that he would want to negotiate the referendum question with Quebec. In brief, the Prime Minister is getting himself bogged down in a constitutional debate and is dragging us in with him.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the process he is suggesting could, ultimately, mean 13 referendums, in 13 provinces and territories, perhaps with 13 different questions, so that we would have to interpret 13 different results?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the position of the Canadian government is very simple. There have been two referendums where Quebecers have expressed the wish to remain in Canada. If the opposition party had a modicum of respect for democracy, it would recognize the fact that the people of Quebec have already made their wishes known.

[*English*]

I am delighted to be on my feet to salute the six heads of state and government of Central America. They all know what it is to be in a prison. They have established democracies in their countries and they are in Canada today. They have told me that they admire the democracy of Canada, the quality of life, the quality of public debate, and the quality of politics. I would like to salute them and wish them good luck in their work.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister forgot to mention that he won two referendums in Quebec by making empty promises to Quebecers and by never honouring his commitments.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Dear colleague, I would ask you to choose your words more carefully.

Mr. Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, I was being very careful. Why does the Prime Minister want so much to create between Quebec and the rest of Canada a confrontation such as there has never been before?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, what I want is very simple. I would like the Government of Quebec to show some respect for the people of Quebec, by asking them a clear and honest question, that would be acceptable to everyone, instead of asking a winning question to try to encourage Quebecers to vote against their own wishes.

I would invite the Government of Quebec to do so and I am sure that—As we saw this morning on television, people throughout the world wonder why a province like Quebec is not happy to live in the best country of the world, that is in Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Our country allows the import of food products which have the benefit of pesticides that our own farmers are prohibited from

Oral Questions

using, and this is to their competitive disadvantage. Canadians eat this food. In the Niagara region our entire peach crop is at risk because of increasing resistance to current pesticides.

What measure is the government taking to expedite the pesticide approval procedures in this country and to harmonize approvals with the United States?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the member on his continuing concern about this matter.

He will know that representatives from the pest management regulatory agency met with peach and apple growers last week on the question of reaching solutions to pest management problems in orchards. That same agency is already looking at alternative candidates for the control of pests. As well, it is in consultations now with the United States EPA to look at joint efforts for pest control management in the coming year.

With his vigilance and his support we will get the agency and our American counterparts to look for long term solutions to pest management control.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to go on and on about page 22 of the red book, which everyone knows is another broken promise.

I would like to remind him of another broken promise on pages 23 and 24. This Liberal government promised to protect the steel industry, the pork industry, softwood lumber and other products. It said it would renegotiate the free trade agreement and NAFTA to obtain a subsidies code, an anti-dumping code and a more effective way of resolving disputes.

• (1445)

Would the Prime Minister admit that this was his first broken promise?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with a trade remedies working group that involves our partners from the United States and Mexico toward doing the very things that the hon. member has talked about.

We are fully committed to dealing with the reform of trade remedy laws to cut down on the use of countervail and anti-dumping duties so that we can have a free trade system. That is our position and that is what we continue to work toward.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that these working groups have been working for eight years and have failed to come up with a subsidy definition.

In fact, the red book says nothing about working groups at all. It says that the Liberals were going to renegotiate NAFTA and the free trade agreement before they signed it. They promised to demand an open market for steel and an anti-dumping code.

This Liberal broken promise has really hurt the people in the steel industry in particular. When will the government honour its promise to produce a level playing field for Canada and the United States in this industry?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with the preamble to the question.

The government is working not only through NAFTA but through the World Trade Organization to help improve the rules based system. The government is committed to liberalization in trade and a rules based system. It will continue whether it is with the working groups, the WTO, the OECD or whatever other vehicle, to bring that about.

* * *

[Translation]

REFERENDUMS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

I would like to start by pointing out that we find it somewhat rude to proclaim one's country the first in the world when there are international visitors present.

Day after day, improvisation after improvisation, the Prime Minister's constitutional strategy is taking shape. If I may say so, however, there are still some bits missing, before we can clearly and fully understand what is in his mind.

Does the Prime Minister plan to hold a referendum right across Canada to decide the future of the people of Quebec?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the title of number one country in the world has been awarded to Canada by the UN several times. Having said that, however, I am prepared to agree with the hon. member that we see other very fine countries in our travels, in Central America in particular.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dion: I have a quote here, since the opposition may not believe the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. This is a quote about how we must look at Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

Mr. Dion: They will not let me speak, for fear of what I have to say.

[*English*]

“Canada is a land of promise and Canadians are a people of hope. It is a country celebrated for its generosity of spirit where tolerance is ingrained in the national character”.

[*Translation*]

“A society in which every citizen and every group can affirm itself, express itself, realize its aspirations”.

An hon. member: Who said that?

Mr. Dion: These words, of such truth that they could have come from Sir Wilfrid Laurier or Pierre Trudeau, were spoken on July 1, 1988 by then Secretary of State, the Hon. Lucien Bouchard.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, might we remind this former university professor that these words predate the failure of the Meech Lake accord, which he may recall?

• (1450)

Does the Prime Minister realize that the deeper his reflections, the deeper he plunges the country into a constitutional impasse and the better the conditions he sets for a confrontation between Quebec and the rest of Canada?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Government of Canada is after in this matter is to ensure that, under all circumstances no matter how difficult, the rights of citizens are respected and negotiations are always held by mutual consent under the protection of the legal order.

Democracy is indissociable from the legal order. What we want is to ensure that, if ever the option of the opposition were to win out, we would not find ourselves in a situation where there would be a legal vacuum. That would be very dangerous for both the people of Quebec and the other citizens of Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had a call from the fishermen occupying the DFO offices in downtown Vancouver. They are outraged that the minister has broken another promise.

On May 9 the minister said that his plan would not be used to take fish away from the commercial fleet, would not be used to reallocate fish. Then yesterday fishermen received a letter from the minister reneging on that commitment.

First the minister flip-flopped on conservation, now he flip-flops on allocation. When will the minister admit that his plan will not work and dump it?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allocations letter which was sent to fishermen was in response to meetings held in Vancouver two weeks ago at which we met with eight groups.

If there was any commonality among these groups it was that there should be a further indication and reaffirmation of the allocations policy for the commercial salmon fishery this year.

There has been no flip-flop. This allocations policy letter went out under my signature. My understanding from the fishermen I have heard from is that the allocations letter does what it was intended to do, which was give greater confidence to the fishermen of the allocation of commercial salmon they will have this year.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister would do well to read his own press releases. Then he would know what flip-flop is about.

The minister’s newly appointed adviser described the minister’s plan as a cold shower, a plan where everything happens at once, a plan where fishermen are forced to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. As the minister’s adviser pointed out, this includes uncertainty about the allocation question.

Will the minister admit that fishermen cannot make informed decisions about his plan by his May 24 deadline?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has agreed with me that the commercial salmon situation and the condition of the salmon stocks in British Columbia are desperate.

The capacity to catch salmon is overheated. I understand that when a situation is overheated, a cold shower is often quite useful.

The description of the cold shower by Dr. Pearse was meant in a positive sense. I mentioned to the hon. member a couple of days ago that Dr. Pearse is very much in support of this plan. Contrary to the words of the hon. member, Dr. Pearse is confident, as are most members of the House, that the plan will work.

* * *

TRADE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Oral Questions

The minister is meeting today with the just introduced leaders of the Central American countries. Discussions will focus on economic co-operation, sustainable development and the promotion of civil rights.

Our countries have achieved great gains in the last few years. Could the minister tell the House how CIDA is collaborating with the Central American region in order to consolidate those gains?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very historic meeting which the Prime Minister hosted today with the Central American presidents is another step in keeping the red book promise to expand into the western hemisphere the influence, opportunity and activity of this country.

The discussion today dealt with how we can use our resources through CIDA to helping environmental sustainable development and the promotion of democratic rights.

It is another example of how we can use the benefits we have as Canadians who live in one of the most open, tolerant, democratic countries and share those benefits with other people who are trying to achieve the same kind of great society we have.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Two months ago the minister agreed to re-examine taxation provisions covering people with disabilities. Nothing has yet been announced. However, according to eligibility criteria for the tax credit, persons who are unable to cook, but able to feed themselves with difficulty are not entitled to a tax credit.

When does the Minister of Finance intend reviewing these criteria and all tax matters applying to people with a handicap?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we said in the budget was that we intended to set up a task force to look into this very relevant and important question. I congratulate the member for raising it.

It is certainly our intention, and we are now looking at parameters to ensure our study is properly targeted.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to business taxes, the minister is quick to announce the establishment of a committee where he carefully invites those he considers primarily interested. Why does he not accord the same treatment to people with disabilities?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as business is concerned, not only did we set up a commission this year to look at all the facts, but, in our first three budgets, we took very stringent measures regarding an increase in taxes for major corporations, an increase in taxes on banks and the abolition of the \$100,000 capital gains exemption.

On the whole subject of corporate taxes, not only did we set up a commission, but we acted immediately.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government is robbing prairie grain farmers of 30 per cent of the price of wheat and barley by refusing to end the wheat board monopoly on grain marketing.

On November 20, 1995 the Prime Minister promised farmers a plebiscite on the future of the wheat board monopoly. In the last election campaign the agriculture minister also promised farmers a plebiscite.

Did the minister have any intention of keeping his promise? Was he prevented from doing so by an act of God or was this whole thing just another hollow Liberal promise to get elected?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman's outraged indignation hardly sells well before an audience that knows the details of this issue.

The hon. gentleman should know what were the comments made during the 1993 election campaign with respect to a plebiscite. Those comments specifically said that the government would not consider adjusting the mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board in any fundamental way without first consulting producers by way of a plebiscite. Obviously that is a commitment that we intend to honour.

At the time that the comment was made the previous government was in the process of amending the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board without the legal authority to do it. This government honoured the law and I would advise the hon. gentleman to honour the law as well.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, how long does this minister plan to consult? Already a commissioner has resigned from the wheat board in disgust because of the way barley is being handled by the board. He said that there is a very narrow fringe that rejects outright any compromise on this issue, a very narrow fringe of which the government is a part.

When will the minister catch up with farmers who know that the monopoly power of the wheat board is hurting their interests,

abandon this fringe position and hold a plebiscite on ending the monopoly of wheat board marketing?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, careful reading of the quotation from the former commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board will show that he was referring to the other side of the argument, not the side of the argument to which the hon. gentleman refers.

• (1500)

On the occasion of the resignation of that former commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board, he went out of his way to indicate that he had a concern about the process for barley pricing. He also said the Canadian Wheat Board does a commendable job of marketing and does not deserve the abuse that people like this member hand out gratuitously without any respect for what the system ought to be.

* * *

EXPERIENCE CANADA

Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Recently an initiative called Experience Canada, a Canada-wide youth development and cultural exchange program, was attacked by a Quebec critic. He has cited this program as a front for the government to push Canadian unity.

Could the Minister of Human Resources Development explain the purpose of Experience Canada and confirm what this program represents for youth across Canada?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in asking a question about Experience Canada, the hon. member is demonstrating his commitment and the government's commitment to supporting youth in the country by providing them with opportunities.

This is a unique experience which has been put together by the private sector. There will be \$21 million going into the program, more than half of it from the private sector. Young Canadians from all provinces and the territories will be able to become involved in an exchange of visits.

In addition to learning about the country, they will be getting job experience which will look very good on their CVs as they seek employment in the years to come.

The only sad note in all of this is that we will be handling about 1,500 young people in this program and we could certainly use many more millions of dollars because the take-up of the program has been absolutely fantastic. A lot of young Canadians are wishing to experience Canada.

Privilege

The Speaker: We will proceed with the usual Thursday question and then I will entertain two questions of privilege, one from the hon. member for Mississauga South and another question of privilege from the hon. member for Laval East.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is on the legislative agenda in the next sitting days?

[English]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to assist the House, I will outline the business the government will place before it for the remainder of this month.

Tomorrow we will continue with Bill C-20, followed by Bill C-4, the Standards Council Act amendments, and Bill C-5, respecting bankruptcy.

When the House returns on May 27, and on Wednesday, May 19 and Friday, May 31 it will turn to Bill C-31, the budget implementation legislation. This will be followed by consideration at second reading of the income tax legislation based on the ways and means motion concurred in yesterday.

We will then return, if necessary, to Bill C-20, Bill C-4 and Bill C-5. If there is time we will call Bill C-23, respecting nuclear safety, and Bill C-24, amendments to the Tobacco Products Act.

Tuesday, May 28 and Thursday, May 30 shall be allotted days. In order to assist the Table, I ask my friend, the hon. Minister of Finance, to confirm their designation.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I confirm.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

BILL C-222

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege relating to the subject of interfering with members.

I refer to Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 92:

A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a member must relate to the member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the member does in relation to that member's constituency.

• (1505)

This point of privilege relates to my private member's bill, Bill C-337, which proposes health warning labels on containers of alcoholic beverages, which passed second reading in the House on

Privilege

December 7, 1995, was reinstated as Bill C-222 after prorogation on March 5 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Health. Accordingly, I believe my point of privilege satisfies section 92.

I further refer Mr. Speaker to Beauchesne's section 93:

It is generally accepted that any threat, or attempt to influence the vote of, or actions of a member, is breach of privilege.

I have evidence that would appear to violate the provisions of section 93 with regard to Bill C-222. First, during the consideration of the bill the representatives of the alcohol beverage industry circulated two customized pieces of literature and other formal communications to all members of Parliament urging them to reject Bill C-222.

Second, on or about Tuesday, May 14 certain members of Parliament were each sent a baseball and tickets to a baseball game and a communication from the alcohol industry relating to its position on Bill C-222.

The third and most important point, the alcohol lobby spokespersons in their literature and other written communications and in committee testimony on this bill stated that if the government mandates health warning labels to be placed on their containers, the money spent on responsible use programs, advertising and educational programs, some of which are cost shared by the government, will be reduced or eliminated to recover the costs of mandating labels.

This appears to pose a threat or adverse consequence directly to Health Canada and therefore to the minister of health, and therefore attempts to affect their position regarding Bill C-222.

I believe these examples violate section 93 of Beauchesne's sixth edition and therefore violate my rights and possibly the rights of many other members of the House. I am prepared to provide the Chair or to table with the House all relevant documents in my possession if so ordered.

It would appear the lobbyists on behalf of the beverage alcohol industry are responsible for these apparent violations of section 93 of Beauchesne's. Therefore I respectfully ask that my rights as a member of Parliament and indeed the integrity of the House of Commons be defended by having a thorough investigation conducted by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs or by other means which Mr. Speaker may deem appropriate.

The Speaker: My colleague, as the Speaker of the House I take very seriously the allegations you have brought forth. I invite you to please put at my disposal all the information you have at your disposal with regard to your claim.

After I have reviewed all the material you have put before me, if necessary I will return to the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that Bloc members never received baseballs, tickets to a baseball game, baseball bats or anything of the sort. I do not know what the hon. member is referring to.

The Speaker: Does any other member wish to rise on the question of privilege?

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say I do not think my privilege as a member has been breached in any way. I did receive some correspondence, as I do every day from numerous groups. I did not receive anything resembling a baseball or tickets to a baseball game. Therefore, my privilege has not been breached.

• (1510)

[English]

The Speaker: If there are no more interventions on this point of privilege, I will await the information from the hon. member for Mississauga South and, if necessary, will return to the House with a decision.

[Translation]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle referred to me personally as a member of Parliament in his statement pursuant to Standing Order 31 before today's question period, I would urge him to proceed with caution and to check the facts before making accusations against my office. I call on him to withdraw his comments, as they are not true.

The Speaker: Dear colleague, were these comments made during proceedings?

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle is not here at this time, so you could perhaps wait for a day when he is present before raising the question of privilege. I will certainly hear your question again. Is this okay?

Mrs. Dalphone-Guiral: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

The Speaker: Before question period today my hon. colleague, the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole, made a ruling on the splitting of time and the proposal of amendments by the two members who were splitting the time, notwithstanding that both these members were the lead off speakers.

[Translation]

Following the Chair's decision on the amendment put forward by Mr. Bellehumeur, Mrs. Lalonde, seconded by Mr. Duceppe,

moved, and I quote: "That the amendment be amended by adding the words 'the book' between the words 'in' and 'Straight from the Heart'".

This amendment is in order.

[English]

Before resuming debate on the business of supply, there are two motions to be put.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence. There are two travel motions which I believe there has been unanimous agreement to put forward.

I move:

That the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Transport and one researcher be authorized to travel to Washington, D.C., Chicago and Montreal on May 21, 22, and 23 and on June 4, 5, and 6 to gather information on the creation of a binational structure for the St. Lawrence Seaway.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

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

That 10 members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and the necessary support staff be authorized to travel to Washington, D.C. for three days between May 27, 1996 and June 5, 1996 in relation to the impact of the U.S. farm bill on Canadian agriculture

• (1515)

The Speaker: There are two motions here. Does the House give its unanimous consent to propose both motions at the same time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motions agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON QUEBEC

The House resumed consideration of the motion; and of the amendment; and of the amendment to the amendment.

Supply

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, continuing with my speech, I will make two final points.

The first point is that Canada has a Constitution which has evolved over 130 years. In fact many of the conventions and concepts which are incorporated in the Constitution had evolved before Canada officially became a country in 1867. A constitution is the base law on which this country and other countries around the world operate. It is incumbent upon us as a nation, as a people, to adhere to the Constitution.

As was said in the speech from the throne not that many weeks ago, the whole issue of Canada, our Constitution and our political make-up is a discussion for all Canadians. It is not for just one segment of Canada but for all Canadians no matter where they live, no matter what their ethnic background is, no matter what their language is. It is an issue for all Canadians. That is important to remember.

The second point is a personal one. It deals with the work I am undertaking in committee, a study on rural economic development. When I talk to Canadians, whether they are from British Columbia, Manitoba, the maritimes or Quebec, we share values as rural Canadians. It is not as rural Canadians from English Canada or rural Canadians from French Canada, we share values as rural Canadians. We share that special quality of life which is rural Canada whether it is in the Laurentians, the Eastern Townships or my area of Muskoka. We share important rural traditions which stretch from coast to coast to coast whether it is in Quebec, Ontario or somewhere else in Canada. Together we share our attempt to overcome those special challenges as rural Canadians.

Canada and Canadians are a nation and a people from coast to coast to coast. Although we have specific challenges to solve as Canadians we know and experience this nationhood every day. It is time for members of the Bloc Québécois to stop their political posturing and to do their duty and take actions which are in the best interests of all constituents, people who live in Quebec and people who live in the rest of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the hon. member for Don Valley North said and I cannot help wondering how an Armenian man of all people can question the right of Quebecers, as a people, to self-determination.

An hon. member: He is not Armenian.

Mr. Lebel: I am told that the hon. member is not Armenian, please forgive me.

At any rate, not so long ago, the Armenians were mentioned, and the hon. member for Saint-Denis also mentioned Macedonia, Serbia and other countries in that part of the world. It is strange how individuals from an ethnic group, members of an ethnic

Supply

minority in Canada, claim elsewhere the very thing they are denying us here. I have a great deal of trouble with that.

I would like to ask the hon. member, who nevertheless made an excellent speech and professed his faith in Canada, if he could help me understand what would be the point of having a Canada in which Quebec would be forced to stay against its will, after voting for sovereignty, all because of some legal texts, a Constitution it never signed or entered into. Do you think this makes for a healthy country? Is that healthy?

• (1520)

Do you think the great and beautiful country you refer to three times every half hour in this place will be able to keep projecting the same image internationally if it forces seven or eight million people to stay in your great and beautiful Canada? That is my first question.

As for the second one, I was listening earlier to the members who spoke before the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. They talked about a Canadian nation. I have a very hard time understanding how they can talk about a single nation when we have two languages and when the central part of this country does not understand its neighbours on either side, in the east and the west. They talk about a country with a single nation but two different languages. That is not easy to understand. As someone pointed out to me earlier, it is like an egg with two yolks, it does not give two chicks. Only one develops.

Please help me understand how a single nation can have two languages. Yet the concept of nation and the use of a given language are closely linked. One nation, one language, I can understand, but one nation, two, three, five languages, I cannot. The Prime Minister denied the existence of a Quebec nation. That is probably what the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka was referring to.

Anyone who considers that Quebec does not exist in the first place will obviously have a problem admitting that it could leave. Could you clarify this point for me please?

The Speaker: Dear colleague, I remind you that you must address the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that what my ethnic origin might or might not be or what the ethnic origin of anyone who sits in this House might be is totally irrelevant to the debate today and at any other time. The member ought to realize that.

The member asks what kind of a nation are we and what kind of a nation will we be. We are a people and a nation that for 130 years have worked in the northern part of North America to build a strong

and vibrant country. We have not done it because we are all the same, that we all look the same, that we all speak the same, that we are all the same colour. No, we have done it because we have learned the importance of partnership. We have learned the importance of working together. We have learned the importance of addressing our challenges together.

We have done what many nations in this world envy. We have succeeded in creating a country that, although it has its problems from time to time, is admired as the best nation in the world, according to the United Nations.

Members of a family are different. I am different from what my brother was. I am different from my sister. My parents are different from each other, as are my children. We do not allow those differences to divide us. We celebrate those differences. It is what makes us unique as a family. It is what makes us special. We build upon those differences so that together we are more than what we are individually. That is what we do as a family. That is what we do as Canadians and that is why we are a great nation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, who just spoke, for sharing his time with me.

Today, I address this House, and the Bloc Québécois, as a French speaking person living outside Quebec.

• (1525)

Canada is the most decentralized of all modern federations. During the sixties, a series of agreements between the federal and Quebec governments triggered a decentralization process, and it was not necessary to amend the Constitution. These changes have allowed Quebec to extend its jurisdiction to areas that traditionally came under federal jurisdiction. Examples of this are the selection of immigrants and the fact that Quebec is represented at the Francophonie summit as a participating government.

In a study prepared for the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, professor Edmond Orban, an expert on federalism, said that “the autonomy of Canadian provinces and their possibilities are, in fact, relatively greater than that of the German Länders and particularly the Swiss cantons”.

Mr. Parizeau himself said the following when he was a Quebec minister and delivered a speech at the University of Edinburgh:

[*English*]

“And because rather often in Canada we tend to talk of the abusive centralized powers of Ottawa, we tend to forget that in reality, Canada is highly decentralized”. This quote is from the *Globe and Mail* of December 9, 1977.

[*Translation*]

In light of this evolution of the Canadian federation, and in line with the changes already made, the government pledged to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government, so as to modernize the federation and make it more respectful of the provinces' priorities and areas of jurisdiction.

Building a federation that is more receptive to the needs of its citizens and better adapted to the realities and challenges of our era is our government's goal.

The measures announced in the throne speech seek to implement the commitments made by the government to improve relations between the federal and provincial governments, including Quebec, and to truly modernize the federation.

Canadians want their country to work. They want the various levels of government to be effective and to perform their respective roles.

The federal government has already brought about important changes. It will continue to do whatever is necessary to achieve this modernization, in co-operation with the provinces and with all the people of Canada.

The government has promised, on the one hand, to undertake a retooling of the federation on four fronts, and, on the other, to limit its spending power. The plan is as follows: first, the government intends to withdraw from certain fields of activity, such as manpower training, forestry, mining, and recreation, and to transfer responsibility to local or regional authorities or to the private sector.

Second, the involvement of the federal government is no longer necessary in certain sectors. The federal government will therefore transfer management of these sectors to other levels of government or to the private sector.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are replacing the Speaker of the House. This is perhaps a first, having a member of the Bloc Québécois occupy the Speaker's chair in the House of Commons.

To continue what I was saying, this is the case for part of the transportation infrastructure. Operational control of transportation systems and facilities, now a federal responsibility, will be transferred to local and private groups. Thus, we will reduce the cost, and the services provided will address Canada's real transportation needs.

Third, in a spirit of increased co-operation with the provinces and greater respect for provincial jurisdiction, the government intends to work with the provinces to find new forms of co-operation and co-management in certain fields, such as environmental management, social housing, food inspection, tourism, and freshwater fish habitat. The government will also explore the possibility

Supply

of setting up a Canadian securities commission, thus ending the proliferation in that sector.

However, such initiatives will not be introduced unless a number of provinces express an interest. As well, participation is voluntary.

Fourth, the government intends to ensure greater harmonization of federal and provincial policies.

All these measures have as a goal the harmonization of federal and provincial initiatives, thus eliminating overlap. They will mean significant savings and more efficient services to the public.

• (1530)

No doubt the most eloquent example of the government's intention to respect provincial jurisdiction is our intention to limit the federal government's spending power in co-financed programs that come under provincial responsibility.

The federal government will not use its spending power to create new co-financed programs without the consent of the majority of the provinces. Provinces setting up and providing equivalent programs will be compensated.

This is an unprecedented initiative on the part of the federal government, which, for the first time ever, is acting on its own initiative to limit its spending power, unequivocally, and outside constitutional negotiations.

The federal budget for 1996-97 consolidates the government's initiatives and intentions in this regard. Measures proposed give effect to the government's commitment to assume its fiscal responsibilities and reduce the deficit to two per cent of the gross domestic product for 1997-98 through ongoing reduction of its expenditures.

The government is also providing long term predictable and increasing funding to the provinces for social programs under the Canada health and social transfer. What is more, the 1996 budget, like the previous one, contains no tax increase.

In addition to these measures, the budget confirms the federal government's commitment not only to spend less but to spend better. In fact, the creation of agencies like the Canada Revenue Commission is part of the federal strategy to modernize the federation and to better define the respective responsibilities of the various levels of government.

This government has made every effort to lay a solid foundation by bringing the deficit under control, avoiding tax increases, cutting red tape, and rationalizing government services to Canadians. Its priorities remain job creation, economic prosperity and stable social programs. Achieving these goals involves modernizing and reinforcing the economic and social union that brings all Canadians together.

We also firmly believe that changing the way the federation works, improving federal-provincial relations, and bringing all

Supply

Canadians closer to the decision making process will eliminate the need for another referendum on secession and the break-up of this country.

This government has resolutely embarked on a co-operation-based process of change. These are the values that will guide Canada and help it take on with confidence the challenges of the 21st century. The measures and initiatives put forward by this government will open a new chapter in federal-provincial relations by emphasizing open-mindedness and dialogue.

The process of change under way is part of an aggressive action plan put in place by the Canadian government. It clearly shows that the federal government wants to be pragmatic and that it is not the great centralizing force portrayed by the official opposition.

Canada is a success story, although we agree that our federation needs some changes. We are ready to take up the challenge, to roll up our sleeves and to get down to work, but we need the co-operation of all our Canadian partners. We sincerely hope that the Quebec government will be open-minded and agree to act as a full-fledged partner of Canada and work with our government to modernize the Canadian federation. That was what Quebecers told their provincial government on October 30.

• (1535)

We must continue to build this country and make it stronger. The initiatives undertaken by our government clearly show its intention to bring about changes that fulfil the aspirations of all our fellow citizens.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member was a bit off the mark today. He extolled the virtues of Canada. There may be some advantages to living in Canada, but the question is whether or not Quebec has the right to decide its own future. That is what the questions I will put to him will be about.

It feels strange to hear members of this Liberal government speak today, given that they had previously recognized referendums as a means of decision making. When Quebecers lost the referendum in 1982, the federal government acknowledged the referendum result.

Same thing again with the referendum on the Charlottetown accord. Quebecers won, the federalists lost. The government's proposal was rejected and, once again, the verdict was readily accepted. The question is why does the Prime Minister keep repeating day in and day out that a referendum is nothing more than a means of public consultation and that any decision made is not final.

Strangely enough, this change in attitude coincides with a very tight vote, with 49.6 per cent of Quebecers voting for sovereignty. It took these tight results to notice all of a sudden that the government is changing the rules of the democratic game. The credibility of democracy and of our financial institutions are at

stake here. That is why we are debating this very important issue today.

Why did it take two referendums before Newfoundland eventually joined the Confederation? The first results were not very high; they were closer the second time around. The decision to join the Constitution in Newfoundland was made on the basis of a very close vote—50 or 51 per cent, 50.5 per cent—in a referendum. While a 50 per cent plus one verdict is good enough to join the Confederation, it is not good enough when you want out.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why, if it takes 50 per cent of the votes plus one to join the Confederation, the same rule does not apply for leaving the Confederation. I would like to hear what he has to say on this.

Mr. Bélair: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer this question. The hon. member referred to the referendums held in 1982 and 1995. It is true that Quebecers spoke and that their decision was respected.

Let me go back to the 1992 Charlottetown accord. At the time, I was a member of this House, and so was the hon. member who just asked the question. Now, I wonder why Quebec rejected the Charlottetown accord, given that it included the distinct society concept, a delegation of powers—in the mining, forestry, recreation and housing sectors—, an elected Senate, and several other major changes.

After the 1995 referendum, the Prime Minister said he would hold out his hand to Quebecers. We did it by passing the resolution on the distinct society, that Bloc members rejected. One has to wonder what they want.

As for the 50 per cent plus one rule, the Prime Minister also held out his hand to Quebecers last week and this week when he told them that, should another referendum be held, there would have to be agreement on the question. The Prime Minister is talking about co-operation. I do not know whether you will accept his offer. Probably not.

Personally, I would go a little further regarding the percentage that should be required, because I really wonder if, from a legal standpoint, it is acceptable to destroy a country with a majority of just one vote.

• (1540)

I firmly believe that the percentage required should be higher. However, we should, in a spirit of co-operation, agree on this percentage, as well as on the question itself.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion before us. It states that the House adopt as its own the statement made in 1985 by the current Prime Minister. The quote is: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

Supply

That is a very open statement, "if we don't win". The term win is not identified as what would be a win. It has still not been identified some 11 years later. The term "let them separate" gives no indication of how that tragic action, if it were to take place, would take place.

The Reform Party cannot support this motion. As a party we have said that we will respect a yes vote if that is the vote of the people of Quebec, but we have also said that we can only respect it if there is an honest question, and if there is honest debate on the consequences of the question. If it does happen, it is critical to follow the rule of law as much as it can be applied to answering the question.

We are discussing this motion today largely because of a lack of leadership by this government. There is no vision for the future of Canada and there certainly is no plan for the future of Canada. The lack of leadership, lack of vision and lack of any plan is not only reflected in the failed unity issue. It is also reflected in the jobs, jobs, jobs which have yet to materialize for Canadians both inside and outside of Quebec. It is reflected in a failing economy that still has not been revved up to its full potential or anywhere near it. There has not been any plan for major changes to our criminal justice system that is failing Canadians.

While we talk about the failure to address the economy and create the jobs which Canadians are so desperately looking for, the failure in both those areas plays into the hands of the separatists. They can point to the failures in Ottawa and suggest that they could do no worse on their own.

I recall some 30 years ago when the B and B commission was first introduced. The government of the day appointed it in an attempt to unite our country, to bring us together as one country. I supported the commission which was originally the B and B commission but became B and multiculturalism commission. I supported it 30 years ago because I thought that was what we must do to unite the country and get Canada moving on to the greatness that could be ours.

After 30 years it is very evident that what has been done over this period of time is not working. As a country we have never been further apart. The October 1993 election in which 54 Bloc members were elected on a mandate to take Quebec out of Canada is living testimony, is living proof of the absolute failure of past policies, of the status quo. It is not working, yet no one is asking why we should be changing.

Going back to October 1993, not just 54 Bloc members were elected, 205 new members of Parliament were elected to this place, an unheard of turnover. Again the vote was a vote for change. Canadians were telling Ottawa: "We are not happy with the status quo. We want changes to be made, not just a change of faces, but a change of policies and a change of thinking".

• (1545)

That message for change was not just reflected in October 1993, it was the message Canadians delivered when Meech was rejected and when Charlottetown was rejected. Those were very strong messages from the voters of Canada that the status quo was not going to get us through.

With Charlottetown something unheard of happened. The three major parties came together in support of a position, as well as the major media. All of them said to the voters of Canada to vote for it. The Canadian people rejected it.

We must never forget the Spicer commission. The government of the day put the commission in place after the failure of the Meech Lake accord to determine the mood of the Canadian people. The taxpayers spent \$27 million for Mr. Spicer and his commissioners to go all across Canada and talk to hundreds of thousands of Canadians to find out what was the mood of the country and what was bothering Canadians. Probably all members of Parliament have read the report. The message very clearly was that we in this place must change.

The most important part of the report is the very last quote. It is not a quote of Mr. Spicer's or of one of his commissioners; it is a quote from one of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who were interviewed. It appears on page 137 under the heading "Conclusion": "No hyperbole or political hedge can screen any member of any legislature who thwarts the will of the people on this matter. The voters are watching and waiting".

That was in June 1991. Those were very prophetic words indeed when we consider what happened in October 1993. The politicians ignored the warnings in that report and because they did not respond to the wishes of the Canadian people, 205 new members of Parliament were elected.

Let us review the October 30, 1995 referendum. There was no understanding on the part of the government of the message that was delivered in the October 1993 election. The government felt that the status quo, good government, would carry the day: "Do not worry, be happy. It is a family feud. Stay out of it. Do not get involved. We will win. We do not have a problem". Politicians were encouraged to stay out of Quebec. As a matter of fact, when we tried to raise our concerns in the House of Commons we were accused of fearmongering. How tragic that almost was on October 30.

As we are doing today, we will continue to debate the yardstick for breaking up a country, the 50 per cent plus one. There were statements made in the House yesterday which were not accurate. I will take a minute to clarify exactly where we are on the question of 50 per cent plus one, or what percentage of votes is required to break up a country.

Supply

Actually, it started in the province of Quebec with the leader of the Liberals in Quebec. Mr. Johnson said that he was prepared to accept 50 per cent plus one because no yardstick had been defined. We had gone into this without clearly outlining what the number should be, but the Liberal leader in Quebec said that he was prepared to accept 50 per cent plus one. At that time the Minister of Labour who was leading the government's position in Quebec and is now the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration also indicated publicly her support for 50 per cent plus one. Two major players in the October 30 referendum were saying to the people of Quebec that yes, they would respect 50 per cent plus one.

• (1550)

However there was a lack of a plan or leadership. Mr. Bouchard, then the Leader of the Opposition, challenged the Prime Minister to back up the quotes that had been made by the minister and Mr. Johnson, the leader of the Liberals in Quebec. Tragically the Prime Minister backed away from the commitment of both of these people and said he did not think he would accept 50 per cent plus one. He did not say what he would accept.

The tragedy is that the Prime Minister played right into the hands of the separatists. He was telling them there would be no consequences to their rejection of Canada, that he may or may not accept their position. The battle was lost to a great degree right there in not making it very clear whether or not the government was going to accept the 50 per cent plus one, the will of the voters.

We need to clarify that at no time did anyone from my party say that it should be 50 per cent plus one. We challenged the government to clarify its position on the issue. When the Leader of the Opposition challenged the government as to whether it would accept 50 per cent plus one, the government missed that great opportunity.

It is this failure to understand the need for change that has brought us to the unfortunate position we are still in today. We as a party understood that the status quo was not sufficient, that there was going to have to be change.

An hon. member: What did your party do in the referendum campaign?

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): A gentleman on the other side of the House is questioning our part in the referendum. The contribution we made to the referendum campaign was one for positive change. We did not stick our heads in the sand saying that the status quo was going to carry the day. We realized far better than anyone on the government side that change was going to have to be made.

As part of our contribution to the referendum campaign we prepared a list of 20 positive proposals for change that would go a long way toward keeping the country united. We went so far as to

publish the 20 proposals in a full page ad in the *Globe and Mail* so that all Canadians could see that what we were saying was that the status quo was not going to do it, change had to be made and these were the changes that would keep the country united.

We produced the same ad in French and offered it to many of the Quebec print media. Some of them chose not to run it, some did. We wanted to get the message to the people in Quebec who wanted to reject the separatists that there were 52 members of Parliament who agreed with them that the status quo was not going to carry the day. We understood the desire and the need for change.

We were asked to stay out, that this was a family feud. In the 11th hour when the government finally realized that its plan was a disaster, that it was going to lose the referendum then there was this great cry to go to Quebec to try to save it. Whether that worked or not is still open for debate. It may have hurt the cause. However we did make a contribution toward keeping the country united by running those ads.

In the 11th hour when the government realized the status quo or good government was not going to carry the day, we did see the government agree to change and what did it come up with? Distinct society and veto. Both already had been rejected by the Canadian people and the government was now going to bring them in the back door. Never mind what the people of Canada said, the government was going to bring them in whether Canadians liked it or not. That is a major problem here in Ottawa which has to change.

Imagine giving a veto to a separatist government. How was the Liberal government able to justify that? How could it give a veto to a separatist government whose mandate is to break up our country? Unbelievable, but it was done by the government.

• (1555)

We are facing one more battle. The separatists said on the night of October 30 that they will be back, that they have one more battle to fight and it will be the final battle. We had better be better prepared for that one than we were for the October 30 referendum or we will lose it. If anything good is going to come out of this debate, it is that we are talking about this threat because while it is coming, we just do not know how much time we have to prepare for it.

It has been seven months since that vote on October 30 and the Liberal government has yet to come up with a plan to deal with the separatists. Day to day it has been going from policy to policy and has nothing yet to put before the Canadian people.

Our party came up with a plan that we have had published and out for months. It is our 20-20 plan, a vision for a new Confederation. In producing this document we took a twin track approach to dealing with the separatist threat.

One track is the 20 positive proposals for change that we could make to keep Quebec in Canada. There are two common elements to those 20 positive proposals for change. One is that they have broad acceptance both inside and outside of Quebec. These are changes that all of the provinces are looking for, British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, as well as Quebec.

They are changes which are going to happen whether we like it or not. I say that because these changes mainly involve eliminating the duplication and overlap which are taking place between the federal government and the provinces. It is going to happen because of the fiscal crisis this country is in. We are going to have to find a better way of doing a better job with fewer dollars which means eliminating a lot of the overlap and duplication.

In our 20 positive proposals for change we see a win-win situation for keeping the country united. We are going to be dealing in a major way with the deficit and debt. The other common element is that the changes do not require opening up the Constitution. These changes can all be made by a willing government. While we have high unemployment and a fiscal crisis, we certainly have to look after both of those problems before dealing with the Constitution.

We have been talking to people about our plan. As I said, it is a twin track approach. There is the positive side and the other track has the realities of any province leaving this great country of ours. That was not on the table prior to the referendum but it certainly should have been. Had it been, the separatists would have been rejected resoundingly on October 30. Again the government's do not worry, be happy, stick its head in the sand attitude resulted in our not facing the fact that change was being demanded by the Canadian people.

What are the realities of breaking up a country? It is important that the people in Quebec understand the consequences of their vote. All Canadians must understand the consequences of a vote to break up the country because it would be painful for all Canadians.

In holding my town hall meetings to talk about unity and how to keep Canada united, there are those who ask: "Why are we talking about it? Just let Quebec go. Who needs all this discussion?" I say to those people to listen to and read about the consequences of the action they are suggesting. It is not just the people of Quebec who are going to be affected. All Canadians would be affected if we were to break up this great country of ours.

These things have to be understood. We certainly have to have that debate now. In no way do we want the people in Quebec voting in the next referendum without a clear understanding of the consequences of that vote. How could we do anything less and look at ourselves? How could we not do that and expect the people in Quebec to make an informed decision on such a vital and important question?

Supply

We have outlined our plan and as I have said, it has been out for months. We have been going across Canada talking to Canadians about it and inviting their input: Do you agree or disagree? Is there something that we have missed?

● (1600)

The difference between the government and ourselves is it does not have a plan. The government is critical of us and it is within its right to question us. However, I ask the government, where is your plan? Sadly it is not there.

Canadians are demanding some clarity to this question. Canadians are looking at a government that has no plan. Its plan is made up on the run. When we are dealing with such an important question, when we are dealing with Canada's future, it just is not good enough.

The people inside and outside of Quebec are demanding that this government start acting in a responsible way and show some leadership.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to my colleague, and, do you know, I understand his federalist reactions when he criticizes the position of the Liberals, who lately, to our great delight, seem to be committing one mistake after another, to the detriment of their cause. I am speaking, for example, of their intransigence that even the federalist premier of Alberta has just criticized, saying that he does not understand their stubborn insistence on interfering in the fields of education and health in particular, as these are provincial jurisdictions, and that it is harming the cause of federalism.

Before that, there were the blunders about the distinct society that was not, and the right of veto that seemed equally imaginary. I therefore understand very well the position of my hon. colleague, who is a federalist and who sees the other federalist party stubbornly blundering on and harming the cause of federalism. I have only one explanation to give him, and it is this: Whom God would destroy He first sends mad.

Now, I have a question to ask. Newfoundland was mentioned earlier. Newfoundland became a province of Canada as a result of a referendum won by a close margin. First of all, I would like my colleague to enlighten me on a constitutional point. Back then, did the Constitution provide for the arrival of a new member in Canada? And if not, why is it constitutional that Newfoundland is a member? Would it not be in order to throw it out by force of arms, as it has no business being in Canada, having entered it unconstitutionally? That is my first question.

I have a second question. At the time—I was not yet in Canada unfortunately—was the opinion of the nine provinces already there sought, because the Prime Minister is telling us that there is no question of allowing Quebec to separate without the consent of

Supply

nine other provinces? Was the consent of the nine other provinces sought before Newfoundland was allowed into Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the hon. member. He started out agreeing with the Reform position and with the fact that the government is standing pat, still sticking its head in the sand and believing that the status quo will carry the day. That is wrong and we agree with the hon. member on that.

Where we disagree is that if we work together we can bring about the change needed to keep Canada united. Quebec does not need to leave, as the Bloc is suggesting. The problems can be dealt with and Canada can remain united.

Distinct society and the veto are not what will keep this country united. We are going to go into the next century as one country of 10 equal provinces. That is the way we will face the future.

The hon. member asks about a province joining Canada, such as when Newfoundland joined Canada. I brought Newfoundland up because I was talking about the fact that all provinces are looking for the positive changes that we have outlined in our proposals. They want more control over areas under our Constitution for which they have responsibility.

I do not have the background on the mechanics used to allow the province of Newfoundland to come into Canada. I would suggest it is a different scenario when an existing country is enlarged and when a country is destroyed or broken up. If I am correct, the basis of the hon. member's question is if it is 50 per cent plus 1 to bring a province in, why would the same formula not apply to a province that wants to leave? My party and I have not taken a position on what the percentage should be, on whether it should be 50 per cent plus 1, 55 per cent or 60 per cent. The point we are making is that in breaking up a country, those rules should be clearly identified now, in advance of the referendum. That is not the sort of debate to get into once the referendum has been called.

• (1605)

The rules must be clearly identified so that the voters understand going in if it is going to be 50 per cent plus 1 or 60 per cent. They also must have put before them an honest, straightforward question about whether they want to stay as part of Canada or leave. Those are the two points that I want to make.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. member that the first parliamentary institution in Quebec dates back to 1792, which means that there has been a

Quebec Parliament for 204 years. It predates Confederation by 75 years. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that the people of Quebec have been in existence as an entity for a very long time. The day that certain people in Quebec decided to join Upper Canada, there was no referendum held. There was no referendum at all. A little group of people in Quebec and Ontario decided to create Confederation by joining together the two peoples.

Today, they are trying to sell us on the idea that the people of Quebec are not a people, whereas they have existed as a people for 204 years. We are not merely an ethnic group, we are a people who have been in existence for at least 204 years, with a parliamentary institution. We are one of the first peoples in North America to have our own parliamentary institution. All that seems to be getting forgotten.

So now, trying to make us swallow the idea that the people of Quebec are not entitled to get out of the Canadian Confederation with 51 per cent, that is 50 per cent plus 1, is like considering that this people no longer has its powers as a people, whereas we are the oldest people in North America. Before that, there were the native people, but they were made up of a number of smaller peoples, whom the French Canadians of the time respected, while the English Canadians hated them. They were always at war with the English, but they always got along well with the French. We have always dealt freely with them.

This is the big issue. If the agreement between Upper Canada and Lower Canada and the two founding peoples had been respected, and if it was still respected nowadays, perhaps we would not be holding this debate in the House at this time. Over time, particularly after the last world war, the federal government started to levy taxes, impose its legislation, meddle in the areas of education, unemployment insurance, health and so on, all of which were areas of jurisdiction of the people of Quebec.

When I listen to the speech of the hon. member for Simcoe Centre, it does not hold together. He is off topic. That is not the subject for today, it is whether the people of Quebec are entitled or not to separate with 50 per cent plus one.

[*English*]

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Certainly no one in our party has suggested that the people of Quebec are not a people. What the numbers should be to take a province out of Canada is a matter for debate.

Personally, I do not believe it should be 50 per cent plus 1. Whatever it is going to be, it has to be outlined in advance of the question. We cannot go into a referendum with that question up in the air.

Supply

As to the right of Quebecers to leave Canada, Quebec does not belong only to Quebecers. Quebec is part of Canada. It belongs to all Canadians. When the hon. member talks about taking Quebec out of Canada, Canadians are incensed that someone wants to destroy their country. When it was suggested that Quebec may be divisible, the argument heard from the Bloc was that it was not divisible. It cannot be both ways. If Canada is divisible in your eyes, then by the same argument Quebec must be divisible.

• (1610)

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nunatsiak.

I welcome the opportunity to remind the House of the great strength and flexibility of Canada's constitutional structure and justice system, and the primacy of the rule of law, of democracy in this great country of ours. Too often in the debate about the future of Canada, the constitutional and legal foundations of our country are characterized as irrelevant, ineffective or to be discarded.

This country's Constitution and justice system form the bedrock of our society. They are powerful vehicles for preserving the values that underlie life in a democratic society. They are in large part what makes Canada the much admired country that it is. They were built by generations of Canadians, including Quebecers. Our Constitution and justice system are not without their legitimate critics, but we should consider the motivation of those proposing this motion.

Too often we hear criticisms of a system that has served Canadians well for over a century and a quarter, a system that has made Canada's justice system among the most admired in the world. Too often we hear the defamation of a constitutional framework and a *modus vivendi* within that framework that has made us the envy of the world.

We must not be seduced by too clever rhetoric, surreal perceptions of this country. We must not ignore the reality of how well this country does, in fact, work. We must not ignore how well this country has served Quebecers, whose interests the Bloc Quebecois professes to represent.

It is essential for all Canadians, those in every province and territory, to appreciate the strength of the values that underlie our Constitution and justice system.

Have Canadians from whatever corner of this land done so badly by our constitutional principles, by our justice system, by our commitment to freedom and the rule of law and by our much admired ability to compromise to serve the interests of all Canadians? The answer in every case is clearly no.

Canadians are the beneficiaries of one of the most egalitarian justice systems in the world, and all this in a country that is among the most prosperous and peaceful in the world. In a world beset by economic turmoil and violence, should we not consider ourselves among the very fortunate, despite the musings of the members of the official opposition?

Our political structure and justice system have not been imposed on Canadians. They are a product of continual debate and well-intentioned compromise. Decades of effort by Canadians from all walks of life, be they elected representatives, public servants, members of interest groups or ordinary Canadians, have produced a confederation that serves Canada well today and will continue to do so in the future.

Those who participated in this process of building the underpinnings of Canadian society have strived to make our systems workable and flexible. All have fought to establish the democratic freedoms and human rights that we now take for granted. Quebecers have been at the fore of the many legal and political advances that have shaped this country. They too have built this country and its institutions. Now members of the opposition would have us believe that these institutions, the development of which so strongly was influenced by the minds and souls of Quebecers, come from outside or do not serve them.

Canada is populated by diverse cultures, by diverse groups, yet our Constitution serves them all. It is not a prison preventing the realization of the aspirations of Canadians. It is our home. Our Constitution is a flexible vehicle that permits the goals of all Canadians to be accommodated. It is a vehicle that allows the values so important to the many cultures within Canada to be respected and maintained.

What are the underlying values in Canada's Constitution and its justice system? Certainly, foremost among these values is the preservation of freedom and respect for human dignity. Those who created Canada shared a fundamental commitment to freedom, representative democracy and the rule of law. This commitment not only laid the basis for the Constitution of 1867, but set the direction for its continuing evolution.

Canada is also a peaceable society. Surely this is one of our most enduring characteristics. Canada was built out of accommodation, not revolution. It endures through the same process today.

• (1615)

Our legal system is built on the foundation of the rule of law. We have a strong and independent judiciary, one that reflects the character of our nation. Three of the nine judges of the Supreme Court of Canada come from Quebec. No other province has such a guarantee. As the President of the Treasury Board said so eloquently in the House in December 1994, the soul of Quebec will

Supply

continue to influence and define Canada as a country for a long time to come through its impact on the Supreme Court of Canada.

Thus Quebec not only continues to influence the direction of the supreme court, but our highest court itself is the product of a society based on the rule of law and respect for individual rights. We are blessed by a trusted judiciary that permits us to resolve our disputes in a civilized, lawful manner. All this we accomplish under the fundamental notion of the rule of law.

As I stated earlier, Canada's governments and its justice system must conform to the fundamental requirements of the charter of rights, another reflection of our respect for the rule of law. Our charter provides fundamental freedoms, the right to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceable assembly and freedom of association among them. It asserts the democratic rights of all our citizens. It protects accused persons in their interactions with the state through safeguards on arrest, detention and interrogation. It ensures that criminal proceedings are carried out in a manner which respects the rights of the accused.

The charter provides equality before and under the law and affirms French and English as the official languages of the country. Never forget the Supreme Court of Canada required Manitoba to ensure its laws were written in both official languages in accordance with the Constitution. New Brunswick has enshrined similar rights. Let us not forget the Canadian model of federalism which has brought such strength to the country.

Let us remember Canada's federalism creates a common identity and purpose that can transcend differences without replacing joint local identities and local communities. Federalism provides the structure of an economic union but places it under control of a democratic legislature.

Federalism allows minority groups to exercise democratic control over their communities and to tailor laws and government services to meet their own needs and goals. Federalism allows Canada to care for all its people. It allows different communities within Canada to resolve various issues while at the same time offering their elected representatives the chance to be part of national policy making.

Canadian federalism today is very different from that of the time of Confederation. Contrary to the rhetoric of the official opposition, federalism is flexible.

Federalism is capable of listening and responding to the needs and goals of its members. It can adapt and evolve to serve the changing needs of Canadians, but federalism must always serve to reinforce the many sided character of Canada: a home for many peoples, a land of two linguistic majorities, a free and democratic society, a strong economic community, a community that provides

equal opportunity and economic security, and an important player on the international stage.

Amidst all these democratic institutions as an integral part of Canadian federalism, under a legal system premised on respect for individuals and the rule of law, Quebecers have prospered. They have shared in the creation and evolution of these democratic institutions. They have shared in the progress that has brought Quebecers to the highest offices of the country, to unsurpassed success in education and culture, and to the heads of many of Canada's largest and most productive corporations. All this they did within Canada, within the present democratic, constitutional and legal framework.

Has Quebec done so badly under this system, as members of the opposition would like Quebecers to believe? The answer is clearly no. Canada is a country of freedom, tolerance and compassion. Quebecers, like their fellow citizens across this great country, have benefited from a governmental system that serves their historical cultural interests within the community of cultures that constitutes Canada.

The government's vision for Canada is one that builds on its finest traditions and grows to serve all Canadians and all of Canada in its wonderful diversity.

I assure the House the government will continue to abide by the true principles of democracy and by the rule of law in its dealings with the many issues facing the country, including those brought forth by the members of the opposition.

• (1620)

We intend to follow the principles that have made this country strong, democratic and tolerant as we deal with those who wish to tear us asunder. We will not stoop to measures that would do a disservice to the principles on which our country was founded.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to direct a question to my colleague from Prince-Albert—Churchill River, but first I would like to make a comment, because, on a number of occasions in his speech he referred to the primacy of law, to the rule of law, to justify his government's intervention in the celebrated case of the person we can now identify as Mr. "B", in reference to plan "B", that is the Bertrand plan.

I am well aware that the member for Prince-Albert—Churchill River is himself a lawyer. He is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. I have not taken law myself, but I believe the first thing we learn when we study law is the principle of the separation of powers. There is a very clear distinction to be made between the political and the judiciary.

The member for Prince-Albert, a lawyer and a politician, can make this distinction, I am sure. He is well aware that, in the

present debate, the Bertrand case is essentially a political matter. All the commentators in Canada agree that it is a political case.

This is my comment. Perhaps he could react to it. Since the rule of law is so important to him, I would like to hear his comments on the reaction of his colleague, the government whip, and of the premier of Newfoundland, Mr. Tobin, his former colleague, when they say they could not care less about the Quebec referendum act and that they did not respect it in the past and will not in the future. What does the rule of law mean in such a case?

[English]

Mr. Kirkby: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. As I indicated many times in my speech, it is the government's stated intention and we will carry through with that intention in all times, in all places and in all circumstances to obey and adhere to the rule of law.

The hon. member referred to a court case. The actions of the federal government with respect to that court case were simply in response to the actions taken by the Government of Quebec, taking what has been viewed as a rather extraordinary position that the rule of law, the Constitution of Canada, the courts of the nation do not have any say or any impact on the unilateral declaration of independence.

It is out of a desire to provide information to the court, to assist the court and in response to the actions taken by the Government of Quebec that the federal government is involved at all in this litigation.

Why do we always talk about things that drive us apart and emphasize differences? When we look across this great nation what are the things that tie us together? Right across the nation we believe in tolerance. Right across the nation we believe in working together. Right across the nation we believe in generosity and helping those who cannot help themselves. These are the fundamental principles that underlie our Canadian heritage, our Canadian citizenship. These are the values that unite us.

• (1625)

Let us talk about the things that unite us and bring us together instead of that which divides and we will find that when we can truly bring to the fore these values in a concrete fashion not only will it be good for the country in human terms, it will be good for the country in economic terms as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Prince-Albert—Churchill River told us that this country has been good to Quebecers. So why has sovereignty made so much progress?

Supply

I have been an independentist for more than 35 years. At the beginning, in the 1960s, we were seen as crackpots. In the 1966 provincial election, the Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale or RIN, which was led by Pierre Bourgault, garnered nearly 8 per cent of the vote. In 1970, 23 per cent of the people voted for the PQ. In 1973, the PQ received 30 per cent of the vote and, in 1976, it came to power.

Did the hon. member for Prince-Albert—Churchill River ask himself why there are so-called "separatists"—although we prefer to use the term "sovereignist"—in Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Kirkby: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member would be better placed to answer that question. As I have indicated, we on this side of the House place our faith in democracy, democratic principles, the rule of law and the application of our courts. We are sure we will be able to convince all people they should stay in Canada and that ultimately we will win.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, whenever I hear about the two founding nations I think of Christopher Columbus stumbling on to America by mistake thinking he was somewhere else and finding out there were already people here in 1492. Therefore when I hear about the two founding nations I think of the Inuit and the Indian people of North America.

However, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on the Bloc motion regarding Quebec separation and the wishes of Quebecers. I ask the Bloc today to respect the wishes of Quebecers, who have twice voted to remain in Canada, and to continue the development of the Quebec society within Canada.

The right to choose one's political destiny is not an exclusive solitary right. It cannot be exercised in isolation from its surrounding framework. The right to choose one's destiny does not belong to only one part of the population. The right to choose belongs to all of the population. Just as the population of Quebec has the right to express its views on its political future, so too the people of Canada have the right to express their opinion on their political future.

We are all in this together. Our past, our present and our future are shared and our destinies are intertwined.

Canadians, including a majority of Quebecers, have made it abundantly clear they want their political leaders to work together to make positive changes to improve our collective future. Yet the separatists refuse to accept and recognize this expression of the collective will. They do not respect the wishes of those in Quebec who voted against separation and for a renewed Canada.

Supply

I focus today on the wishes and the rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada who live in Quebec. They maintain strongly they have the right to choose to remain affiliated with Canada. What does the Bloc Québécois say about aboriginal people's right to choose? Does the Bloc Québécois believe the Inuit, the Cree, the Montagnais and the Mohawk have the right to choose their own destiny? Does the Parti Québécois believe in the right of aboriginal peoples in Quebec to choose? The actions and the words of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois on this issue are somewhat contradictory and illogical.

• (1630)

I remind the Bloc Québécois of the words written in 1992 by Daniel Turp, who by the way was the Bloc candidate in the recent federal byelection in Papineau—St. Michel. Mr. Turp wrote a chapter in a book of essays on secession. He made some interesting statements about the right of aboriginal peoples within Quebec to choose their destiny:

In exercising their right to self-determination, the native nations may, like Quebec, use consultation mechanisms to freely determine their political status, which could include exercising their right to democratic secession. If Quebec were to object to sovereignty measures democratically approved by the native nations, these nations could undoubtedly claim that their democratic right to self-determination and to secession had been violated.

For the right of self-determination, it is up to the majority population of a given territory to determine its political status. Where members of the Québécois are in the majority, the future of such territories would likely be determined more by these individuals than by the native nations. On the other hand, where members of native nations are in the majority, the status of these territories would be freely determined by the majority of the individuals living there.

If the Québécois and the native nations were to claim the same land, as may well happen, arbitration would be necessary to ensure that all people living in the territory of Quebec were able to exercise the right of self-determination as established by international law.

Yet despite these pronouncements of one of their own, time after time throughout the last referendum, before and after it, other representatives of the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois have denied the right of aboriginal peoples in Quebec to choose.

Last fall, the House will recall, the Inuit of northern Quebec, the Cree of northern Quebec and the Montagnais held their own referendums and voted massively in support of choosing to remain in Canada. The Montagnais leader, Guy Bellfleur, said: "The message is clear. We will refuse the forcible inclusion of our people and traditional lands in an independent Quebec state".

Northern Quebec Inuit leader Zebedee Nungak stated: "We will not follow you in any journey toward Quebec sovereignty. We are one people, determined not to be bandied about from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. We believe very firmly that our rights are protected

in a way that cannot be snipped by a pair of scissors called Quebec sovereignty".

In response the Parti Québécois said it would not respect the aboriginal no votes and denied that the aboriginal peoples could remain attached to Canada in the event of Quebec's secession. Earlier this year northern Quebec Cree Grand Chief Matthew Cooncome stated clearly his peoples' view on the secessionist proposal: "Quebec would be separated from Canada and from the Cree. In that situation our lands would still be ours and we have the right to choose to remain with them, and the resources they contain, in Canada".

This past March at the annual general meeting of the Makivik Corporation in Inukjuak Zebedee Nungak reaffirmed the right of northern Quebec Inuit to decide their own destiny. At that meeting Quebec's native affairs minister, Guy Chevrette, outlined the limits of his government's position: "The continuation of future negotiations will be based on principles that our government has always advocated, including the respect of the authority of the National Assembly and the integrity of Quebec's territory".

Respect needs to be given in order to be gained. The separatists cannot continue to deny and ignore those whose views do not coincide with their own. Reality must be accepted. Aboriginal peoples in Quebec, as in the rest of Canada, have real rights that are constitutionally recognized and affirmed. A relationship exists between the aboriginal peoples of Canada and the Government of Canada. That is real and cannot be wished away.

• (1635)

Canada is a real country from sea to sea to sea. It is filled with real people, aboriginal and others, who care deeply about it and about making it work for the benefit of all. Just as one person's junk is someone else's treasure, so one person's prison is someone else's beloved homeland.

For these reasons the Government of Canada rejects the opposition motion as amended. The opposition motion has taken the Prime Minister's words out of context. The quote properly reads: "We will put our faith in democracy. We will convince the people they should stay in Canada and we will win". The opposition motion does not reflect the government's positive action to renew the federation.

We need to stop antagonizing and offending one another with sharp words and fabricated political crises. Let us work together in mutual respect, recognizing we all have a stake in what happens.

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.*]

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's comments as he address the specific part of the country's problem with which he is certainly very familiar.

It occurred to me this really points to some of the problems and some of the reasons the separatists in Quebec feel it is their God given right to divide the country. The Liberal government has seen fit to enter into agreements with Indians and Inuit to set up separate governments across the nation.

We are setting up small self-governments in various parts of the country based on race. Is it any wonder the people in Quebec would be led to believe they should be accorded this same right to divide the country and to have their separate government as well? Where does it eventually lead?

I wonder if the hon. member would address that. By its very actions the Liberal government is creating and fostering this environment across the nation of separateness, of divisiveness.

Since we are talking about the possibility of another referendum to decide the future of Quebec in Confederation, what percentage would be acceptable? Since his leader said 50 per cent plus one is not an acceptable level to recognize the right of Quebec to secede, what would it be, 70 per cent, 80 per cent?

Mr. Anawak:

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of percentages that needs to be determined today. It will be determined over the next number of months if necessary. We do not need to get into percentages today. What we will have to determine is what will happen over the course of the coming months or years if there is another referendum.

On the first question, obviously the hon. member has property that as far as he is concerned is his by right. If he does not, I would be surprised.

Let us say he has a property, a farm or a house with a back yard, a front lawn and what not. I am bigger than he is and I come along and say: "we are taking three-quarters of your land but in the corner you will have a little area to live on". I would bet the first thing the member would do is say he owns that land legally and lawfully.

• (1640)

We are dealing with the law and legalities and maybe we cannot really say that is exactly what happened in the past. We did not have legalities for land and we had a poor immigration system. In 1492 we allowed in all sorts of people.

Supply

Three-quarters is a conservative figure. If 75 per cent to 80 per cent of his land were taken away from him, I am sure the hon. member would object very strongly and would cry foul. If somebody did that to him I am sure he would know exactly how the aboriginal people in Canada feel.

[Translation]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is leading us to the issue of territorial integrity, which is indeed a very important issue. With the right to self-determination also comes the right of a people to live within clearly defined boundaries.

The Canadian Constitution currently guarantees our right to clearly defined boundaries. The boundaries of each province cannot be altered without the consent of the provincial legislature concerned, and not the consent of a municipality, or of the people who live on a specific part of the territory governed by this legislature. If the legislature wants to consult with the people before making a final decision, so much the better.

On the day after a yes vote, our borders will be clearly defined. If there are suggestions that people living near the Quebec border, either in New Brunswick or in Ontario, should apply to join other entities, it is not the people of Quebec who will be the troublemakers but those acting as agents provocateurs. It is therefore in no one's interest to raise these Swiss cheese theories to partition Quebec. The dispute over raw-milk cheese has been resolved, so let us quit while we are ahead.

[English]

Mr. Anawak: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke of the security of borders. Should we not apply that to Canada? The hon. member and his party say the boundaries of Quebec are indivisible. If the hon. member thinks the boundaries of Canada are divisible, surely democratically the boundaries of Quebec should be divisible as well. Otherwise that is being hypocritical and discriminatory against one or two groups of people that would like to remain part of Canada should Quebec ever decide to separate, which I think will not be the case ever.

[Translation]

Mrs. Madeleine Dalfond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the October 30 referendum, the true face of this government has emerged. It does not care about the legitimate aspirations of Quebec as a people. In fact, all the federalist parties represented in this House have been trying to do is bring Quebec in line by changing the basic rules of democracy. If we take a look back on the constitutional issue these past few years, we notice that never before has the federalist camp dared to challenge the 50 per cent plus one rule, a rule universally recognized in the democratic world.

During the 1980 referendum campaign, the current Prime Minister was a more than enthusiastic player on the no side, recognizing ipso facto both the validity and legitimacy of the referendum

Supply

process. In 1985, in his book entitled *Straight from the Heart*, the Prime Minister wrote, referring to an eventual referendum on Quebec's sovereignty, and I quote: "If we don't win, I'll respect the wishes of Quebecers and let them separate".

• (1645)

Again in 1990, he made remarks along the same line before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, when he said: "I am a democrat and I said so repeatedly in 1980, in many speeches to this effect. Had we not recognized that Quebec could decide to separate, we would have acted differently".

As we can see from such statements, as well as from the massive involvement of federalist forces in the referendum campaigns, the Prime Minister believes in democracy, that is to say the process by which citizens participate in deciding their collective future and in whatever comes of it, or at least he did at the time when he made these statements. If the whole exercise had been illegal, do you think the Prime Minister of Canada and the federalist parties would have participated in it with such determination?

No. During the last referendum campaign, the federal government kept repeating that a victory for the yes side would trigger an irreversible process. In the famous speech he made in Verdun a few days before the referendum, the Prime Minister said that a victory for the no side would mean three things: first, the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society; second, a veto power for Quebec over any constitutional amendment; third, a decentralization of federal powers.

Six months later, what happened to these promises and to the government's democratic attitude? In December, the government pretended to recognize Quebec as a distinct society by passing a resolution in this House. This concept does not recognize that Quebecers form a people. It has no constitutional value. It is merely a statement of principle. It is wishful thinking. The same goes for the veto power, which is not included in the Constitution.

As for decentralization, this government simply continues to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction, with measures such as the establishment of a securities commission. The promises made in Verdun had the same value as those made regarding the GST. The government certainly shows a great deal of consistency in this respect.

However, the same cannot be said regarding Quebec's right to self-determination. Given the Liberal government's decision to support Mr. B's appeal, it is obvious that those in favour of plan B, led by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, now have the upper hand over the democrats in the Liberal Party and the government.

When he was the Prime Minister's adviser, the current Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said, on March 17, 1995 that, should the yes side win the referendum, the federal government should make Quebec suffer as much as possible. This same minister endorses threats to partition Quebec and claims that Quebec has no right to decide its future, even through a democratic process recognized by all, except by him and his confederates. Who calls the shots in this government? Is it the Prime Minister, who claims to be democratic, or the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who is denying Quebecers the right to decide their own future.

It is important that this House adopt the motion presented by the Bloc Québécois this morning. There must be a clear signal that the Liberal Party is prepared to respect the decision of the people of Quebec about their future. If there is not, it would be a spiteful way to conduct the debate, an irresponsible way of governing.

It is, in fact, worrisome to see this government getting into bed with Mr. "B", Guy Bertrand, in a legal manoeuvre designed to prevent democratic debate. It is just as worrisome to hear the Prime Minister call into question the very ground rules of our democratic system as it is to see him interfere in Quebec's move toward sovereignty.

• (1650)

It is even more alarming to see this government sit quietly by and listen to threats of partitioning Quebec, in the event of a yes vote. The government's actions leave no room for doubt. It will support those who oppose sovereignty duly obtained through a democratic process.

Sovereignists respected the verdict last October 30. The Government of Quebec did not declare sovereign the regions in which a majority voted yes. This would have been anti-democratic.

As for the federal government, its promises were so much hot air. For it, what the sovereignists are doing is illegal. It unequivocally gives its support to the partitionists and those who oppose a democratic verdict. It is completely irresponsible. Either this government does not know what it is doing and is the sorcerer's apprentice of democracy, or it knows very well what it is up to with its plan B, and has no intention of observing the most elementary rules of democracy. This government is therefore either blind or just plain irresponsible. Clearly, Canada must be very worried.

This motion thus gives the Prime Minister and his colleagues an opportunity to reaffirm the democratic values that guide their actions. Once and for all, they must stop calling into question the democratic rules known to us all. What we are asking is that democracy be allowed to operate freely. The sovereignty of Quebec is a political debate in which the people of Quebec have participated and will participate, under the terms of the Referendum Act.

The national question will be resolved in this manner, not in a court of law by a handful of jurists.

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that, listening to the Bloc Quebecois member—

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): You were impressed.

Mr. Discepola: No, Mr. Speaker, I was not impressed at all.

The member says that they are the protectors of democracy, that they accept the democratic decision made by Quebecers on October 30. Yet, that same evening, then Quebec premier Parizeau clearly said “See you next time”, while the current premier threatened us again just recently.

I promised a constituent of mine that I would ask a question on his behalf. The question is: If Bloc Quebecois members truly respect democracy, why have there been two referendums, in which Quebecers expressed their will to remain Canadians? How could separation be achieved with only one yes win in a referendum?

The question was asked by a wise nine year old, my son Marco.

Mrs. Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Very good question.

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Vaudreuil—

Mr. Discepola: You should thank my son.

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, could I please thank whom I want and in the manner that I wish to?

I thank the hon. member for Vaudreuil. I know the riding very well, since I grew up there. Children in Vaudreuil are indeed bright kids.

• (1655)

It is true that two referendums were held, one in 1980 and one in 1995. These two referendums did not result in Quebecers choosing to form a country. Quebecers voted no because they were fooled, in 1980 and in 1995, by federal politicians who promised them a Garden of Eden. Fifteen years after the first referendum, it had become obvious that the Garden of Eden was still a thing to come. Therefore, a second referendum was held. Again, promises were made.

Someone may tell Quebecers: “Vote no and Quebec will really be recognized as a true society. You will have a veto power; you will really be in heaven”. However, if that does not happen, what is the logical thing to do? The logical thing to do is to say to Quebecers: “Choose to become a state. You will be able to pass your own laws, and to pay your taxes to your elected government”.

Mr. Discepola: Answer the question.

Supply

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: The hon. member is truly adorable. This is extraordinary. Democracy is based on respect, and respect implies that promises are kept. When a government such as the one to which the hon. member belongs does not keep its promises, it is like a slap in the face. The next time, Quebecers will say yes, and they will do so loud and clear.

I hope that answers Marco’s question.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unbelievable that the hon. member claims to have answered the question. I think the question was very clear. My colleague wanted to know, because her child asked her, how come Quebecers have voted twice to stay in Canada and yet separatists continue to ask the same question again and again.

If Quebecers were to vote yes, can the hon. member tell us whether they will have a chance to vote again, or will this be the last time?

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can say that it is clear that the day Quebecers choose to be a country, they will be one, with everything that entails. What I mean is, the promises to be a country, we will keep them collectively. It will not be like the federal government’s story of unkept promises, which is their reality.

The Deputy 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 Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Employment Equity Act; the hon. member for Fredericton—York—Sunbury—public service of Canada.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am both delighted and privileged to rise on this motion by the official opposition and to debate with some of my colleagues.

I hope people will pay particular attention to what I say here. I would like to try to clarify, once and for all, the famous question the Prime Minister has been harping on in response to our questions and the question our eminent colleague has just asked my colleague for Laval-Centre.

There were indeed two referendums in Quebec, and they were both democratic. They followed the principles of democracy. In 1976, the Lévesque government was elected on its promise to hold a referendum in its first term of office, a promise the Lévesque government kept.

During the election campaign, Mr. Trudeau and 74 of 75 of his followers came to Quebec and put their head on the block.

• (1700)

I even remember Mr. Trudeau saying: “Hark ye well, Canada. We are not going to ask Quebec to vote no and then drop it. You

Supply

will look after it afterwards. You will find a solution for Quebec. You will be asked to meet Quebec's needs". This is what your Mr. Trudeau came to tell us in Montreal, at the Paul-Sauvé arena. Since then, they have demolished the arena, so ashamed were they of Mr. Trudeau's unkept promises. Because of this, they demolished the Paul-Sauvé arena afterwards. The promises were not kept.

Then another government came along. It said: "The federal government had promised to do certain things. Look what it has done". During the night of the long knives, they repatriated a Constitution we never signed and which might even be illegal because it has not been translated into French. That is what we just found out. This is a Constitution they wanted to impose on us.

So, we said: "Look, this does not work. Elect us—that is taking place in 1994—and we promise to hold a new referendum, given that the Liberals did not keep their word. They did not keep their word and, as a result, we are no further ahead as a people". That is how Mr. Parizeau's government came to be voted in office, and this government kept its word and held a referendum within more or less the first year of its mandate.

Moving to the events in Verdun now. Verdun—what a coincidence—you probably recall what happened in Verdun back in 1914. In Verdun, the Prime Minister made a number of promises. "Vote no and you can be sure things will change", he said. More of the same hogwash. They still think we can be fooled. Do we look like fools? Think again. We will not be taken in again. We are not fools. This time again, we were promised the world, but the Prime Minister is proving unable to deliver the merchandise.

It is quite obvious that there will be a third referendum. Three is a magic number, they say. Between the first and the second one, we gained only ten points. We are just four or five tenths short of a victory. You crow about winning the referendum with 50.4 per cent of the votes. This means that we would need as little as that to win a future referendum and our victory would be as valid as yours.

We have given the Prime Minister two chances. This is the same Prime Minister. We have given him two chances and he failed both times. The reason why we respect democracy is that we live in Canada and we pay our taxes—we have not started boycotting our taxes; the day may come, but we are not there yet—we pay our taxes and we are still in Canada because even though 49.6 per cent of Quebecers want to leave, that was still not enough. Every day since we were elected to this House, we find more reasons to leave. They closed the Tokamak facility and gave the money to Triumph in British Columbia. They wash off their hands of what is happening at the Montreal airport, saying it is none of our business. Every day, we could look at more issues and find new reasons to leave. There are more than enough reasons.

The most recent one is unemployment insurance. My colleague across the way who is always interrupting me should take a good

look at his seat because it may be the last time he sees it. New Brunswick is fed up with your policies. They would have us believe that Canada is the greatest country in the world. The Prime Minister keeps bragging about it. But when he gives out our statistics, the Prime Minister is deceiving the UN. They forget to mention our illiteracy rate. If they gave the real number of illiterate Canadians—not functional illiterates, but real illiterates—we would come in fourth place. We would not be No. 1 but No. 4. Stop lying to the people. They are fed up with your tactics.

• (1705)

Furthermore, the reason why Canada is prosperous is not because we have a federal system of government, but because Canadians and Quebecers work hard day after day. It is not the federal government's doing; that, too, is a lie.

Mr. Harb: Mr. Speaker, I note that the hon. member said that someone had lied in the House. I hope things will not deteriorate.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair did not hear any such comment. I might point out that the debate is pretty turbulent. There is a lot of noise on one side of the House, while someone from the other side has the floor.

Mrs. Tremblay: It is Canadians and Quebecers who are responsible for the country's prosperity. They are the ones who show creativity. They even have developed survival skills, given that the federal government keeps targeting the poor.

Mr. Speaker, think of this as a delicious chocolate cake. If you split a very good chocolate cake in two equal parts, it is still as good as it was before. It is not any less appetizing because it has been split. If Canada is such a great country, it will have no problem surviving a separation. Come on. There is nothing to it.

There are countries, such as the former U.S.S.R., which are federations. However, the U.S.S.R. was not a prosperous country. Living in a federal system does not ensure the country's prosperity. It has nothing to do with it. There is no connection. None at all. However, a country can choose to go it alone, such as Norway, which refused, through a democratic referendum, to join the European community. Incidentally, the yes and no sides in that referendum were led by two women. Why did Norwegians make that decision? Because they did not think it would be a good thing for their country. It is possible for a small country to be open to the whole world and to survive. Of course there will be a next time.

Last night, I was very impressed by an article that members opposite should definitely read. I will give them the exact reference, so they can learn something and finally understand. The article, entitled "What does Quebec want?", was published by the *Financial Post*, and was written by Gord Sinclair. There is a column called "Inside Quebec". The title is "Look at Canadian history through francophones' eyes". The subtitle read: "Would you feel cheated?" The author then asks English Canadians to

pretend they are French Canadians and to reread the history of Canada.

At the end, he says:

[*English*]

“As I have said before, what French Quebec needs to hear are the words “keep Quebec in Canada”. It is respect. Francophone Quebecers need to feel that Quebec can be different but accepted as equal and never to be cheated again. If you can do that we are going to save Canada. If not—” which means Canada is lost forever.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that people who are following the debate on television must be wondering what is going on in this House. They must wonder whether there is a national crisis, or an international crisis. What is going on?

They are listening and wondering what the opposition is up to, wasting its time on things we have already dealt with many times, over many years. We have been having the same debate for 16, 20, 30 years.

The opposition should be congratulating the government for doing a lot more than any other Canadian government has done to make federalism flexible. The Prime Minister should be congratulated for doing a lot more than any other Prime Minister for this country.

Mr. Loubier: Against Quebec.

Mr. Harb: This is flexible federalism. Instead, opposition members rise in their seats and start attacking the rest of Canada, talking about English Canada. There is no such thing as English Canada and French Canada, there is one Canada. There are Canadians who speak French, they are Canadian; there are Canadians who speak English, they are Canadian. Canada is for all Canadians, period.

Stop rehashing the past, it will not work. There are in Canada over 12 million people who are neither French nor English. They are Canadian, period. Stop all this nonsense.

Mrs. Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about nonsense. He is the one who is talking nonsense; it is obvious he does not know what he is talking about. He understands absolutely nothing. And on top of that, perhaps I have been talking loudly, which is in my nature, but I tried to be very clear on one fundamental thing. There are two peoples in this country: yours and mine. I will never be part of your people. I am not part of your people. I have mine. It is not yours, you are not part of mine. To be part of my people, you have to be in Quebec. You are not in Quebec. Does he come from Quebec?

Supply

An hon. member: No.

Mrs. Tremblay: No, he does not come from Quebec.

An hon. member: He is not far away.

Mrs. Tremblay: There are two peoples in Canada, and the hon. member just said there is only one. That is why we are tired of fighting and we want to leave. It is very simple, we want to leave. That is not complicated.

It did not work the first two times. It is not the first time the process does not work.

Mr. Loubier: Newfoundland voted twice.

Mrs. Tremblay: Newfoundland voted twice. And apparently, if we looked very very closely at the results—In any case, ours were clear: 94 per cent of the people voted, and we are waiting for the next time.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the slanderous things and the misinformation that were mentioned about the referendum results this afternoon, as did, I am sure, a huge segment of the population.

I want to point out to the opposition members, to the Bloc Quebecois, that they were elected with 48 per cent of the votes in Quebec. We know full well that the no side, the federalist side, won the last referendum. Since they call themselves true democrats, I would urge them to recognize our victory and the wish of Quebecers to remain in the Canadian federation.

I know I do not have much time, however, I want to stress the fact that they do not speak on behalf of all Quebecers. Quebecers are proud Canadians and, believe me, they have no lesson to receive from the Bloc members and the opposition who maintain that we do not protect the interests of Quebecers within the Canadian federation.

Canada without Quebec is unthinkable, which is why we, the Quebec members of the Liberal Party—

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted to the member has expired.

Mrs. Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments. Unfortunately, he did not hear me well. Maybe he was overseas when the referendum results came out. I do not know where his figures come from but he is a past master in the art of misinformation. It is 49.6 per cent, not 48 per cent, of Quebecers who voted yes. Let us get our facts straight.

• (1715)

Since the elected representatives of provinces other than Quebec do not seem to understand at all, for the last time I am asking the

Supply

people of Canada to try to understand what we want and to force the government to find a solution and to let us go.

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, time is up. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 89)

YEAS

Members

Bachand
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Gaspé)
Brien
Dalphond-Guiral
Debien
Duceppe
Fillion
Gauthier
Guay
Jacob
Landry
Laurin
Lebel
Loubier
Mercier
Paré
Pomerleau
Sauvageau
Tremblay (Rosemont)—39

Bélisle
Bergeron
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Crête
Daviault
Deshaies
Dumas
Gagnon (Québec)
Godin
Guimond
Lalonde
Langlois
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Leblanc (Longueuil)
Ménard
Nunez
Picard (Drummond)
Rocheleau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Anderson
Assad
Augustine
Barnes
Bélair
Bertrand
Bhaduria

Anawak
Arseneault
Assadourian
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bethel
Bodnar

Bonin
Bridgman
Brushett
Calder
Catterall
Clancy
Collenette
Comuzzi
Cullen
DeVillers
Discepola
Dupuy
Eggleton
Epp
Flis
Forseth
Fry
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Goodale
Graham
Grose
Hanrahan
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Harvard
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jackson
Jordan
Kirkby
Kraft Sloan
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Lincoln
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Manley
Marleau
Massé
Meredith
Milliken
Morrison
Murray
O'Brien (Labrador)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peters
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Proud
Reed
Richardson
Robichaud
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Simmons
Stewart (Brant)
Stinson
Szabo
Terrana
Torsney
Valeri
Verran
Wells
Zed—135

Boudria
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden
Campbell
Cauchon
Cohen
Collins
Cowling
Cummins
Dion
Dromisky
Easter
English
Finlay
Fontana
Frazer
Gaffney
Godfrey
Gouk
Grey (Beaver River)
Hanger
Harb
Harper (Churchill)
Harris
Hayes
Ianno
Johnston
Keyes
Knutson
Lastewka
Lee
Loney
Maloney
Marchi
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick
Mifflin
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
O'Reilly
Paradis
Peric
Peterson
Pillitteri
Ramsay
Regan
Rideout
Robillard
Silye
St. Denis
Stewart (Northumberland)
Strahl
Telegdi
Thalheimer
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Williams

PAIRED MEMBERS

Bakopanos
Canuel
Chamberlain
Collenette
Dingwall
Duhamel
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Patry
Pettigrew
Sheridan
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Whelan

Cannis
Caron
Chrétien (Frontenac)
de Savoye
Dubé
Lefebvre
Leroux (Shefford)
Payne
Plamondon
St-Laurent
Venne
Wood

Private Members' Business

• (1740)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

[English]

The next question is on the amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results of the last vote to the amendment and the main motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition will vote yea on the amendment.

[English]

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, just to confirm, there is agreement with the government whip to apply the vote.

• (1745)

Mr. Bhaduria: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion.

[Editor's Note: See list under Division No. 89.]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, I declare the amendment and the main motion lost.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from March 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-201, an act to amend the Criminal Code (operation while impaired), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to second the private member's bill proposed by the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley which would provide a sentence of seven years for the offence of drunk driving causing death.

This is a very serious issue in Canada today. Let us look at what happened in Prince George recently. It was the scene of the murder of a young father from Prince Rupert and his two children. The murder weapon in this case was an automobile with an impaired driver at the wheel.

When the offender was sentenced, the entire community, as well as virtually everyone who heard about it in the province of British Columbia was shocked at the extremely light sentence of three and a half years to be paid for taking three lives.

Judges in British Columbia commonly treat lightly the offence of using a motor vehicle as a deadly weapon. Impaired driving is a very preventable form of death. Sad to say, it is very often our young people who lose their lives for making the tragic mistake of drinking and driving.

For example, in February three young women from the city of Vernon in my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap paid that price when they decided to drive home from an evening's entertainment at nearby Kelowna. They made it only a few miles north of Kelowna before they turned in front of a logging truck in the early hours of the morning. All three paid the price. They died. Their families and friends were devastated.

It is our duty to structure the Criminal Code in such a way that such unnecessary deaths are prevented, along with the murder of innocent victims by drunk drivers. We should send a much stronger message in the sentences handed out for drunk driving offences.

• (1750)

It is not only the young people who like to party. If we could convince them as soon as they start to drive that alcohol and gasoline are an extremely dangerous and deadly mixture, the good habit of not driving when they have been drinking would probably stay with them all their lives.

A poster which hangs not far from the Parliament Buildings says that if you are old enough to drink, you are old enough to drive: Choose one. That is excellent advice. A very good way to emphasize that message would be to include a minimum sentence of seven years for drunk driving causing death.

There are many sad figures available about drunk driving. For example, there were a total of 6,700 alcohol related accidents in British Columbia in 1994, including 3,231 personal injury claims and 138 fatalities. There were 3,331 accidents with property damage and 11,379 impaired driving offences.

In my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap the total number of impaired offences for 1994 was 406. That number only represents the drivers who were caught by police. For every one caught, many more manage to get away with drinking and driving until that fateful day when a child rides his bike suddenly around the corner or a grandmother suddenly steps into a downtown crosswalk or another driver does something a little too fast for the delayed reflexes of that impaired driver.

The cost of impaired driving is not limited to accidents. An estimated \$200 million is spent on enforcement, court, medical and other costs in British Columbia as a direct result of drinking and driving. That does not get into the terrible emotional costs to the families. Look at that \$200 million and what it could do. It could pay nurses' salaries. It could help provide essential medical

Private Members' Business

services like kidney dialysis, x-rays or CAT scans. It could be used to provide computers for British Columbia classrooms. That \$200 million thrown away because of drinking and driving represents a great loss to the people of B.C.

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia estimates that 21 cents of every premium dollar is spent repairing damage done by drunk drivers. That is a very important point because most families in British Columbia are having a very difficult time making ends meet. Most B.C. families also own a motor vehicle. It is common for families to spend \$3 a day or more just to insure their cars, and 21 per cent of that goes to repair damage done by drunk drivers.

We could say that drunk driving increases the cost of every family's premiums by at least 63 cents a day or \$4.41 a week. That would buy every family a couple of litres of milk and a loaf of bread every week. Maybe that is not a big deal to the members of Parliament whose inflated egos make them think they deserve the gold plated pension plan they voted in for themselves. I can assure my colleagues that is a very big deal to the grocery budgets of most young mothers in particular.

The dollar costs of drunk driving are not just the numbers on a sheet of paper. They represent a burden to the family income at a time when most families have far too little income as it is. In large measure this is due to the excessive spending and the resulting excessive taxes imposed by Liberal, Conservative and NDP governments, those advocates of big government.

Let us look at drunk driving causing death in a different way. Are today's penalties doing the essential job of preventing drinking and driving? Those penalties include the following: The punishment for a first offence is loss of privileges and a fine of up to \$2,000. The punishment for a second offence is a mandatory jail sentence of 14 days to one year. The punishment for a charge of impaired driving causing bodily harm is a maximum 10-year sentence and 10 years of prohibition from driving, which means they can go into court and bargain it away.

• (1755)

The punishment for a charge of impaired driving causing death carries a maximum penalty which includes a 14-year jail sentence and up to 10 years from driving. I do not know of one case that even touches that point. We just heard about a judge who gave three and half years for taking three lives and yet the opportunity was there for him to give up to 10 years.

A recent tragedy involving the death of a 17-year-old youth in my riding has reopened the question of more severe sentences for impaired driving among the residents of Vernon and area. Because the offender had a history of alcohol related offences, concerned

citizens of the Vernon area collected 5,000 signatures on a petition calling for stiffer and longer sentences.

In view of the tragic damage that driving while impaired can cause, I strongly support the requirement of much stronger sentences for drunk driving causing death.

Some people may object, especially on the government side, saying that to impose these kinds of penalties is too harsh. Is it too harsh for taking the lives of a mother, father or children, because the excuse will be: "I was drunk when it happened".

The truth is that most offenders who are guilty of driving while impaired have committed one or more previous alcohol related offences. In other words, for those on the other side who are having trouble with this, in most cases it is not the first time they have been charged. In most cases it is not the first time they had been in an accident. Of course, we have no idea of how many times they also drove while impaired and got away with it. We will never know.

I have always believed that the first responsibility of any government is to protect the innocent and law-abiding citizens to the best of its ability. For far too long we have seen that governments have not lived up to that and it is time we started. I strongly urge that we take the first step by supporting this bill. Having a stiffer penalty may be just the kind of tough love we hear talked about all the time that could save lives. In fact, I strongly believe that if such a penalty had been in effect, maybe we could have saved those three women I talked about earlier.

In conclusion, I would like to remind all hon. members in the House that when they stand to address this bill, they have to face the public. They have to go back and look their constituents in the eye. Believe me, there is not one in this House in our term that will not have a case of death caused by impaired driving before them in their own constituency. I hope they all remember that when the time comes.

Mr. Derek Wells (South Shore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-201, introduced by the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. This bill would increase the minimum sentence for impaired driving causing death to seven years.

I share the member's concern about the serious problem of impaired driving. Indeed, all Canadians share this concern. I would readily lend my support to any measures which would be truly effective in deterring impaired driving. The challenge is finding measures which are effective.

A seven-year sentence can be a reasonable sentence in some circumstances. In some circumstances it may not be enough and in other circumstances it may be too much. I cannot support the bill because I do not believe we should limit a trial judge's discretion in sentencing in this way. The sentence must be proportional to the

gravity of the crime. This longstanding principle of the criminal law is a fundamental principle of sentencing. The proposed amendment would be inconsistent with that principle and for that reason I cannot support it.

• (1800)

The current law provides that the maximum punishment for impaired driving causing death is 14 years imprisonment. In some cases this may not be enough. Bill C-201 proposes a minimum sentence of seven years imprisonment be added to the section.

I am aware that the public is often outraged by the sentences imposed in individual cases, sentences that often do not appear to reflect the severity of the crime, or do not come close to the maximum set out in the code. This is one of the primary reasons for including the principles and purposes of sentencing in the Criminal Code. I am confident that these measures will ensure greater consistency in sentencing for similar offences. The fundamental principle as expressed in section 718.1 of the Criminal Code is: "A sentence must be proportional to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender".

Imposing a minimum sentence for one particular offence in response to public outrage over particular cases where the sentence was considered inadequate is not a long term solution to any of the problems caused by impaired driving. It is not how our criminal justice system should be changed and is not in keeping with the fundamental principles of sentencing.

The issue of minimum sentences was fully canvassed by the government in the mid-1980s before the Criminal Code amendments to the impaired driving provisions were passed in 1985. The 1985 amendments added two new offences, impaired driving causing bodily harm and impaired driving causing death, with maximum penalties of 10 and 14 years respectively. No minimum sentences were provided because a conviction for such offences is based on fault.

To prove the offence it must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the impaired driver resulted in the death or bodily harm. Similarly the sentence imposed must also take into account the degree of fault of the offender. For example, if a pedestrian runs between parked cars into the path of an impaired driver and is killed, should the impaired driver receive the most severe punishment permitted under the code? While his impaired driving may have contributed to the accident because a sober driver could perhaps have avoided the pedestrian, it may well be that even a sober driver would not have been able to avoid the accident.

The impaired driver must of course be punished for driving while impaired. However, I would not agree with a minimum sentence approach that ignores the many other factors considered

Private Members' Business

by a judge when drafting a sentence, including the offender's record which may not have included previous impaired driving charges.

We must ask ourselves whether a minimum sentence would deter impaired driving behaviour. I do not believe it would. Our efforts to reduce and ideally to eliminate impaired driving have to focus on early prevention and perhaps even a zero tolerance for drinking and driving. Perhaps we should be considering a reduction of the .08 standard that is now part of the Criminal Code.

In addition to the law, there must be strict enforcement and greater public awareness and education. This is the approach we have been taking in Canada and throughout North America for the past 15 years. This approach has been successful. It has not reduced impaired driving to zero, but significant reduction in the number of charges of impaired driving and impaired driving behaviour have been experienced. We have to a large extent changed the public perception of drinking and driving. It is no longer socially acceptable as it once was. Through the combined efforts of federal and provincial governments and municipalities across Canada, this trend should continue.

Impaired driving is a unique example of where both federal and provincial laws operate. The Criminal Code sets out a range of offences including impaired driving; driving with a blood alcohol content over .08; refusing to provide a breath sample; driving while disqualified; impaired driving causing bodily harm; and impaired driving causing death. Penalties vary with the seriousness of the offence.

• (1805)

In addition to the federal criminal provisions, the highway safety legislation of all provinces imposes sanctions on impaired drivers in accordance with the provinces' responsibilities for driver and vehicle licensing and highway safety. Even before a driver is convicted of impaired driving, some provincial laws impose licence suspensions for up to three months. Upon conviction for impaired driving, a driver's licence will be suspended for a period of six months to five years, depending on the province and the driver's previous record.

Some provinces have legislation to impound the vehicle driven by drivers while their licence is under suspension. The combined effect of these provincial and federal laws has had an impact on reducing the occurrence of impaired driving.

As my colleague has pointed out, when tragedy occurs the inadequacy of the law is often singled out as the cause. Some members seem to believe that so long as a law is transgressed it is not efficient and the penalties are not high enough. I do not share this view and I believe it is a rather naive way of seeing things.

Private Members' Business

It does not necessarily mean that our laws are to blame because they are infringed. However if our criminal law is in need of reform, I would fully support a comprehensive reform based on adequate research and consultation rather than on a speedy amendment. I know we would all readily support initiatives that could be shown to bring about further reductions in impaired driving.

I should point out that Bill C-17, an omnibus piece of legislation which is awaiting second reading, proposes a range of amendments to improve the criminal law. Included in that package are a number of amendments to improve the impaired driving provisions, including clarification of the provisions regarding mandatory prohibition orders and the use of evidence in blood samples. Bill C-17 demonstrates that this government is prepared to make changes and effective amendments, amendments which follow from adequate research and consultation and which are consistent with the underlying principles of the criminal law.

I do not wish to suggest that our laws are perfect. Indeed there is always room for improvement. The incident the member referred to in his speech during the first hour of the debate on this bill where an individual killed three members of the same family while driving impaired and was sentenced to three and one-half years is a sad one. The judge had the discretion in that case to impose a sentence of 14 years but he chose not to.

All members of this House should work together to develop solutions that will lead to reducing impaired driving. This does not necessarily mean changing the law. It means speaking out against impaired driving at every opportunity, supporting community programs, supporting groups like MADD and PRIDE, spreading the message that Canada does not tolerate impaired drivers.

However the solution is not to take away judicial discretion. If changes to the criminal law are needed, let us do it right and look at the advantages and disadvantages of various options and their effectiveness. I do not believe that Bill C-201 is the solution and I cannot support it.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in support of Bill C-201 which is sponsored by my colleague, the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

In doing so I am aware of an event which took place in this House just 12 years ago, an event which contributed to the death of thousands of Canadians. On April 5, 1984 Private Member's Bill C-229 was allowed to die. With its demise approximately 23,000 Canadian lives were put at risk and many of them did die. Another tragedy is that many of those who died were innocent children.

Why do I bring up a bill that failed to pass 12 years ago? Because Bill C-229 is very similar to the bill we are debating this evening, Bill C-201. Like Bill C-201 the earlier bill sought to do something

about the number of people who lay bleeding and dying on roads and highways in ridings all across Canada.

We will hear plenty of statistics in support of this bill but we must never forget that behind each statistic is a story. They are stories such as that of 16-year old Crystal Nyhuis from my riding of Simcoe Centre. During the time that has elapsed since this House failed to pass Bill C-229 in 1984 Crystal and approximately 23,000 others have died from the deadly mixture of alcohol and automobiles and with them have died their dreams.

• (1810)

On June 10, 1994 Crystal's dreams were snuffed out. At 10 p.m. at the intersection of Innisfil Beach Road and the 10th Side Road a drunken driver slammed into the car driven by her boyfriend. Crystal's dreams died that night, her dream of marrying her high school sweetheart and of becoming a social worker. This innocent young teen who was such a good listener and who offered advice that belied her young age was now silenced.

How many more Crystals must die before this House deals in a serious way with the crime of impaired driving? As we look at the statistics of the nearly 1,500 people who die every year in Canada because someone insists on drinking and driving, let us remember Crystal's needless death. Remember also the people left behind. John and Simone Nyhuis remember their beautiful young daughter who died too young.

Following her death, Crystal's parents placed flowers and candles around the grade eight student's graduation picture. Crystal's mom told a reporter that every night she lights the candles: "It is all I have left of her". Summer dawned on that June day in 1994, just as it does for us in this House today, and the thoughts of Crystal's mom turn to her daughter. "I miss the sounds", she said. "Our home used to be packed with teenagers. She would come through the door with five or ten of her friends. I miss her physical presence. There are still days when I cannot believe she is gone".

How many other John and Simones must suffer the agony of losing a child before this House acts to curb the needless slaughter that occurs on Canada's roads? Every six hours across this country a police officer knocks on a door to announce that a child, a mother or a father will not be coming home any more. They have died because the legislators have failed to act.

Some wrongly charge that a law will not stop the needless slaughter on our roads and highways, but let us consider this argument. Partly because of harsher laws enacted in the 1980s, fewer people are dying today. In 1980 the typical sentence for killing someone while drunk was a \$500 fine and a 90-day licence suspension. Changes to the law in 1985 which allowed blood sampling of drivers suspected of drinking and driving, along with the addition of new sections to the Criminal Code have all

contributed to a drop in the number of people being charged with impaired driving. But much more needs to be done.

What about the fact that 63 per cent of all people charged with impaired driving are second time, third time and even fourth time offenders? They refuse to listen and about 1,500 people are still dying needlessly across this country every year. In Ontario alone, alcohol is involved in 43 per cent of all motor vehicle fatalities. Because of alcohol related crashes, 565 people died in the province of Ontario in 1993.

It is true that those who murder by using vehicles face a maximum sentence of 14 years. However, every member in this House knows of people in their ridings who get off with sentences of six months. This bill would establish a minimum sentence of seven years so that those who up to now have faced a slap on the wrist for murdering with an automobile will think twice before drinking and driving.

Bill C-201 will deter impaired drivers while suitably punishing those who will kill while impaired. Some will think that the use of the word murder in connection with someone who kills with an automobile is too harsh. I do not think so and neither do John and Simone Nyhuis. I will quote again from the Nyhuis family. "To me drinking and driving is no different than taking a gun and shooting someone", says Simone. Her husband John agrees. He says: "When you get behind the wheel of a car and you have been drinking, that car becomes a lethal weapon".

We as legislators must stop looking upon alcohol as something many of us, including myself, treat as a social drink. While it is a social drink to many of us, I would hope none of us would get so drunk that we cannot speak coherently or walk a straight line and then climb into 5,000 pounds of deadly metal. However, if we or anyone else does and we kill an innocent person then we are guilty of murder, just as if we had shot them with a gun.

• (1815)

How many more people like Crystal will have to die before we realize the seriousness of the crime of drinking and driving?

It is a sad reality that automobile crashes are the leading cause of death of those under 21 years of age. More die as a result of impaired driving related accidents than all other causes combined. What a senseless waste of young lives. What an unforgettable tragedy.

These deaths do not tell the whole story. The Ontario Medical Association estimates that it costs our economy at least \$100 million annually to deal with the approximately 100,000 people injured because of impaired drivers.

Private Members' Business

Behind those injured drivers there are 100,000 stories each year. One of those stories is about Colleen Blair. This 18-year old Ontario girl survived the November 11, 1994 crash that killed her 18-year old friend Raeann McNeely, a victim of an impaired driver. The crash left survivor Colleen brain damaged and unable to walk on her own. She has difficulty controlling her emotions. She has limited memory. Although she is now 21, she is in many ways like a five-year-old. A family member talks about how Colleen's life has been changed by this senseless tragedy: "She had a right to expect she would get married and have kids some day, but now she's 21 and has no life".

At the time of the accident Colleen was studying horticulture. She loved flowers and had a collection of her most artistic arrangements. Now she cannot even remember if she was a student. She needs constant care and is constantly apologizing to her family for being a burden. Because of the brain damage she does not understand that her injuries are in no way her fault.

During the time that has elapsed since the House refused to act on Bill C-229 in 1984, approximately one million people like Colleen Blair have had to suffer needless pain. Approximately one person is injured every five minutes from alcohol related crashes. In the past 12 years since Bill C-229 was killed, our overburdened medical system has paid out over \$1 billion to care for the victims of impaired drivers.

How much longer will police officers like Sergeant Fitz Gaylord of the Madoc OPP have to respond to alcohol related accidents that claim so many young lives, such as a recent accident that killed two young men? Sergeant Gaylord described the scene: "A twisted car wrapped around a tree, two bodies laid out on the ground and the ones left in the car screaming that they were going to die".

Coroner Andy Quinn, who pronounced the young men dead on the scene, said: "For me, it is just immensely sad to see these young people dying. I just hate to pull kids out of cars. It is an incredibly hard thing to do and the whole time you are doing it, you are just thinking of the families and the terrible loss of young lives".

Before the House finally acts to send a message to people that impaired driving is unacceptable, how many more mothers and fathers will walk by their son's or daughter's bedroom at night knowing they will never again share the many things they had planned to do together? How many more fathers will never get the chance to walk their daughters down the aisle on their wedding day? How many more mothers will suffer the pain and agony of knowing their child will never come home again? How much longer will we as legislators stand by and watch people die needlessly? We need Bill C-201 to deter people from drinking and driving.

Private Members' Business

I end my thoughts on Bill C-201 with the words of Arnold Malone, who drafted the bill that was defeated in the House 12 years ago. Mr. Malone said that to stop the carnage on our highways we must start a war against people who drink and drive. Mr. Malone's war analogy still rings true today. Just as the second world war claimed 42,000 Canadians, approximately 23,000 Canadians have died since the House refused to pass Bill C-229 in 1984. Just as the second world war saw 54,000 soldiers wounded, over one million Canadians have been injured as a result of drunken drivers since 1984.

These are the types of figures Mr. Malone also used when he said:

We need another war. We need a war against drunken drivers. We need a war which will place a real deterrent against drunken driving.

More importantly, we must recognize that we all have limits. We must realize that the laws are such that if we are inebriated, we had best seek alternative transportation. In communities all across Canada there are growing concerns that something must be done to curtail the extent of alcohol use while driving an automobile.

• (1820)

Although the House refused to act 12 years ago when a similar bill was before it, we can now ensure that fewer lives are lost because of drunken drivers by supporting Bill C-201. I urge my fellow members to support the legislation.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-7, an act to dissolve the Nipissing and James Bay Railway Company, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

The bill is deemed read the first time, with second reading scheduled for the next sitting of the House.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-201, an act to amend the Criminal Code (operation while impaired), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity speak on Bill C-201, which provides for a seven year minimum sentence for impaired driving causing death.

I share the concerns of the hon. member who sponsored the bill with respect to the problem of impaired driving and I also share the

concerns of my constituents of Windsor—St. Clair who see impaired driving as a serious problem.

I see problems with this bill, one of which is its focus on punishment rather than on more efficient and productive forms of deterrence.

The Criminal Code was amended with respect to impaired driving in 1985. At that time the charges of impaired driving causing bodily harm and impaired driving causing death were added to allow for more serious penalties in cases in which injuries or death resulted from impaired driving.

In the case of impaired driving causing bodily harm the maximum is 10 years, and causing death the maximum is 14 years.

At the same time other charges are available to the crown where there is a death involving the use of a motor vehicle and alcohol or drugs. The dangerous driving sections and the criminal negligence causing death sections of the code carry major maximum penalties. It is not uncommon for these sections to be used where alcohol or drugs have been involved in a motor vehicle accident.

In the early and mid-1980s federal, provincial and territorial governments really turned their minds to impaired driving, acknowledging it was a serious social problem. They did this in response to concerns in their own communities. This was because of the cold, hard facts that people were not deterred by criminal penalties and that people and property were being destroyed by the activity of those who drink and drive.

The question of how to deter people from pursuing this decidedly undesirable activity resulted in a concerted effort by governments, non-governmental organizations and even by the beverage alcohol industry to tackle the problem. In this case the beverage alcohol industry should commended because, unlike the tobacco industry which consistently denies there is any health problem in terms of using its products, the beverage alcohol industry recognizes there can be a downside to the use of its products when the use is excessive or when it is combined with other behaviours.

The focus was in part on the Criminal Code at the time. The code was refined with increased penalties and with a range of additional offences to make it more flexible, but also with a range of devices to allow easier prosecution.

The provinces also took steps within their justice administrative powers and in their highway traffic management jurisdictions to deal with the problems. For instance, mandatory licence suspensions are standard on conviction and in some provinces vehicles are impounded for the period of the suspension.

Governments and non-government organizations and industrial groups entered into public education campaigns which research has shown had an effect on the way we view drinking and driving. Although I am sometimes critical of other parties for using

anecdotal evidence, I think it is useful here in this sense. I think we all know examples of anecdotal evidence which support the research I am talking about.

We all know people who today without any embarrassment simply leave their cars at home and take a cab when they are out for a big night on the town or who engage in negotiations with their friends to ensure they have a designated driver.

• (1825)

This change in the attitude toward drinking and driving has been a very effective deterrent, better than any changes in the Criminal Code. We know this from the research that has been done.

I know, however, this has not abolished the problem and I dare say that in spite of some people's desire for a quick fix we will not solve the problem completely. Someone will always have an extra drink and always think they can still drive.

I raise this point to corroborate my belief that punishment is not the only way, indeed not the best way, to deter people and that we are not necessarily in Canada on the wrong path. It is easy to seize on a fixed minimum penalty as a solution to our problem.

Let us look at the other side of the coin. Does a fixed penalty cause any problems in the process? We already know it is not the most efficient deterrent. What we also have consider is that the minimum sentence removes judicial discretion which is necessary to allow courts to take into account the facts of each particular case. I suggest minimum penalties and removing a judge's discretion should not be handed out easily or glibly.

An hon. member: Nonsense.

Ms. Cohen: For 11 years I, unlike the member who is heckling me, prosecuted criminal code offences for the crown attorney of the county of Essex. During that time I prosecuted an awful lot of impaired driving charges. I would venture a guess that in most jurisdictions crowns, particularly that operate in provincial court, do more impaired driving trials than almost anything else.

Every once in a while cases arose which required flexibility in terms of sentencing. In the case of a simple impaired driving that flexibility is not there. There are prescribed minimums and those minimums have to be followed and in all cases of impaired driving there are some prescribed minimums. There are cases where there is an impairment but where there are other factors involved.

I give an example which has been much heralded in the media which comes out of Windsor and Essex County. We recently had an example of quite creative sentencing. I say with some pride in my community that the criminal bench there deals in a creative way very often with problems. It is the case of Kevin Hollinsky. Mr.

Private Members' Business

Hollinsky is a young man who was out drinking one night with his friends. He drank, he drove and on the way home there was an accident and both of his friends were killed.

The parents of both of these victims came to the court to support Kevin Hollinsky and during the sentencing process the judge decided to accede to a request by defence counsel for a long period of probation and a community service order.

As a result, Kevin Hollinsky embarked on a remarkable community education campaign throughout Windsor and Essex County which members of the Windsor police force, probation officers and others who are very experienced in this area said resulted in a remarkable odyssey and remarkable result.

Last summer in Windsor and Essex County there were no incidents of injury or death as a result of impaired driving among young people. Had there been a minimum penalty of seven years Kevin Hollinsky would have been in jail during that period of time and one wonders how the community would have benefited from that. Instead he has educated hundreds of young people and brought home to them in a very serious, personal and emotional way the disastrous results of the behaviour of drinking and driving.

It is misleading to suggest, as some members have, that judges are flippant in their sentences, that faced with a conviction of impaired driving causing death they routinely slap people on the wrist; the suggestion I heard here today.

The government takes these problems very seriously. We have taken steps to ensure sentences are more consistent across the country. We did this in Bill C-41, which members opposite including some who spoke today opposed on other grounds.

• (1830)

We define principles of sentencing. Sentencing is there to denounce unlawful conduct, to deter the offender and other persons from committing offences, to separate offenders from society where necessary, to assist in rehabilitating offenders, to provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community, and to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders and acknowledgement of the harm done to victims and the community.

A seven-year mandatory minimum sentence does not meet those requirements of the law. A seven-year minimum mandatory sentence is a quick fix which is intended only to punish. I would suggest that with the principles entrenched in the Criminal Code, we do not need to spell out for judges the minimum that should be imposed in particular circumstances. Instead, we have given them the guidance to exercise their discretion.

I also believe very strongly that we cannot support ad hoc amendments to the code. When the government proposes code

Private Members' Business

amendments after comprehensive study and consultations we are criticized for singling out certain provisions for amendment rather than undertaking more fundamental reform. These very same members have done that with us.

This amendment seeks to impose a minimum on a single provision of the code, impaired driving causing death. However no similar amendments are proposed for other offences, for example impaired driving causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing death or bodily harm, dangerous driving causing death or bodily harm. It is not a comprehensive approach. It is a quick fix. I cannot support the proposed amendment.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill tonight. Bill C-201 is designed to bring some equity into the justice system. It is designed to bring some certainty of sentencing into the justice system. It is designed to make the justice system just, where someone cannot just shrug and say: "I am sorry. I had too many and I drove over somebody you cared about. Please forgive me, I would like another shot at it, another time down the road".

This is not the only bill before the House which deals with drinking. Another bill brought forward by a Liberal member deals with warning labels on alcoholic beverages. It was brought forward because of the potential and real damage that is done by people who drink to excess, especially by people who drink and drive which we are discussing in this debate.

When people say that this bill is a quick fix so they do not want to support it, I am not sure exactly what line of thinking that is. I believe at least it is a partial fix concerning what must happen, but if it is a quick fix then why do we not try it? It may be quick, it may be over before we know it tonight. We could pass this. If we were to go to people who have suffered a loss because of a drunk driver we would find agreement.

We may wonder whether people are paying attention to what we are debating tonight. Are people in Canada listening? I have a letter which is hot off the fax. It arrived about an hour ago and is written to the sponsor of the bill:

I am writing to you on behalf of the board of directors of MADD Canada to reaffirm to you our support for Bill C-201 requiring a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years for impaired driving causing death. MADD Canada and our volunteers and supporters are 100 per cent behind your initiative. We clearly understand the meaning of your bill and have as one of our MADD Canada policies that we will seek mandatory minimum sentencing.

It is my understanding that during the last hour of debate Gordon Kirkby rose in the House of Commons and referred to a letter from MADD Canada indicating that MADD did not support this bill. This letter was written by a member of the board of MADD Canada and was the opinion of this person as an individual and not that of the board. This letter was not approved by the executive committee of the board of

directors and was not approved to be sent on MADD Canada letterhead. This individual has been advised of this and has been requested to retract his statement.

I want to once again reaffirm MADD Canada is in support of Bill C-201. MADD Canada is fully aware and understands the content of Bill C-201.

Respectfully submitted, the President of MADD Canada, Jane Meldrum.

• (1835)

People are watching and listening to what we are talking about tonight. I would suggest they are not too happy with some of the arguments about not wanting to do it because it is a quick fix. They do not want to do it because they could what, offend somebody? What is wrong with the Liberals?

I wonder what the reaction would be if 1,500 people a year were killed or were dying from something else. What if it were a new type of cancer? What if 1,500 people were dying every year of some new dreadful disease? What if it were one of the pet projects of the special interest groups who say they need more funding, millions of dollars, to do research into a problem or whatever? Sometimes they are legitimate causes, but what would be the reaction? The Liberals would say: "Let us do it".

Is there a way to stop 1,500 unnecessary deaths and hundreds of thousands of ruined lives? Is there a way we can arrest that? There is, at least partially.

We are not talking about people who have an extra drink on the way home from work. Listen to the statistics. All drivers who are involved in an accident are tested for the alcoholic content of their blood. In 1993 statistics show that 63 per cent of the people tested had not over .08 but over .15. These are not people who miscalculated and had two beers instead of just one. They are sloppy drunks who are driving the roads, causing accidents and running over innocent people.

I wonder which family in Canada has not been affected by this. The very first tragedy I can ever remember as a child is when my two cousins were killed in a car accident. They were snuffed out by a drunk driver who had crossed the double line and hit dead on a carload of kids on their way home from graduation ceremonies. He killed four kids the same age as my older brother. Cousin Dennis and cousin Karen I never really got to know of course but I was there for their funeral. That guy is out on the street again. In those days the sentence was not that long, a year or so. He is still a drunk but I do not know whether or not he has caused other deaths.

All of us have heard anecdotal stories. We have heard the statistics here tonight. It is not just about people who say they are sorry that they were drunk and they deserve a slap on the wrist. It is also about people who are driving while suspended. There was a case back home where a guy was suspended, went to court because he was caught drinking again and was suspended some more. How

can we suspend the guy some more? The guy is just waiting to drive over somebody and cause a death.

The question is: What should we do with somebody like that? A guy causes a death while under suspension so we suspend him some more, tell him not to do it and give him a year in jail. It is absolutely certain he will do it again. That is why the minimum sentence is necessary.

Do not tell me the minimum sentence will not send a message. If nothing else, it will keep those habitual drunks off the road. When they do it once it is not just: "Oh well, you have killed one person and have ruined many, many lives". It will be: "You killed somebody. In this society we still value life highly. You took an innocent life and you are going to pay the price. If nothing else, we are going to stop you from killing somebody for the next seven years".

Right now it is a revolving door. People shrug their shoulders. They are already under suspension so what are we going to do to them? Statistically they have driven drunk dozens of times before they get caught. The only reason they are caught is that they are sitting on top of a bunch of twisted metal with a dead person in another car and finally we have the goods on them. They go to court, everything is plea bargained right down and they get a year in jail. It is not acceptable.

• (1840)

The Mothers Against Drunk Driving who have felt the anguish, who know what it means to suffer a loss, know that this bill is necessary. They are not saying it is a quick fix. It is not the total answer. They are not saying that. This bill will save lives and that is why this bill should pass. I urge all members of the House to listen to the people in their ridings. If they are listening they will vote in favour of this bill.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and add my voice and remarks to those who have already spoken in favour of Bill C-201, a private member's bill put forward by my friend the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

I am not going to get into statistics as a great many have already been cited by my hon. colleagues from Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Okanagan—Shuswap, Simcoe Centre and Fraser Valley East. We could go on all night citing tragic statistics in support of Bill C-201 which would see a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years for impaired driving which causes death. It is something that is certainly needed.

As did the hon. member for Fraser Valley East, I too would question why the Liberals are speaking against this piece of legislation. The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair said she cannot support this piece of legislation because it does not do this

Private Members' Business

or that. What does it do? Certainly it is not the be all and end all. No one said it was. I believe very strongly it is a step in the right direction and it is going to send a clear message.

The hon. member for South Shore indicated that the problem runs so deep that this piece of legislation will not save lives. I dispute that. I think it will save lives. It will send a very strong message to people who get behind a wheel when they are drunk and go on our nation's highways and streets and kill people.

It is a coincidence that in January I wrote a column for my local paper on this very topic. I will read part of that column into the record because it hits at exactly what we are talking about here.

Does anyone else have a problem with the light sentences constantly handed down to drunk drivers? A comparative rap on the knuckles or slap of the wrist, even when their offence leads to massive property damages, injuries or death of innocent people.

I went on to say that perhaps the system might provide some deterrence if the criminals—and these people are criminals; that is what we are talking about here—were sent to work in a bush camp instead of being granted a short stay in some five star hotel that we call jails or prisons in this country today. The article went on:

You know the kind of camps: no running water or indoor toilets. You have to chop your own firewood or you freeze. As for work, there is no shortage. For example, with all the parkland being set aside, I am sure there is a need to clear hiking trails.

I went on to say that the particular individual I was referring to should have to pay back ICBC and the city for the damages resulting from his stupidity.

Does this sound too harsh? Well I do not think so. I for one am sick of our system mollycoddling the guilty. This is but one example of thousands occurring across the country. Drunk drivers who take little or no moral or financial responsibility for their actions. And most Canadians are also beginning to question a justice system that does not seem to hold drunk drivers accountable.

I am reminded of the recent case of David Johnson, 27, of Prince George. My hon. colleague for Prince George—Bulkley Valley also referred to this case. Last September while drunk, he caused an accident that claimed the lives of Jim Ciccone, his 12-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. The prosecutor asked for a sentence of six to eight years. The maximum allowable is 14 years. Judge Ramsay decided three and one-half years would be sufficient punishment. Is that punishment enough for taking three lives?

• (1845)

Following public demonstrations, the sentence is now under appeal. I remember 42-year-old Herman Richards who ran down Amanda Bailey while she was flagging at mile 123 on the Alaska highway in July 1990. Richards had been drinking prior to hitting Amanda in the middle of the highway in the middle of the afternoon. The sentence for Richards was three years and a life sentence of nothing but memories for Amanda's family. The examples could go on and on.

Adjournment Debate

The member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley responded to this type of tragedy with Bill C-201. What is the attitude of the government across the way? Members opposite say the bill does not do this, it does not do that, so they will have to vote against it. Do those members offer something to replace it? Hardly. They offer criticism.

Canadians are starting to realize that what we see here is a government gone soft on criminal behaviour. The member opposite from Prince Albert—Churchill River said in a speech at second reading which was mentioned in a news article in March: “We cannot look at this from a narrow perspective. The objective of the law is that it ought to be reduced impaired driving and if you have stiff penalties but no enforcement, there will be no one obeying the laws”.

I say hogwash. Stiff penalties will deter people. If people know they will have to face stiff penalties, as I suggested in my column, perhaps we should be looking at more than only a jail term where they shoot pool, lift some weights and maybe take a course at taxpayers' expense. Maybe if they had to do some work, we would see some real deterrence.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 22 I asked the Minister of Labour when he intended to proclaim Bill C-64, the new Employment Equity Act.

Although this bill was passed by Parliament on December 15, 1995, it is still not in force. Worse still, according to the bill, it will only come into force one year after proclamation.

I want to remind the House that in 1983, the Trudeau government appointed the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment under Judge Rosalie Abella. This royal commission reported in 1984 to the new Mulroney government.

The Abella commission recommended mandatory employment equity legislation for both the federally regulated private sector and the federal public service sector. In response, the Conservative

government brought in the existing Employment Equity Act but it did not accept all of Abella's recommendations. That law did not cover the federal public service, and applied only to firms with more than 100 employees. Worse still, the employment equity requirements in the act were not enforceable.

The Liberal opposition at that time strongly criticized the government on those grounds. As a result, once back in government in 1994, the new Liberal administration, to complete the work started 10 years before, introduced Bill C-64 to include the public sector and to set up a practical enforcement mechanism.

After lengthy committee hearings and parliamentary debate, the bill was finally passed December 15, 1995. Almost six months later it is still not proclaimed.

At a recent meeting of the human rights committee on April 18, the commissioner for human rights made a strong case for proclaiming this bill as soon as possible. He pointed out that there was still too much systemic discrimination and that, according to the provisions of the bill, it would only come into application one year after proclamation which would be at the earliest in 1997.

• (1850)

Once again I urge the government to proclaim this bill, these important improvements to employment equity, as soon as possible.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, Bill C-64, an act respecting employment equity, was adopted by this Parliament and given royal assent at the end of the last session. The new act clarifies existing employers' obligations and actually reduces their administrative burden.

Employers under the act must identify and remove employment barriers that prevent women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities from progressing in the workplace.

I would like to assure the hon. member that the Minister of Labour and his officials have been working in close consultation with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission to ensure that the Employment Equity Act can be put into force in the shortest timeframe possible.

However, since the new act leaves a number of details to regulation, we want to ensure that employers under the act have a clear understanding of the regulatory requirements and have ample lead time to make any changes that may be required to comply with these regulations.

In pursuit of this commitment, HRDC officials are holding consultations with employers, joint employer and labour organizations and designated group representatives and associations throughout the month of May.

Adjournment Debate

Given the requirements of the regulatory process, we expect that the Employment Equity Act will come into force in mid-fall of this year.

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to go into a little more detail about the question which I put to the minister responsible for the federal public service in mid-April.

I asked a question regarding the downsizing of the public service because I believe that there is an area in this exercise where we as a government can address a situation that would benefit those involved. In short, I believe there are things that we can do.

First, we must recognize that during the beginning of this three-year program the attraction to packages being offered was easy to manage. There were many individuals who were quite willingly accepting them. As we move closer to the end of the exercise it must be getting more and more difficult to find workers willing to accept the offer. I want to urge the department to invest as much discretion as possible in local managers so that they will have the opportunity and the flexibility which they need to treat people in as humane a fashion as possible.

I am aware there are those who accepted packages in the initial stages. That was done in good faith. However, we must be prepared to reassess our own rules if we are going to continue to attract people at the same rate as we have in the past.

We must be motivated to find the fairest possible solutions to the many problems that may arise and the local managers are in the best place to do that.

Also we must realize that funding for non-governmental organizations as one possible employer has been reduced along with many other areas where federal public servants may have found alternate work. It is therefore incumbent on the government to be as open as possible to alternatives suggested by local managers on adjustments to the federal public service work week or any other ideas which would generate more jobs. They must be considered. I believe that is our contribution in this exercise.

In conclusion, I want the government to recognize that the public service has participated quite graciously in this exercise and we

must be willing, as a government, to listen to them and to give the local managers the flexibility they need to do the downsizing properly.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the government will be vigilant to minimize the effects of downsizing on the affected employees during the remainder of the program review implementation.

The government stated at the very beginning of this process that it was its intention to be fair to its employees.

It introduced the early retirement incentive and the early departure incentive programs in order to facilitate the transition of employees to retirement or to other employment outside the public service. These programs have been successful in achieving these ends.

As can be seen in the quarterly reports on downsizing, 4,715 employees had taken the ERI and 4,323 had taken either the EDI or its equivalent, the civilian reduction program in the Department of National Defence, up to the end of December of last year.

The early retirement incentive program will be available until March 31, 1998. The EDI program will be available until June 22, 1998.

We also introduced a program which allows employees who wish to leave the public service to switch with employees who wish to stay. This program has been a big success in my view, since it has permitted almost 2,000 employees to participate in such exchanges between March 24 of last year when the program was first introduced.

I am confident this tool will continue to be effective in accommodating departments, managers and employee needs and that management will strive to use this and other tools available to ease the transition of all those who will be affected.

The Deputy Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 6.55 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, May 16, 1996

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Zed 2851

Interparliamentary delegations

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger) 2851

Committees of the House

Justice and Legal Affairs

Mr. Zed 2851

Motion moved and agreed to 2851

Petitions

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Harper (Calgary West) 2851

Merchant Navy Veterans

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre) 2851

Health and Dental Benefits

Mr. Harris 2851

Minority Rights

Mr. Béclair 2851

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Zed 2852

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Supply

Allotted day—Declaration by Prime Minister concerning Quebec

Mr. Gauthier 2853

Motion 2853

Mr. Boudria 2855

Mr. Duceppe 2855

Mr. Zed 2856

Mr. Irwin 2857

Mr. Bellehumeur 2858

Amendment 2859

Mr. Zed 2859

Mr. Harper (Calgary West) 2860

Mr. Boudria 2863

Mr. Crête 2863

Mr. Harper (Calgary West) 2864

Mr. Godin 2864

Mr. Dion 2864

Amendment to the amendment 2866

Mr. Boudria 2866

Mr. Crête 2867

Mr. Sauvageau 2867

Mr. Plamondon 2868

Mrs. Lalonde 2869

Mrs. Lalonde 2869

Amendment 2870

Amendment to the amendment 2870

Amendment to the amendment 2870

Mr. Dion 2870

Mr. Crête 2871

Amendment 2872

Amendment to an amendment 2872

Mr. Dion 2872

Mr. Lee 2873

Ms. Clancy 2873

Mr. Godin 2875

Mr. Duhamel 2875

Mrs. Lalonde 2877

Mr. Landry 2877

Mr. Rocheleau 2878

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River) 2879

Mr. Ménard 2879

Mr. Stinson 2881

Mr. Mitchell 2882

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger) 2882

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

St. Stephen, New Brunswick

Mr. Culbert 2883

International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development

Mr. Paré 2884

Fisheries

Mr. Cummins 2884

Mining

Mr. Mitchell 2884

The New Millennium

Mr. McKinnon 2884

Chinese Canadian Association of Public Affairs

Mrs. Terrana 2884

The Disabled

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead) 2885

Agriculture

Mr. Morrison 2885

St. Thomas University

Mr. Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury) 2885

Optimists in Action

Ms. Beaumier 2885

Alliance Outaouais

Mr. Bertrand 2886

Central America

Mr. Nunez 2886

The Senate

Miss Grey 2886

Norman Inkster

Mr. Boudria 2886

Lloyd Robertson

Mr. O'Brien (London—Middlesex) 2887

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Capital Gains

Mr. Gauthier 2887

Mrs. Stewart (Brant) 2887

Mr. Gauthier 2887

Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2887	Mr. Mifflin	2893
Mr. Gauthier	2887	Trade	
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2887	Mrs. Gaffney	2893
Mr. Brien	2888	Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	2894
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2888	Persons with Disabilities	
Mr. Brien	2888	Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	2894
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2888	Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	2894
National Unity		Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	2894
Mr. Manning	2888	Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	2894
Mr. Dion	2888	Canadian Wheat Board	
Mr. Manning	2888	Mr. Benoit	2894
Mr. Dion	2888	Mr. Goodale	2894
Mr. Manning	2889	Mr. Benoit	2894
Mr. Dion	2889	Mr. Goodale	2895
Somalia Inquiry		Experience Canada	
Mr. Jacob	2889	Mr. Knutson	2895
Mr. Collenette	2889	Mr. Young	2895
Mr. Jacob	2889	Business of the House	
Mr. Collenette	2889	Mr. Duceppe	2895
Quebec Contracts		Mr. Zed	2895
Mr. Morrison	2889	Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	2895
Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	2889	Privilege	
Mr. Morrison	2890	Bill C-222	
Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	2890	Mr. Szabo	2895
Persons with Disabilities		Mr. Daviault	2896
Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	2890	Mr. Bélanger	2896
Mr. Young	2890	Statements by Members	
Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	2890	Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	2896
Mr. Young	2890		
Taxation		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
Mr. Williams	2890	Committees of the House	
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2890	Transport	
Mr. Williams	2890	Mr. Zed	2897
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	2891	Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Presence in Gallery		Mr. Zed	2897
The Speaker	2891	Motions agreed to	2897
Referendums		GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
Mr. Bellehumeur	2891	Supply	
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	2891	Allotted Day—Prime Minister's Statement on Quebec	
Mr. Bellehumeur	2891	Consideration resumed of motion; the amendment; and the amendment to the amendment	2897
Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	2891	Mr. Mitchell	2897
Agriculture		Mr. Lebel	2897
Mr. Maloney	2891	Mr. Bélair	2898
Mr. Volpe	2892	Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil)	2900
Trade		Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre)	2900
Mr. Penson	2892	Mr. Mercier	2903
Mr. Eggleton	2892	Mr. Leblanc (Longueuil)	2904
Mr. Penson	2892	Mr. Kirkby	2905
Mr. Eggleton	2892	Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	2906
Referendums		Mr. Dumas	2907
Mr. Guimond	2892	Mr. Anawak	2907
Mr. Dion	2892	Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	2909
Mr. Guimond	2893	Mr. Langlois	2909
Mr. Dion	2893	Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	2909
Fisheries		Mr. Discepola	2911
Mr. Cummins	2893	Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	2911
Mr. Mifflin	2893	Mr. Harb	2911
Mr. Cummins	2893	Mrs. Dalphond—Guiral	2911

Mrs. Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	2911
Mr. Harb	2913
Mr. Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	2913
Amendment to the amendment negatived: Yeas, 39; Nays, 135	2914
Amendment and motion negatived on division: Yeas, 39; Nays 135	2915

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code

Bill C-201. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading	2915
Mr. Stinson	2915
Mr. Wells	2916
Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre)	2918

Message from the Senate

The Deputy Speaker	2920
--------------------------	------

Criminal Code

Bill C-201. Consideration resumed of motion for second reading	2920
Ms. Cohen	2920
Mr. Strahl	2922
Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	2923

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Employment Equity Act

Mr. Allmand	2924
Mr. Proud	2924

Public Service of Canada

Mr. Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	2925
Mr. Proud	2925

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