CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 19, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 19, 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 seven petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees.

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BELL CANADA ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-57, an act to amend the Bell Canada Act.

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

* * *

● (1005)

CANADA SHIPPING ACT

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-58, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act (maritime liability).

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

CARRIAGE OF PASSENGERS BY WATER ACT

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-59, an act to implement articles 1 to 22 of the Athens Convention relating to the carriage of passengers and their luggage by sea, 1974.

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

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, with your permission I wish to inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 73(1), it is the intention of the government that this bill be referred to committee before second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I wonder if I might ask the assistance of the hon. minister. I neglected to recognize him on the first bill I presented in his name. Was his last remark applicable to the first bill, the second one or both?

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to request the permission of the House to have both bills referred to committee prior to second reading in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I apologize to the minister and my colleagues for not recognizing the minister in the first instance.

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CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-60, an act to establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and to repeal and amend other acts as a consequence.

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

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BILL C-201

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent for two motions. The first reads:

> That at the conclusion of the debate on Bill C-201 later this day, a recorded division be deemed to have been put; and the said division be deferred until Tuesday, September 24, 1996 at the conclusion of Government Orders.

(Motion agreed to.)

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe you will also find unanimous consent for the following:

> That notwithstanding any order of the House, debate on the motion to concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on the composition of committees, tabled earlier this day, be held and be concluded no later than 1.50 p.m. today; and at the conclusion of the said debate, the motion be deemed to have been put and carried on division; and that the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs and the Standing Committee on Finance be permitted to hold their organization meetings later this day.

(Motion agreed to.)

• (1010)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The motion put before the House by the chief government whip, as I stated, carried and we will now continue with motions.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. The motion that was placed before the House and was agreed to calls for debate on the motion. When will the debate commence?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Just as soon as the government tables the motion we will move to debate. The motion presented by the chief government whip was the agreement to debate the motion once it is tabled, within certain parameters I believe, until 1.50 p.m. this afternoon.

I will look to the government side and see if we can move back to motions.

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House this day, be concurred in.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate the concurrence motion so ably put to the House by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

As we commence the debate we are setting in place the committees for this fall and for next spring, committees which could in fact be in place from now until the next election. Of course, next fall if we are still in session and still in this Parliament, then the whips, through the mechanism of a striking committee, will table another report which would be subject to something similar to what we are experiencing today and new committees would be struck then.

[*Translation*]

Meanwhile, we are all here this morning to debate this report, which, as I pointed out earlier, will put in place these committees.

To start with today, I would like to talk about the amendments made to the whole committee system in the past few years and the new openness that now exists in this Parliament. In previous Parliaments, parliamentary committees did not have the same level of authority as today.

For example, committees now have the authority to draft legislation. These committees have done so. The bill on lobbyists, for example, was drafted by a parliamentary committee.

Mr. Bellehumeur: This is not a good example.

Mr. Boudria: I for one think it is a good example because we did a good job. I commend opposition members for their excellent work, notwithstanding the criticism aimed at them by my friend across the way. I think the members from both sides of the House who sat on this committee did a good job.

Having given you that example, I could add several others.

[*English*]

This morning one minister tabled two bills which will be sent to committee for study prior to second reading. The general principle of the bill, as opposed to merely the clauses, are up for review at a very different level, a far more intense level of criticism than those bills which are sent after second reading. That is an innovation of this Parliament and that is the kind of good work that can be done by parliamentary committees when bills are sent there prior to second reading under the new mechanism and, of course, pursuant to the promises that were made in the red book and which have been delivered, as were so many promises in the red book.

• (1015)

The parliamentary committees have done tremendous work. Just yesterday we saw the finance committee table a report in the House on the whole issue of family trust.

[*Translation*]

A while ago, we saw a whole series of reports prepared by parliamentary committees and the good job they did.

I must tell you that, when I first arrived here as a member of Parliament back in 1984, committees were not doing much other than dealing with legislation and budgetary estimates. Today, under Standing Order 108(2), committees can practically turn into working groups and review all kinds of matters coming under the responsibility of the departments associated with the various committees.

Under Standing Order 108(2), the transport committee can review transportation issues either within or outside the estimates.

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): The auditor general.

Mr. Boudria: The hon. member opposite talks about the auditor general. In fact, this power existed before the amendment I just mentioned. This is not a good example, because this power has existed for a long time. It existed before Standing Order 108(2). In fact, the power of the public accounts committee to review the auditor general's report is similar to the power now held by other committees; it did not exist before.

In that sense, I am glad the hon. member raised the issue. Committees have a much freer hand today than they did, say, 10 or 12 years ago when I first came to this hon. House.

Of course, much more headway has been made since this government took office and opened up all sorts of new ways to improve the efficiency of parliamentary committees.

[*English*]

We have, for instance, seen some of the work done by the foreign affairs and environment committees in dealing with issues ranging from pollution, circumpolar issues and so on. The foreign affairs committee is, as I understand it, studying the possibility right now of doing work in that regard. All of this would have been impossible under the rules as they existed only a few years ago.

We saw a joint committee early in this Parliament do a review of both the foreign affairs department and the defence policy put together. This was a joint effort of the foreign affairs committee and the defence committee. This was early in Parliament. They did an excellent report, widely quoted, and this work was done under the able chairmanship of the then member for Ottawa—Vanier, now a member of the other place, Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier. That kind of excellent work was done in this Parliament by the parliamentary committees.

The point I am making here is that the parliamentary committees have a role to play today which is far different than the one I knew when I came here. I only wished that as a new member I would have had the power to do all these things that new members today as they come here in Parliament are experiencing. The level of frustration that some of us had many years ago when we tried to do anything in committees was unbelievable.

I see my distinguished colleague from Edmonton who was a member in this House several years ago at the time when I believe estimates were probably done right on the floor of the House of Commons. There was little or no work done by committees. You could not even call witnesses before a parliamentary committee. You could barely hear testimony of any kind with regard to legislation.

Today we have committees sitting in Ottawa, bringing experts to give advice so that we can improve on the legislation of the government and study issues far and wide. All of these opportunities would have been virtually impossible before.

• (1020)

We have starting next week the standing committee on justice travelling to look at the Young Offenders Act. I am sure it will produce an excellent report.

I hear a member of the Reform Party being critical already but I am not that negative about the Reform member who will be sitting on that committee. I think he will probably do a good job. I am willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the hon. member, notwithstanding the criticism which is already starting by some of his colleagues. That is okay.

We have faith in some of the Reform members. We say that the ones on that committee will hopefully do a good job. I hope they do. I am still hopeful. I hope those Reformers do not take personally the criticism of their own colleagues we have just heard. We are on their side. We will defend those Reformers sitting on the justice committee.

The parliamentary committees have done a very good job over recent years. In this Parliament we have seen them do excellent work. We have seen them produce legislation. We have seen them produce reports. We have seen them study various issues, make recommendations to Parliament and we have seen many of those recommendations turned into law.

During the 1993 election campaign our party had the red book. I know you are a non-partisan person, Mr. Speaker, but nevertheless I am sure you will recall those of us who are more partisan—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Boudria: The members across who want to abolish the CBC did not get their way. I guess they are agitated this morning.

Notwithstanding that, here is what we said. We said we would give MPs a greater role in drafting legislation through House of Commons committees. That was done. Legislation was produced, everything from the redistribution bill that was produced by parliamentary committee to the committee that dealt with the lobbyist registration and so on.

We said we would permit parliamentary committees to review order in council appointments. Most people across the way have never even used that process. That process was used a lot more when we on this side of the House were in opposition. We were

scrutinizing those things a lot more diligently than some members of the opposition now.

We said at that time there would be more free votes allowed in the House of Commons. Free votes occur almost exclusively in the Liberal caucus. When was the last time we saw the Reform Party vote against one another? I know someone will bring to my attention the gun control issue where one member voted against the rest of them. Shall we say he had a different job not too many days later, a job with less whipping. Nevertheless we had some free votes. The consequences were a little different in the Reform Party.

We also said the parliamentary committee would do prebudget consultation. That has been probably the greatest success of all parliamentary committee initiatives. I congratulate all members of the finance committee on both sides of the House in all three political parties officially represented in Parliament. That consultation has occurred every fall. It has given Canadians a more precise picture of the country's finances and we have been able to track gradually how this country has been doing financially. That is something which is unprecedented.

We have the finance committee televised nationwide, being questioned by members on all sides of the House and being able to indicate to all Canadians the progress of Canada's economy. Whereas that process formally occurred once a year at budget time, we have developed an almost twice a year system. We now have the fall consultation process with the appearance of the minister and the others who also appear before the Finance Committee, and then the spring budget free period.

• (1025)

Why did this happen? I believe it happened in large measure thanks to the diligence of members on all sides of the House. In order for that to happen the proper climate had to be there to start with. That process was permitted because this government wanted to change the rules and allow Parliament to do that. We did. It was in the red book. We made the commitment. We delivered on the promise. We made that kind of thing happen, or at least we created the climate to make it happen.

The reason I make the distinction is that notwithstanding the wishes of the government had members on all sides of the House done a shoddy job of the whole thing it would not have been very significant. The government made the commitment. The House put the structure in place. Members on all sides of the House acted properly and made it work. I congratulate all members. You did a good job and that process now has an incredible level of credibility.

[*Translation*]

You can certainly see the good work parliamentary committees are doing. The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development has also done a fine job with its comprehensive study of social programs in Canada.

I mentioned earlier that the Standing Committee on Finance took on prebudget studies. There is also the Standing Committee on Industry, with its ongoing review of the banking industry in Canada, its summer hearings and all it has done. Why is the industry anxious to know what the Standing Committee on Industry is going to do? Because this committee has gained credibility in this matter through its good work and because the rules we have now allow committees to do that kind of work. These rules did not exist when I was first elected to Parliament in 1984.

Mr. Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul, Lib.): It has been many years.

Mr. Boudria: It has been many years indeed. In fact, to be more precise next Wednesday I will be celebrating 20 years in political life. The rules have changed over the years and they have changed for the best.

I will conclude on this to give as much time as possible to parliamentarians from other parties to speak. I am confident that, like me, they will express satisfaction with the way parliamentary committees operate and will want to commend the hon. members for their excellent work on these committees.

This was made possible by the excellent co-operation of the committees and by this government's agreeing to put the system in place and improve it as required and then listening to the advice given by parliamentarians. Through committee reports, we have collectively ensured better government for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Harb: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I wonder if we could seek the unanimous consent of the House to take a few minutes so we could introduce petitions and then come back to the motion rather than waiting until the debate collapses. This way we would be able to get petitions finished and get back to the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Laurin: Mr. Speaker, if we immediately move to the presentation of petitions, it will leave us less time to debate the committees' motion. Is this indeed the case? I would first like to know how many petitions there are. They could always be presented at three o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I appreciate the involvement of the chief opposition whip, but the House did not give its unanimous consent. We therefore resume with the questions and comments for the last speaker.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question for the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

In the member's commentary he spoke for a long time and virtually said nothing of substance except to praise the status quo, which is not what we are here to do. We are here to bring about positive change. The member also made an implication as to my role when I was whip and about free votes. Let me explain to him very briefly what free votes are all about in the Reform Party.

A free vote means that we vote the party line, the platform and policies that we represent to the people, unless we have clear evidence from our constituents, even those who did not vote for us, to vote otherwise. The way we find that out is to do polling, talk shows, town halls, surveys through householders and scientific surveys. I did that on gun control. I live in an urban riding and there is a greater mix there. Therefore, I voted the wishes of my constituents which were with the government on that issue. My colleagues are proud of that. That is a free vote.

That is the way we would do a free vote if we were government, not the way the member claims a free vote should work, which is that on private members' bills we have free votes. That is a sham and that is not what free votes are about.

On sexual orientation, I did the same thing. I voted with the government because there was a clear indication from my constituents to vote with the government on that bill instead of with my party. My party did not kick me out of any position. I resigned the position of party whip voluntarily and freely.

For the member to use an argument of convenience is once again misleading the public which not only he is doing today but the finance minister and every minister across the way has done, except for the current human resources development minister. He is doing the best job of all.

I will now put my question to the hon. member. As the whip for the government, as a man who bragged about his 20 years of experience in the system, as a man who has honesty and integrity, as a man who I know will tell me the truth to this question, as a man who I know will not shirk from his responsibility to answer this question, does he, when these committees are set and struck, tell the members of his committees who are assigned to those committees how to vote and whom to vote for in terms of vice-chairs? Will he answer that question with conviction, honesty and courage on chairs and vice-chairs? On public accounts we cannot have a member of the opposition party as a chair. On that issue, would he give me the benefit of his 20 years of experience and be honest with me?

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, let us start with the issue of the wishes of constituents before I get to the second part. The hon. member just told us how he did the right thing by voting on gun control because it was the way his constituents wanted him to vote.

However, there is something wrong with the proposition here because his leader said that even though his constituents wanted him to vote for the bill that he was going to vote against it. What the hon. member just told us is that he did the right thing by not adhering to the party line. He has to at the same time recognize that he has told his leader that he has done the wrong thing because he did the opposite to what his constituents wanted. That is the proposition that has just been—

Mr. Silye: And I will be held accountable.

Mr. Boudria: He just told us now that his constituents will probably kick him out. That may be so but that is not the point. The point is that the hon. member has just said that a rule applies to him and he followed it and that the rule was the rule of the Reform Party. However, the leader did not follow the rule which he has just himself invoked as being the rule for the Reform Party. We have to admit that there is something inconsistent in that.

Let us get to the second part. The member has asked me how I do my job of whip in the Liberal Party. I hope I do it with honesty. I hope I serve my country, my party, the Prime Minister of this country and all of us in the House of Commons properly. I believe that is how all of us should behave in our jobs.

• (1035)

The hon. member was the whip of his party; the hon. gentleman performed this function for his party for some time and he did it very well. He will note that whether the issue was the timing of a vote or any other issue, he consulted with his colleagues and with his leader and then took a decision. After making that decision he would take action on whatever issue.

I do not know whether in his party it was he when he was whip or his leader, who selected the critic, which is roughly the equivalent on the opposition side of what the chair or the vice-chair is on the government side. I have no idea how this selection process occurs. Maybe they draw straws. Maybe the leader selects them. I do not know because it is an internal caucus matter on their side.

Mr. Strahl: Committees are supposed to be independent, Don.

Mr. Boudria: And the hon. member says that committees are supposed to be independent.

We just appointed the members to the committee. The member across is not going to tell me that he did not appoint them. His signature is on the report we tabled in this House a few minutes ago. Obviously determining the composition of committees is not

an independent process. Under the standing orders it is done by the whips of all political parties.

The member cannot say that he has no knowledge of the rules. He was, after all, the whip for some time, and I know the whip knew the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before I call for resumption of debate, just so we all understand the rules of debate on this motion, I will look to the Bloc Quebecois then the Reform Party for their participation.

The time allocations are all the same with 20 minutes and 10 minutes. Then we will revert to the normal rules of debate, going from one side of the House to the other.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as always I enjoyed the speech of the government whip. He is always very entertaining. He always gives us a nice little political story to go with his speech, but he often does not answer the question. The question that was put to him today was point blank: Does he or somebody else in the leadership of the Liberal Party instruct the members on those committees how to vote on the committees as to who will be chair and vice-chair?

A committee is supposed to be independent of the House. In other words, it supposedly has an agenda of its own. It calls the witnesses and comes to conclusions independently of the House. It runs its own affairs, organizes itself and if it has to spend money, it will ask the House for permission.

What we are trying to get from the government whip is the answer to the question: Do committees really have that much independence or is the government whip or someone in their hierarchy actually holding them down under their thumb and telling them what to do?

As we head into the election of the chairs and vice-chairs it will be interesting to see what happens. The government whip would not answer that question because the truth is that members are told how to vote in committee. They are told who the chair will be and they are told to vote for the Bloc Quebecois members, the separatists, for the vice-chairmanship in every committee. They are told that, they are instructed to do that. If they break the rules, they pay the price.

That is the kind of discipline we are trying to break in this House of Commons. It is the kind of thing we say should be the prerogative of individual members. They have worked with one another for several years now.

I cannot say how much it boggles my mind to say that the vice-chairmanship of the Canadian heritage committee should be a separatist who wants to break up the country. On foreign affairs we want to have somebody who represents Canada and Canadian views, who portrays the Canadian perspective on international issues. So what do we do? We put a separatist, a person who wants to break the country in half, in the vice-chairmanship, the steering committee as it were of that committee.

That is a shame. It is a shame because it is instructed from the government side by the whip, the person who would not answer the question of our former whip. He knows the answer yet he tries to get around it. That is one of the things that is wrong with the committee system.

● (1040)

Why are we debating this today? I can tell you why. We are debating what is wrong with the committee system.

I should have mentioned before I started that I was dividing my time.

There are two broad headings we are going to be discussing today from our perspective as to what is wrong with the committee structure. First, there is too little independence from the governing party. I already mentioned an example and I will talk a little more about that and what is wrong with the partisan process in the committee structure. The second part ironically is that committees are too independent from Parliament. They are too dependent on the party hierarchy and too independent from Parliament. I would like to expand on that a little bit in my time remaining.

To use an example, I was on the committee debating Bill C-64, the employment equity bill. When it came time for amendments, of course, I had many amendments to the bill from my perspective of what should be done to improve it. But the amendments given on the government side were not amendments from the committee people at all. The amendments were brought in by the cabinet minister, laid on the desks of committee members and people started making amendments. Unilingual English speaking members were making French amendments to the bill. In other words, they did not have the faintest or foggiest idea what they were amending. If we brought that to their attention, well of course they had no say in the legislation at all.

The bill went to committee, sure. We investigated it, sure. But the word came down from on high: ''These are the amendments that the cabinet minister wants. Do it, or else''. That is not independence and it is not what we had hoped for, which was some true independence from the governing party.

That partisan process, the fear that the members in these committees have of what might happen to them if they break party lines, is hindering the political process. It hinders the independence of the committee process. It hinders the ability of individual members to have an impact on the governing of our country.

At times it gets to the farcical stage, it gets really bad. For example last year the chairman of the defence committee would not allow our members to question the defence minister when he was before the committee. The reason? Well, he was our guest and we do not ask nasty questions of our guest. It is partisan, highly

partisan. The chairman was chosen beforehand and did not have the confidence of the committee and has not proven herself on that committee. Instead, she was using her absolute authority to tell people what they could or could not do.

If only the government would realize that if it cut the apron strings, the partisan strings to the committees, the committees would suddenly blossom on their own into useful, powerful and dynamic committees. They would have the independence required to get individual members of Parliament some influence into actual government business. Instead of being a voting machine, they would be a policy making machine. That is all that has to happen.

It is the same thing that was wrong with the parliamentary system 20, 30 or 40 years ago and in essence it has not changed. Whether a bill is referred on first reading, second reading or third reading, we all know the truth: The committees do as they are told. And that, regardless of how we try to change it is what the government insists on.

The second thing is about too much independence from Parliament. Committees are dependent on the party partisanship in order to make them function because of the way that party over there runs things. That is too bad and it should be broken in order to free up all backbench members who sit on these committees to have some real influence.

Parliamentary committees are too independent from the rules of Parliament. The rules are made in the House of Commons, our standing orders. They give order and civility to debate. That is why I address you in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, instead of calling somebody by name across the way.

The Latin phrase that guides this parliamentary system is lex rex. It means the law is king. In other words, the rule of law, the way we handle ourselves, the way we conduct debates, the questions you can ask and so on are decided by law or parliamentary procedure by order as to what can happen and in what order.

• (1045)

The committee system is a law unto itself. When the government majority decides to do something it is king. In other words, the party is king. I do not know what the Latin for that is but the party is king. Instead of the rule of law being king, instead of having predictable standing orders for the committees, it does as it wishes when the going gets rough.

On May 17, 1995 the human rights committee was studying this same employment equity legislation. During this supposed investigation I made a point of privilege. Let me read my point of privilege, a little of what happened during this debate. I brought into the House of Commons the following observations.

First, I brought amendments to that committee in English and I was not allowed to table them because they were in English only. The chairman would not accept my amendments. They were all in proper order but they were in English and he would not accept them. This is totally out of order in a country that accepts both languages, and yet who cares? The chairman hammers the gavel and he is king. The orders came from on top. The chairman's ruling was challenged but it was supported entirely by the government whip and others who were there to make sure the chairman was the king. He had all the authority.

When we had some of the amendments come forward amendments were passed in that committee without a vote. The chairman said: ''I do not want to hear anymore about this''. Smack, amendments carried. We said: ''But we have not even tabled the amendment''. He said: ''It does not matter, it is carried''. That is the new openness, the new co-operation.

The committee moved then to time allocation. It said it would debate it all right, five minutes total time allocation per section. You could not even read the sections out in five minutes, but that is the freedom that we have in committees.

The problem remains and it is two-fold. The partisan system drives it from the top, it drives it from the party hierarchy in the Liberal Party and demands strict obedience to its rules. On the other hand it does not have a law except the law of the jungle. The people it appoints in those positions do the bidding of the hierarchy. It is wrong, it is an effective committee system and all backbenchers from all parties should be outraged at the way that works.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, several of the examples provided by the hon. member are true. We have to review the way committees operate, including the election process within committees, but the issue today is really that of the party line.

I believe the party line is indeed a foundation of the British parliamentary system, as can be seen when a general election is held. Candidates try to get elected on the basis of a platform, a party line. Why, once elected, should they no longer adhere to the party line? These people can run as independents if they wish. If they get elected, they will have their own line. It is up to them. Reformers claim to have ideas, a program, something to offer to Canadians. They would get elected based on that platform, but then they would do away with it? It does not make sense.

The real problem is that this new party has a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the way the House operates. Let me give you an example. Once, we spent an evening here voting on a series of amendments tabled by a Reform Party member, who voted against his own amendments. The House was unanimous; everyone voted

against the amendments that the member had proposed. This is quite something, but we should tell it like it is.

I took part in the negotiations on the establishment of the committees when this Parliament first opened, in January 1994. We discussed the issue of offices. It took me two hours, on behalf of the Bloc, to select the offices of Bloc members. It took about ten days for members of the Reform Party to do the same. They even chose a closet for one of their members. I think there is a problem at some level.

• (1050)

I suggested to the Reform members that they could co-chair five committees, a first in the history of the Canadian Parliament, here in Ottawa. They said: ''We insist on having finance, commerce, agriculture, justice and industry.'' And a cherry on top, I suppose. I do not see what else they could ask for.

It does not make any sense. These people do not know how to negotiate and then they complain that things do not work well. I, for one, think that they should adapt to how things are done here. We are a sovereignist party. We, of course, have major disagreements with the party in office, but we agree on how to disagree. We can agree on the rules and say: ''Here is how things will be done.'' Then, of course, the going gets tough, but we have agreed on the rules.

There is always some way we can work with these rules. We have done it before and we are a sovereignist party. We are able to work with the rules of Parliament. I do not see why a federalist party like theirs has trouble functioning here. The problem is not with the rules. The problem is with that party.

[*English*]

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I am interested to hear the strong defence of the rule of law. I hope the members opposite will, during any referendum debates, ensuing negotiations and that kind of thing, stand by and say that nothing will happen to Canada except by the rule of law and observance of the Constitution. I hope they would do that, although I will not hold my breath. The rule of law seems to be a convenient thing for them.

One of the things I am talking about is that in committee, certainly we can obey the rules. Certainly we will observe the rules. The trouble is that there are no rule in the committee. Some committees only act as a law unto themselves.

Sometimes there is a good, experienced parliamentarian at the head of the committee. The member across the way is a fine example. We disagree with him in many ways. We disagree with many of his policies. We disagree with a lot of what he says and stands for.

Even on the gun control debate, a very heated and protracted debate, we had absolutely no problems with how he handled himself and how he handled the chair. That is not the case by and large.

There are inexperienced people, people being paid off or people who are being rewarded somehow who get to chair these committees and ramrod things through following the wishes only of the party leadership. That is not right.

The member opposite, a former justice minister with many years of experience, whether I disagree with him politically or not, is at least fair in committee and I do not have a problem. It is interesting that when he votes against the government, when he stands up for what he knows is right as he did a year ago, he lost his chairmanship. We do not have the benefit of his experience any longer. That is a shame.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to debate this issue today on committees.

Although it is a debate about committees, it could almost be a debate about democracy itself. It is really a debate about the definition of democracy in a way that it fits our committee structure.

I could talk about committees in general. My colleague has already brought up specific examples of committees. I could speak about them in general but I will start with some comments about a committee that is probably the worst committee on the Hill. It is perhaps the best example of what I would call manipulated democracy.

That committee is the committee that decides whether private members' bills will be votable. Just before the summer break in June 1996, a member from the government side of the House, the member for Mississauga East, had her comments about the committee that had just decided that her private member's bill would not be votable quoted in the *Hill Times*: ''I am not suggesting that it is a kangaroo court. It is more like a cockroach court. You cannot see them at work and then they run away''.

It is a really good description of what that committee stands for. The member from the government said had a private member's bill that would have ended concurrent sentences and forced rapists and murderers to serve consecutive sentences for multiple crimes. That bill was made non-votable because the government side had decided it did not want that issue to go to a free vote in this place.

• (1055)

Can a member of this House get an explanation of why it was non-votable? Can she or he find out what happens in that commit-

tee? No. There are no records kept. There are no notes. It is all done in secret behind closed doors with no records kept. No wonder the member for Mississauga East called it a cockroach court. As she said, we cannot see them at work and then they run away.

That member's experience is not unusual. It has happened to me. Every single one of the private member's bills and motions that I have put forward has been made non-votable. Maybe there were good and logical reasons for that to happen but there is no way that I could get an explanation for that. That for me certainly and perhaps anybody in this place who has put forward a private member's bill is the worst committee on the Hill.

As the member for Mississauga East said, if she had a bill that offered better treatment for criminals it would race through the place in a week, but if you have a bill that wants to side with the victims or correct obscene injustice in our system you can expect resistance and many years of effort and debate. To that member, welcome to the club, because that is what this side of the House is fighting the entire time.

Last year there were a total of 16 private members' bills which would have toughened up the justice system and not one of them could get past the system that is put in place through these committees to prevent it from ever becoming law. Even the ones that are made votable by that cockroach court committee that end up being passed in this House by the members get referred to committees which then stonewall them, delay them and keep them there under the orders of the ministers until they disappear completely off the map.

We see those examples over and over again. The bill that would have rid section 745 from the Criminal Code passed in this House and yet the committee and the minister are defying the will of the members here. It is contempt of Parliament in our estimation.

The members on both sides of this House are demanding more and more that all of our private members' business should be made votable and that the committees should stop interfering with the process. We should be permitted to bring the will of the people to this place and to put it through and turn it into law. I certainly hope we will soon see the disbanding of this cockroach court committee which has been a major problem for us.

The problems of the committees are really symptomatic of a load of problems that go right through the system which operates here, that makes this place almost just frosting. The real issue, the real cake, all happens behind closed doors. Everything is predecided and this is just the charade that happens on the top.

An example is I write letters to ministers about important issues about these committees. Months go by. A letter written to the justice minister remains unanswered after two months. A question on the Order Paper in this place, put here on October 5, 1995 with a 45 day answer period asking what sort of money the Squamish Indian Band gets in my riding has been sitting on the Order Paper since October 1995 and never answered. That is just another symptom of our constant problems.

My colleague from Fraser Valley mentioned the employment equity committee. I was sitting with him on that committee when the employment equity bill was considered last year. We were told that bill would be referred to committee before second reading so that members could have meaningful input to shape the bill prior to coming back for second reading in the House. What an absolute sham that was. It was unbelievable. When we describe it to people in the outside world away from this place they can hardly believe that it is true, what we tell them.

There was a time limit—arbitrary rules created by the committee—to discuss any clause. It did not matter how long it was, how short it was. Five minutes included the time it took for the government member to read it out and describe what it was all about. My colleague from Fraser Valley and I were denied the opportunity and ability to even ask questions of expert witnesses who were at that committee, experts from the government side. We were not even allowed to question them. We had questions from our constituents and we were denied the right to put them. That bill was rammed through the committee after hours, at short notice, when it was impossible for us to get witnesses to come to the committee. This is an abuse and a manipulation of democracy. It is unacceptable.

• (1100)

One example my colleague from Fraser Valley gave was how the chairman decided he had had enough discussion and just passed something by himself. We had another example where we managed to catch a few of the government members napping and got a particular clause through and the chairman reversed it by himself. He changed the vote. The vote was yes and the clause passed. He said it was no and it had failed. We were unable to get that reversed. Days later when we came back into this House and appealed to the Speaker for justice to be served and these decisions at the human resources committee to be reversed, we were told that the committees were their own masters.

I have another example. I sat on a small committee which was looking at the boundary changes in North Vancouver. There were only three members on that committee, two from the government side and myself from the Reform Party. There were about five clerks there, one to watch translation, one to watch what's going on and others whose jobs I do not know, five people and the three of us. We had to elect a chairman. One of the government members asked me if I minded if he nominated the other government member to be the chairman. I told him I knew how it worked around here and he should do what he had to do. So he nominated the other Liberal member to be the chairman. Then they both look

at me to second the nomination. Can you believe it? ''Not a chance'' I said, ''you can't expect me to do that, it is not democratic''. They looked at one another for a moment, looked at the clerk, and the clerk said that we could always change the rules, so they did. They changed the rule so they did not even need a seconder to elect the chairman.

The whole committee system is a disgrace. I could go on for an hour giving examples. I see my time is up and I welcome questions and comments. I will just say that this needs changing badly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie who asked a question a few moments ago, I also agree that we can support some of the arguments put forward by the Reform Party. It is indeed difficult to work in committees where the majority of members are on the government side. Since the government exhibits a certain amount of ministerial solidarity within committees, it is difficult for us to win every time. It is part of the game of democracy.

In this context, it can be very frustrating for the Reform Party, as well as for the official opposition, to have requests or proposals rejected sometimes.

I would like the member to tell us what changes he thinks should be made to improve the committee system. Before knowing if we can support their position and if we can denounce the government's attitude on this issue, I would like to know what alternative the Reform Party is proposing for these committees. What democratic system would it like to see put in place in order to be able to achieve its aims, because I suspect that under all this lies a feeling of frustration with regard to proposals that were not supported by the majority in committee? What mechanism would Reform members suggest be put in place to ensure that other members who do not belong to their party would get the respect they deserve in committees?

[*English*]

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question about the operation of committees. There has been some discussion about the British parliamentary system. There is a lot of tradition involved in the operation of this place. That is absolutely true.

• (1105)

However, all it takes is the political will to change these things which have been in place for a very long time. Most of these things were put in place to fit a time that has long gone, a time when the people were not well-educated and when communications were not very good.

When Edmund Burke said: ''You don't do your constituents any favour by representing their will'', that was 200 years ago. Today we live in the information age. Our constituents are exceptionally well-informed. They know what is going on in the world. They can find out the minutest detail about what is going on in this place.

I am sure all members have experienced from time to time constituents who know more about a particular bill and its possible problems or benefits than they do. There is a member over there from the islands who said that he never reads the bills. There are constituents out there who take a direct interest.

The suggestion from Reform is that we can run on a general mandate of what we stand for but within that we must have flexibility to suit the information age and the flexibility to adapt that agenda to comply with the will of the people, the people who, after all, are paying our salaries. This means that when a committee goes travelling across the country taking submissions, it should truly take democratic submissions so that it is not a predetermined outcome and that it truly wants to know what Canadians want and is prepared to have the political will to adjust its agenda and get away from partisanship.

It does not happen very often. If we look at the past three years in this place, I have had to vote three times contrary to my party mandate in order to represent my constituents' wishes on government bills. Therefore, it is not something that happens every day. It is on very carefully considered issues. I do not suffer any consequences from being able to do that.

It is a new democracy. All it takes is the political will. I would urge members to get behind these changes so that we can get real democracy in this place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I regret to have to say in this House that it seems to me that the Reform Party has chosen a topic for debate this morning that would have been more appropriate for a supply day.

The hon. member from the Reform Party did not reply to the last question I asked him. I threw the ball into his court by asking him, through you, if he could tell us how he would like us to operate in committees. He did not answer the question.

What is at the bottom of all this is the Reform Party's frustration at not occupying the position of official opposition in this Parliament, and at not being able to obtain the number of vice-chairs that it would like in committees. That is the real issue.

Under the guise of a free vote, the Reform Party would have us believe that it allows its members to vote as they wish, that they do not have to toe the party line. I would like to hear from them what happened to Jan Brown, what happened to her? I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I ought to have used the name of her riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I am sorry, but nobody can hear you right now because my microphone is on, not yours. Only one person may rise at a time. The member corrected himself, but I would like to remind the House that when speaking about our colleagues we must use the name of their riding or their department.

Mr. Laurin: As I could not be heard, I will correct myself now that my microphone is back on and say that I should have said the member for Calgary Southeast. I would like the members of the Reform Party to tell me what they did with the member for Calgary Southeast when she decided to vote freely, when she decided not to toe the party line, because she found it too radical, too extreme?

• (1110)

That MP was not allowed to remain in the party, she was expelled. Today, they are telling us, with a ''holier than thou'' air, that they advocate the free vote within their party. Granted, but on certain minor bills only. If, for instance, the Reform Party were to introduce a bill on the use of cow hair in mortar, I do think it could let its members vote freely on something like that, but on fundamental and vital questions which were part of a party's election platform, it is important for solidarity to be maintained, and that must extend to the committees as well.

I also have doubts about how sincere the Reform Party members are, because we have seen them in action in committee. In the three years since we were elected, every time committee chairmen and vice-chairmen are selected, the Reformers opposed having a Bloc Quebecois member as head of the public accounts committee, for example, or as vice-chair of other committees—because, traditionally, a member of the party in power heads committees except that the public accounts committee is chaired a member of the official opposition.

The Reform Party would have liked to be the official opposition, but unfortunately the voters decided to give them two seats less than the Bloc Quebecois. Terribly frustrated by this, the Reform Party decided to try to change the rules, to change tradition. True, this is not a Standing Order, but it has always been parliamentary tradition to have a member of the official opposition as the vice-chairman of a committee.

The Reform Party ought to have put more effort into its election campaign so that more of its candidates could have been elected. Then it would have been recognized as the official opposition and would have had that privilege. With all their talk of democracy and British tradition, Reformers ought to know that democracy and British tradition recognize that the majority rules.

As it happened, the Bloc Quebecois won more seats than they did, but they refuse to accept this, and that too is just another excuse, because the real reason they are making such a fuss about how vice-chairs, how Bloc representatives are chosen in committees, is not that Bloc members are involved but especially because Bloc members are sovereignists.

We are sovereignists because that is what our platform is about. We presented our platform to the people of Quebec, who democratically elected to send us to Ottawa with a majority to represent them. The people of Quebec chose so wisely that, as a result, we became the official opposition. Quebecers owe themselves a vote of thanks now because they are well represented.

Reform Party members would like to see this sovereignist position, this political option prevent us from having the democratic right to sit on committees. Because we are sovereignists, they would like to see Bloc members denied the right to be vice-chair of a committee.

If we did not have that right, why would we have the right to have a member on the committee? If we have no members on the committee, where does that leave our democratic rights? Is this not about the most elementary respect for democracy?

• (1115)

The most elementary respect for democracy means accepting the decision made by voters in a riding, in a province, to send representatives to the House of Commons. That is the most elementary respect for democracy. Denying someone a vice-chairmanship because it is not convenient this time around is not a good reason. A person holds opinions we do not share, and as a result, we deny him the right to be vice-chair of a committee. If it were like that, we would not get very far in a democracy.

We saw the attitude of the Reform Party in the committee that dealt with the Jacob case, for instance. Oddly enough, they showed a great deal of solidarity at the time. The Reform Party members on that committee did not seem to be allowed much latitude to express their views. They all had to think the same way, otherwise they were not allowed to sit on the committee. If one member did not work out, they would substitute another.

And today the Reform Party tells us, with a ''holier than thou'' air, that it wants more democracy in committees. I agree that we are sometimes pushed around by the party in power which has a majority in all committees. I agree that the party in power, which has a majority and decides to exercise its solidarity, can beat us every time.

Mr. Pettigrew: That is what the people want.

Mr. Laurin: That too was the result of a democratic decision. I wonder what the Reform Party would do if it were in office. I would be curious to see if its position would be: ''From now on, you are free to elect whomever you want to chair the committee, in spite of the fact that we have a majority''.

Angels act like that, not the Reform Party, in spite of its ''holier than thou'' air. If it came to power, the Reform Party would be the first to insist that rules of democracy that are to its advantage apply; it would want to use them and would fight anyone opposed to their use.

I am sorry but the real subject matter of the debate today is the Reform Party's frustration at not being the official opposition, and that is how their remarks must be taken.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a comment based on what I have heard here this morning on the rule of law. My colleague, the member for Fraser Valley East, was very specific about it. He said this Chamber operates under the concept that law is king. He said the Latin for that is lex Rex.

He went on to describe what committees do, that this is not the rule of law. He said instead, committees seem to operate under the rule of politics, that the political system is Rex, is king. He did not know the Latin for politics is king.

I have done a little research and I have this to offer to the House. I believe the Latin translation for that as it applies to the committee system is tyrannosaurus Rex, which comes from the dinosaur era.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I do not know if the hon. member for Joliette wishes to comment on his colleagues' remarks.

Mr. Laurin: I do, Mr. Speaker. Such remarks are surprising, coming from the hon. member who just spoke, after his recent comments last spring and during the summer.

The rule of law does not mean much to people like that. What matters is their owns views, extremist views. When the law gets in their way, they get around it. When the people in front of them do not share their views, they try to get rid of them. If their skin is not the right colour, out they go. If they do not have the right political ideology, the right views about where this country should be headed, out they go.

● (1120)

We have been here for three years and both the official opposition and the governing party have been saying all along that the Reform Party is a party of extremists whose attitude is reflected not only in official statements to the press and in the excessive behaviour displayed by individual members but also in each and every committee of this House. They would have people excluded on the basis of their political opinions. That is discriminatory. That is extremist. It is like racial prejudice, like being against religion.

Today, these people want to teach us a lesson in democracy. But they cannot even tell us how the committees should operate in order to be more responsive to public opinion.

I suggest that they think this over and I am confident that this is the last time they make such a request because not enough of them will get elected in the next election to be in a position to demand anything, whether in committee or in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The time allocation of five minutes for questions or comments is brief. I want to accommodate as many participants as I can. I simply ask for the co-operation of the member for Calgary Centre. If he could he either make his comment or pose his question within the one minute period then I could give the same amount of time to the member for Joliette to respond.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about tradition and what we suggested should be used in the standing committees.

He referred to tradition. I would like to refer to the rules, and the rules are clear. We wish the standing committees would operate according to Standing Order 106(2):

> Each standing or special committee shall elect a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, of whom two shall be Members of the government party and the third a Member in opposition to the government—

The wording does not preclude members of the third party in the House from filling these positions.

Since 1958 the chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has been a member of the opposition, following British parliamentary tradition. Even Beauchesne's parliamentary rules and forms citation 781 states it is customary for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to be chaired by a member sitting in opposition to the government. That does not preclude any opposition party. It does not refer to the official opposition, the tradition he refers to.

Procedurally no party member is precluded from assuming the position of the chair in any committee. A precedent was set during the third session of the 35th Parliament when members of the NDP, the third party—the third party in the House like us—served as vice-chairs to standing committees and subcommittees and chaired legislative committees.

This party is recommending a push for real openness and real free votes for chairs and vice-chairs, not the set up that the government perpetrates on each of the standing committees. That is what we are recommending. Allow the members to be masters of their own destinies and vote for their own chairs and vice-chairs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Laurin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary Centre is absolutely right. True, this is what the law says but it is also true that we are often guided by the traditions and practices in our parliamentary system.

But if we look only at the legislation, the Bloc Quebecois proposed candidates for the position of vice-chair in the various committees and managed to convince the government representative to vote for them. All this proves is that we had the same right as Reform members. We exercised this right and, since we are better than they are, we managed to convince the government to vote for our candidates. That is why some of our members are now committee vice-chairs, and this was done democratically.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the most extraordinary thing about parliamentary life is how one always has to expect the unexpected. Last night, when I went to bed, I certainly did not think that, this morning, I would be debating a report tabled by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In 1993, during the election campaign, four major parties were trying to win the support of Canadians. There was the Liberal Party, which claimed to be in the best position to manage the affairs of the country. There was the Conservative Party, which, of course, made the same claim. There was the Reform Party, which wanted to change Canada and knew how to do it. And then there was another group, made up of separatists, sovereignists, who said: ''We want to go to Ottawa to protect the interests of Quebecers''.

● (1125)

On October 25 of that year, the Liberal Party formed the new government, with a strong majority and, of course, the responsibility that goes with it. When you have a strong majority, you ultimately have the power to do what you want. This comes with a price though, and I think that, when the time comes, voters will make the government pay that price.

The Reform Party got 52 candidates elected, not bad for a new party. Unfortunately, the Bloc got 54 candidates elected in Quebec. In other words, we became the official opposition by a narrow margin. It was a narrow margin indeed—only two members—but we got it nonetheless.

The value of parliamentary government and the respect in which society holds it derive entirely from its rules and tradition. Accordingly, we became the official opposition. This did not thrill the members of the Reform Party, and I can understand that.

What I have more trouble understanding is that after three years, they have been unable to sort out common sense, logic and, finally, their responsibility as a party in this House to ensure that the House's time is used intelligently. They wanted to reform Canada. When their members are capable of taking up the time of this House for matters which are very interesting but somewhat dubious, we have to wonder what is going on.

What does the time of the House mean? It means 295 members who are here to defend their constituents' interests, it means staff who work with these members, it means the House's support staff. When the House's time is wasted, tens of thousands of dollars are being thrown out the window.

My colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, mentioned the Jacob affair. Everyone remembers the Jacob affair, I should think. In any future discussion of the 35th Parliament, it is one issue that will stand out. We listened to the Reform Party, we appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, much work was done and the final conclusion was that there was not really any basis for the charge.

As for what we are hearing this morning, and with any luck the debate will be over at 1.55 p.m., there is not really any basis for it. I can understand that it is frustrating for the Reform Party to see members of the official opposition holding the position of vice-chair on each of the committees for three years, but that is one of the responsibilities of the official opposition. The governing party has understood that, and finds it perfectly reasonable to vote for the candidates the Bloc Quebecois submits to committees.

There are certain actions that go along with the recognition of responsibility. I feel that the governing party can live with us as the opposition, and I am totally in agreement with that. I have no problem with that.

It is quite another thing, however, to say that it is easy to work in committee. It is not. Sometimes one has good ideas, is convinced they are excellent ideas and can make a valuable contribution to the government's bills, but sometimes, unfortunately, our valuable contributions end up in the waste basket. That is the government's choice and the choice of the majority in committee.

What we have to demonstrate is that our arguments, our contributions, are important and have real potential for improving the lives of our fellow citizens. When we work in committee and try to convince our counterparts on the government side that this or that amendment is important and should be passed by the committee, and subsequently by the House, we are doing our jobs.

We may regret that we are not always successful in doing so, but I do not think it is productive to take up three hours of debate to say that one is not in agreement with the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and that really, everything ought to be done according to a free vote.

When we ask ordinary people, the people who constantly switch channels on their tv and end up getting bits and pieces here and

there, who sit around discussing this and that, what they think about politicians, their answers are not always very reassuring.

● (1130)

It hurts to hear this, when we have the impression we work hard and are doing our best. However, if they are watching us today, and I imagine some of them are, they will inevitably start wondering and say: ''What on earth is going on? Let them go to work in committee, instead of wasting their time''. They may have a point there.

However, I wish the voters watching us this morning would remember one thing, and that is that the parliamentary system works according to certain rules, which means there is a price to pay when we have a majority government and there is also a price to pay when a party is the official opposition thanks to a single member.

I would therefore urge them to elect a sizable official opposition in the next election, which will probably be held within a year. I am convinced the official opposition will come from Quebec, because to me it is clear that as far as the rest of Canada is concerned, the Reform Party is not up to forming an official opposition with a sense of responsibility and capable of acting accordingly.

Amazing, Mr. Speaker. You are signalling that I have one minute left, so I will do you a favour: I would rather not take it. I am sure my Reform Party friends have plenty of questions to ask and perhaps members opposite as well, you never know, so thank you, and I will wait for their questions.

[*English*]

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the member for Laval Centre is the only one I know who has brought up the Jacob decision or transaction in the committee. She is the one who brought it forth, not the members of the Reform Party.

We were not questioning the decision of that committee here in this discussion. I find it absurd that members of the Bloc party can question our concern about committees. If members of the Bloc party really think that being the official opposition is the be all and end all, then maybe they should have the courage to put candidates in all of the ridings across this country and see whether they have the support of the Canadian people for the kind of issues and positions that they take. They know that they represent one province in this country. If anybody is extreme, it is the Bloc Quebecois members who are talking about leaving this country and breaking this country apart. If they do not call that extreme, I do not know what is.

I would like to ask the member if the Bloc Quebecois has the courage to put candidates in the other provinces other than Quebec in the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I was negligent in not raising the issue earlier when it occurred the first time. I believe in the affair we are referring to we are referring to one of our colleagues. I would simply ask the co-operation of the House in reference to that particular issue that we would refer to the member for Charlesbourg.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, your point is well taken.

I want to inform the hon. member that whether something is extreme depends how you look at it. Yes, I referred to the case of the hon. member for Charlesbourg. I made that reference to use an example everyone would be familiar with. You know, when you teach a class, the best example is one that is crystal clear. For everyone in Quebec and the rest of Canada, the case of the hon. member for Charlesbourg is an example that is self-explanatory, and a case that took quite some time. The hon. member may think it extreme of me to bring this matter up, but I do not think that just because this case was closed by the House, we were bound never to discuss it again.

Fielding candidates in all Canadian ridings is an interesting point, but the hon. member should remember that we are here to defend the interests of Quebecers and to stand up and say what is wrong with this system, because there is something wrong with it. I see the hon. member is smiling. I am sure this means he agrees with me. There is something wrong with the system, and we believe it is not only our right but our responsibility to say what is wrong on behalf of the rest of Canada, when we wear our official opposition uniform, which we do quite elegantly.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the dialogue. With regard to the investigation of the member for Charlesbourg, the member has basically stated that it was a waste of time. What she is saying in fact is that the House made a decision of its members to do something and that this entire House therefore was the cause of wasting its own time.

The member may want to reconsider whether or not the integrity of the House is being brought into question, because it was our decision and not a committee decision to undertake that investigation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, I will give one response to that comment: in its highly democratic spirit, of course, the House agreed to have a committee examine the case of the hon. member for Charlesbourg.

What I mean is, if the Reform Party had not introduced a motion, as far as I know, I do not think the House would have had to use such precious time to come to the conclusion, following the tabling of the procedure committee report and our minority report, that, ultimately, there was nothing to make a fuss about.

It must be recognized that we sometimes waste our time. It is not because a decision was made that, a posteriori, we cannot say that, in fact, there was nothing to fret about. So, our time was wasted somewhere.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate this morning. I have also been, with some interest, involved in the matter that led up to this debate coming before us today.

As a new member of this House, I too have found it to be a learning curve challenge to deal with some of the issues of the standing orders, the rules, the decorum and the general principles of governing ourselves as members of this House and as members of the other house.

Frankly, I think that on balance, one of my frustrations when I listen to some of my colleagues from the Reform Party is based on the fact that they—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I hesitate to interrupt the proceedings and particularly the parliamentary secretary, but I have been apprised by our table officers that there is a technicality here that I think we should clear up.

The parliamentary secretary in tabling the motion earlier is deemed to have spoken. Therefore, just to assure myself that we are following the correct parliamentary procedures here, I will have to ask the House for consent to permit the parliamentary secretary to continue his intervention. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, there is a good example where a rule has come up and we learn by our inexperience.

The point is that we need to look at what the government said when it was the Liberal Party of Canada in the 1993 federal campaign.

In that campaign there were a number of commitments which dealt with parliamentary reform. They included the commitment that would give members of Parliament a greater role in drafting legislation through House of Commons committees. That was a commitment we made. We made a commitment that would permit a parliamentary review of order in council appointments.

• (1140)

It was a commitment we made as a Liberal Party. We stood before the people of Canada and said that was a principle. We all felt in the run up to the 1993 election that the respect the people of Canada had for members of Parliament was low. Now that we are at our places in the House we all have a responsibility to try to enhance and improve the respect and the integrity of the system.

We also talked about more free votes in the House of Commons in the lead up to the campaign. We talked about the fact that members of Parliament should be involved in the prebudget consultation process.

Frankly, whether or not the Reform Party members have accepted this, we won the election. Therefore, our platform is the one which will be adopted and imposed. Despite their opposition, I am somewhat sympathetic to certain remarks that were made by the whip for the Bloc Quebecois this morning. All parties have to work together at committees to produce and enhance the work of the government as it is presented.

As I was thinking about what I wanted to say this morning, I was really struck by the very first line in Beauchesne. It states:

> The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are: to protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every Member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum—

We must have certain limits and certain rules. Just because the Reform Party members do not like the rules, they want to change the rules.

The rules have become part of the Canadian tradition which adopts the principles of the British House of Commons, the principles that all members have respected. Notwithstanding those principles or precedents, the Liberal Party of Canada came forward with a series of changes and said that there were certain flexibilities it would like to build into a new approach to Parliament. We ran on them and we got elected on those and we implemented them.

On February 7, 1994 our government House leader brought forward a substantial motion that detailed changes to basic House rules. He stood in his place and said that there should be a motion to change the rules. He talked about the fact that he wanted to implement a number of commitments that our party made in the election campaign and in the speech from the throne. That is how it works. He talked about a revitalization of Parliament.

Not everything the Reform Party has said is wrong. Not everything the Liberal Party, the Bloc or other Canadians have said is wrong, but we have a set of principles of British parliamentary tradition that we have had for hundreds of years. When we look at how Canadians have reflected on this Parliament and the previous Parliament during the mandate of this government since 1993, it speaks volumes about how Canadians have reflected on us as members of Parliament. I do not say that in a partisan way. I talk

about it as the hard, good work that has occurred on committees such as the industry committee, government operations committee and the lobbyist committee.

• (1145)

As a new member of Parliament I have been given the opportunity and the honour to have served shoulder to shoulder with members from the Reform Party and the Bloc where we work together in procedure and House affairs to resolve difficult and complex issues when legislation comes after first reading to our committee as it did with the lobbyist bill.

We were given a rare new Canadian opportunity, an opportunity that lived up to the commitment that we made as a government and as a party. We said that members of Parliament should be given more flexibility and so we effectively drafted new legislation.

We had a minister come before our committee who said: ''Here is my bill, my opportunity to present my best chance to give you how I believe a policy should be implemented on lobbying''. The committee took this very seriously and worked very hard with members of the Reform Party, the Bloc and with our own members. We had members of the Liberal Party agreeing with the Bloc. We had members of the Liberal Party agreeing the Reform. At the end of the day we had a very good quality result. The result was a better piece of legislation.

We brought the minister back and he said: ''I think you have gone a little further than I might have gone but if that was the consensus I am prepared to accept it''. I use that as an example of the credibility of members of Parliament. Frankly, our credibility is at stake every day because all members of Parliament at the end of the day have to work together. They do not have to agree on everything from hair style, suits or opinions but we respect each other's opinions.

One of the frustrations that I find with what Reform members have suggested in certain comments today is how committees have manipulated democracy. Frankly, what I worry about is in whose view of democracy have they manipulated? Is it their view? Is it the people's view? Which people of Canada's democracy have we talked about?

The issue is not that the government has failed to live up to its commitments. The real issue is the Reform Party has failed to understand that it did not win the last election. Many of my colleagues know I have tried throughout my career in Parliament to be a non-partisan chairman at industry, at government operations, at lobbyists and procedure and House affairs. At the peril of my own party I have tried to be a non-partisan chair of a committee.

I find it most irritating when I see members opposite, particularly in the Reform Party, trying to portray the government as manipulating democracy because their characterization of that is a perversion of democracy. Their characterization is manipulating the true realities of how this place works. Many Canadians do not get an opportunity to get the flavour of what goes on in this place.

Frankly, perhaps rather than televising this place we could have more television at our committee rooms when a lot of the real work of what goes on at committees is what is going at this place for the work of the men and women who work shoulder to shoulder regardless of political persuasion.

Because there is a particular agenda in one particular party which represents only a very small part of that overall agenda, I find it irritating disruptive—

An hon. member: Rubbish.

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member calls it rubbish. It is important to look at what our party has done, at what we have accomplished, at what we have done and what we said we were going to do and at what Canadians feel about members of Parliament today.

• (1150)

I feel better about being able to say to people when I get into a taxi, when I am in a restaurant or when I am on the street in a market that I am a member of Parliament than I might have characterized being a member of Parliament 10 years ago.

Elections are something that we have for 45 days every four or five years. I would urge those members of the Reform Party who have not bothered to read the newspaper to realize that they lost the last election to look at some of the polls about how Canadians feel about Parliament, that we are doing a better job. It is not as Liberals, although the Liberal Party is doing quite well. I am very proud of that record but those members should reflect on how Canadians view Parliament, how Canadians have viewed the committees that are working, the role of the member of Parliament.

I am very proud of the committees that I have worked on. I am proud of the work of the members of the Reform Party and the members of the Bloc Quebecois. They have contributed. We have become friends, colleagues and compatriots. We have become part of a process of changing this place and making it better. We have become part of making the British parliamentary tradition that we have so carefully preserved at this place more flexible, more current.

As the member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley said, it needs to be something not spoken by Sir Edmund Burke 200 years ago. It has to be more modern. We have a more modern democracy and a more modern federation.

While I disagree with certain views of the Reform Party or certain views of the Bloc, we have become a better federation. I do not think it is fair to characterize the new government initiatives that were brought about as commitments in the red book to give members of Parliament more flexibility, more involvement with drafting legislation, and have them whitewashed as a manipulation of democracy. That is wrong. It is disruptive. That is intellectually dishonest.

An hon. member: That is rubbish.

Mr. Zed: There is a good example where a member walks into the Chamber, barks out ''rubbish'' and then wants to participate in the debate.

If Canadians want to look at what is really going on, perhaps they want to re-examine what is going on with certain members of the Reform Party. Frankly, it makes me very worried about democracy when I look at some of the extremist views that come out of certain elements in the Reform Party.

I respect the member's right. I would ask you respect our right to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I have been here since the beginning of the debate. There are strongly held views about this issue. Please allow the Chamber to do its work in the usual parliamentary fashion. We will get through this debate and all the others.

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, I will conclude with what Reform Party members said when our government leader spoke about the reforms and brought forward the reforms, the enlightened changes in my view, to the House.

The House leader for the Reform Party, whom I would consider a colleague and a friend, said the following. I respect what he says. The members of the Reform Party should listen carefully to these words and take heed of them: ''Mr. Speaker, today is a very great day and one we should mark high on the marquee as being very important for the House, for Parliament and for the people of Canada. First I want to thank the government''. He spoke those words in reply to the government House leader. He spoke those words in response to the changes, the initiatives we brought forward, to the initiatives we campaigned on, to the initiatives we have implemented.

• (1155)

An hon. member: Be specific.

Mr. Zed: If you had been listening to the debate you would know what the specifics were.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I know that shortly we will get to questions and comments. I urge you to please make your interventions through the chair.

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, I believe MPs have been given a greater role. I believe MPs have been permitted to have Parliament review legislation. I believe we have been given more free votes. I believe we have been more effective in becoming involved in the consultation process.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I sort of enjoyed that presentation. It was a lot of good political rhetoric, not as good as the government whip who I still think trumps this particular member because he gets the political rhetoric up to a different level. I did not believe most of it, but still it was relatively good rhetoric.

The question I have is two-fold. This was asked of the government whip, and I will ask the deputy House leader. The committees are supposed to be independent and above board, masters of their own destiny. I asked the government whip if he instructs the members of the committee as to who should be the chairman and vice-chairman. The government whip would not answer. So I ask him the same. Who in the hierarchy in the Liberal party instructs who should be chairs of these committees?

Second, on the greater issue of fulfilling red book promises, one of the promises for parliamentary reform is that the position of deputy chair should go to one of the opposition parties. That was the position in the red book, written by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. That has not come to pass, even by the furthest stretch of the Liberal imagination. I wonder why that did not happen if it was a red book promise? What about these committees? Who chooses the chairman?

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, this is certainly not a new complaint coming from the whip of the Reform party or from the previous whip of the Reform party, or the previous whip of the Reform party, or the previous acting whip of the Reform party. I get a little amused—the old expression that people in glass houses should not throw stones.

What I find curious is why members of the Reform party would want to have information about how the Liberal caucus operates? The committee operation is open. The Liberal party continues to be the most open party on Parliament Hill. We have democratic elections. We have democratic open contests. There is no fettering of that. There is no interference with that. We have a caucus system.

I make no illusions about the fact that I got elected as a member of a political party. We campaigned on it. We produced our information in black and white and we were elected on it. What I find a little curious is that we made commitments, got elected and delivered on those commitments. What part would the hon. member say we did not deliver on? Have we given a greater role to drafting legislation? How many pieces of legislation have gone to committee after first reading? How many parliamentary reviews have there been of order in council appointments by this Parliament? How many more free votes have there been in this Parliament than the previous Parliament?

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Before I recognize the hon. member for Chambly I should explain to the House that when we began the debate on the motion, the first time around each of the parties, the government, the Reform and the Bloc spoke. We are now reverting to the customary order for speakers and I will now go to the official opposition to see if someone wants to speak and then I will revert back to the government to see if there is a spokesperson and of course subsequently to the Reform Party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand up before you in this House to make a few comments on the attitude of the Reform Party today.

I am a member of this Parliament. With a senator I co-chair the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations. As the hon. member who just spoke pointed out, it is in the committees that the real political work gets done. It is there that members can have an impact on the legislative process, often without regard to how parties are represented on the committee.

This morning, for example, I attended a meeting of the industry committee at which another member like myself asked pertinent questions and tried to influence the position of the Liberal majority on the committee. Judging from the reaction of the other members and of the Liberal majority, I now believe that his proposals may be approved. That is the ultimate reason why members sit on any committee.

It is the same for the regulations committee, where a Reform member often asks relevant questions and contributes ideas the committee needs, because they often—not always, but often—reflect common sense and a real search for solutions.

For example, I must point out to the Reform Party, the third party, that since the real political work is done in committee, it is normal for those who appoint the committee executive to choose people who tend to share their views.

That is probably why, in many respects, the Liberal Party is in perfect harmony with Bloc members, and that is probably why Liberal members on a committee will often vote for a Bloc member as vice-chair. In fact, other than on sovereignty issue, if you look at the record of the debates and votes held in this place, you can see that the Bloc Quebecois has often adopted or already shared the Liberal position. That is politics.

By contrast, and I must remind Reform members of this. They often come here to defend the oppressor rather than the oppressed, and I can elaborate on this.

• (1205)

They often remind me of this joke a member told me a while ago. Two young men are trying to steal a purse from an old lady on the street, but she puts up quite a fight. He said—that is how the joke goes: ''I stepped in and the three of us had no problem snatching the purse from her.'' What the Reform Party is doing in this place is similar.

Take for example the banking legislation, the Interest Act introduced in this place. That year, banks had made between $3.2 and $3.4 billion in net profit after taking advantage of every allowance for bad debts permitted under the law. The Reform Party—I had not travelled as extensively in Canada at the time as I have since—objected to telling the banks that their profits were excessive and that they should loosen their stranglehold on consumers.

The Reform Party voted unanimously against it. I figured that everyone in western Canada were either bankers or very wealthy, with close ties to banks. They could not be consumers or debtors; they had to be creditors.

I have travelled through there a few times since. Along the road, I have seen houses no more sumptuous or larger that those in rural Quebec. I noticed big equipment, probably mortgaged or financed, in some people's back yards. They could have used the kind of assistance provided for in this famous piece of legislation.

No Reform member rose on party lines to say that the banks were doing a little too well. Reform members all voted against the bill presented by the hon. member for Portneuf calling for the employees working in a company just before it went bankrupt to be given priority when assets were distributed, even ahead of the banks. Unanimously, Reform members voted against. They are not right of centre, but extreme right wing, which is unfortunate.

They would like the majority to submit, to shut up, and to let them have the whole playing field. They think they could go ahead with hare-brained ideas like reinstating the death penalty. Apparently, they even sent someone to the eastern bloc countries to learn how to give a good beating, how to flog people. They are pretty good at whipping themselves. They discovered something good, something equitable and fair: how to whip others.

Will we put up with such attitudes in committee? When the message does not suit Reform members, they go after the messenger. They kill the messenger. It is simpler to eliminate him, and thus silence any opposition.

I heard Reform members, puritans no doubt, saying that God did not make all men equal. He created the rich and the poor. It is not up to a man, a legislator, or society to restore a just balance. God created such a world, and we must respect His will. The poor have no choice but to die, or to starve. This is Reform's basic philosophy. The rich can become richer. God wanted them rich. This is the other side of Reform's basic philosophy.

Fortunately, in committee, and I acknowledge it, their views are somewhat less rigid. They know they are in a minority position and cannot impose such a philosophy, and this is what frustrates them.

Now, put yourself on the side of the majority. Will the majority let reformers run the show in committees and try to sell all sorts of preposterous ideas, all this is in the context of a political agenda so convoluted that is hard to follow?

In this particular case, I can understand that Liberal members would vote in favour of Bloc Quebecois members who, since the beginning, and in spite of having had just about every possible insult hurled at them, have been able to stay on course and follow their ideal and their philosophy, which is to show compassion for the poor and to have an understanding of the political situation in Canada, and in Quebec in particular.

• (1210)

All these factors come into play and influence the outcome of an election to a committee.

I want to reassure reformers right now by telling them that the redistribution of the electoral map for the next election will greatly favour them. There will be several new seats in western Canada, including British Columbia and from Ontario on. This will be a golden opportunity for them to become the official opposition, as they so strongly wish. Are we to interpret their attitude this morning as a sign that they have come to the conclusion, as the party whip said, that they might be wiped off Canada's political map in the next election? They may have come to this conclusion but, of course, they will not all tell us.

All this to say that we cannot, in the committees, grant executive representation to a minority party. It cannot be done.

Since I only have a minute left, I will to reply to the member for Vancouver, who quoted a latin maxim of his own. Let me tell him one which I hope he will understand. It is not from me. It says: Vox populi, vox Dei. When the majority speaks it is the very basis of democracy and we must respect that. We must not start interpreting democracy. When democracy has spoken, we must respect it.

In response to what the member proposes, I will simply say that the nicest bird song is not always and necessarily the longest one. I say no to what he is proposing this morning.

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been sitting here right from the beginning of this debate, and I have to admit I have not been able to understand what Reform members are driving at. What do they want?

None of them has been able to describe the kind of democracy they would like to see here.

But I did understand one thing. Reform members are unable to adjust to the system. Whether we work here, in the Canadian Parliament, in a workers' union, in a school, or a hospital, there is always a system that cannot be ignored. It is needed if we are to avoid constant strife and futile discussions, to avoid having to do without an established order. Under such conditions, it is extremely difficult to reach a consensus.

It is a well known fact that Reform members have a hard time agreeing among themselves. Just imagine the problem they have living within the system as it now stands.

To make things change, one must work from within the system. That is the way to improve it.

• (1215)

I have to admit that I sometimes have a hard time accepting what goes on in committee. I sat on the public accounts committee, which is chaired by the official opposition. The chairman did an outstanding job, I have to say. He did not try to give preference to the official opposition during the proceedings. Instead, he tried to stick to existing criteria.

Since the chairman of the public accounts committee was a member of our party, I would obviously have liked to have preferential treatment and to get a little more time during the proceedings. But we followed the rules on allocation of time in committee.

There is room for improvement in the committees, and some procedures could also be improved. However, did Reform members make any constructive suggestions in that regard? In any case, in the committees I sit on, and especially in the government operations committee, I never saw nor heard any Reform member try to improve our operations. This is not to say that everything is perfect, far from it, but within the committee everyone is allowed to express one's view.

Problems can arise when the time comes to table in the House a report on a committee; there too there might be room for greater information and above all improvement.

All committee members should be able to talk to each other, to have certain discussions, instead of constantly complaining that nothing works. This is how to improve things.

As we know, the Reform Party wanted to change Canada. Let us look at what it has been doing for the last three years. In my opinion, it has not succeeded in changing much, except, as I heard the hon. member for Vancouver North say this morning, for turning the House into a spectacle, into a farce.

I do not have to go back very far. Since the House resumed its work this week, what has happened here? We got to hear the same old stories, stories that took up a lot of the time of the House, that

kept members away from dealing with the real problems Canadians have. They used anything and everything to make a spectacle of this House.

We avoided true debate on job creation. We avoided talking about family trusts. Those are the issues people want to hear about. I find this morning's debate pointless. Why is this issue being raised again? Why challenge the Bloc Québécois' legitimacy as the official opposition and refuse to go by the rules of the Canadian parliamentary system? The voice of democracy has been heard.

● (1220)

It is as a result of a democratic process, namely the last election, that the Bloc Quebecois, which has been mandated to protect the interests of all Quebecers in this House and has, until now, fulfilled its mandate in an honourable and dignified manner, became the official opposition. Why is its legitimacy always put in question by the same people, the same political party?

I can understand that there is some frustration, but at one point they have to get over that kind of frustration. They have to roll up their sleeves and get to work. I think that is still beyond the Reform Party. Why lose time on a pointless debate on procedure, that means nothing to Canadians, that will not change the way things are done and that will bring no improvements whatsoever, when we have so much to do?

Of course, they will blame it all on the separatists. But that is not the case. In committee, we have constantly made suggestions to the government, ever since it was elected in 1993, and we will continue to do so. We want to represent with dignity the people who elected us, my constituents and each and every Quebecer. That is how things should be done. If something needs to be corrected, we should go through the existing channels, make suggestions, hold discussions and things will improve.

Let me conclude by asking the following question: What have the members of the Reform Party done to improve the system? In my view, not a thing. I agree with my party's whip. So, ''until the next time''.

[*English*]

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment and also ask a question of the hon. member.

The hon. member talks about democracy, structures, a waste of time and these kinds of things. In debate previous to this, reference was made to the same thing. I suggest to the member that Parliament has roles. I agree that we are elected and we come. The bulk of the members form the government and subsequently down the opposition.

I suggest very strongly that the role of the opposition is to critique. The third party is doing that. We do not see that coming from the official opposition. Someone has to do that regardless of what his or her mandate is. We also have to address the mandate of the House. That is in the traditional structure of this place.

He also mentioned that we have structures by which we function. I suggest that structures are human made and they can be changed. It is not necessary to continue to use something forevermore amen because it happens to be a structure that is in place. It is the role of the opposition to critique that structure and make it function as well as possible in today's environment.

I ask the hon. member if he feels that it is not a democratic principle to critique these things and bring to them a modern day concept of what is happening. The rest of Canada's citizens are asking us to do that and not just say it is a waste of time.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fillion: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. I will answer this: When we want to change things, when we want to improve things, we have to work within the system, to discuss, to negotiate.

During this Parliament, committees operate in a way they never did before. So there is room for improvement and there is still time to act.

Now, as far as the Bloc Quebecois' role as official opposition is concerned, I must say that it plays that role fully, on top of its mandate, which is to defend the interests of Quebecers. Whenever the interests of Quebecers are at stake, we have solutions to suggest, we question the government, whatever the subject, whether it concerns what happened in Somalia, what is happening on the job creation front, what is going on with respect to family trusts or what is going on in the different committees.

In the committees, there are certain stands with which the Bloc Quebecois disagrees. On such occasions, we criticize and play our role as official opposition fully.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. Some members who have arrived recently may be wondering exactly what is going on in the House.

We are debating a motion which has to do with a report tabled by one of the House committees. Pursuant to the rules of this place, after the adjournment for the summer all committees have to be reconstituted. We need to have chairs, vice-chairs and the membership of all committees reassessed and reaffirmed by each of the parties. That report has come before this place for adoption.

Normally what would happen is that the report would be tabled during Routine Proceedings and a motion to accept that report

would be put. Then, by unanimous consent of the House, the report would be adopted and committees could proceed with their work.

That is not what is happening now. The motion to concur in the report of this committee and to accept the structure of the membership of the various committees of the House of Commons is being debated. It is being debated not because the government wanted to debate the work of that committee but because the Reform Party decided it wanted to take up some time of this place to talk about its wish list and to do a little whining.

Reformers want to talk about how awful it is that they did not form a government after the last election. They want to talk about how awful it is that they are not in charge of this place. One of the previous speakers made the point that they just do not understand democracy. So we are here and will be having this debate for four hours.

The point of the Reform motion is that there is a lot of wasted time here. Right now 295 members of Parliament are hung up, unable to do any work whatsoever in this place for four hours. Committees cannot even hold meetings because they are not officially constituted. They are waiting for this motion to be passed.

The hypocritical arguments of the Reform Party to this point are blatantly evident. The Reform Party does not even think it is important enough to participate in debate or to follow the debate.

Although this is a waste of time we have to go through it. Yet the issue here should not be a partisan debate on whether the Reform Party's views or the government's views or the views of any other party in this place are okay.

Madam Speaker, if you had been here last night you would have heard the very interesting speech of the member for Gander—Grand Falls which reflected what should be happening in this place.

● (1230)

We were here until after 11 p.m. last night dealing with House business. A number of members were doing other work, making calls and getting ready for a vote that was to be taken, but when the member for Gander—Grand Falls rose in his place to give a brief intervention, people stopped and listened. Not only did they stop and listen out in the lobbies, they came into the Chamber and they took their places because they wanted to hear what was being said and they wanted to participate in the event.

The event was a barn burner of a speech. People were listening. People watching television I know were listening because here was a long time member of Parliament who is not a member of the cabinet, who is not a parliamentary secretary, who is not I do believe a chairman of any committee, but he is one of the most eloquent debaters in this entire House. People listen to what he has to say.

The point is, he is a member who is a model for all members. He is a member who is working as hard as he can to do one thing: to improve the image of people in political life, to improve the image of members of Parliament not only in this place but at home in their communities and as they travel across this country. Probably the most important work of any member of Parliament is to make their contribution in whatever way they are capable of, to improve the productivity, the image and credibility of this place like the member for Gander—Grand Falls does.

One of the important issues that has to be accepted in this place is that a majority government was elected in the last election. In some respects that is a curse to a government. A government that has a majority has complete control of the House. Democracy makes it so with the majority of the members in the House, provided they maintain solidarity among that team. They all ran for a party, they all ran for a platform and they are here to deliver on their promises. As long as that government is true to itself and true to its platform to the best of its ability and within its control, then it has the control of this place. It has the control to the extent that when issues come up and votes are taken, the government with a majority will win the vote. It is a quirk of democracy in that a majority government is fully in control of the aspects of this House.

That is a very frustrating position to be in, not only from the opposition party standpoint, but also for backbench members of Parliament who are one of a very large number of members of a caucus. It is very difficult for all members in this place to fully participate to the extent that opposition members do.

If you look at the news on any one night, the clips of the action in this House that were taken for the news will be of opposition members. An opposition member will get up and say: ''The minister over there was just protecting his own sorry butt'' and that gets on television. Another member will point their finger and make some rhetorical comment and that is on the news.

All members of Parliament regardless of whether they are on the government side or the opposition side, if they are doing their job effectively, if they are taking advantage of the opportunities available to them, have ample opportunity to demonstrate to Canadians what their salt is in this place, what their value is and whether or not they respect this place. This place must be respected.

I want to point out that we have four hours to debate a motion which is just going to review old arguments. This debate could not have taken place without the unanimous consent of the House. The Reform Party, the Bloc and members on this side of the House gave

unanimous consent. If Reform Party members were really so agitated about what was going on, they would look at all of the aspects of the operations of this House in which unanimous consent is asked for and required.

● (1235)

There was one this morning when the parliamentary secretary rose to give a speech. Somebody realized that he was the mover of the motion and in fact was deemed to have spoken and technically should not have been speaking. The House was asked for unanimous consent to waive the rule and allow him to speak. The Reform Party accepted. It could have said no and he would have had to sit down and we would have moved on to the next speaker.

If members of Parliament who have a problem with the process would look very carefully, they would find that there are ample opportunities for them to direct the activities within this House, if they would only exercise them. However they do not.

I will tell the House why members of Parliament do not take advantage of the opportunities they have to direct the activities within this House. It is because it is clear to all members of Parliament here that regardless of political stripe and regardless of views on the issues, it is in our best interests, in the best interests of our constituents and in the best interests of all Canadians that we co-operate and make sure that this place is operating efficiently and that we are dealing with issues which are important to Canadians.

It means from to time to time members from all sides of the House have to co-operate. Therefore, we make deals. We co-operate with each other. We say: ''We will allow you to have this debate this morning but listen, we have to get our committees working. Therefore, why do we not agree to let this debate go forward and instead of for the full day let us cut off the debate?'' The Reform agreed, the Bloc agreed and the House agreed. We are going to at least limit this so that the vote on the motion can be taken before the House and the committees can go back to work this afternoon. That is co-operation and work.

Committees are an interesting beast. Someone said earlier that committees are where the real work takes place. That is absolutely true. As a backbench member of Parliament, I want to personally attest to the fact that it is in committees where the real work, the strong work, the intelligent work, the work which applies the experience and expertise of members of Parliament really comes into play.

When I have an opportunity to address the House, it is a very honourable and awe inspiring occasion. It is always a great honour to be able to speak in this Chamber. However, whenever I speak in this Chamber, the Chamber is generally empty. There are usually about 10 people in the House. I look up in the galleries and try to sense what the people are thinking: ''Gee, there are not too many people down there. Where is everybody? We pay for 295 members of Parliament. Where are they?''

We all know that right now many members of Parliament are making calls to constituents, writing letters, meeting people in their offices or at committee meetings. Things are going on on Parliament Hill all the time. We do not all have to be here. As a matter of fact we do not all have to participate in the debate on every issue. That would be tremendously unproductive for the House of Commons.

Therefore, we have a committee system. We have a committee system where hopefully each of the parties has assigned to their committees representatives from their parties who they feel have appropriate experience, expertise or certain things to contribute to the activity of that committee. It is in their best interests that the views of their party and the views of their constituents who are represented by those members are brought to bear at committee which is where it really happens.

I had the honour to chair a parliamentary committee on a drug bill. It went on for a year. I enjoyed the opportunity to lead a group of my colleagues through a very complex bill, as it ultimately turned out to be. I think we came back with some 70 amendments to a drug bill which dealt with all kinds of very interesting problems.

Being a member of the health committee, having served as an associate on the finance committee, having participated to some extent on the industry committee, I have had an opportunity to move around through various committees. I had an opportunity to make a contribution and to participate in the debate, to participate in the questioning of witnesses and to help focus on the relevant issues to the matter before that committee.

● (1240)

It is easy to say that committees are free to do what they want to do. Technically, that is true. The parliamentary secretary quoted earlier from the first line of Beauchesne's which basically says that the rules, the limits and the principles articulated in the rules of this place are there to protect the rights of minorities. It means that things like unanimous consent are required. Even if there is a majority government, if we co-operate, that means we can be productive.

One of the most important changes that has happened in this House to make it a productive place was the change which was made and introduced by the government House leader with regard to voting procedures. We have had literally hundreds of votes in this place. In a vote it takes about 10 minutes to call the roll of the members. If we wanted to grind this place to a halt, consent should not be given to have any votes in this place without calling the roll each and every time.

Whoever says no to unanimous consent will do so at their peril because Canadians will quickly understand that the House is going

through a process that is not productive. We agree on a number of things and that means we can apply votes. It means that we can express the will of our constituents, of our parties or of our individual views.

We have had cases where ordinary members have voted in a way contrary to their own party. They voted their own views. We have had free votes. I am very grateful that the government has extended free votes on certain issues to its caucus. The other parties have done the same or similar things. They respect the values, the interests and opinions of their own members because there are certain issues that are not partisan issues. They are personal issues. They reflect social and personal values that someone holds very dear.

We will not force people to simply be lemmings that run and jump off the cliff if somebody says to jump off the cliff. Members have more integrity. We are here trying to improve the optics of the House of Commons, the integrity and the view of the integrity and image of people in political life.

This is a very honourable profession. It is a great honour to be here serving people. We all know that we give up a great deal to be here because we feel we have something to contribute. Most if not all members are giving up valuable family time to be here. Many members who live far away from Ottawa and who travel extensively to get home give up a lot of their own personal time to be here representing people because they feel strongly about it.

We know that nobody takes this job to get rich. Members do not get rich. Most members I know made a better living in terms of income in their former lives. I know many of the members. Look at their history. Look at what they have done in their communities. They have been involved at the grassroots level, at the local level of politics, at the provincial level and territorial level. They have been involved in raising money for causes they feel strongly about. They have track records and they are here because of those track records. They are here because they have experience and expertise that their constituents felt was important to bring to this place.

People have made that contribution as members of Parliament and we respect that. I hope each an every one of us is making progress, ensuring that our constituents and Canadians we encounter know we are doing the best that we can to improve the image of people in political life.

Having said that, is it good? We have seen the polls on what it is to be a member of Parliament and where we rank. It is very low. There is very little respect for people who are in political life. It is unfortunate. It has taken about 25 years to get there and it will probably take as long, if not longer, to earn back a measure of the respect we need in this place.

To get back to the issue of committees, some have suggested that we really should have certain parties as vice-chairs or whatever. I can tell of my experience in committees. I would not want to be a vice-chair. If a person cannot be the chair and at least have some control over the timing of the meeting and have an opportunity to apply one's wisdom, then I would rather be an ordinary member of the committee and be able to participate. f I had a choice and could pick what would be the best position for me I would rather be a member of the official opposition on a committee. The normal procedures and the rules of the House are that members of the official opposition get to ask the first questions of witnesses and make the first interventions. They get to ask all the good questions. They get to set the tempo and some of the focus of the committee meeting. Then it goes to the third party. By the time it gets around to government members in committee, there are few substantive matters to be dealt with. Very often, as we all know, time runs short because we only have a half an hour for a witness. Time runs out and government members do not even get a chance to participate. There are some awkward things.

• (1245)

However, we have made progress in making this a more open place. As long as the opposition parties are going to be given unanimous consent, I will be comforted to see that unanimous consent coming forward. It continues to remind me that we all have to co-operate in this place. We do from time to time get into situations like this because we have to keep our feet on the ground and say: ''Let us get a little bit of that partisan stuff in there''.

I have tried not to make this a partisan speech. I respect my colleagues in this House. I do not agree with them on many issues but I respect their right to have a different opinion and I respect the opportunity to be able to continue to express my opinion in this place.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Mississauga South a question. He spoke about respect for parliamentarians and that the public needs to re-establish respect for the people who have chosen to serve their country in this manner.

I would like to ask the member how the public can respect members of Parliament and members of committee when often times we see that the chairpersons or other members of the committee do not respect the member of Parliament's right to represent his or her own opinion rather than that of the party in committee? Is that not something we should be dealing with? That person is there representing Parliament, not necessarily a political party, and he or she should be given the freedom to say what he or she thinks openly, rather than being controlled by the party whip. Is that not required as respect for that member in committee?

Mr. Szabo: Madam Speaker, the member raises a very good question. However, the member would agree that it does not get back to the issue of what are the implications to the House of Commons and to Parliament if a majority government is elected.

If I were in the Reform's position, I probably would share their frustration to some extent in certain aspects, for instance committees. If there is legislation or issues that the committee has decided to deal with and the government policy or platform is articulated and specific, the government members of the committee will support the platform on which they ran. They will support the legislation they are dealing with or they will support the opinion articulated by the party for which they ran.

Notwithstanding what the Reform or the Bloc or even other Liberal members have to say in committee, with a majority government situation there is no question that by and large the decisions made by that committee reflect the government position.

There are cases where very important changes have been made and very important points have been raised in committee. Committee is where the work happens. I know that the member has been very active in the justice committee. I know that this member and many other members working in committee do make very positive contributions and consultations in committee.

● (1250)

As was suggested earlier, I wish that more committees could have their proceedings televised so that Canadians could see all members at work. What happens in this place happens in about 45 minutes during question period. That is where the theatre is. Canadians think that what they see during question period is what happens all day long in this place. It is not.

In fact this place is a forum for the opposition parties. I recall when a colleague from a long time ago asked the rhetorical question: ''What is the role of the opposition?'' Somebody blurted out: ''The role of the opposition is to deliver blows that would tenderize a turtle''.

It was a rhetorical question and a flip answer. But in this place when there is a majority government, that majority government is in a position to either deal with matters straight up or to have a little fun with them. Government members will be held accountable when they go back to the electorate. A majority government which is in control day after day is fully responsible for its decisions and for the results of those decisions. It means that even at committee the government still must call the shots. It is the one that is responsible, not the opposition parties.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on what the hon. member said and perhaps question him at the same time.

He speaks of progress in the committees. This is my first Parliament, so I would not be aware exactly what progress he is talking about. I am concerned that when the election of vice-chairs for instance is not an open and democratic process, where is the progress in that? We have ample proof that it is not. I am not going to waste the time of the members giving them examples for which I have facts. I would like the hon. member's comment on that.

I would also like his comment on this. I know that in the last Parliament that third parties had vice-chairs. Why is that not the case now? I know who it was too and that party only had 44 members in the House. Why could the third party in the House not have vice-chairs on the committees? That would be fair and progressive. If we are talking about progress that would certainly be progressive.

I am also concerned about the democratic process when a bill has been voted unanimously in the House of Commons and it is non-partisan. I hear this member talking considerably about partisanship. This particular bill was non-partisan. It was presented that way. When it went to committee it was voted down completely and buried. It was voted down in such a way that it could not come back to the House. The committee would not return it to the House. Yet technically and procedurally that bill was considered alive. It stymied anything that the member, who is working hard for non-partisan interests, could do.

When the bill came back to the House because of the prorogation last February the same thing happened. It went to committee and it was voted down, and would not be returned to the House. That is not a democratic process. We must do something to change it. I would like this member to give me his comments on this. How can we change it?

I happen to have a motion in. I put it in last June so it is far ahead of what we have been doing this last two weeks. We must address these concerns.

Third, I have suggested to those who are in charge of committees that when any information comes in from witnesses it is given to the member whose bill is on the committee agenda at that time. In fact, it must be given to the member whose bill is being discussed at that time or that member is at a disadvantage. I have also addressed that to those who are in charge of committees.

Could this member please comment on those three items?

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with regard to the vice-chairs issue, I understand that Reform would like to have people in the position of vice-chairs. They well know that committees have two vice-chairs, one is the government vice-chair and then there is the official opposition vice-chair. That is the pattern we have had.

• (1255)

If the chair is not there, the government vice-chair takes over. If the government vice-chair is not there, then it would go to the official opposition vice-chair. That happens so rarely that in my view having a vice-chair position is actually a disadvantage. The opposition members who would not be in the chair would get an opportunity to question witnesses. I do not see it as a significant issue.

I understand parliamentary tradition. It is frustrating but I do not see it as a problem.

With regard to private members' bills I agree. The member will know that I have a similar situation with a bill, Bill C-222, on health warning labels on the containers of alcoholic beverages. It was dealt with at subcommittee. But the subcommittee did not take a vote on the bill. Rather, it referred it back to the main committee and said let us continue to study it. It is at committee now. It may never come out which is very frustrating.

The issue here is private members' business. I would support the reform of the selection of bill for private members' business. I do not believe we should be debating bills that do not qualify as votable. If a bill is frivolous there is no point in taking up the time of the House by talking for an hour about it. A bill which does not merit being votable should not go through the process.

For any bill that is passed at second reading and referred to committee, I do not support the committee failing to report the bill to the House. At least it should report that it has decided the bill has no merit. Then the House would have an opportunity to determine whether it shared that view. That would be an important clarification which I would support.

With regard to witnesses, it sounds like a technical matter. Anyone who has business before this House or a subcommittee should be privy to all documents. That is something the member could work out herself.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to join this debate. When I first ran for Parliament in 1993, I had a couple of real concerns about the preceding years. It seemed like the will of the people had not been heeded on many occasions. The Trudeau government began an era with all kinds of legislation being forced on the people of Canada although they objected to it.

When the will of the people guides the politicians we have a democracy. We do not have that, which is the problem with this place and this country and which is also the reason I am here. Instead, we have the will of the politicians who make decisions that affect the people, even if those decisions are against the wishes of Canadians. In my view that is tyranny, and that is what we have to break.

I find it amusing to hear the Bloc members debating the issue of democracy when they will not even honour a referendum of their own people that said no to separation. I wonder what part of no they do not understand. This was the result not once but twice. And they are talking about democracy. I find that kind of amusing.

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Sadly amusing.

Mr. Thompson: Sadly amusing.

We are talking about the committees today. As I look about the room, I see the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who was the chairman of the justice committee when I served on that committee. He did a very admirable job. He is a very fair individual.

However, I found it really discouraging. One day he chose to do what he felt he had to do as a politician, as a representative of some people, and voted a certain way. He is therefore no longer the chair of that committee.

One might say that those committees are supposed to be there for the benefit of parliamentarians. They will examine issues and do things right. We are going to put people in charge, in the chair positions, who are the most capable and the most able. I have found that is not so.

It is being used as a place of patronage if an MP is a good old boy or girl. If a member does not behave, they will be booted out and their position will be taken away.

• (1300)

I see another member in here from Scarborough whom I admired on that committee because of his ability to go through legislation in a legal manner that I am not capable of doing as an ex-educator. I relied on his statements and opinions that he put forward on that committee. He was a valuable instrument as far as I was concerned. One day he chose to go against somebody over there on a little decision. So out he goes. We do not need him there any more and instead we will shove in somebody else. Guess who we shove in? Maybe not anybody nearly as competent but somebody who will do as they are told.

When you have a government constantly telling the people running this country to sit down, be quiet and do as they are told or face punishment, that is wrong. I am going to do everything I can to inform the people of this county about what is going on. It is a dictatorship, not a democracy. The sooner the voters realize it the sooner these guys will be gone. That is what I am waiting for. I hope for the sake of my grandchildren that is exactly what does happen.

In 1993 the Liberal party put together a red book of promises to act on if it became a governing body. On page 92 it states:

> In the House of Commons a Liberal government will give MPs a greater role in drafting legislation through House of Commons committees.

So much for that. How many of these pieces of legislation have received second reading approval in this House of Commons and go to the committee and there they lay? They were never brought back to the House to discuss. I find it absolutely deplorable that we are voting on Bill C-45 this week when about two years ago we had 78 members from that government vote to abolish section 745. Those same 78 will probably have to support Bill C-45 because a certain minister has said that is the way it will be.

That is a shame. Once upon a time they were in full support of a private member's bill that would abolish section 745 of the Criminal Code. Now we have a flip-flop. Why? The word must be out. You had better shape up. Is that what it is, you little puppets? When are you going to wake up and start being the men and women you were sent here to be and represent the people of Canada?

That statement of page 92 has turned out to be nothing more than a red ink book lie, another broken promise. They ought to be ashamed. It is a farce going through the motions. I felt like all we were doing on that justice committee was going through the motions day after day. One member from the government asked a while ago who reads it. There were some very conscientious workers from the Liberal government on that justice committee who tried their best to make some important changes. Consequently they will probably not be on that committee again under these social engineers we have on the front row of today's government.

An hon. member: There is nobody here today.

Mr. Thompson: We will use our imagination. That is what they use all the time.

There is a rule that we could follow. I talked to the chairman of our committee, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, and I said the member from Calgary Northeast and John Edwards, the past commissioner of Correctional Service Canada, and I visited the University of Alberta. We met with some researchers in their department who gave us some very strong messages: ''We must get our message to the Parliament of Canada, it is essential for the safety of Canadians''. I talked to the chairman of the committee and he suggested I put it on a letter and send it to the committee requesting that particular researching group to appear before a committee to tell it what they had found out because they were unable to get the ear of the government. Even Mr. Edwards indicated from his visit to the committee that this information should be brought to our attention and that it could be extremely important.

• (1305)

On April 27, 1995 I wrote a letter to the chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. I did not even get an acknowledgement, and I am on the committee. I did not get this before the steering committee for even a suggestion that we consider it. Nothing whatsoever happened to this.

I asked the next chairman to review this, look at it and he said: ''What letter? What request? I have no idea what you are talking about''. In 1995 the researchers told us that if something is not done about what we are finding out, in the very near future, within the next year or two, we will see a major increase in HIV in the prisons across this land. We could do something about it but we have to have the ear of the government. You try to do that through a committee where you are supposed to. Not a chance.

They are going to get the ear of the government because I am going to the press. We will get it out. I am going to the researchers and they are going to join me. The message will get out. They have been ignored.

Suddenly last week we see a huge increase in HIV and hepatitis C in the prisons because a non-democratic body of people are not interested in what the opposition has to say. I say opposition is right here, not there. They are in with the Liberals on so many pieces of legislation they ought to have a copy of the red book to go along with the other propaganda they read.

I hope the Canadian people will wake up one day and realize what kind of people are operating this country. It is not a democratic group. We need a change.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I served on the human resources development committee for two years after being elected to Parliament. I would like to recount a bit of my experience on that committee and ask the hon. member for Wild Rose to comment.

One of the first things the government mandated that committee to do was consult Canadians. We were instructed to make a cross-Canada tour to find out how social programs should be changed, reformed and modernized.

As a young rookie parliamentarian I felt that was very important thing we needed to do. One of the reasons I was elected was to change and modernize Canada's social programs. Canadians wanted to preserve some of their most valuable social programs and so I participated in that complete tour. We went across Canada and consulted for over six weeks. We amassed volumes and volumes of material on what Canadians wanted to do. I was excited about the possibilities of what could be done.

The tour cost millions of dollars. We went from Yukon to Newfoundland to consult Canadians about what the wanted to do with unemployment insurance, pensions, welfare, health and all

the areas under this entire umbrella. It was virtually half of government spending.

Canadians told us very clearly what they wanted to do with unemployment insurance. That was one of the special interests I had on this. Canadians wanted unemployment insurance to again be a true insurance program. They wanted a lot of the things the government had put into that program taken out and made a true insurance program with employers and employees having a much greater say in how the funds would be managed.

I was most disappointed when at the end of this tour the minister completely disregarded what the committee had done. The minister completed disregarded the input Canadians had through that committee.

● (1310)

I was shocked at the amount of money that was wasted. All of this material was simply shoved away. I do not know what room it was put in but it would have taken a fairly large room to house all of the submissions that people, in good faith, thought were going to be heard by this government. It was completely disregarded. This was a farce, as my colleague said.

The government claims it will listen to the committees, that the committees will be effective and have an influence on the agenda. There is concrete proof that absolutely nothing was done. This committee process was an absolute joke. The government completely disregarded the report and the recommendations that were made.

A government that claims that the committees will be effective and which made that promise in its red book has completely reneged on that. I am very concerned that it continues to give the impression that through the committees effective changes will be made to legislation. That is not happening. I have been an eye witness to the waste of money and time these committees are because Canadians do not have a say even when the government tries to give the impression that it is consulting.

Would the hon. member have any comments with regard to that? I think it is a serious matter which I have not heard addressed. However, it continues to go on behind the scenes all the time.

Mr. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I do agree. I know what he is talking about. He is talking about a group of people who have been put together to go through the motions.

The decisions on all of these issues are already made. They are made behind the closed door of the minister's office. That has been evident over and over again in the last three years. The decision is made but they go through the motions and pretend that the committee is really having some input and the Canadian people are really having some input. It is all a joke.

On January 16, 1994—I will never forget the day—the social engineer from the justice department, our justice minister, said: ''Get your submissions in for the Young Offenders Act''. I can tell this House that they came from all across the land, thousands and thousands of them, including my own. They arrived in that minister's office and then the committee was struck. We then got Bill C-37 which was approved by this House.

Guess what? After all that work, the committee is going to tour around and see what the people want to do with the Young Offenders Act. It is a joke, a waste of time and a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have sat on several committees and would like to support my colleague by saying there have been some good chairpersons from the government side who have taken on their role very judiciously. However, I have also sat on a committee that broke the rules and changed the membership to accomplish what it wanted accomplished, which was to kill a report from the subcommittee on national security.

This committee met, and I will only use the 1995 year, for seven months. It spent over 35 hours hearing witnesses and preparing a report. During this time the member for Scarborough West was a member of the government and led the government's attack or representation on dealing with a report from SIRC, the security intelligence review committee, that we were reviewing.

This individual put hours of research and represented the government in what I thought was a very competent manner. He has a very astute legal mind and offered a lot in the discussions and debates on this report. As I said, the committee members sat for over 35 hours listening and cross-examining the witnesses to get as much information out as we could.

The members of the committee, which included the Bloc member and the Reform member, got to the fourth draft of a report on September 8. This report was being prepared to be introduced and tabled in the House of Commons by the end of that month.

However, lo and behold, one of the other members of this committee, obviously on instruction from the party and the government, which the member for Windsor—St. Clair who maybe had not understood the issues but who participated in the discussion, had been involved in bringing this report to a fourth draft.

● (1315)

On September 19 the government made sure that this report would not go on, would not be tabled in the House of Commons. The government took the member for Scarborough West off the committee. He was the only government member who probably had actually read the report under discussion and knew anything about it and he was taken off the committee. The government

replaced him with an individual who had not sat for over 35 hours listening to witnesses with a chance to cross examine them.

The second meeting of this committee with the new members from the government side lasted for 10 minutes before they adjourned it. They waited until they had eaten the sandwiches. We met at suppertime because that was the only time we had available as busy MPs. They waited until they had filled their faces on the sandwiches and fruit before they adjourned the meeting because they did not want to address the report.

There was one government member who decided they would rewrite the report after the committee got to a fourth draft. The member for Windsor—St. Clair went away and rewrote the whole report without any input from the opposition members on the committee. What a farce.

The government, in order to keep this report from being tabled in the House of Commons, did not even respect their own member. It did not even respect the chair of that committee. The adjournment by his own party members was done without his knowledge. They adjourned our meeting early on three occasions in order not to deal with the issue. They did not even have the courtesy to tell the chairman who was representing the same party, the government party, that they were doing this.

It shows to me the absolute disregard and disrespect the government has for the independent operation of a committee to get down to the real work and to determine whether something is in the best interests of the people of this country.

It is about time the government realized that each one of us is here to give the best that we can, including the government's own members. If they happen to find something that is wrong and that should be brought to the attention of the government, they should be allowed to do that.

I have watched time over time this kind of interference by the government whip. I watched it in the justice committee when we were debating Bill C-41. Two Liberal members had gone through the process, had gotten replacements signed in to show up and sit down and the party whip came in and said: ''No, you are not representing the government. Here are the replacements that we have approved''.

There is total disregard for the process and the rules that are in place so that we as members of Parliament can do the job for the Canadian people in reviewing legislation in committee to make sure the end result is the best possible for the people of Canada.

I would suggest that the government has a long way to go before it is fulfilling its red book promise of giving more independence to committees, of giving more members of Parliament the ability to affect legislation and to help in the creation of legislation.

I am another private member who has a bill that made it through second reading in the House of Commons. Mine passed unanimously two years ago. It is sitting in the justice committee and has been for two years. The Minister of Justice introduced a bill on the same subject two years later. Why did the committee not deal with a private members' bill that was dealing with dangerous offenders and how to keep them off the streets of Canada? Two years ago that was passed unanimously by this House, placed into the committee and totally disregarded.

I would suggest that the tyranny of the majority which one of the Liberal members referred to earlier is precisely what this country has with the present government. Because this government has such a massive majority, it feels it has the right to totally disregard the rights of its own individual members of Parliament to represent the Canadian people in what they feel is right and just.

• (1320)

Anytime there is a critical review of something which may point out an issue or an area that the government should back away from or reconsider, it is disregarded. Maybe I have misread the position of the member but I thought we were all here to do the best job we can for the Canadian people and to make sure that those who follow us have the best legislation, the best rules to govern the country to make sure that it is a strong, vibrant and unified country in the years to come.

I do not see that our work in committees is allowing us to do that. I have seen interference by the government, not only on opposition members but on government members which is in contravention of the parliamentary system.

If the government wants to return to this House with any majority let alone a mass majority it had better pull up its socks and start listening to the Canadian people because it may not be given another chance.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made a very good intervention. I am glad she was able to get all of her frustrations out. It is good to be able to express one's frustration at democracy. However, it is a contradiction because one cannot be frustrated with democracy.

The issue here is that a majority government is fully in control of the work and the decisions of the House of Commons by virtue of that majority. The electorate as a whole is going to hold the government fully accountable for the decisions and actions in this place, understanding fully that the opposition parties were not in a position to defeat anything.

The member raised issues about something that happened in the justice committee and talked about our work. I believe her quote was ''our work'' as a collective of the committee, as if the committee does not reflect a microcosm of this place. It is a partisan committee made up of partisan members and team members who represent their party's position. That means notwithstanding that the member has made good points, the ultimate decision is of the committee. The committee is controlled by the governing party with the majority and thereby transposing the responsibility, the government is responsible for each and every decision the committee makes and must be accountable to the people.

If the member feels that the committee's work and the end result of the decisions made and the amendments proposed and the bills supported or not supported were wrong and not in the best interests of Canadians, there will be an opportunity for those members in the next election.

The member should remember that the curse of a majority government is that it is deemed to be in control by all Canadians. It will be held fully accountable and what it does is at its own peril.

Ms. Meredith: Madam Speaker, I find it very interesting to hear a member of the Liberal Party say that the government is fully responsible for the decisions of the committee. In this case the member the government replaced on the committee was recognizing that there was a discrepancy in the information or the testimony of witnesses and questioned and challenged it. Because I had no support from the committee for recognizing there were discrepancies in testimony and that it should be challenged and questioned, I brought it to the House as a point of privilege.

● (1325)

I will quote from the Speaker in his ruling earlier this week: ''However in my opinion this is a matter for debate and not a question of privilege. The member clearly has a dispute as to the facts presented to the committee. Should the member wish to return to the committee with the matter, and the committee ought to report to the House on this aspect of the question, the House at that time may choose to deal with it''.

The committee refused to even deal with it in the report stage. That is why the member for Scarborough West was kicked off the committee. He recognized that the other members of the committee would not deal with that issue. I would suggest that the government is responsible for the decisions to help cover up.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what she really thinks about the selection of vice-chairs, especially only from the ranks of the separatist, break up the country party.

Ms. Meredith: Madam Speaker, the issue really is the openness, the ability for the members of the committee to choose the person they feel is best able to represent the opposition. I would suggest that there have been times when many of the government members would have liked to have supported a Reform Party member who was presented to them but were told not to.

The day that the Liberal members of these committees are given the freedom, and I mean full freedom, to select who they feel is best able to represent them, we will see some Reform Party members placed in the vice-chair positions.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have just a few points concerning this debate.

What started it was the tabling of this excellent report by our whip, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who is doing a fantastic job. He has been one of the best whips I would say in the history of this place. On the list of names of people serving on these committees, months of consultation have gone into preparing this list to make sure that members are on the committees they want to be on if possible.

All of a sudden, the Reform Party stands up in the House, frustrated by its own unpopularity, frustrated because the government is so far ahead in the polls, but mainly frustrated because of the Bloc. Under our system it is the Bloc, the official opposition, which has many of the privileges the Reform Party would like to have.

Here Reformers are today criticizing of all groups to criticize the Government of Canada for this lack of democracy, for this lack of accountability to the House of Commons, to the Canadian people, to this lack of power over the legislative process. There are only two functions of committees in the House of Commons under our system and they are accountability and the legislative function.

Is it not strange that they should be criticizing the very government in the entire history of this place which has allowed free votes not just on private members' bills, but also on government initiatives. If we investigated the mother of Parliaments, the British Parliament, I do not think we would find there such progressive actions as those by the Government of Canada, by the Prime Minister, under the present administration. It is historic. It has never been done before.

● (1330)

On top of that, with this new found power which has been given to members of Parliament on government bills and private members' bills, we have in this place the best accountability of any legislature under the British parliamentary system. I am referring to question period.

There is no other legislature in the world that has a question period that the ministers, the executive, have to attend to answer whatever questions are posed by the opposition parties— no other legislature in the world.

I will tell the House what we do have in the world. Perhaps the Reform Party would like to have this. Perhaps it would like us to become up to date like the British, the Australians or any other Parliament where one has to give notice of a question to a cabinet minister. The cabinet minister does not even have to be in the House every day. They are only called once every two weeks to come for a day to answer questions in the House, questions for which notice has been given.

Why have we retained this? We have retained this because the Government of Canada, particularly now, is in a situation with a separatist party as the official opposition. The Government of Canada has rejected the many suggestions from the academic community that we go the way the British and the Australians have gone where they have to give notice of every question and the cabinet ministers would not be confined to their places here in this House every day and be answerable to a complete free for all by the opposition parties.

The system we have works only if the accountability of the government is actually accomplished by the two main political parties in opposition, first the power given to the separatist party.

We can imagine why the Reform Party is rather frustrated. We have a system whereby one of the two main players in question period is a separatist party that is only interested in breaking up the country. That is its agenda. It is not interested in anything else. I do not think Bloc members are interested in anything else. When they sleep they dream about it. They plan it day after day: ''What are we going to say in question period to break up the country?'' Obviously that is not working in the best interest of Canada. Then there is the second party.

An hon. member: Extremists.

Mr. Baker: As the hon. member pointed out, this is party of extreme political positions. And so we wonder who the losers are. The losers are the people of Canada.

An hon. member: Give us an example of what is extreme.

Mr. Baker: The hon. member has asked for an example. We can give examples. Imagine a political party with that much power for accountability being opposed to our health care system. Imagine a political party that includes in its position that it wants the public to have roads built by private enterprise and then we would need toll gates. How else? Imagine the Alaska highway. Imagine if there were tolls on the TransCanada highway. This is the party with these very extreme positions on certain things.

An hon. member from the Reform just mentioned unemployment insurance. They had this great plan. Let us talk about the extreme position of being opposed to reducing the premiums for employees and employers, to use the unemployment insurance fund to pay off the deficit, to make sure that everything becomes zero, and then they will reduce the premiums. That is in their policy booklet, page 24 of the budget they presented.

● (1335)

What we have is the Government of Canada being held accountable to the people of Canada by two political parties that are not representative of the wishes of the Canadian people and therefore cannot really hold the government accountable for their actions. The government holds true to the principles of democracy in the House by giving members of Parliament on the government side a free vote even on matters that are introduced by the Government of Canada.

It is clear the reason the system is not working is the fault of the opposition parties and they only have themselves to blame. They should go back to the drawing board as far as question period is concerned and perhaps come up with some better suggestions rather than hold up all of these excellent committees with these excellent MPs just waiting to do their job as presented by our whip earlier on today.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am always interested to hear the member from Newfoundland speak.

He spoke of extremism. We have seen extremism in this country for the last 25 years. We have seen the extremism in the fiscal monetary policy that has created a $600 billion debt in this country. We have the extremism result in a $50 billion interest payment each year on that debt. We have seen the extremism of the MP pension plan which is not a pension plan at all but a winning lottery ticket.

We have seen the extremism of section 745 that allows first degree murderers like Clifford Olson to apply for early parole after serving just 15 years and take everyone of those 11 families whose children have been murdered through the horror, pain and the anguish again and again.

We see the extremism of politicians who support those kind of rights and protection for the murderers in this country while ignoring completely the duty and responsibility to protect the innocent victims of the children of those families.

Yes, this country has had to be subjected to extremism, extremism that I have talked about, which we could speak about for hours in this House; extremism of the Young Offenders Act that is considered to be a joke by many of the young offenders them-

selves; a justice system that cannot protect the lives and the property of our citizens. Yes, we have extremism in this country and it is the result of people like my colleague who just addressed us.

We can talk of something the hon. member did not address with a democracy as expressed within our committees. I sat on the justice committee and I saw one of the finest chairman who knew the rules, who was an experienced capable man and who was fair to both the government side as well as the opposition. I saw that hon. member fired from his position simply because he chose to represent what he thought was in the best interests of his people on a government bill.

The hon. member has not addressed that. Perhaps he could address that in the time he has left. What does he think about the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce being treated in that horrible manner by a so-called democratic process and a government that is supposedly sworn to uphold the democratic principles of this country? Let us hear the hon. member respond to what happened to this hon. member over here.

• (1340)

Mr. Baker: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has claimed we are a government of extremes. He started his point by talking about the debt and the deficit, of economic extremes, as he called it.

I have to admit this country today is in an extreme position because we are at an extreme, are we not? Which one of the G-7 countries leads the world in economic development? Which country is at the economic extreme? Is it Italy? Is it France? Is it Germany? Is it the U.K.? Is it Japan? Is it the U.S.? What country is at the economic extreme? We agree with the hon. member. The country at the economic extreme is the country of Canada, which leads everybody else.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member, speaking of extremes, which political party's extreme ideas did the government adopt? Which party ran a campaign on cuts and deficit elimination and that cuts lead to jobs, better opportunities and make this country better? Which party ran on jobs, jobs, jobs? Which party has stolen the other party's ideas? We want nothing to do with its ideas and we are glad it is stealing ours, our extreme views, our extreme positions and our extremely valuable contribution we have made to this country.

Mr. Baker: Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada would never be that extreme. The Liberal Party of Canada, since the fall of 1993, has been the most progressive economically of all of the industrialized nations of the world, and is projected to be that way next year, without adopting the Reform principles of cutting health care, making people pay for their roads and doing away with social programs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, I can see as you do that the government majority is pleased to hear what I have to say, and I will not be afraid to speak my mind.

The fundamental reality we are faced with here is that we have a democratically elected opposition composed of 53 members who agreed to comply with democratic rules with regard to party fundraising, rules that were rejected by both the Reform Party and the government majority in this House.

We are being told today that our work as parliamentarians, particularly our work in committee, is useless. That is what the Reform members are saying. They are saying that our work as parliamentarians is useless because they are not the official opposition.

That is sheer hypocrisy. You will recall that less than two weeks after we came to this House, the leader of the Reform Party invited us to a luncheon where he told us that his party would have a new image, that we would see a new way of doing politics, that his party would be democratic, that it would enrich debate.

Despite the fact that we have a system where the people have their say, where they can choose their representatives democratically, some members have the gall to tell us today that this system is worthless with regard to committees, because they are not the official opposition. It certainly takes some nerve to rise in this House today and make that kind of comment.

How should we evaluate the work of the opposition? We have a democratic opposition.

• (1345)

And we are here because we received a mandate. What is that mandate? It was given to us during a democratic electoral campaign held according to public rules. The people of Quebec chose 53, 54 members from the Bloc Quebecois. That is a fact.

What is so painful for the Reform Party members? I hope that one of them will have the courage to stand up and say it instead of their usual hypocritical speech. What counts in democracy is not what you have on your head, but what you have in it and how much

brain power you have that determines whether you should aspire to form the official opposition.

What does the Reform opposition have to say? What do the Reformists say about public finances? And on the foreign affairs policy? And what about human rights? What do they have to say about the big debates of the moment? And about the recognition of the rights of Quebec? They have nothing to say and this is why not only will they not form the official opposition after the next elections, but we will see to it that they are completely wiped out.

I challenge you, Madam Speaker, and any of the Reformers—who are a throwback to bygone days—to give us an example of any occasion where we have been remiss, either with respect to content, policy or ethics, or in connection with attendance in the House, or our use of any of the prerogatives of the official opposition. I challenge them to give us one example.

We know very well that we have done our work properly. We have done it like those who know that, when the official opposition rises in the House, it speaks on behalf of the Quebec people, who made a democratic choice, and who will do so again in order to reach an ideal that we have never concealed, which is to see that, when it so decides, Quebec will be able to attain sovereignty.

But did that mean that, when we had the opportunity, we were not able to honestly and respectfully represent a broad range of Canadians? Yes, we were able to do so. We were able to do so when we spoke about Bosnia. We were able to do so when we spoke about renewing institutions internationally, particulary with respect to the United Nations. We agree that, in specific cases, the Quebec nation may have interests in common with the rest of Canada, but we have never compromised our principles.

Did the Reform Party fight against family trusts? Did you hear them on this issue? Did the Liberals get up and fight when apparently two billion dollars had more or less legally left the country, left Canada? Did they stand up and fight? No.

What bothers both these parties is that we take a unique position. We have something different to say, something specific.

I know both the Reform Party and the government majority wish we could blend in with the rest of Canada. But that will not happen, because we know what Quebecers will do, because they are capable of democratically choosing what is in their own interests. And being guided by their own interests means electing spokespersons exclusively dedicated to promoting the interests of Quebec.

● (1350)

In the same breath, I hasten to say that each and everyone of us has friends in English Canada, and we believe that the best way to conduct our political business in the next century is in the form of a partnership.

That is what we believe, and we are not naive about the eventuality, the plausibility and the eminently desirable policy of maintaining a Canadian common market. We are not naive in this respect.

I am concerned to say the least that the Reform Party has nothing to say about these issues. To rise in the House with all the naivety and indignation of a convent school girl of 17 and say they are unhappy because in committee they are not the official opposition is an affront to democracy.

Democracy is about being able to elect the people who represent us. Do Reform Party members seriously believe that with this kind of holier than thou attitude, devoid of any common sense, they will win the popular vote? Is that what they believe? I hope not.

[*English*]

Mr. Strahl: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know we have to wrap up the debate momentarily as per the motion we passed earlier this morning. Is there going to be an opportunity for questions and answers following this?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): That is not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ménard: Madam Speaker, I would like to carry on with my speech.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): The hon. member for Fraser Valley East.

Mr. Strahl: A point of order, Madam Speaker. I know the normal method of debating here in the House is a statement period, a period of debate—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Please sit down. It was agreed that discussions on this motion would end at ten to two. I will give the hon. member an additional minute to complete his 10-minute speech.

Mr. Strahl: Will there be time for questions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ménard: Madam Speaker, here you can see this inability to take a position on issues and the use of tricks to avoid the real debates. This is why these people, at least I hope for the sake of Canadians and Quebecers, will never be the government nor the official opposition.

Here we are, acting in a responsible way, talking about the real problems and ensuring that the voice of Quebec is and continues to be heard. We are all, without exception, very enthusiastic about the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): It being 1:55 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings.

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the motion is deemed to have been put to a vote and agreed to on division.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions from several hundred Canadians from different provinces which state that abolishing the opportunity for prisoners serving life sentences of 15 years or more who apply for a judicial review of their parole eligibility will likely only serve to increase both the human and economic costs of the criminal justice system and increase public fear and misconceptions about crime among the Canadian public.

The petitioners therefore call on Parliament to oppose the repeal of section 745 of the Criminal Code or the restriction of prisoners access to just and fair procedures as well as to launch a concerted public education campaign to promote the need for more responsible and humane criminal justice approaches to enhance the safety of all Canadians.

● (1355)

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition containing over 500 names from the riding of Simcoe North.

The petitioners state that there are profound inadequacies in the sentencing practices concerning individuals convicted of impaired driving charges and that Canada must embrace a philosophy of zero tolerance to people who drink and drive.

The petitioners pray and request that Parliament proceed immediately with amendments to the Criminal Code to ensure that the sentence given to anyone convicted of impaired driving causing death carries a minimum sentence of seven years and a maximum of 14 years as outlined in the private member's bill C-201, sponsored by the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to present two petitions. The first is on taxation of the family.

The petitioners from Kirkland Lake, Ontario would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to pursue initiatives to eliminate tax discrimination against families that choose to provide care in the home to preschool children, the chronically ill, the aged or the disabled.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition, which has to do with the labelling of alcoholic beverages, comes from Belleville, Ontario.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems or impair one's ability and specifically that fetal alcohol syndrome or other alcohol related birth defects are 100 per cent preventable by avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

The petitioners, therefore, pray and call on Parliament to enact legislation to require health warning labels to be placed on the containers of all alcoholic beverages to caution expectant mothers and others of the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

WARTIME MERCHANT NAVY

Mrs. Anna Terrana (Vancouver East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have petitions to present from people in the lower mainland of Vancouver regarding veterans of the wartime merchant navy who are excluded from the War Veterans Allowance Act, from pension benefits, from veterans post-World War II free university education, housing and land grant benefits, small business financial aid and veterans health care benefits.

The petitioners call on Parliament to consider the advisability of extending benefits and compensation to veterans of the wartime merchant navy equal to that enjoyed by veterans of Canada's World War II armed services.

PROFITS FROM CRIME

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I pleased to present a petition signed by 92 constituents from the province of British Columbia and the communities of Horsefly, Williams Lake and Miocene.

My constituents request that Parliament enact Bill C-205, a bill which would amend the Criminal Code and the Copyright Act. Passage of this bill would prohibit a criminal from profiting by selling, authorizing or authoring the story or details of a crime.

S. O. 31

CANADA

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present the following petition.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that this nation is in danger of being torn apart by regional factions. Therefore, they pray that the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Canada declare and confirm immediately that Canada is indivisible.

SEXUAL PREDATORS

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to rise to present two petitions from residents of the lower mainland of British Columbia.

The first one is from Sun Hope Petitions in memory of Andre Castet. The petitioners would like to draw attention to a great public concern that sexual predators are at large in our streets without public notification.

They feel that Bill C-37 does not address the public's call for substantial revisions of the YOA and they call on the House to enact legislation to reform the justice system and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act addressing a number of principles, primarily that new laws would ensure that sexual predators are kept off the streets and placed in a secure setting until they no long represent a threat to public safety.

TAXATION

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is again from a group in my area. They call on Parliament to refrain from implementing a tax on health and dental benefits and to put a hold on 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.

I am pleased to present both these petitions.

The Speaker: It would be my intention, immediately after statements and question period, to take up where we left so we can receive all the petitions you want to make today.

It being 2 p.m., we will now go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that strong families make a strong country and that we must pursue appropriate initiatives to build that strength. These initiatives also include mitigating problems which undermine and weaken the family such as alcohol abuse.

Tragically, 50 per cent of family violence, 65 per cent of child abuse and one in six family breakdowns in Canada are all directly or indirectly due to alcohol misuse.

The consequences of family violence and child abuse are devastating and long lasting. However, this is a societal problem which requires the resolve of both men and women working together to identify and eliminate the root causes of family violence.

Reducing family violence means healthier families, improved outcomes of our children, lower health care costs, lower social program costs, safer communities and stronger families.

Finally, strong families make Canada strong. Therefore I call on members of Parliament to pursue initiatives to restore the strength of the traditional Canadian family.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LES INDUSTRIES CASCADES OF KINGSEY FALLS

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to salute the management and employees of Les industries Cascades. Environmental protection is an important value for them, and an integral part of their management philosophy. Evidence of this is their recent official opening of a secondary water treatment plant at the Kingsey Falls pulp and paper complex, representing an investment of over six million dollars in order to reduce biological oxygen demand and hence the toxicity of effluent from the four Kingsey Falls plants.

Cascades employees were responsible for much of the design, construction and installation of the equipment, and its operation. This company now has one of the most efficient secondary treatment systems in the pulp and paper industry. My congratulations to the management and employees of Cascades, which has now moved into the vanguard of environmental protection. Theirs is an example to be followed.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Hugh Hanrahan (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government's lavish spending sprees are breaking through the superficial fiscal restraints.

The Liberals have committed to pay approximately $3 million or 30 per cent of the total cost of the francophone games to be held in Madagascar. These games include medals for such events as sculpting, video production and even story telling.

We plan on spending over five times more than what we spent on the Commonwealth games which were held in Canada and over ten times more than what we spent on the 1996 Olympics.

Government waste of taxpayer dollars is indefensible. In bad times such as what we are in now when many Canadians are suffering, the government is hard pressed to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jag Bhaduria (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a national disgrace that the unemployment rate in Canada is still higher in comparison to our neighbours to the south.

Canadians are tired of excuses and slogans from this government. They want to see employment opportunities created regularly. Creating jobs for Canadians has to be the number one priority for this government.

Recently the Prime Minister stated that more than half a million jobs had been created since the last election. Nothing is ever said about whether this is the net total and not another flip-flop statistic. If these jobs have been real then let us see the true numbers from this government.

I hold this government personally responsible for the sad state of affairs of our economy.

* * *

• (1405)

CANADIAN FLAG

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 1,300 Canadians living in 180 communities from every province have expressed their support for my private member's bill which would adopt an official pledge of allegiance to the Canadian flag.

Individual Canadians are not alone. The councils of 33 municipalities including Windsor, Rockland and Guelph, Ontario, Beaconsfield, Quebec, Chester, Nova Scotia, Cardston, Alberta and Logan Lake and Cranbrook, British Columbia have passed resolutions of support in the past three weeks.

Some of our country's greatest moments have involved our flag. Canadians love their country and the flag that flies proudly everywhere. Young and old, they have said this summer: ''The maple leaf forever''.

S. O. 31

CANADA GAMES

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the city and county of Peterborough have submitted a bid for the 2001 Canada Games.

The bid is the result of months of work by hundreds of volunteers. It includes details of our sports facilities and of our expertise in sports management.

The bid points out that we have already hosted the Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled, the National Slo-Pitch Championships, the Memorial Cup Tournament and two Ontario Summer Games. We have decades of experience in hosting sports events.

This bid has the full support of the city and county councils, local municipalities, the Curve Lake First Nation and our sports organizations. The bid already has strong financial as well as moral backing.

Peterborough will ensure that the first Canada Games of the new century will be the best ever. I urge all members to support Peterborough's bid.

* * *

SUMMER OLYMPICS

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a record three people from Newfoundland and Labrador competed at the Summer Olympics from July 19 to August 4 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Maria Maunder as well as Phil Graham from my riding of St. John's East and Andy Crosby of Corner Brook each competed in the rowing events.

Maunder and her Canadian women's eight crew rowed to second place and received a silver medal. Graham and Crosby rowed in the men's eight and finished fourth.

I want to thank and congratulate each of these athletes for their contribution to sports in our province and as well for Canada. Their spirit and dedication stand as examples to all of us to try our hardest at whatever task is before us. Canada is proud of you.

* * *

GULF WAR SYNDROME

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, conclusive scientific evidence on gulf war syndrome verifies that neurological damage occurs when two pesticides, deet and permethrin, are used in combination with the anti-nerve gas agent pyridostigmine bromide.

University of Glasgow studies show neurological dysfunction in gulf war vets and the U.S. Defence Department confirms use of chemical weapons on seven occasions during the first week of the

war, including the area of Hafr Al-Batin where some Canadians served. These confirmed the 1991 Czech and French reports of the presence of chemical agents in this area.

On May 16 the defence minister said that veterans affairs would review gulf war veterans' disability applications, assuring that those who display symptoms will be given the benefit of the doubt for treatment and compensation.

However, current regulations accept only disabilities with medically recognized symptoms. These regulations must be changed to recognize the chronic and multiple disabilities from which our gulf war veterans suffer. Talk is not enough. Action is needed now.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP views the preoccupation of Parliament with the fate of the defence minister and General Boyle as politically unfortunate. It has let the Liberals off the hook on other issues.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister and the minister of defence have been disappointing in their stalwart defence of General Boyle.

The Prime Minister is right to say that the inquiry should be allowed to do its work but the Prime Minister should do his work.

To question General Boyle is not to attack or criticize the enlisted men and women of the Canadian forces who are distinguishing themselves at home and abroad.

To imply that questioning General Boyle is an attack on all who serve in the forces is false and a cheap rhetorical tactic. To imply that all General Boyle's internal critics are only motivated by resistance to change in the department is also false. There is a legitimate question of leadership here and it is hard to argue that General Boyle is the one to provide it.

The Prime Minister should be wary that his twisting, evasive and often shallow defence of General Boyle is enough to make some Canadians wonder about his leadership abilities. It is time he stopped bragging about his standing in the polls. Pride goeth before a fall.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

ACADIA UNIVERSITY

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.): I am pleased to rise today to make my colleagues aware of the Acadia advantage.

As of September, Acadia University is the first fully wired campus in Canada.

The use of IBM ThinkPad computers is now an integral part of first year courses in business administration and computer science. By the end of year 2000 a high end lap top will be a standard part of every student's admission package. Acadia University recognizes that computers are no longer the wave of the future. They are the way the world communicates now.

With the help of their partners in this project, IBM Canada Limited, MT&T, Mariott Corporation of Canada Ltd. and American Express special teams, students will be equipped to learn the skills they need to compete successfully in a demanding world.

Acadia University is truly taking a leadership role in innovation among Canadian universities.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RURAL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of a first-ever forum of agents of local development in rural settings at Saint-Germain-de-Kamouraska. Focussing on the theme ''Rebuilding the countryside, villages and towns for the 21st Century'', this meeting brings a number of rural local development workers and prominent speakers from France, Belgium and Quebec together from September 19 to 22.

This little village of barely 300 people is to be congratulated for its initiative in encouraging reflection on the conditions fostering the development of rural villages and towns.

We are sure that this first forum on rural local development will draw from accumulated knowledge in this field to consolidate the actions needed for a rural renaissance.

Congratulations. We wish you every success in your undertaking.

* * *

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, national defence contracts are helping to stimulate our economy and are creating and sustaining many trading jobs. For instance, Atlantis Aerospace Corporation and Fullerton Sherwood Engineering Limited in my riding recently submitted successful bids for DND contracts valued at over $1,400,000 each.

I congratulate DND on its ongoing willingness to shop Canadian when seeking the finest expertise and equipment available. It is clear that the Minister of National Defence takes his job quite seriously. The minister has displayed tremendous strength and tenacity as he works to make Canada's defence department the best it can be.

LITERACY

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to once again to your attention an innovative tool for promoting literacy.

I had the recent pleasure of participating in launching a new Canada Post Corporation stamp in Fredericton. The new stamp is a partnership effort between CPC and ABC Canada, a non-profit organization that helps raise awareness of literacy and promotes private sector involvement in supporting the cause.

The new stamp costs 50 cents, with five cents from every stamp going to ABC Canada.

I wish to commend Canada Post for this novel and creative way to support literacy in this country. It is once again helping us raise funds on a community basis. New Brunswick has been a leader in the promotion of literacy and I hope it continues to lead by supporting the use of this new stamp. If all 10 million stamps are sold literacy groups across the nation will benefit to the tune of $500,000. If one in three Canadians buys just one booklet of stamps they will sell out.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MEMBER FOR GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 27, the chief government whip will be the star of a benefit rock show to help those who deliberately broke the Quebec Elections Act during the last referendum.

The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell did not settle with funding civil disobedience in Quebec using federal public moneys, he called upon sponsors such as Canadian International, the official carrier for all those who love Quebec, *The Ottawa Sun*, famous for its Quebec bashing, and the parliamentary channel, which is funded by Canadian cable companies.

No matter how hard the government whip tries to look like a rock star and how many heritage minister's flags he waves on stage, his government's music will always sound off key to Quebecers.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

LIBERAL PARTY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):

S. O. 31

Well, Mr. Speaker, the summer is over
The Liberals thought they were really in clover
Three months back home to talk to the folks
Would give them the chance to garner some votes

What do you know, the people were mad
A brand new government they thought they had
But when listening closely it was the same old tune
Liberal, Tory, just two sides of the same old loon

We want jobs, real jobs, not an infrastructure scheme
We want leaders to really say what they mean
We want violent criminals to do their time
But the government says, hey, everything's fine

The military is crumbling from the top down
The general blames the troops on the ground
The minister says I'm proud of that man
He should be let go, not given a hand

Let's get on with how to fix this land
Let's get people to work—let's give them a hand
Let's show the world if you commit a crime
The consequence is you do the time

Let's prove to the world that our country is one
And quitthis fighting the separatists have begun
Canada is good butlet's make it great
Times running out and the people can'twait.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BLOC QUEBECOIS LEADER

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, between now and the next election, the Bloc leader and his advisers intend to show Canadians, and I quote from their report, ''that sovereignty and an offer of partnership are the best path toward a solution to the future of Quebec and Canada''.

How can the Bloc leader be taken seriously when he said exactly the reverse, on December 22, and I quote again: ''Mrs. Lalonde wants to convince Canada of the benefits of an economic partnership with Quebec. For my part, I believe it is more important to be in Ottawa to defend Quebec's interests and show to its people that federalism as it stands is not in their best interest, so that they will vote yes at the next referendum''.

Who is telling the truth now? The member for Roberval who wanted to become leader of the Bloc Quebecois or the member for Roberval who is trying to get re-elected?

* * *

PARTI QUEBECOIS REGIONAL CONVENTION

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone will remember, early on during the last referendum campaign, the separatists promised federal civil servants that they would all be integrated into the new Quebec civil service.

[*English*]

A few weeks into the campaign spokespeople for the separatists began to send the message that perhaps they would not be able to guarantee a position for all public servants. In the end federal public servants were told it would be unrealistic to guarantee work for anyone in an independent Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Last week, at the PQ regional convention held in Quebec City, delegates asked that the clause concerning the automatic integration of federal civil servants be withdrawn from the agenda, since it was, in their views, the biggest blunder in the PQ strategy in the Quebec City area.

[*English*]

What else is new? They never keep their promises. The hypocrisy and the flip-flops of the separatists never cease to amaze us and do little to improve the image of all Quebecers.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an absolutely unprecedented gesture, Liberal members have attacked the auditor general for blowing the whistle on the family trust scandal.

For three years the Bloc Quebecois has been criticizing these tax havens, yet now, because the auditor general has confirmed what we have been saying, that billions of dollars are going out of the country tax free, the Liberals are questioning his competency and the way he is fulfilling his mandate. And this is someone appointed by the House of Commons.

Will the Prime Minister tell us whether he dissociates himself from the opinion of certain members of his party or whether he rejects this report?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the finance committee for its report. I would like to thank the representatives of the government for the majority report, and the opposition members from the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party for their minority report. I intend to examine it with care.

As for the comments about the auditor general, someone who, as the hon. members are well aware, has always had our strong support, I must admit that there was a difference of opinion in the committee on certain steps taken or recommended by the auditor general.

• (1420)

Differences of opinion are, I feel, part of democracy. What I do not understand about the tone of the comments on the auditor general in the Bloc Quebecois minority report—for it is not merely a disagreement with the government—is that the Bloc seems to hold the position that the committee, that Parliament, does not have the right to make comments about an employee of Parliament, which is what the auditor general is.

It is the role of Parliament, and the role of the members of Parliament, to make comments, whether about the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, other ministers, or the auditor general. That is part of what democracy is all about, and that is what they have done.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Minister of Finance has given up his fancy footwork for the summer. He was much more nimble when it came to skating around the GST issue.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, by remaining mum, he is sanctioning the report by his MPs and making a direct attack on the very institution of the auditor general, the protector of the general public and the one whose job it is to call attention to the faults in the public administration? Does the Prime Minister realize that he is backing up his MPs by his silence?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is really doing is confirming the point I wanted to make in my response, namely that the standing committee does not have the right to make comments about an employee of Parliament. This is totally ridiculous. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to speak about the substance of the majority report, a report which I applaud. This is a very meaty report, with a great deal of merit, and we on this side plan to examine it carefully.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants to talk substance, we will talk substance. We will talk of the very philosophy of this government. It has to be understood. When the Somalia inquiry tries to cast some light on administrative and leadership failings in the Army, the Prime Minister discredits the Commission. When the auditor general tries to cast some light on the matter of family trusts, government members discredit the auditor general.

How can the Prime Minister explain to us the new philosophy of his government, which to all appearances consists in discrediting those who are not in agreement with it?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition has not had time to read the majority report. First, their criticisms were made very respectfully, and second, they accepted most of the auditor general's recommendations very favourably. They thanked him for them, point by point. That is in the report, the thanks to the auditor general. Moreover, we in government thank the auditor general for the points he had raised, and because of the fact that he

did raise those points—and the majority report says this—the Ggvernment will be in a position to act.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the past three years, we have been asking the government to get to the bottom of the family trust scandal. It was not until the auditor general recently condemned the scandalous transfer of $2 billion in trust funds to the U.S. tax-free that the Prime Minister finally decided to ask the finance committee to review, to shed light on this matter. The Liberal majority tabled its report yesterday and all they did was attack the auditor general.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Who is the Prime Minister trying to protect?

• (1425)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, this matter was first raised in 1991 under the previous, Tory government. Second, right after we came to office, we dealt directly with the matter of family trusts and, in our second and third budgets, we eliminated all the fiscal abuses associated with family trusts. Third, the hon. member must know that this matter has nothing to do with family trusts. It was indeed a family trust, but the real issue is how to collect taxes from immigrants when they leave the country. That is the real issue.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if this is only a Tory matter, why should they be afraid to get to the bottom of this scandal? Why? While the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are stalling, more billions of dollars are leaving the country tax-free, because the government refuses to plug the loophole created in 1991.

The Prime Minister is aiding and abetting the flight of capital, and I ask him again the same question: Whose interests is he trying to protect?

[*English*]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate on a matter of some seriousness that the opposition is unable to treat a serious matter with the serious degree of concern that it requires.

Instead of yelling here in the House or trying to seek a diversion, why does the opposition not deal with the fundamental matter which is what the majority report did? This occurred in 1991 under the previous government. Immediately upon taking office we eliminated all fiscal abuses having to do with family trusts. We then asked the finance committee to take this issue on. It has in fact made a serious number of recommendations that we as a government intend to look at.

I only wish the opposition parties had been able to sit down and understand the issue. Under those circumstances they might have been able to deal with the debate in an intelligent way.

* * *

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot have it both ways on the Somalia inquiry. The Prime Minister has complained that it is too slow, too expensive and too hard on witnesses. The reason the inquiry has been delayed again and again is that the department was not producing the relevant documentation. If this government wants someone to blame in this whole affair, it should simply look in the mirror.

Why will the Prime Minister not simply admit that if the Minister of National Defence and Jean Boyle were really capable of doing their jobs, the commission would have had all the documents and the Somalia inquiry would be on track today?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says the government cannot have it both ways. I would submit that her party cannot have it both ways. Her party advocated the establishment of the commission. That commission, as I have reminded hon. members, will allow for an impartial setting to hear all of the evidence and have everyone dealt with fairly.

However, for the last three days in the House, if we look at *Hansard*, what have we seen? We have seen accusations coming from the other side, imputation of motive and reflection upon evidence. One cannot one day advocate having an inquiry with an impartial setting and then the next day come in the House of Commons and do the opposite. It is the opposition that wants it both ways.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this very minister, by appearing on TV and pronouncing Jean Boyle innocent even before the thing was finished, has castrated that commission and that is all there is to it. It is as simple as that.

The Somalia inquiry is having such a hard time doing its job because the department does not have any real leadership. We then see a minister step in and think that he can make announcements about it before it is even over.

The minister and Jean Boyle himself do not know up from sideways. There is precious little respect in the military across the country for this minister and for Jean Boyle. That is why the department is in such a mess and why the Somalia inquiry has taken so long.

I will ask one more time. If the Prime Minister is really serious about mopping up the mess in the military, why will he not start at the top with the minister and Jean Boyle?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has uttered an absolute untruth. I am sure she has done this inadvertently. I defy her to show any time where I reflected upon evidence before that inquiry.

• (1430)

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, not on evidence but by inference he was saying that Jean Boyle is a great guy. On national television the minister stood up and said: ''He is a fine man, we support him and he is doing a great job''. I do not know how much more clear I could get that he is trying to influence and interfere with the commission and its findings.

The only reason the Prime Minister will not fire these guys is because he is worried about potential political damage. Let me tell him from Canada: There is far more damage in keeping them than in letting them go.

I ask the minister, the Prime Minister or whoever is going to juggle and get themselves up on this one, why does the Prime Minister not just admit he was wrong, cut his losses and let these guys go?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have an inquiry that is doing the job it was asked to do. We would like to have the results as quickly as possible so we can deal with the matter efficiently.

In the meantime, I urge everybody to let the commission do its job, let General Boyle run the armed forces and let the Minister of National Defence do what is needed in national defence to give it some stability and the political leadership that is needed. In the previous nine years, in the previous administration, the department had seven ministers. There was no connection between the political needs and the administration. The stability that is needed is being established at this moment by the good work the Minister of National Defence is doing.

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[*Translation*]

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, family trusts are a strange issue to say the least. Two billion dollars were transferred out of Canada tax free, with the kind help of Revenue Canada officials. The auditor general exposed the scandal, the official opposition demanded that an inquiry be held, the government refused, turned around and attacked the auditor general.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why does the Prime Minister not want to look into this scandal in which billionaires are able to transfer huge assets to the United States to avoid paying taxes like everyone else?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding the substance of the question, the majority report contains a series of recommendations vital to ensuring that any loophole that may have existed is plugged.

That said, the hon. member used the word ''scandal'', implying a lack of credibility on the part of certain people. We were not in office when this took place, the Conservatives were, and I must point out that the auditor general himself, whom the hon. member quoted, confirmed the integrity and credibility of all concerned.

Is the hon. member telling us that the auditor general was mistaken?

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister justify refusing to review such an unfair tax system, which always benefits the same people, unless he is trying to protect those around him who contribute to his election fund?

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, the question itself seems to be imputing motive and that should not be a part of the questions we address to one another. I would caution all members to please be very judicious in their choice of words.

I saw the hon. Minister of Finance was moving to answer. If he so wishes, I will permit it. If not, we will pass on it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem in dealing with this issue is that the hon. members opposite have been overtaken by the events.

• (1435)

We set out to tackle the family trust problem immediately upon taking office. We started by repealing the 21-year rule.

Then, we eliminated the choices that applied to the privileged. As a result of the steps taken by this government, the fiscal abuses associated with family trusts have been eliminated. Unfortunately, the hon. member is two years out of date.

[*English*]

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, double standards prevail at the Department of National Defence. There is one policy for General Boyle yet a different policy for the rest of the Canadian Armed Forces. Due process for subordinates and none for General Boyle.

In the tragic death of Corporal MacKinnon, his commanding officer Major Hirter said he is responsible and he has been charged. Boyle said he is responsible yet nothing has happened.

Is this glaring double standard the kind of management the Prime Minister is proud of?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is yet another example of the hon. member reflecting upon something on which he knows I cannot comment because of my obligations under the National Defence Act.

He has made reference to potential proceedings against one member of the armed forces and he wishes to have this debated in the House of Commons. We have a justice system within the military and the people in the military are subject to it. It is constitutionally sanctioned by the supreme court. It could, perhaps, be in need of some updating and I hope Parliament will help us in that.

I think it is grossly unfair for the hon. member to raise the cases of individuals knowing that I cannot reply because of the obligations I have under the National Defence Act.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, again the Minister of National Defence tries to spin the argument in his own favour. He knows full well that Major Hirter will get due process. The problem is that a political appointee of the government does not seem to be able to be lowered to the due process the law system should provide. There is a clear double standard.

Canadian Armed Forces personnel were ordered not to use work or business hours or resources to prepare their testimony for the Somalia inquiry. Yet despite this order, access to information documents show that General Boyle spent more than 50 business hours preparing to testify.

Is this glaring double standard and violation of orders the kind of management the Prime Minister is proud of?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows I cannot comment on any matter before the inquiry. Even if I could, it would be very difficult to cut through the convolutions and non sequiturs in his question.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Minister of Finance, one gets the impression that only the Liberals are right regarding this issue. All the editorial writers are wrong. The Liberals are the only ones in step, as in the case of the army.

The Prime Minister's silence today speaks volumes. So do the comments made by the Minister of Finance, who tries to cover up his colleagues' blunder.

I ask the Minister of Finance: What does he have to say to the statements made by the auditor general, Mr. Desautels, who said he would do the same work again, and by the former auditor general, Mr. Dye, who said the Liberal government does not understand anything about the auditor general's role?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the majority report said that the advance ruling process must be protected. The auditor general said the same thing. Is the Bloc Quebecois for or against that?

The majority report says the credibility or the integrity of the public servants involved is not in any way at issue. Similarly, the auditor said he had no intention of attacking the credibility and the integrity of these public servants.

• (1440)

The Bloc Quebecois cries foul, but the auditor general does not agree. There is no scandal, as stated in the majority report.

Clearly, we must now follow up on the substance of the comments made by the auditor general, and the majority report agrees with that.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can remember seeing the Minister of Finance more comfortable than he is today. If anyone was attacked, it is the auditor general, yesterday. The members opposite are having a hard time dealing with the substance.

I ask the Minister of Finance why he is taking cover behind something which is said to have occurred in 1991, on December 23, around 11 p.m., just before Christmas, when everyone is partying. Some hard-working public servants can come and find a little hole to slip $2 billion through. This still goes on every day, and the hole is not being plugged from the other side.

The auditor general called for an end to it. Why not take action? Why not follow up on the auditor general's recommendation? Who are you protecting?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let the hon. member name these public servants. He is attacking the credibility of the public service. If he wishes to do that, then he should give names. Who is he attacking? If he has the courage to talk about substance, then he should read the majority report. We must deal with fundamental issues here. Why is the Bloc Quebecois afraid to tackle these issues, preferring to create a scandal on the grounds of lack of substance.

* * *

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General of Canada is an independent officer of Parliament whose mandate it is to investigate government mismanagement, waste and abuse.

Not only is the Prime Minister critical of the independent inquiry into Somalia but the Liberal dominated finance committee has also found fit to interfere with the day to day affairs of the auditor general.

My question is for the Prime Minister. What is the purpose of this attack on the auditor general, who is an independent officer of the House and whose job it is to investigate the government and report back to this House?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committees of the House of Commons that look at reports from a lot of officials from many important sectors of public administration.

When the committees meet, the duty of the members of Parliament is to look into the report and express their point of view about it. We have different parties in this House and sometimes the parties do not agree.

We are not about to ask the committee to meet and not to look and not to report. They are there to do just that. Now the report will be studied by the Minister of Finance. There are in this report suggestions by the people from the government side, people from the Bloc and from Reform. We will look at all the suggestions, take the good ones and reject the bad ones.

The committee members have to do their work, to study the report and have the honesty to report to the House what they believe should be reported to the House.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this report is extremely critical of an officer of this House. It was not the officer, it was not the auditor general, who waived the $500 million in tax revenue. It was the Department of National Revenue. It was not the auditor general who approved a tax waiver of that magnitude with no documentation in the files whatsoever. It was his duty to report these facts to the House.

Clearly this government favours the rich and taxes the poor.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will the government act today to close this loophole that has been wide open for several months and stop it right now?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member earlier said that the committee had interfered in the work of the auditor general. That is obviously nonsense.

The committee, immediately on receipt of the report of the auditor general, convened, heard the auditor general, heard a number of experts on the issue and came out with a report that largely agreed with the auditor general on the steps that had to be taken. In fact we have now received the report and we are going to act on it as quickly as we possibly can.

It is really nonsensical for the member to say what he has said. What is even more nonsensical is for a member of the Reform Party to talk about somebody preferring the rich over the poor. This is the party which has consistently for three years stood up and said eviscerate the poor, get rid of them so that we can protect our friends. This is the party which has said let us get rid of old age pensions. This is the party which has said let us eliminate health care. This party which has tried to destroy the social fabric of this country, and he has the nerve to stand up here and say that. Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe my ears.

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• (1445)

[*Translation*]

THE CBC

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

This morning, the CBC took action in response to the Liberal government's order to reduce spending. When it has completed the operation, it will have reduced its budget by one quarter, or $414 million, and its staff by one third, or 4,000 positions.

How can the minister explain that, with one hand, she is cutting the CBC's budget by $414 million, while, with the other, she is creating a $200 million patronage fund, in the guise of promoting the production of Canadian content?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the cuts made today to the CBC, in response to our budget, are not easy. I must remind the hon. member that the cuts were made to several levels of government.

Over the next three years, the federal government will let 40,000 people go. I must remind the member that, last year, even

Radio-Québec had to reduce its staff by half. It is true that we are losing positions, but during the budget cuts last year Radio-Québec, now Télé-Québec, had to let half its staff go.

I am satisfied that the CBC's president and board of directors have done their best to at least respect the CBC's right to be heard throughout the country in both official languages. They were not forced to cut as deeply as Radio-Québec did.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister would do well to get her facts straight. Télé-Québec may have made cuts, but it reopened all the regional stations, it did not close them, like the CBC.

Are we to understand that by transferring money from the CBC to the television production fund, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who until today had no influence over the CBC's editorial content, has finally given herself the power she has always wanted and that she will control the CBC?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is not easy to make cuts. Radio-Québec dropped from 629 employees to 329, a reduction of 50 per cent. One thing is certain, and that is that the programming fund, half of which has been set aside for the CBC, was supported by all of Quebec's artists, by Quebec's cultural community.

What is interesting is that this will give the CBC, working in partnership with the private sector, access to funds that will give priority to Canadian production, up to a total of $650 million. We are creating 10,000 jobs.

There is no doubt that these are difficult times and this is why we must work in partnership with film makers, the true creators of Canadian and Quebec culture.

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[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend will mark the return of a very special tradition for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and for the people of the lower north shore of Quebec.

Both the food fishery and the commercial fishery for cod has been closed for several years now to allow for rebuilding after a catastrophic decline. Conservation has been our first priority. Would the hon. minister explain to his colleagues why he has allowed the resumption of the food fishery?

• (1450)

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this year I implemented the continuation of the sentinel fishery. This is a survey designed for fishermen and scientists to determine the rate of return of the cod stocks that were decimated. The results are optimistic. In some cases the results this year as compared to last year are from double to 25 times greater.

This is not sufficient for a commercial fishery but after consultation with every aspect of the industry, all the stakeholders, including the senior scientists, I have decided that it is prudent to allow a very limited, very closely controlled food fishery for two weekends. Essentially this will allow the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and those of the Quebec lower north shore to return to a traditional association with cod as a food in a very limited manner that they have been associated with for hundreds of years. I was very pleased to do it.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the question is, did the Deputy Prime Minister scrap the GST like she said she would? No. Did the Deputy Prime Minister provide stable funding to the CBC? Rather obviously not. Did the Prime Minister fulfil his promise to scrap the GST on reading? Rather obviously not. In fact, he doubled it.

Given a record that would make Pinocchio blush, why should Canadians believe anything at all this government has to say?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when you are looking to find out who is telling the truth, I have a hard time taking the question of the hon. member seriously when he and his party have a stated policy of abolishing the CBC.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Deputy Prime Minister to stay away from those bank machines.

I would like to quote from the Liberal Party policy convention: ''A Liberal government would reaffirm the historic principles embodied in tax free status for the printed word and remove the goods and services tax on reading materials''. The Liberals have put it in writing for us and we are very appreciative of that.

Since the finance minister likes to talk about his government's commitment to education and literacy, I wonder if he can explain his broken promise, for instance, to medical students at Memorial University who are going to have to pay $400 more for their books because of a promise that the Liberals did not keep. In fact, not only did the government not keep its promise it doubled the GST on books.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, there has been no change in the GST on books and there has been no doubling.

At the same time I indicated very clearly in this House on numerous occasions that we are very open to the concept of examining the way in which books are taxed. However, we raised certain questions which the hon. member has not yet answered. In fact, is this the best use of $140 million or are there other ways in which one can support literacy?

We will continue in that vein. Our basic goal is certainly an improved workforce and more educated Canadians. I ask the hon. member, why is it that in the last budget we increased educational credits for students? We made it easier for students to go back to school and to afford it. We made education easier in the last budget and Reform voted against it.

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[*Translation*]

THE SOMALIA COMMISSION

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said the army was at a standstill. Obviously, its chief of staff is busy defending himself, preparing his testimony and trying to get out of the mess he is now in.

Are we to conclude from what the Prime Minister said that he admits the army is paralysed because he refused to suspend his chief of staff at a time when the latter's credibility is being questioned? In other words, will the Prime Minister acknowledge that if he had suspended the general, the army would not be at a standstill?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Boyle has finished his testimony, and now the commission is continuing its work. We hope the commission will be able to finish its business as soon as possible, so that we can bring the necessary remedies to the present situation.

• (1455)

We should all let the commission go ahead with what it is supposed to do, which is to do its job so that the necessary reforms can be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the present context, could the Prime Minister tell us how much time General Boyle can spend on leading the army, carrying out his tasks and playing his leadership role, considering that for more than 12 months he has been busy managing the mess he himself helped to create?

[*English*]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process of change in the armed forces is going on very rapidly. I am pleased that the chief of the defence staff and his colleagues have been at the forefront of bringing some very important changes to the armed forces.

Yesterday in a speech in Ottawa the general talked about some of the real accomplishments of giving commanders more control, of devolving more authority to base commanders across the country, of looking at terms of service for military personnel so that they can be assured of service depending on performance.

Lots of reforms are going on. It is a pity that people have become so obsessed with some events that they are overlooking the fundamental changes, the good changes, that are putting the Canadian military in the forefront of reforms of all military in the world.

* * *

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister about how his government distributes regional development program funds.

Last week, the Liberal member for St. John's West gave an ultimatum to the town of Placentia. The ultimatum was this. Sell two surplus fire trucks for a token fee against your will or face losing a $350,000 federal grant for an arena.

I would like the Prime Minister to explain to us why Liberal MPs can use the money from taxpayers' pockets across Canada to force provincial or municipal governments to toe the Liberal line and to agree to individual MP's projects.

The Speaker: The way the question is worded, I am trying to see how it fits in with the administrative responsibility of a minister. I see the parliamentary secretary has risen. If he wishes to answer the question, I will permit it.

Mr. Morris Bodnar (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the statement that was made and attributed to the hon. member is not government policy. I understand that she has apologized. That ends the whole matter.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what do we say about this? It is not government policy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Why is it that time and time again in this House, the Prime Minister of this government defends unacceptable behaviour by ministers at times, by backbenchers? Why does that happen? All they say is: ''Ain't our fault, folks. It is not government policy''.

I would like to know whether the Prime Minister has the courage to call in the ethics counsellor—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals on the finance committee got the message from the auditor general that there was something wrong in the way Revenue Canada was mollycoddling the Bronfman family trust they chose to attack the messenger.

Nevertheless, they did make some recommendations. I want to ask the finance minister, who claims that the Liberals have already dealt with this problem, why the finance committee would make such recommendations to deal with the problem if, as the finance minister says is the case, the government has already dealt with the problem.

● (1500)

I would like to further ask the finance minister when he is going to wake up to the fact that Canadians who pay their fair share of taxes are sick and tired of people getting away with this stuff and they want something done about it. They want the government to revisit this tax decision because it is legally possible to do so. Get that money back so we can—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immediately upon taking office the government dealt with the question of family trusts. It took away all of the abusive tax advantages that accrued to family trusts. We did that immediately upon taking office.

That is not the issue in this case. What happened in 1991 brought up the issue of how we should treat property owned by somebody who is a resident of Canada who is leaving Canada, of how we should treat the property of an immigrant. It was not a family trust question. It was really a question that dealt with very wealthy Canadians but every bit as much could have dealt with a widow of an immigrant who was returning to her homeland and how she should deal with that property. That is the basic issue at stake here.

The auditor general made a series of recommendations and the majority report made a very important series of recommendations which the government intends to study very carefully.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Derek Wells (South Shore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Last week the annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization was held in St. Petersburg, Russia. Would the minister inform the House of the results of that meeting, of the impact on Canada's fishery and fishery resources that are so critical to my riding, my constituents, and all of eastern Canada?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to report on a meeting that took place in St. Petersburg two weeks ago. It was a very important meeting to us because of reasons everyone in this House will be familiar with, related to the importance of the fishery to Canada.

There were three points that were achieved through careful negotiation and a lot of homework. The first is that Canada will control the total allowable catch when the fish recovers in NAFO area 2J 3KL, which is adjacent to Canada's coast. The second is that the amount of total allowable catch for a NAFO non-Canadian will be restricted to 5 per cent. The third is that a dispute settling mechanism will be allowed to look at the difficulties we have experienced in the past.

These measures and the continuation of Bill C-29 will ensure that the uncontrolled fishing that has taken place in the past will cease.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my point of order is with regard to the question I asked during question period.

As I understand it, it is the responsibility of the government and a minister to fairly distribute regional development grants. My question was related to the purview of the minister and the question went to the Prime Minister in that regard.

I was asking whether it was right or wrong for a Liberal MP to interfere with the minister's role. The Speaker called that question out of order and I would like you to review—

The Speaker: In the course of question period I give as much latitude as I can. But when I do not know where a member is going in his question, when and I give every latitude for him to get to the question and the question is not arrived at, I feel it is my responsibility to intervene. I made a decision and my decision stands.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for clarification, the question asked was about referring something to the ethics counsellor which is under the purview of the Prime Minister. Is it not appropriate to ask if something can be—

● (1505)

The Speaker: I invite the hon. whip to see me in my chambers. I will be happy to discuss this with him.

[*Translation*]

THE MEMBER FOR SAINT-DENIS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during my speech yesterday you informed me that we should not use the word ''hypocrisy''. Today, during members statements, the hon. member for Saint-Denis used this word. I imagine you did not hear it. I would ask you to check the blues and then get back to us.

The Speaker: I can inform the hon. member that I did not hear the word but I will check.

I would ask all members of the House to please not use words like ''hypocrite'' or ''hypocrisy'', because members get angry and sometimes respond in ways the Chair considers out of order.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would ask one of my colleagues on the other side of the House to state the business of the House for the coming week.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the House shall consider third reading of Bill C-45 concerning section 745 of the Criminal Code. If this is completed, we will return to debate on Bill C-53, the corrections legislation.

Tomorrow we will deal with Bill C-54, the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act. If this bill is completed, we shall return to the point where we left off today.

On Monday and on the days following, we shall pick up the list from Friday, followed by Bill C-41 respecting child support payments, Bill C-26 regarding oceans, Bill C-44, the marine bill, Bill C-47 respecting reproductive technologies, and Bill C-29 concerning fuel additives.

We shall likely designate next Thursday as an allotted day.

The Speaker: We will move directly to tributes.

* * *

THE LATE ARNOLD PETERS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to Arnold Peters, the CCF-NDP MP for riding of Temiskaming in Ontario from 1957 to 1980. Arnold died at the age of 74 on September 17.

I had the honour of being a colleague of Arnold's all too briefly from May 22, 1979 until he was not re-elected in the general election of February 18, 1980. During that time I came to appreciate him greatly as a happy warrior who knew Parliament well, who knew his constituents well and who knew where he stood.

Arnold stood on the side of working people and he made no bones about it. He was a rough but gentle person with strong roots in the mining and logging communities of northern Ontario. He loved the people of these communities and worked hard for their welfare. He had worked in various capacities as a union organizer and was very clear on who he represented when he came to Parliament.

Arnold and his CCF colleague Frank Howard were responsible for reforming Canada's archaic divorce laws in the late 1950s. As I understand it, divorces in some provinces used to have to come before Parliament, something that seems ridiculous to us now. By discussing or reading into the record each divorce claim that came before Parliament, Arnold and Frank made the ridiculousness of such a process obvious and it was soon changed.

Arnold knew the rules and he knew how to use them. He was not one to be pushed around politically or personally. He did not mince words, and stories abound about how direct Arnold could be with bureaucrats who were frustrating the legitimate needs and rights of his constituents. As a rookie MP, I always knew that we were in good hands when Arnold was around.

Arnold Peters also had a reputation as one who worked to reform the prison system in his day. He was also, I might add, an advocate for those who worked for the House of Commons without benefit of collective agreements.

I spoke with a long time colleague of Arnold's this morning, Mark Rose, who told me that Arnold at one time could fairly have been called an ombudsman for House of Commons security and other staff who needed someone to go to bat for them on many occasions.

● (1510)

During the second world war Arnold Peters served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and we honour his service to his country in time of war, as we have honoured it in time of peace.

I last saw Arnold at the unveiling of the plaque in the Centre Block where the names of those who served in former Parliaments are inscribed. The name of Arnold Peters is inscribed there nine times. But more important, Arnold Peters' name and memory is inscribed in the hearts and minds and stories of all those who love justice and who fight for the common people. Arnold Peters was such a person and we loved him for it.

To his wife Alma, his sons and all his family, I express sincere condolences on behalf of the NDP caucus in Parliament. We

continue to be inspired by Arnold's legacy and we will honour his memory by continuing to fight the good fight that Arnold fought so well and for so long in the House of Commons.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute today to Arnold Peters who served with distinction for many years as the MP for the riding of Temiscaming in Northern Ontario.

I remember him well, for Arnold Peters was my member of Parliament during the years I was growing up in Kirkland Lake. Arnold Peters died on Tuesday.

Before his election in 1957 Arnold Peters had been a gold miner, a union activist and had served during World War II.

[*Translation*]

When Arnold Peters was first elected, in 1957, I was still quite young, but, as my family lived in Kirkland Lake, I remember very well when he became the member for our riding of Temiscamingue.

[*English*]

He very quickly made a name for himself in Parliament when he and his CCF colleague Frank Howard successfully managed to reform Canada's divorce laws. As a result he became known around here as one of the divorce twins.

As an opposition member first with the CCF and later with the NDP, he was certainly outspoken. I am sure some of my colleagues on this side of the House can still remember this northern Ontarion's spirited questions from his seat across the way.

He was rewarded for his dedication to his constituents in Temiscaming and for his service to all Canadians in the House of Commons by going on to win eight more elections. With 22 years in this Chamber he was the longest serving member in the riding's history.

On behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to his family.

[*Translation*]

Again, we extend our most sincere condolences to the family of the late Arnold Peters.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as the Reform member from Ontario, I rise in the House today to join my hon. colleagues in paying tribute to Mr. Arnold Peters, who passed away this week.

Mr. Peters served in the RCAF during World War II and in 1957 was elected as the member of Parliament for the Ontario riding of Temiscaming, an office he held for 23 years, winning nine successive elections.

Mr. Peters served both his country and his constituents with distinction and honour.

On behalf of the Reform Party I want to give thanks for his years of service and to extend our sympathies and condolences to his family and friends.

The Speaker: Before we had Statements by Members today, we had a few more petitions that I said I would take in and also answers to Questions on the Order Paper.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present pursuant to Standing Order 36 three petitions.

The first petition signed by my constituents calls on the Parliament of Canada to prohibit convicted criminals from profiting financially from book writing, setting up 1-900 numbers and producing video tapes.

● (1515)

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING PROJECTS

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from two co-operative housing projects in St. John's, Odyssey House and S.O.D. Housing Co-operatives, which calls on Parliament to administer a financial and federally funded co-operative housing office for non-governmental organizations.

CANADIAN MERCHANT MARINE

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): The third petition calls on Parliament to extend benefits to veterans of the merchant marine equal to that enjoyed by veterans of Canada's World War II services.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 10 could be made an Order for Return, the return would be tabled immediately.

[*Text*]

Question No. 10—**Mr. Ringma:**

For the fiscal year 1995, and with respect to minority language broadcasting stations across Canada, what has the government determined to be: (*a*) the total amount of federal monies spent on providing these services and (*b*) the total amount of advertising revenue generated by these stations?

Return tabled.

[*English*]

Mr. Zed: I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Sheila Copps (for the Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved that Bill C-45, an act to amend the Criminal Code (judicial review of parole ineligibility) and another act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in support of the third reading of Bill C-45, an act to amend the Criminal Code and another act.

This bill would amend section 745 of the Criminal Code which provides for judicial review of the parole ineligibility period for life sentences for murder and high treason.

I note for the information of the hon. members that section 745 is now called section 745.6 as a result of the coming into force of Bill C-41, the sentencing bill, on September 3, 1996. Under section 745.6, as it currently reads, an offender is not eligible to apply for review of his or her parole ineligibility period until he or she has served at least 15 years of the sentence.

During such a review the decision on whether or not to reduce the ineligibility period is made by a jury of 12 ordinary citizens drawn from the jurisdiction where the crime was committed. At present this decision can be made by a majority of eight out of twelve members or two-thirds of the jury. This is one of the aspects of the provision that would be affected by Bill C-45. The decision is made by a jury after it hears evidence presented by the applicants and by the crown.

It must be noted that under section 745.6 the jury has no authority to release the offender from prison. All it may do is allow the applicant, in appropriate cases, to apply to the National Parole Board for a parole hearing prior to the expiration of the 25 years of ineligibility. A decision on whether or not to grant parole is made by the parole board after considering whether the offender's release would present an undue risk to society.

Where the parole board decides to release an offender who has had his or her parole ineligibility period reduced, the board imposes conditions on that release. These conditions and indeed the life sentence itself continue to apply for the remainder of the life of the individual or the life of the sentence and the offender may at any time be sent back to prison should he or she breach the conditions of that release.

This means that the offender continues to be subject, literally for the rest of the offender's life, to the risk of being reincarcerated at any time for a breach of the conditions of release.

I would also note that for the consideration of all hon. members that a system of review of the parole ineligibility period after 15 years is consistent with systems in place in many of the western democracies we like to compare ourselves with, in that, in many of these countries parole eligibility for murder is set at 15 years and in some cases less than 15 years. In the United States the average time served by murderers who are not executed is 18 years at the federal level, and 15 years at the state level.

• (1520)

As hon. members know, section 745.6 was enacted in 1976 in a public fashion when the death penalty was abolished in Canada. It was felt at the time that section 745.6 was necessary as a source of hope for the rehabilitation of convicted murders and as a source of protection for prison guards as well. We can all imagine situations where convicted murderers have a faint hope of being released on condition that their behaviour will be better. If they knew in advance they would be imprisoned for the rest of their lives, what incentive would there be not to put the safety and life of prison guards in jeopardy?

The enactment of section 745.6 also recognized, in some cases, keeping offenders in prison beyond 15 years does not serve the public interest. We all know there is a great deal of public concern about section 745.6. Many have asked for the repeal of this section out of concern for public safety. Others have cited the revictimization of the victim's family by the review hearing 15 years down the road at a time when the terrible wounds inflicted by the crime may have started to heal. Others focus on the appropriate minimum period of incarceration for the worst offence in the Criminal Code.

I share the concerns of Canadians about the need to ensure public safety. I am moved by the pain and experience of the families of the victims of these often brutal, senseless crimes. The prospect of victims' families being revictimized through a public review conducted before a jury in cases where the offender has no reasonable prospect of success is one of the considerations that has prompted the government to act by bringing this bill to the House. However, I do not support the repeal of section 745.6. I believe the reasons that justified its addition to the Criminal Code in 1976 are still valid today. Bill C-45 amends section 745.6 in order to ensure the provision is available only in appropriate cases.

Before moving on to the three main elements of the bill where changes are being sought I want to speak briefly about a number of principles on which our criminal law is based. These principles which have evolved over hundreds of years of jurisprudence through the British courts, the Commonwealth and the courts of Canada. We must keep these principles in mind when we are considering some of the arguments made, particularly those arguments that this section should be abolished.

If we cast our minds to what we have heard about the criminal justice system a number of these sacrosanct principles come to mind. Probably the most obvious is during a criminal trial that in order to have a finding of guilt we must prove that guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. I suppose in some instances the person that committed the offence is found not guilty because of that very high standard. We could have a standard where perhaps the person is guilty, so let us convict him. Or, they are likely guilty, or on the balance of probability they are guilty and maybe we should convict them. The law has evolved in this civilized society, such that we want to keep the number of innocent people in prison to a minimum. That is why we have a very high standard of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. If we question that principle, let us remember why it was enacted in the first place.

• (1525)

Another principle that has evolved over the years is the rule against the retrospective application of the criminal law. What does that rule say? It says that someone cannot change the criminal law in a substantive way to affect the life of an individual after the fact. We cannot make a new law to apply to past actions.

This law probably evolved many hundreds of years ago through the jurisprudence. It was a way for the judiciary to protect citizens many centuries ago from the capricious actions of a state less concerned about the rights of an accused. For example, a person does an act that is not illegal. Subsequently, whatever government it is changes the law and makes that act illegal. Surely there is something wrong with charging the person after the fact. When the person did the act, it was not illegal. However some government enacted a law making that act illegal and are going to charge the person. That does not make any sense.

What if a person commits a criminal act and the sentence is a maximum of any number of years in prison. Subsequent to the person committing that offence, the government changes the law and puts in place a penalty that is much harsher. What about the death penalty? Surely it would be unfair to impose a more significant penalty after the fact. This principle is no doubt protected in the charter. Do not blame the charter as often Reformers are prone to do. This rule has evolved over hundreds of years to protect citizens from the capricious actions of government.

Governments many years ago may not have held the individual in such regard. Let us never forget to look back in history to see how these rules evolved, to see what abuses they were designed to alleviate, before we disregard them.

We believe that individuals must be notionally aware of what is legal and what the consequences are before the act is committed. By promulgation of these prohibitions, and the statutes of the land are in the code, action is to be taken against them. Society must be aware of these restrictions and activities before they can contravene these prohibitions. This makes common sense.

What is the implication of this rule against retrospectivity in relation to the repeal of section 745 when it means that even if this section were repealed, the people already in the system, that is, those already convicted of murder and serving time in prison for up to 25 years? In the future if they were recently convicted and sentenced, they could still apply. The repeal will not bring to an end the ability of people who are already sentenced to make application under section 745.

Reformers tell people to go out and campaign for the repeal of section 745 and the person who committed this horrible crime against their loved one will not get a section 745 application. That happens. That is a fact. That is what the Reform Party is telling these victims of crime to do. I want to read the words. We have the words of the hon. member for Macleod who indicated quite clearly in a speech on Monday. that he advocated that an individual go out and campaign for the repeal of section 745, reliving past horrors, spending their own money, spending their own time in order that the individual who committed this terrible crime would be prevented from making a section 745 application.

• (1530)

Surely the Reformers cannot have missed one of the fundamental principles upon which our criminal law is based. Surely even if the members happened to miss it perhaps their researchers might have caught this very fundamental principle. They could have told the victims of these horrible crimes exactly what the fact of the matter was instead of urging them to campaign against this legislation, suggesting to them that the individual that committed this horrible crime against their family would be prevented from applying. That is an absolute exploitation of the pain of the victims and their families. It is an exploitation for political purposes of people who have been hurt in the most fundamental way.

Reformers are always interested in talking about the effects on the victims. I ask the question: What about the effects on the victims of this kind of nonsense? The Reform Party would do well to advise people who come to them to counsel as to exactly what is entailed by repeal of section 745 of the act before sending them out to conduct their campaign for them.

It is very disturbing that these people who have committed these horrible crimes and have been convicted, and those who seek nothing more than to gain publicity because they know they will never ever ever get out of prison, utilize people from the Reform Party to get their publicity for them.

I remember a day at the justice committee when the hon. member for Calgary Northeast sat there with eyes aglow reading a letter from a notorious criminal. The hon. member was hoping beyond hope that maybe he would get some attention by bringing forward this letter. The Reform Party needs to think about the witting assistance of individuals who have no hope of getting out; all they are seeking is publicity. They need to think about whether they should in fact be giving them publicity. Serious thought should be given to this tactic and changes in behaviour should result.

Our legislation deals realistically with section 745 and the changes that are required. We acknowledge that even a repeal would not change the system. The changes we are proposing, while one of the changes cannot be implemented after the fact because it is a substantive change, the other changes to the act are procedural and thereby we can make them.

I will now go over the changes that have been brought in by this government. The three elements of the bill that are changing accomplish the goal of ensuring that only in appropriate cases will individuals have the benefit of success of this application.

• (1535)

The first change eliminates judicial review for all multiple murders committed in the future, whether or not the murders are committed at the same time. This would include serial murderers. The proposed amendment is consistent with a notion found in the Criminal Code that repetition of the offence should be treated more harshly by the law than a single offence. Therefore anybody who commits multiple murders will not be allowed the benefit of section 745.

The second proposed amendment is procedural in nature. It creates a screening mechanism whereby a judge of a superior court would conduct a paper review of the application to determine if there is a reasonable chance of success before the application is allowed to proceed to a full hearing. This would help to ensure that only deserving cases get before a section 745 jury, that only in appropriate cases would there be a full blown hearing. This would ensure for frivolous cases with no likelihood of success that the victims would not have to relive the horrors of the situation.

The third amendment would provide that a parole ineligibility period may only be reduced by a unanimous vote of the jury. As a result of this provision, an application for a reduction in a parole ineligibility period would be denied when a jury decides it should be denied or when a jury simply cannot reach a unanimous conclusion to reduce the period. Also in denying an application, a jury can decide if and when the offender may make another application, but in any event, not before two years.

In June, before the summer recess, the standing committee heard from a number of witnesses with strong views on section 745.6. Some of them asked for a complete repeal of the section. I cannot support this because I believe that doing away with section 745.6 is not good policy and not the right thing to do in addition to the other problems I have mentioned.

Other witnesses have argued forcefully for maintaining the section in its present form. In light of the committee hearings which accurately reflected the deep division in opinion evident during the consultations that preceded the introduction of this bill, I believe Bill C-45 strikes the right balance between those who want to maintain the section and those who want it repealed.

When the Minister of Justice introduced Bill C-45 on June 11, it was my hope this House would be able to move quickly to pass these amendments before the House rose for the summer. Regrettably this was not possible. I ask hon. members of this House to support the bill at this time and give it quick passage so we can bring these amendments into force as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the third time I speak to Bill C-45, not counting what I said to the Standing Committee on Justice.

Right from the beginning, we have been hearing double speak from the hon. member for Prince-Albert—Churchill. On the one hand, he says: ''We are not striking down section 745 of the Criminal Code. It should not be struck down, there must be some hope left'', and on the other, for all intents and purposes, the provisions of Bill C-45 will make release under section 745 impossible in several areas in Canada.

Let us start at the beginning. When did article 745 appear in our criminal law? Twenty years ago this year, in July 1976, as a result of a compromise negotiated by the then Solicitor General, the present member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, amendments to the bill abolishing the death penalty in Canada were tabled. These amendments were referred to as the Prud'homme-Fleming amendments, after the names of their movers.

• (1540)

Why? What happened? Nobody had to toe the party line, it was to be a free vote in the House of Commons, and those in favour of abolishing the death penalty simply could not count on enough votes; the numbers were not there. If the vote had been on the initial bill introduced by the Trudeau government, it would have been defeated by 4, 5 or 6 votes. Negotiations conducted by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and the Prud'homme-Fleming amendments made it possible to secure another 6 votes, and I

believe that the death penalty was abolished on the strength of these 6 votes. But when you negotiate, you make compromises.

Some kind of compromise had to be reached at that point with the people who were inclined to favour the death penalty but still had some doubts, and the members who took part in the negotiations at the time were able to tell them: ''Look, the basic decision to make here is not to choose between 25, 10 or 15 years, but to determine if we want to abolish the death penalty''. This is how they were able to convince some individuals who were against a firm sentence of 25 years in prison to support the 25-year sentence; otherwise, the death penalty would have been maintained. The government back then made it very clear. I remember hearing Mr. Trudeau say in this House: ''If the bill is not passed, do not rely on cabinet to systematically use the royal prerogative to commute sentences. People will be executed in Canada, and scaffolds will be built''. The message was quite clear. Members who wanted to take it into account did just that.

The hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River would have us believe that section 745, as amended today, is a measure of clemency, but that is not so. In 1976, the law was made tougher. Until July of 1976, anyone under sentence of death, whose sentence was commuted to life in prison or anyone found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison was eligible for parole after 10 years. They did not have to appear before a jury; they only had to go to the National Parole Board and, based on the circumstances, apply for parole. In fact, convicted murderers sentenced to life imprisonment spent an average of 13.2 years in prison. That is far from the minimum of 25 years stipulated in section 745.

All these negotiations made the law tougher; it was not improved for the inmates. Section 745 provides that anyone convicted of first or second degree murder and sentenced to more than 15 years in prison may, after 15 years, apply to the chief justice of the province's superior court or supreme court, who would then empanel a jury. The chief justice has no discretion in this; he must empanel a jury and it is up to the jury to make the determination.

After the evidence is introduced, after the sociologists, psychologists, social workers and correctional officers have presented their arguments and reports, sometimes after the victims' families have provided relevant information, the jury will determine whether or not it should recommend that the inmate be paroled, since the inmate will always have his life sentence hanging over him. The procedure outlined in section 745 is not a lottery.

Under the current provisions in section 745, the jury must make a decision based on a two-third majority, or 8 out of 12 members, which, I think, is quite reasonable since, according to criteria that were set centuries ago, their cedision does not have to be based on something beyond a reasonable doubt. All they have to do is make a determination based on a preponderance of evidence.

● (1545)

In the circumstances, does the inmate deserve to be paroled earlier? Do you need unanimity for this? I think not.

I think that, back in 1976, the legislator had the good sense to determine that a two-third majority was sufficient. Maintaining the two-third rule will result in the standard application of the law throughout Canada. Regardless of the province where we live, we will all be subject to the same laws and regulations not only in theory but also in practice.

The comments made by the Reform Party reflect a Canadian reality that cannot be ignored. These members represent a significant number of Canadians, who want tougher sentences and are asking that section 745 be repealed or Bill C-45, with its tougher sentences, be passed. In certain regions of Canada, western Canada in particular, juries will certainly be less lenient.

If the hon. members representing western Canadian ridings have been calling for the repeal of section 745 of the Criminal Code with such vigour, I assume that judges and juries in western Canada will reflect the same social reality.

These members must not be out of touch with the reality in their region. This means there will be one reality for western Canada, one for Ontario, another one for Quebec and yet another one for Atlantic Canada. I submit that, since criminal law comes under federal jurisdiction, there must be a single standard applicable from coast to coast to coast. This standard should allow for a bit of leeway—a margin of error, so to speak, i.e. four members in the jury. That sounds like an excellent idea to me.

As I said earlier, under the current legislation, after 15 years, inmates are fully entitled to ask the chief justice to empanel a jury. The point was made during the debate that only a minority of individuals actually make an application. They realize, in many cases, that it may be rejected.

The chief justice then empanels the jury and the jury makes a recommendation. If it is recommended that the individual be allowed to apply for parole, the individual can go before the National Parole Board. This means that, at the end of the 15 years, several more months may elapse before a decision is made.

We have heard of individuals who applied for parole but were not released until much later. If the jury is not convinced by the

arguments presented, it sets a date when the person may reapply for parole or release before serving the full 25 years of their sentence.

The hon. member for Crowfoot asked an excellent question of most of the witnesses at the hearings, both on Bill C-226 and on Bill C-45. The question he asked was the following, and he may correct me if I do not get it right. He asked the witnesses what was the appropriate sentence for a person found guilty of murder. It is a fundamental question, the crux of the whole debate.

Once the answer is that a person found guilty of murder should not be sentenced to death, once the possibility of the death penalty has been eliminated, what is the appropriate sentence? Nothing can replace a life, we have been taught this from an early age. This is a value—I was going to say an almost universal one—that would benefit from more universal exposure. In the world in which we live, it is one of the supreme values we have.

There is no way to replace the life of a person lost in such circumstances. And then the Canadian Parliament decided that taking someone's life because he had killed another person was not a good way of showing that it was wrong to kill.

We are in a difficult position. We cannot just let people go free. There has to be a penalty.

• (1550)

Twenty years? Twenty-five years? Life? Something along those lines, without being more specific. Twenty-five years seems like a sensible proposal. Life imprisonment with the possibility of review later on, yes. People must have something to hope for. We must not remove hope. That is what helps a person to survive. To sentence a person without holding out the hope that some day he may be released is at least as bad as a death sentence.

On the other hand, the sentence must be exemplary, since murder is, in my opinion, the most serious crime that exists in the Criminal Code. We cannot give a suspended sentence for first degree or second degree murder. So we need something that is severe enough to set an example, to protect society, so that the person who is found guilty is punished and the family, the community feels safe. People have the right to be protected.

We said at the second reading stage that we wanted a review of the legislation, which is now 20 years old. We had a day and a half, two days at the most to do this review, practically sitting around the clock. We expected a review process from coast to coast. Like the unemployment insurance scenario, it seems everything was agreed upon beforehand. We heard witnesses, with very little time to spare. It was impossible to do parliamentary committee work worthy of the name, but the vast majority of witnesses who appeared, the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society and even people representing victims told us: ''Do not tamper with section 745.''

What was the rush? Where were the public demonstrations demanding amendments that affect about 75 or 76 people who have filed requests in the past 20 years? There are other problems that are far more acute and require immediate attention. We would have had time for a thorough review.

Now that 20 years have passed, would it not be better to go back to the situation that existed before 1976 and judge each case on its merits before the Parole Board? That was an option.

Is there a case for keeping the section as it is now or should we consider all other avenues? That is what we wanted to do and what we were not allowed to do, and now we are faced with legislation that is fundamentally reactionary, since it will now require the jury to be unanimous, with the consequences I mentioned earlier. It will also force prisoners who want to apply for parole to first go through a judge to whom they will give evidence, not in person in an adversarial hearing where each party can argue its case, but in writing. In common law, while the judge could decide to hear the parties, the prisoners have no statutory right to be heard, they cannot demand a hearing. Depending on what school of sentencing he belongs to, the judge may decide: ''There is no probability of a jury granting you parole; your application is denied.''

Individuals will not be judged twice, but the facts will be heard twice. In criminal cases in general and, by way of comparison, in trials by jury, the jury is master of the facts, while the judge is master of the law. But in this case, the judge will be master of the facts. He will first examine the facts of the matter. If he does not find the evidence probative enough, he will not allow the prisoner to go before a jury. Should the prisoner be allowed to proceed, he will then have to make his case again.

The burden of proof is on the prisoner. Do not mislead us into thinking that this measure is designed to protect the system and to extend the traditional jury process to the system under section 745. The prisoner who goes before 12 jurors to be allowed to apply for parole after 15 years has to convince those 12 jurors. The Crown is not there to say: ''In objecting, I must convince the 12 of them to vote unanimously against his release.''

The burden of proof is on the prisoner. It seems to us that it is too heavy a burden, with the consequences we enumerated earlier.

Reference was made to Bill C-226, which I opposed, in which the issue was set in much clearer terms by simply calling for the repeal of section 745.

● (1555)

There was at least a clear question and no double talk. Now people in the West can be told: ''See, criminals will no longer be paroled under section 745 because the law was tightened up'', while people in Ontario and Quebec will hear: ''See, social workers, psychologists, we believe in rehabilitation because we have amended the provisions in section 745 to make them even more attractive''. That is what they will say. As one of my professors used to say in law school: ''The best thing to do when one wants to win a case but does not have one is to confuse the judge''.

During elections, it is the people who are the judge. When one wants to win a case but does not have one, the thing to do is to confuse the people so there is a chance that, on election day, they will be confused and put their Xs in the wrong spot. The chance to vote in an election comes only every four or five years so one must be careful not to make a mistake. That is what the government is doing.

At least, those who argue in favour of simply abolishing section 745 are being honest. I do not share their views, but their arguments were clear. By contrast, the government's convoluted reasoning is anything but. I wish to commend the courage shown by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, who held his ground throughout the debate and who, at report stage yesterday, put forward an amendment and voted against the bill, as did the former Solicitor General, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, along with a few other colleagues on the Liberal side.

One can live with double talk for a while. According to the old saying, you can fool some of the people all of the time, you can fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. This is what the Liberal government has tried to do since the beginning of its term, believing that it would improve the plight of the unemployed, the Canadian prison system, the transportation system by privatizing it, in spite of all the comments and interventions of the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans. As you know, his comments were right on throughout this whole issue.

Some day, the dust will settle and voters, who are not stupid, will render their judgment. The hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River also said that section 745 would be improved, since a serial killer, a person who has committed more than one crime, at the same time or consecutively, will no longer be allowed to invoke this section. This is a step backward. One can easily think of cases where a person may commit more than one crime in a given situation but still deserve to be released.

Take the case of someone who decides to rob a bank with a gun. Criminal intent may not be present at the beginning, but the person ends up killing two people during the hold-up, according to the rules of interpretation of murder. This is a regrettable and reprehensible act, and the person will be sentenced. However, if this person has not committed any other offence, should he be prohibited from invoking section 745, in the same manner as a murderer such as the one to whom the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead referred, who savagely killed and raped Isabelle Bolduc in such a sordid manner that it cannot be described in this House? There are people who seem beyond redemption for society. Committing one sordid murder is often worse than killing more than one person.

The bill also attempts to establish levels of murders. Is it less serious to kill two people, than one? Is it less serious to kill one person, than three or four? The particular circumstances of each case must be taken into account. We cannot rely on a general rule, as the government wants to do.

The government wants to pave everything over. This used to be a popular thing to do. The City of Quebec did it about 20 years ago. It put concrete everywhere in the city. Today, all that concrete has to come down in order to restore the beautiful architecture of this city. Today, the government is putting another layer of asphalt on parking lot 745, hoping that the spring thaw will not do too much damage. But we will begin to see the perverse effects of this legislation in a year or two. We will see these results in the prisons, because, as I said earlier, if we remove any hope for these people, we will force them to do desperate things.

● (1600)

Will prison guards and law enforcement officers be safer? Will an inmate who knows that he will never get out of prison have no qualms about killing a guard or two, because he has no hope left? I think that the way we are going about addressing this issue is all wrong and that the status quo would have been much better.

Not one of the opposition amendments has been accepted. Even the amendments put forward by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands were not approved by the government. Was the bill so good? It was introduced on June 11, then there was a time allocation motion at second reading when the bill was rammed through and sent to committee for a day and a half or two days, forcing its members to sit night and day almost. Do we have all the information we need to say: Yes, we are sure that, beyond a reasonable doubt, this bill will improve the situation in Canada? I do not think so. This is a bad piece of legislation that will only undermine the judicial process in Canada.

In conclusion, after indicating that the official opposition will be voting against this bill, I want to move an amendment, which reads as follows:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word ''that'' and substituting the following therefor: Bill C-45, an act to amend the Criminal Code

(judicial review of parole ineligibility) and another Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence.

The Speaker: Dear colleague, the motion seems in order.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I support the hoist. In fact I would like to see this bill hoisted forever without a glimmer of hope of ever being returned.

As I rise to address Bill C-45, I will first comment on two points in the intervention by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

He suggested today in his speech that the removal of a parole application is barred by the principle of retroactivity. That is really what section 745 is. It is a section that allows for a parole application for the reduction of the parole ineligibility of a life sentence. The legal advice we have received is that the removal of section 745 would affect all people who are imprisoned at the present time and who would wish to apply. This would deny them the right to apply and it would be sound and constitutional.

● (1605)

I listened carefully to the parliamentary secretary's statements and he suggested that members of Parliament, including Reform members of Parliament, would use the pain and agony and suffering of families who have had their children murdered for the purpose of partisan political gain. If I understood him correctly, in my humble opinion that statement is beneath contempt.

I oppose this piece of legislation which in my mind and that of many Canadians demeans the value of a human life. Bill C-45 clearly demonstrates that the Liberal justice minister and a majority of his Liberal colleagues place very little worth on the lives of Canadians.

I would like each of the members of this House who voted in favour of Bill C-45, who voted to allow first degree murderers the opportunity for early release, to ask themselves: What value do they place on the lives of their brothers and sisters or the lives of their children? Do they feel their lives are only worth 15 years? Would the joy and excitement which rings in the voices of their young children and grandchildren be forgotten after 15 years?

I would like the justice minister to ask the Rosenfeldts when they attend the justice committee hearings today if they have forgotten how their son once smiled and laughed, or if they have forgotten how it felt to cradle and comfort their young child.

I would like the justice minister to ask the Rosenfeldts how they felt the day they learned Daryn was tortured, sexually assaulted and killed by the deranged Clifford Olson.

I would like the justice minister to ask Mrs. Rosenfeldt how she feels every time she is forced to think about Daryn's last hours of life, or how she felt on August 12 when Olson exercised his right for early release courtesy of the Liberal government.

I would like the justice minister to look into the eyes of Mrs. Rosenfeldt and explain why he supports the bid for early release of her son's killer. I would like the justice minister and all members to pause and think about our own children and grandchildren and then justify to Mrs. Rosenfeldt why her son's life is worth a meagre 15 years.

The minister is directly responsible for Clifford Olson's August 12 bid for early release. He is directly accountable to the Rosenfeldts and the other 10 families whose children were ripped from their lives at the hand of this man.

The justice minister is responsible for Clifford Olson's news making attempts for early release. The justice minister claimed Bill C-45 was not about Clifford Olson; he claimed the bill was not a result of Olson's August 12, 1996 date to make application for early release. Why then was the minister and his government so insistent that the bill be passed before the summer recess? Why did the Liberal government ask us and the Bloc not to unduly delay the bill?

We provided our co-operation despite the fact we do not support Bill C-45. We gave our word that we would not block the passage of the bill because we did not want to be responsible in any way for Olson's bid at early release. We did not want the Rosenfeldts and the other families to have to relive the nightmare they have endured for the past 15 years.

And although Bill C-45 would still give the likes of Olson an appeal to a judge, which I find beneath contempt, there is the possibility he could be denied a full judge and jury hearing he now has under section 745 of the Criminal Code.

The justice minister has had almost three years to introduce Bill C-45 but he chose to drag his feet. He chose to introduce Bill C-45 at the eleventh hour. The justice minister chose to gamble with the emotions of the Rosenfeldts and the other 10 families whose children were killed by Olson and he lost that gamble. Bill C-45 did not pass and Olson once again grabbed the spotlight he so predictably seeks.

● (1610)

For the benefit of the members of this House that do not sit on the justice committee, I would like to read the testimony given by Sharon Rosenfeldt on June 18:

> Emotional upheaval, that was what I felt on February 8, 1996 when I found out that Clifford Olson, the killer of my son, had applied for his 15-year judicial review. I do realize that the full application cannot be made until August 12, but I know that all the paperwork is ready. I have known for the past number of years that it was his right to apply and that in all likelihood he would. Yet for some reason, although my mind knew it could be a reality, my heart, emotions and soul denied it. I was afraid to think about it, so I put my feelings on hold, something I have grown accustomed to. I know how to make certain feelings go numb. I learned how to survive like that.
>
> You see, I have to stay strong because I made a promise to my son as his coffin was being lowered into the ground that I would do everything I could as his mom to ensure that the person responsible for killing him would be brought to justice. I promised I would never leave him until that happened. I know I have to put him to rest and that he deserves to be put to rest, but the laws in our country prevent both of us from experiencing any peace.
>
> When I learned that Olson had indeed made the application, I was stunned. Suddenly many images flashed through my mind. I felt shock but I should not feel shock. I felt angry but I should not feel angry. I felt hurt but I should not be hurting. I felt betrayed and I felt panic. I could not breathe and I could not stay still. I kept pacing from room to room. I wanted to cry. I wanted to scream and I wanted to run again—Why do we have to go through this again? I felt weak and vulnerable. I cannot lose my dignity again—I went into the family room and took my son's picture off the cabinet. I sat down and stared lovingly at him, outlining his face with my hands. He looked so perfect. You see, I always have to reconstruct his face in my mind because a hammer was used on him. He was beaten beyond recognition. I cradled his picture next to my heart and once again made the same promises I had 15 years earlier.
>
> I got on my knees and I asked God to give me the strength to keep my dignity. This is very important to me because after Clifford Olson took my child's life, he also took my dignity for a while. I will not let Olson and the system do that again.

The justice minister failed to stop Olson and he failed to protect Sharon Rosenfeldt, her family, and the 10 other families whose children were murdered by Olson from feeling shock, angry, hurt, betrayed, weak, or vulnerable. Instead the justice minister and the Liberal government are protecting the rights of Clifford Olson by refusing to eliminate section 745 of the Criminal Code. To emphasize my statement I would like to quote Mrs. Debbie Mahaffy who said:

> You, this justice committee, and I wager every MP and MPP in Canada, have not heard the screams of terror and the cries of their child as she plead with her killers to let her live, to let her come home, but everyone has heard the synthetic cries of murderers wanting protection in prison for his or her safety, or wanting better food or a bigger cell, or no cell mate, or a different cell mate, or release from prison. The wants and the wishes of the murderers are even given fiscal priority over the needs of victims' families whose members need professional counselling: the mothers, fathers, siblings of all ages, grandparents, cousins and friends whose lives are forever changed.

I cannot begin to imagine the pain these parents experienced when they were told their children had been taken from them. I attempt to empathize with the families of murder victims, however, I cannot fully understand the depth of horror they have gone through. To have this agony awakened by a section 745 application provided by the Government of Canada is beneath contempt. Like them, I believe the lives of their children are worth much, much more than 15 years.

Bill C-45 and the justice minister's last ditch attempt to pass a bill of this nature clearly shows that the minister does not empathize with the families of murder victims and the nightmares they endure as a result of the reliving of the heinous crimes committed against their children and grandchildren. Instead the sympathy is with the murderers of our children, the Olsons and the Bernardos.

● (1615)

Bill C-45 clearly shows that the letter written to him by Sylvain Leduc's grandmother, Teresa McQuaig, had absolutely no impact on him. This grandmother's pain and her plea did not change the justice minister's support for the early release of first degree murderers or his attitude toward justice.

Here is what Sylvain's grandmother said in her letter to the justice minister:

> The most painful thing in life is to live with the knowledge that your child lies naked and cold in a morgue. My grandson was in the morgue for three days. I was frozen to death. I could not warm up. I was in a hot tub for three days. I could not stand it until I knew he had clothes on him.
>
> My heart is a pump that keeps blood flowing through my veins. I have a special sacred place situated below my stomach. Some people call this intestinal fortitude, but I call it my soul. It is there that love, hate, courage, faith, humour, anger, compassion, happiness, conscience and God dwell. The horrible murder of my grandson has made my soul very sick. At times it is numb and on other days it is like jello. It has lost its desire for living. It does not care much about everyday things any more. It has lost its desire for food, sex, enjoyment, travel and books. There is a emptiness there, a hole that will never be filled. My grandson left this earth with part of it. Horror and fear live there also.
>
> Sylvain's murderers have done this to me. When all is quiet I cannot stop my mind from imagining the pain and horror Sylvain suffered before dying. I must take sleeping medication to dull those horrible pictures. I receive psychiatric care but I find it difficult to speak of Sylvain in the past tense and it takes so much energy to get there. I find it also hopeless. I feel like a dead flower who has been trampled down. I feel like I have been robbed.

That forms part of the letter to the justice minister. For the justice minister to allow that anguish to keep festering to allow this grandmother's wounds to be opened and reopened is wrong. Yet that is precisely what Bill C-45 allows. Every time a killer applies for a judicial review of his parole the family and society relive the horrible memories and live in terror of the day these killers will be released early from prison.

I would like to share with the House the feelings and memories of two other mothers whose children were murdered and who presented testimony to the justice committee. The justice minister

should have been present during Mrs. Boyd's and Mrs. Mahaffy's testimony. He should have faced these two grieving mothers and publicly explained to them why he places only a value of 15 years on the lives of their children and why he is not protecting these grieving mothers instead of those who have murdered their children.

I begin with Darlene Boyd:

> In 1982 our 16-year old daughter Laurie was abducted, sexually assaulted repeatedly and stabbed 18 times. They did not leave her any dignity. They then proceeded to douse her body with gasoline and set her on fire. She was the second victim. There was a High River girl. It was the same scenario, but they beat her head with a tire iron.
>
> This is what we are talking about here. We are talking about people who commit heinous crimes like this. I truly believe that the man who took our daughter's life and that of the young girl from High River is not and never will be rehabilitation material, especially after serving only 15 years in his confined environment. To rehabilitate there has to be some spark of remorse, and James Peters did not demonstrate any of this. The chance of filtering men like James Peters back into society after 15 years through the system we now have is too great a risk. We will be digging more graves for innocent people.
>
> Truth in sentencing must be addressed here. Our maximum penalty for murder in this country is life with no eligibility for parole for at least 25 years. This, however, is a lie and the lie is still going on. They are still telling this lie at the time of sentencing. Nobody told us about section 745. We found out about it from a newspaperman, not from the parole board or the legal system, but from a newspaperman. That demeans Laurie's life right there, I would say.

● (1620)

Section 745, Bill C-45 and the members sitting on that side of the House heave demeaned Laurie Boyd's life as they have demeaned the life of all Canadians through their continued support of a murderer's right to early release. Section 745 provides killers with an avenue of early release. This makes a mockery of the term life imprisonment.

In the absence of the death penalty the only just and fair penalty for premeditated first degree murder is life imprisonment. To those who say that we do not have a glimmer of hope without section 745, I would suggest to them that there is a glimmer of hope after 25 years because that is what the law states. No parole for 25 years. They do have an opportunity of parole after serving 25 years.

Although Debbie Mahaffy does not support the return of capital punishment, she does support the complete repeal of section 745 of the Criminal Code. Mrs. Debbie Mahaffy believes section 745 should be repealed because she believes her daughter Leslie's life is worth at the very least life imprisonment without the eligibility of parole for 25 years. I quote Mrs. Mahaffy's testimony of June 18 this year:

> To do anything less than that is to say the best is irresponsible, unconscionable and does not represent our Canadian values of zero tolerance of violence, but continues to erode the sanctity and the preciousness of life and fairness. My family and all victims' family members have to recover from a death that is not normal. The bereavement is not normal, the grief is not normal, the recovery is not normal, and to build, to redefine, to live a new and normal life will take a lifetime, not just 25 years, but the rest of my life.
>
> I am talking in absolutes. Twenty five years is absolutely 25 years before considering a release back into society, because that is the closest balance our government could ever come to my absolute pain and other victims' families' absolute pain and slow rehabilitation to a much lesser degree of happiness for the rest of my life. This absolute pain is felt by a growing and hourly increase in the number of Canadians who feel this absolute loss of joy. Our loved ones are absolutely dead. Killers receive nothing more absolute than the guarantee of their life in custody for 25 years.

Bill C-45 does not provide the absolute guarantee of life in custody for at least 25 years. It is precisely for that reason that Bill C-45 is being opposed by Debbie Mahaffy, Sharon Rosenfeldt, Darlene Boyd, the Canadian Police Association and I would suggest a majority of Canadians.

On Tuesday of this week the justice minister stood in the company of the Canadian Police Association and the chiefs of police when he introduced his legislative initiatives in Bill C-55 with regard to dangerous offenders. In reference to Bill C-55, Darlene Boyd said: "The minister is trying to deflect attention from the contentious Bill C-45 by introducing dangerous offender legislation. He is trying to take the heat off himself when nothing short of a total repeal will do".

The Canadian Police Association and the chiefs of police endorsed the justice minister's dangers offender legislation this week. And the justice minister capitalized on their support during his press conference. I would like to share with the House and with Canadians the view of the vice-president of the Canadian Police Association on Section 745. In doing so, I would like to point out that the Minister of Justice did not broadcast the Canadian Police Association or the chiefs of police opposition to Bill C-45.

On June 18, 1996 before the justice committee Mr. Grant Obst, the vice-president of the Canadian Police Association said:

> My world entails dealing with victims who have had loved ones yanked from them through the most reprehensible crime that can be committed against mankind: murder. It's a lifetime of loss to them. It is not a 25-year loss and it is not a 15-year loss. There are no judicial reviews or section 745 hearings for victims of murderers or for their families. There are no second chances for them. There is nothing to make their life whole again. There's no section of the Criminal Code that relieves their pain.
>
> I sat through section 745 hearings in my jurisdiction and I have become very close with the family of a murder victim. I have seen what these hearings have done to them. I have spoken with police officers, my colleagues across this country, and it is nearly unanimous that section 745 has to go. That comes from those of us who have experience with murder, murderers and victims.

> Section 745 creates disgust and distrust in the criminal justice system. To a large extent, it is becoming increasingly difficult for me and my colleagues to defend the criminal justice system we work for, believe in and want to believe in. Our position has been, is and will be that section 745 has to be repealed in its entirety.

● (1625)

Mr. Neil Jessop of the Canadian Chiefs of Police echoed those very sentiments, as did Scott Newark, executive director of the Canadian Police Association, who on June 18 also said:

> Section 745 contradicts fundamentally not only public confidence but the entire philosophy of how our criminal justice legal system has grown.

It is a bleeding heart mentality of the glimmer of hope advocates who contradict the philosophy of our justice system. It is they who have made a farce of our penal system by extending rights to murderers, rights they deliberately and viciously denied their victims.

Convicted murderers, rapists and others who take it upon themselves to assault or take the life of another human being throw all their rights away the minute they launch their deadly attack, all their rights except to a fair hearing and humane treatment if incarcerated.

For the criminal justice system to provide a killer with a so-called glimmer of hope or to restore their rights is a further injustice to the victim, the victim's family and an offence to Canadians. That is the Reform Party's fundamental justice philosophy, a philosophy which is shared by thousands if not millions of Canadians.

Bill C-45 contradicts that philosophy but, more important, Bill C-45 demeans the value of a human life. That is why I stand opposed to this bill. It is unworthy of support.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm has the floor.

Mrs. Lalonde: For Mercier, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mercier. Pardon me. The hon. member for Mercier.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my constituents will be annoyed with you for failing to appreciate this riding in the east end of Montreal known for its proximity to the St. Lawrence River and its oil companies.

I wanted to speak to this bill in support of my colleague's amendment, because I want to say that the discourse I have heard repeatedly in this House from the colleagues seated geographically to my left strains belief, and despite their claims, does not serve Canadians.

I would also like to speak in support of my colleague's amendment because I think that Bill C-45, by its very wording, even as presented by the minister, is a bill that contradicts the very essence of the minister's arguments and that also contradicts the old reform, which undoubtedly needed to be reviewed, but not along these lines.

It is important to point out once again, as my colleagues have done, that the parole provisions set out in section 745 are not frivolous.

● (1630)

Before someone who has committed first or second degree murder can be eligible for parole, he must first of all, depending on the degree, have served a large part of his sentence, but, above all, he must get through three crucial steps. First, a judge must be convinced that he can convince a jury; a sort of trial must be held before a jury of 12 citizens with witnesses who do not make a decision, but who decide whether or not the parole board should hear the case and review the sentence.

In other words, at the end of a process in which citizens are involved as jury members, a process that is certainly not full of loopholes, a person who was punished for a first degree or second degree crime may be granted parole.

The government took advantage of the fact that people in western Canada were upset, and understandably so, when a serial killer became eligible for parole, and introduced legislation to strengthen, in fact to completely transform the conditional release process. I would say, and perhaps I am exaggerating, to anyone who is not an expert but is able to use his judgment, there is not the remotest possibility that Olson, the convicted murderer, would have successfully gone through the process leading to parole. It is absolutely unthinkable.

I intend to prove that by quoting statistics we have heard repeatedly, but they bear repeating: as of December 31, 1995, 175 inmates who were eligible to request a judicial review did not do so. Only 76 had filed such a request and 13 of those requests were still pending. Of 63 requests processed, 39 led to a reduction in the period of ineligibility for parole, and as of December 31, 1995, only one offender who benefited from this reduction committed a repeat offence when he committed armed robbery.

So we must realize that the government has used a situation that upset part of the public to act like Zorro coming to the rescue. No doubt influenced by Reform Party speeches feeding on intolerance and especially on anxiety, the government decided to give in, and it did so not unwillingly, because since in Alberta the jury would consist of Albertan jurors and in Quebec, Quebec jurors, in that distinct society, it is very likely that the same legislation will be implemented in widely differing ways.

• (1635)

Why? Because, among other things, this amendment of section 745 will require the jurors be unanimously in favour of granting parole, while a two thirds agreement was enough in the past. To all intents and purposes this clause become unenforceable.

We must ask ourselves a question. According to available statistics, out of 175 prisoners, 39 have obtained a reduced ineligibility period and, as of December 31, one reoffended. This goes to show that rehabilitation is possible in prison.

The fact of the matter is that a number of tools including training go into the rehabilitation effort. If individuals who have paid dearly for their crimes and cost a great deal of money to keep in prison can become valuable members of society, I think they should be given a chance. Need I remind this House that first-degree murderers cost us $76,000 per year?

How can we deprive society of citizens who, having paid their debt to society and proven that they were no longer a threat, having been screened through a judge, a jury and the parole board, are prepared to pull their weight and pay their way?

There are, of course, two completely opposite views to this. One is centred on punishment, on the pretext of protecting society. How can society be protected? How can distressing and murderous crimes be prevented from happening again when intolerance is promoted left and right?

I am no expert, but I see three main categories of crimes. There are foul crimes. Then there are what I call sordid crimes, outrageous sexual offenses, the kind you can forgive but not forget. There are also all sorts of crimes of passion. Under emotional strain, people kill for love or because they are overly possessive, having thought it through of course. It is a highly reprehensible way to solve problems. Prevention in this case does not consist in ensuring that these people remain in prison when they have paid their dues to society and no longer pose a threat to society. Why? In the name of what?

• (1640)

Whenever we address the issue of prevention, we must also talk about values, because keeping inmates in prison for life does not guarantee the safety of citizens when the people who are free do not share the same values of tolerance and generosity or the belief that disputes should not be settled through violence, including violence against women, which often leads to crime.

We should address this problem and give those who work in areas of risk the tools they need. But depriving people who have often paid a heavy price of the chance of having their sentences reduced is cruel and unnecessary. Instead of protecting society, this would create a climate and foster values more likely to generate and justify intolerance and violence than the other way around.

We must deal with realities. We must also deal with what I called the crimes associated with the mafia. This is something else. We need suitable tools to deal with this.

The Liberal government did not grow in our esteem by introducing this amendment, which will make section 745 almost impossible to enforce. It may be a little easier to enforce in Quebec, but it will still be extremely difficult. That is why, led by our colleague from Bellechasse, we in the Bloc Quebecois are asking the government to defer passage of this bill, to look at the situation a little more closely, to identify the real reason why people do not feel safe. Resorting to fearmongering is not the right way to reduce violence and reassure people.

Furthermore, being able to sentence someone to life without parole after going through the usual steps is important, of course. As a woman and a mother, I would be the first one to demand that a dangerous offender not be paroled, including for his own protection. But I know people who are rehabilitated, who are now good citizens and who have much more self-control than others who have never experienced what they have gone through, which will remain present in their minds. It is very important to give those who can make a useful contribution to society an opportunity to do so.

• (1645)

A punitive approach whereby the largest possible number of people would be imprisoned for life is in total contradiction with the creed of the members sitting to my left, the reformers, because prisoners cost a lot of money, even though, in some cases, there is no solution other than incarceration. As we know, and this is particularly true in the case of federal prisons, a person who is incarcerated and is not a hardened criminal—and I am not referring to dangerous criminals—can be released after two years, and can come out a hardened criminal. We have to call a spade a spade.

I personally think that when imprisonment for life is advocated, in spite of the high costs involved and instead of trying to promote preventive measures, we end up with absurd situations. We end up with situations such as in Ontario, where the minister responsible for security is proposing to build huge prisons in which electronic surveillance would be used to reduce costs. This solution was tried elsewhere. What happens is that we create enormous jungles where prisoners set their own rules. One would rather not think of the implications. This is a nightmare that goes beyond one's imagination.

So, we have to be consistent in our overall approach and be careful to avoid giving way to demagogy. We must protect our citizens. The little old ladies—and I am one of them—, who go out at night, must not be afraid. To be sure, we must try to create a society where we can live without fear. But we have to find the proper means. And if this means imprisonment only, we will not reassure our citizens, because the causes of crime are rooted in society itself; they are related to poverty, to criminal networks and to the problems experienced by people in their youth, when they do

not get adequate support. Violence also includes conjugal violence, which can result in tragedies and which can also destroy children's lives.

Therefore, I support my colleague. I deeply regret that the Minister of Justice has once again yielded to the demagoguery, whose goal is not to protect Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from the Bloc. I would like to ask her a question that I asked witnesses who appeared before the justice committee not only on this bill but on other bills that are related in topic.

It is a question that society wrestles with. What is a fair and just penalty for the premeditated taking of an innocent life? What should that penalty be? Should it be only three years if after three years the individual is completely rehabilitated in the eyes of the officials and will never kill again? Should it be 15 years or should it be 25 years? That is the question.

We must remind ourselves that when we as a society determine what that penalty should be, we are placing a value on the life of a human being.

• (1650)

I ask my hon. colleague what she thinks is a fair and just penalty for the planned and premeditated murder of an innocent life.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I should begin by telling you that I am old enough to have followed the debates on the death penalty. I was already an adult.

What struck me the most was that one of the main reasons the Liberal government decided to abolish the death penalty was the belief, backed up by studies, that in many cases the death penalty itself was not a deterrent to murder. For example, if it was a crime of passion, premeditated, but driven by passion, whatever the nature of the passion, passion being an integral part of what we are.

Your question is a good one, but what do the bill and our interventions say? We are not questioning the existing statute, which says 25 years, especially since, in certain cases, three successive hurdles must be crossed: the judge, the jury—peers—and finally, if the jury agrees, the parole board, followed by conditions that are rigorous and must be observed, failing which the paroled inmate is reincarcerated.

It seems to me that for years now people have been creating a system that answers I think, or attempted to answer, the question you are asking. I would never say three years. In any event, I am not qualified to say.

What I observe is that this society has for years found ways, various ways it is true. Yes, there were some cases, but, in the end, should people who are ready to reintegrate society be forced to stay in prison because of a few cases? That is why I say that our approach must be either punitive or consider that at a certain point, the sentence served is sufficient for the offender to be allowed to resume his life in society and become part of the community.

I think this particular situation, and mind you, I am not an expert, I am really your average citizen in this debate, but when we consider all the obstacles a person who committed this heinous crime must overcome before being granted parole—it seems to me that answers your question. Not three years, not six years, but 15 years minimum. That is a long time.

That is the best thing I can suggest but, I repeat, my main conclusion is that the death sentence is not a deterrent to crime. So yes, society must decide to what extent it makes the offender pay. What is it worth to society? Is it worth it to have someone who could be a useful citizen after 15 years stay another 10 years in prison at a cost of $76,000 annually? Is that what Canadian society needs? That is the real question.

We think that when someone has gone through three successive screenings and has to meet certain conditions, society should give him a chance to do his share. That is all we are saying. It would be useless and, in fact, counterproductive from the social point of view. That is what I wanted to say.

• (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: Would all members please direct their comments to the Chair, otherwise I get very lonely.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

What we are trying to find out here is the price of a human life. The member has said that in her mind it is 15 years. If somebody plans to murder another person, first degree murder, that person would get only 15 years. In my humble opinion that is far too low.

When this whole debate took place 25 or 30 years ago in the 1970s when they changed from capital punishment to a new sentence for life, it was life subject to parole after 25 years. That was the sentence. That was the trade-off. That is what the politicians of the day thought they had agreed to. Life with parole after 25 years was the price for taking a life.

Where is the truth in sentencing, the deterrent to or the punishment for taking a life, instead of capital punishment, which obviously the member abhors and says would not be a deterrent? There are lot of people who share that point of view, which is fine. The replacement was a life for a life. We will not take another life but we will put a person away for life, away from society. ''We do not want you to do that. You cannot do that. Your punishment is life. However, if there is a chance that you can be rehabilitated, we will take 25 years to find out if you have learned your lesson and if you can make a contribution to society again''.

Now the person gets another lowered tier opportunity to enter society after 15 years. The judge heard the evidence and pronounced a sentence. Where is the truth in sentencing when after the judge and the jury have declared the punishment for the crime, life subject to parole after 25 years, when the criminal after serving time in jail can apply to a parole board which had nothing to do with the case or the trial, was not there when the evidence was given, was not caught up in the emotion of the situation but which can then after 15 years decide to lower the sentence or let them out earlier?

That is an injustice. It is cruel and it is placing the lowest possible value on a human life. We need truth in sentencing. If we do not favour capital punishment, then a life sentence should mean a life sentence and 25 years should mean 25 years. This 15 year stuff has to go.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I have two points to make in reply. First, I know that for 10 years the death sentence was not carried out. The average sentence was, at that time, from 12 to 13 years. I have heard criminal experts say on various programs that the average sentence—I say this to the hon. member who is not listening, I am not supposed to say that but I will say it just the same—the average sentence when the death sentence still existed but was not enforced was not 25 years but around 12 or 13 years. Those are the facts.

I have every reason to believe the people I heard on these programs. They are authorities on the subject and they are reliable. I also read some reputable texts. If at the time the actual sentence served was 12 or 13 years, the introduction of a sentence of 25 years with possibility of parole after 15 years did not mean a lighter sentence. Considering the system that had existed for 10 years, it was more severe, according to my understanding.

● (1700)

We must call things by their proper names. It seems to me that is elementary. My second point is that as soon as we have the requisite certainty, and I think that with these three instruments we have ways to arrive at that moral certainty, as soon as we have that certainty, why leave someone in prison? To keep him from committing another crime? We know that is not true. The death sentence was no deterrent.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the hon. member has ever experienced the prison environment, from the outside, of course. I suggest he do so and find out what it is like. In many cases, the prison environment is a lot like hell. I did not say purgatory, I said hell.

[*English*]

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the motion to hoist this bill. In fact, I agree with my colleague from Crowfoot that I would like to hoist that bill right out of sight, never to appear back in this House. With any luck maybe in the next election we can hoist this social engineer called the justice minister. This bill is absolutely aggravating.

Colleagues on the other side of the House do not seem to understand that we have thousands of Canadians joining Victims of Violence because they are not happy. Members opposite do not get the message. Mr. Speaker, do you think Canadians enjoy going to meetings year after year, gathering together at rallies trying to get the message out, if they are happy with this government? No, they would like to go home. They would like to have some peace and to see things settled.

When you enter the House of Commons, you hear day after day petition after petition being tabled to abolish section 745. There are probably millions of signatures by now not to mention all the newspaper articles that have come in, the newspaper ads that have been answered. What do we do with section 745? Canadians want it abolished.

The government does not get the message of the police chiefs saying abolish this bill, abolish this section of the Criminal Code. I find it hard to understand why a member of the Bloc would sit there. They only ones they know how to attack is the Reform because we would like to see the people have their way. We would like to support the people in seeing to it that some of the things that need to happen do indeed happen.

We would like to see a referendum on capital punishment but then again that might prove that these guys over here are wrong. They say they do not want capital punishment. People do not want that. The government would not dare have a referendum on it because they might be proven wrong. They do not dare have one because the polls indicate it is not a good time for that kind of referendum. In fact if they were about 15 per cent in the polls, which I am sure they will be one of these days, they would not want to call an election at that time either.

The only thing I can support is a bill that will repeal section 745 and nothing less. The justice system took a wrong turn back in the early 1970s and it has been going in circles ever since. It will continue to circle into the future with legislation such as Bill C-45.

Suddenly another bill has come out with regard to dangerous offenders. Wait a minute, that is going to attract some attention. That is what we have been looking for, something to deal with

dangerous offenders. It appears to be a ploy to get our minds off section 745 because they really do not want to get rid of that.

• (1705)

I do not know how to play the political games that some of the experts do, the social engineers such as the justice minister. I have to admit they play them well. I would like to see them once present something that everybody in the whole House could unanimously support, mainly because it supports the will of the people. We are really lacking in that area.

Back in the early 1970s Jean-Pierre Goyer summed up the Liberal government's justice agenda by stating:

> We have decided to stress the rehabilitation of individuals rather than the protection of society.

This philosophy was continued into 1976 when Pierre Trudeau and the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—who is presently with us today and at that time was involved with the justice department—created section 745. This happened regardless of the fact that most Canadians did not want to see the death penalty abolished. As for the politicians of today, as with the old line parties, it really does not matter what Canadians want. The fact that they wanted capital punishment in those days did not make any difference, it was ''we know best, we are the politicians''. That is called tyranny, just in case anybody forgot the word. It happened regardless of what the people wanted.

Even with this replacement I feel at that time the sentences were clearly defined. In my opinion, they were fair and reasonable but they made these changes. The problem is that many of the bleeding hearts of our society felt that 25 years was cruel and unusual punishment. Therefore, before giving support to abolishing capital punishment, they argued that we needed to provide inmates with an incentive. If they behaved properly while in prison they could apply for a reduction in their parole ineligibility period. This is how it became known as the ''faint hope'' clause.

The problem is that with all the wheeling and dealing in abolishing the death penalty, section 745 allowed the system to change for the worse. We see the product of that mistake today. It was only back in 1987 that section 745 and its true meaning became known.

Most Canadians at this point still believed that the penalty for first degree murder was life in prison without eligibility for 25 years. The first judicial review was in Alberta in 1992 when William Nichols was in jail for robbery, kidnapping and killing a police officer. After the review his sentence was reduced from 25 to 20 years.

Since that first review, and up until April of this year a staggering 79 per cent of first degree murderers who had received a section 745 hearing have been recommended for some form of early release, according to Corrections Canada statistics. By December 1995, 63 murderers had asked for a review. In 50 cases juries gave the applicant a chance at early parole. In 33 of those, full parole or day parole had been granted. It is obvious from these numbers that section 745 has fundamentally changed the sentence for first degree murder in Canada. By virtue of its success, section 745 has made a 15-year sentence for murder a reality for a significant number of killers.

I had to laugh when I heard the speech from the Bloc asking my colleague if he had ever been to a prison. I often wonder if any of the people here have been to a prison and visited. How many of you have? If you have not I encourage you to do so. You will find out these guys are not the type of guys that will come out of a prison and then help a little old lady across the street. They are certainly not going to sing in the community choir or do anything like that.

I do not think they really know the kind of individuals they are dealing with. The crime of murder and the pain for the victim have been completely forgotten. Punishment is the last thing on the legislator's mind today and it is clear that all concessions are being made to rehabilitate those that are convicted.

• (1710)

Traditionally the laws allowed provinces to establish their own rules of procedure for judicial hearings. This has resulted in huge disparities across Canada in the number of those winning an early hearing. For example, as reported in April of this year in Alberta, juries heard seven applications and denied five; Ontario juries heard eleven but denied only four; B.C. juries faced five killers and granted parole eligibility to every one; while in Quebec one has the best chance of early parole with twenty-seven of twenty-eight cases resulting in a reduction in parole ineligibility.

This regional disparity is something that must be recognized. The only legislation that would restore everyone to a level playing field would be the repeal of section 745. Then everyone would serve a full 25-year sentence.

It is interesting to listen to those pro-745 groups trying to defend the usefulness of section 745. They say that few killers are granted early release and only 10 per cent of those who are reoffend.

Among the most pathetic reasons given for maintaining section 745 reviews is that it is giving inmates some hope. By doing that it influences them to try to change their lives; or that convicts with little hope of release, having nothing to lose, would become far more dangerous elements in prison.

Another reason is cost related. I have heard a lot of cost figures used like $76,000 and other figures. But the figure most used is that it costs $45,000 per year to incarcerate a killer, while it only costs $10,000 to supervise him as a parolee. If it costs that much, if that

is too high, we will fix costs. I do not see any problem with that. It should not be hard to do at all.

Another reason is that it is fair because the creation of the review was a political trade-off in Parliament when it abolished the death penalty in 1976.

The last reason cited is that not all first degree murderers are alike and some may very clearly have paid their debt to society after 15 years. I hardly think that is the point.

It is difficult to fathom that there are those who support section 745. For example, the vice-president of the Canadian council of criminal defence lawyers stated that he did not think section 745 should be scrapped. He feels that there are some poor offenders after a long period of time who are ready to be returned to society.

As my hon. colleague from Calgary Northeast pointed out, these defence lawyers are activists to maintain a revolving door in the penal system because it brings more money to them. We cannot overlook the fact that some people count on making a living from these kinds of procedures.

I have listened to the reasons of the defenders and in my books the bottom line is we do not owe these killers any favours by allowing them to apply for early release. Even thinking of letting them out early is just another way of saying: ''We don't really hold you responsible for your actions''.

There is already too much leniency in our justice system. To those who argue that these criminals can be rehabilitated, let them prove this after they have served their full term of 25 years and not a moment sooner.

I frankly do not care if killers hopes are dimmed by the prospect of no early release. We must remember that the victims' families have no hope at all of ever seeing their loved ones again. There will not be any rehabilitation of the victim who is in the grave. It should once and for all be their suffering that is on our minds. That should be the thing we think about.

The government does not seem to see that all acts of murder in the eyes of Canadians are reprehensible. There are no good killers or bad killers. A killer should not get special treatment because he or she committed merely one murder. This categorization of murder by the justice system is an insult to the families of victims of one-time killers.

By categorizing murderers by the number of victims we are adding yet another level of bureaucracy to our over-bureaucratized system. We will have one level handling multiple murderers while another handles the so-called less harmful one time killers. Ultimately this glimmer of hope clause for killers is more bureaucratic and more expensive. A first degree murderer will not apply directly to a jury but has another hurdle to jump. Application has to be made to a superior court judge, but at what cost?

• (1715)

Bill C-45 contains a royal recommendation which means additional money will be expended. The cost for the hearings before Bill C-45 was introduced was approximated to be $10 million by the Canadian police chiefs association. That is based on 40 murderers applying per year.

This cost is sure to rise with the expanded appeal rights now available to section 745 applicants in Bill C-45. The applicant can appeal to a court of appeal on any determination or decision made by the superior court judge and the applicants have the right to apply for judicial review more than once.

In other words, any judicial decision to reject an application may be appealed. The applicants absolute right to a hearing has been replaced by an absolute right to apply for a hearing and to launch appeals on an unfavourable decision.

It is clear to me that this hearing process is still weighed heavily in the inmate's favour. The emphasis is still on the offender and his behaviour in prison and his rehabilitation possibilities. The information about the original crime, the full details and the impact of the crime are not presented for consideration.

In addition, the murderer will have to be tried by a jury in the jurisdiction in which they were convicted. This will mean that they will be travelling and there will be extra cost. That will also contribute to the risk factor that some killers will have to be transported a great distance.

In my opinion instead of differentiating between multiple killers and single murderers the justice minister, the social engineer of our government, could have simplified the system with consecutive sentencing. Consecutive sentencing would have at least put a value on the taking of a life. For example, Clifford Olson should have received 11 life sentences.

In our system he killed once and then the second one was free and the third one was free and the fourth one was free and so on. I think that is pretty sad.

The problem is our justice minister does not appear to truly understand the significance of murder. For example, during question period on June 11 the minister implied that a murderer who takes just one life deserves special preference under the law.

He told the hon. member for Beaver River that ''if the hon. member is not able to distinguish the difference between those who take more than one life and those who take one life, I say that she is overlooking a fundamental feature''. I cannot fathom how the justice minister of this civilized country considers the taking of one life not to be as serious as the taking of two. It is just one of his many explanations for this bill.

I still cannot get over the fact that he had so many years to introduce something of this nature and yet he waited until there were eight sitting days last June, knowing full well that the bill could not properly be debated in that short period of time.

Darlene Boyd was quoted as saying the timing of the legislation in order to ram it through the House was nothing more than cowardly. I certainly agree with her.

Once again I see it as another example of this government's democracy in action. We have talked about that already today and I do not want to get back into that one, mainly because democracy in action only exists with this government once about every four years, and that is on election day.

All and all no one could possibly be satisfied with this feeble attempt to remedy this serious loophole in the justice system. Section 745, although modified, still exists and the justice minister is simply trying to sugar coat it for Canadians. Sprinkle a little sugar on it and make the medicine go down.

Approximately 600 convicts are soon going to become eligible to apply for judicial review. This is a problem that is not going to go away. By the end of the century the judicial system could face a possibility of one judicial hearing per week.

A Calgary *Sun* editorial said: ''This loophole in the Criminal Code that allows killers to apply for early parole was one of the most heinous frauds ever perpetrated on voters by the politicians''.

• (1720)

I am proud to say that this politician and those who represent the Reform Party want to set the record straight. A life sentence for premeditated first degree murder is not about rehabilitation. It is about providing a fair and just penalty for the taking of another human's life.

We do not want to have any part of Bill C-45 and want it unequivocally known that all persons convicted of first degree murder should be imprisoned for life with no chance of parole or conditional release in any form for 25 years, and consequently that section 745 of the Criminal Code be repealed. Nothing short of its elimination will be acceptable.

This ongoing travesty that this section creates must be corrected immediately in order to stop future killers from acquiring this same right courtesy of section 745. This has the support of 98 per cent of the Reform delegates who attended our assembly in June.

It has the full support of the Victims of Violence, the Canadian Police Association and a high majority of Canadians from coast to coast. It has the support of millions of signatures. Abolish section 745. Quit tinkering with it. We cannot approach the 21st century by ignoring the law that has effectively changed the sentence for murder in Canada.

The old Liberal reasons of economics or prison overcrowding will no longer cut it, nor will the bleeding heart philosophy of remorse, rehabilitation, deterrence, restitution or any of their sentencing excuses, nor will underhanded instructions to offenders like those given by Liberal Senator Earl Hastings.

He advised criminals, upon approaching a section 745 review, to express remorse, apply for legal aid before the 15th year and develop good interpersonal relations and communications. Develop some leadership skills. Do all the right things when that 15th year comes and you will be out of here. These are nothing more than back door, underhanded, sugar coated baloney. They are bleeding hearts and have reasons that just do not cut it.

Life means life, nothing more, nothing less. I find it really difficult to understand how anybody on that side of the House can suggest for a moment that the signatures that are on these petitions and that the messages they get from the thousands and thousands of people who belong to victims' groups across this country go completely unheard. It is all right because we know best. We are the government.

The sad part about it is that there were 78 individuals who voted once upon a time about two years ago from those back benches to abolish this section because they knew it was the right thing to do.

Now they will turn around a little and support a half measure. I heard it called a step in the right direction. I do not think it is a step in the right direction. It is a stall. I do not think it has anything to do with that. It is simply a matter of where these people in these back benches are who voted against section 745.

They stood up in this House and said they wanted out. What happened to them? Let me guess. Maybe the Prime Minister and the champion social engineer said: ''We will change things a little and guess what? You are going to support it. If you do not, you will be out or punished''.

The message is there. Sure enough there was unanimous support from that side. The 78 just disappeared. That is too bad.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although I am sorely tempted to deal with certain of the Reform concerns about this bill, I shall restrain myself because I feel we are straying rather far from the clause.

There could be a debate on everything that has been done, everything that is being done, about parole, the pros, the cons and so on. Right from the start, I think, it has been said that this bill before us may contain things we would have liked to have seen changed but that, overall, it is a bill that merits careful examination.

• (1725)

For those listening to us, who are hearing all of the philosophical debates but are not too clear about what the hon. members are to vote on, Bill C-45, an act to modify the Criminal Code (judicial review of parole ineligibility), it might perhaps be worthwhile to understand the context, how it operates, and particularly why we in the Bloc Quebecois have some reservations about it.

Section 745 of the Criminal Code already covered parole, and this is the part the Minister of Justice wants to change with his bill. Looking at the summary of this bill, one can see there are three major points. It is not a revolutionary change to the entire Criminal Code, only to section 745. Three key points are affected by the changes.

The first removes the right of multiple murderers to apply for judicial review. The second introduces judicial screening of applications, and the third requires that decisions of juries to reduce parole ineligibility periods be unanimous. These are the three key points affected by the bill.

People need to understand how the system works. First of all, the individual ''behind bars'', as they say, who has fulfilled the conditions of section 745, applies in writing, according to the proposed changes. In the past, this could be a verbal request, but now, under subclause 745(1), the person applying for parole under section 745 must do so in writing to the appropriate chief justice of the province or a judge designated for the purposes of this section. That is the first step.

The second step is new, and the Bloc Quebecois has reservations about it as well, because it is an initial evaluation. The judge, on the basis of the written material in his possession, including the application, the report provided by the Correctional Service of Canada, or any other document submitted by the attorney general or the applicant to the judge, will decide whether the applicant has shown, on a balance of probabilities, that there is a reasonable prospect that the application will succeed.

There has already been an evaluation by an appropriate judge, a judge familiar with the field, to determine whether there is a reasonable prospect that the application will succeed. Our first reservation about this is that the judge is not given specific guidelines. As far as his evaluation goes, there is no problem. I understand that judges have experience in the field, that they will evaluate the case, that they will weigh the facts and make an informed decision, but I would have liked to have seen something clearer, or this part dropped altogether.

That is the second stage of the process. After written application is made, a judge evaluates it and decides whether or not to designate another judge to empanel a jury. Naturally, if the judge who examines the application concludes that, on the face of it, there is not a reasonable prospect that a properly instructed jury would approve the application, he will obviously reject it.

There are two possibilities, according to the amendment: either that the inmate will come before a judge in two years, or that the inmate will not be entitled to present himself for a specified number of years, because his record is not appropriate for parole, or no information is given. Then the law calls for the inmate to be allowed to make another application in two years.

Under 745 (5), if the judge says yes, deciding that the applicant has shown that there is a reasonable prospect that the application will succeed, the chief justice instructs a judge of the superior court of criminal jurisdiction to empanel a jury to hear the application.

The third step is another evaluation, this time before a twelve member jury. The jury has a whole series of criteria to apply. I have absolutely nothing to say on the criteria set by the minister; they are in keeping with jurisprudence and with what is being done at present. I have absolutely no comments to make on this.

Where I do have something to add, where we in the Bloc see an obstacle, is where it is stated in 745.3, subsection 3: ''The jury hearing an application under subsection (1) may determine that the applicant's number of years of imprisonment without eligibility for parole ought to be reduced. The determination to reduce the number of years must be by unanimous vote''. This is what bothers the Bloc Quebecois, the unanimity of 12 persons. Twelve people will have the file that has already been examined by a judge. The judge has said ''Yes, there is a reasonable possibility of the applicant's being able to convince a jury, so we will move it to a jury''. The jury of 12 examines all this and has to reach a unanimous conclusion. That will be very hard.

Finally, if the government had decided that section 745 ought to be abolished, that ought to have been done, but without imposing excessive criteria, because it is excessive to require unanimity on a case of this kind.

Mr. Speaker, you are telling me I have only two minutes left, but I thought I was entitled to 20 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: At 5.30 p.m., we will proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business.

Mr. Bellehumeur: In that case, I will give a very quick summary, Mr. Speaker.

The main aspect of this bill, an aspect to which we object, is unanimity, and we also object to the government's rushing to get this bill through the House. That is why my colleague, the hon. member for Bellechasse, tabled an amendment seeking an additional six months so that we can examine and study this bill and perhaps improve it. The government has shown undue haste, although this is a bill that deserves particular consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 16 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. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on February 29 this year I seconded Bill C-201, introduced by my hon. colleague from Prince George—Bulkley Valley, and I would like to thank him at this time for the opportunity to speak to and support the bill.

This is the second reading of the bill. It has been deemed votable by a committee of the House. The bill essentially would amend section 255(3) of the Criminal Code of Canada to impose a minimum seven year sentence for a person convicted of the crime of impaired driving causing death.

This is a piece of legislation known as a private member's bill and it really deserves the support of every person in the House. I really and sincerely hope the Prime Minister will allow a free vote on this and that every member of the House will look at this piece of legislation and throw their political affiliation aside and listen to the debate and hopefully support it.

Before I go into many of the reasons here, I would like members to imagine for a moment what we must do in order to seriously consider drunk driving as a very serious type of behaviour, something we should not tolerate in our society.

● (1735)

We have done a lot of educating of members of the public to make them aware that they should not drive while impaired and much of that education has been taken to heart, but education in and of itself does not do it all. Other signals must be sent to society to illustrate how serious this is, something that no one should ever do, something akin to manslaughter. To take the life of someone while impaired is unacceptable.

This bill has the potential to save lives, much more potential than some of the other legislation that the justice department has brought down. I would like to make the point that good laws and punishment do not necessarily make people good but they do restrain evil, unacceptable behaviour and that is why this bill should be supported.

A drunk driver going down the highway is very much like a hand grenade lying on a playground with a timing device that has an arbitrary time on it. This hand grenade has had the pin pulled but the timing device as to when it will explode is completely unknown. We do not know if there is going to be someone in that playground when it goes off or maybe it will explode in the middle of the night when there is no one there. Maybe it will go off when there are a lot of people around.

That is what it is like when a drunk driver is going down a highway unable to completely control his vehicle and react appropriately to something that may happen very quickly. We would not tolerate someone placing a hand grenade in a playground not knowing when it would go off anymore than we should tolerate a drunk driver going down the highway. That is why this bill is really important.

Here are some of the reasons why I second this important piece of legislation in addition to what I have just said. Three times the number of people are killed by drunk drivers than are murdered. That is a lot of people in comparison to the number of murders. Even though the Criminal Code provides a maximum penalty of 14 years for drunk driving for killing someone with his car, the actual sentences are only one to four years. I ask members of this House is that all a person's life is worth?

We have to send a signal through our courts to people in society that this is very serious and they should obey the law. Such low sentences do not provide a meaningful deterrent to those who continue to drive while drunk, while out of their minds. Such low sentences do not reflect the public's concern for this type of crime. Impaired drivers are responsible for 90 per cent of the fatal car crashes in which they are involved. That is an unacceptably high level.

One of the main reasons the carnage on our highways does not stop is the present leniency of our courts. Imposing a minimum sentence of seven years for killing a person while driving drunk will send the strongest of messages that the lethal consequences of driving while impaired will not be tolerated by society.

Here are some other facts which I think need to be repeated. Forty to seventy per cent of impaired drivers have had prior alcohol related offences. They know they have a problem. It takes between 200 to 2,000 incidents of driving while impaired to produce one arrest, not a conviction, just an arrest. And 57 per cent of those charged had at least one similar offence in the previous five years. Impaired driving charges are dismissed or reduced in 40 per cent of cases. Our courts need to deal more seriously with these things.

● (1740)

Bill C-201 has had the support of many organizations. Here are some of them: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Canadian Youth

Against Against Impaired Driving, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, Nepean Committee Against Impaired Driving, Friends and Family Against Drunk Driving.

I understand there has been material circulating in the government benches disputing the support of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, MADD Canada. Let me quote from two letters sent to the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. On March 20, 1996, Mr. Jim Wideman, executive director of MADD Canada wrote:

> On behalf of the Board of Directors of MADD Canada, I would like to reaffirm our support of Private Member's Bill C-201. I am aware that other correspondence has been made to Mr. Rock's office. Let me reiterate that the National Board of MADD Canada, our Chapters and Members wholeheartedly support Bill C-201.

On May 16, 1996 Jane Meldrum, president of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers Canada, wrote:

> It is my understanding that during the last hour of debate that [the hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River] rose in the House of Commons and referred to the 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 of 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 would like to now respond to a couple of other criticisms of this bill in the short time I have remaining.

We have heard that some Liberal backbench MPs oppose this amendment because the minimum sentence would be inconsistent with the sentencing provisions of other sections of the Criminal Code, in particular section 220, criminal negligence causing death.

While we thank our hon. colleagues for pointing this out, the solution is not to oppose this bill but to propose an amendment or introduce another bill that would make sentencing provisions consistent.

We heard another concern that the mandatory minimum sentence might discourage accused drunk driver killers from pleading guilty and thereby typing up more time in the courts and causing more pain for the families of the victims. One of the most important principles of our criminal justice system is that the punishment must fit the crime. It is clear that drunk drivers who kill are quite literally getting away with murder.

If the average sentence for those convicted of impaired driving causing death was half the maximum sentence of 14 years, permitted under section 255(3), I would say let us leave well enough alone, but this is not the case. The average sentence for impaired driving causing death ranges between one to four years. I think the majority of Canadians would agree with me that this punishment does not fit the crime.

As for the rights and interests of the victim's family, the most important issue for them is to ensure there is a sense of closure to the case and, above all else, that the sentence equates with real justice. The victim's family also needs to know that the death of their loved one served some purpose, that the punishment of the crime will in some way prevent someone else's death. This is what a mandatory minimum sentence will do. This is why thousands of Canadians have told us to support this bill.

Finally, our critics tell us that the minimum sentence of seven years for killing someone will be challenged under the charter of rights and freedoms because it is cruel and unusual punishment. If anyone really thinks that this sentence is cruel and unusual punishment, I would ask them to conduct a poll of all the families that have had a loved one killed by a drunk driver and ask them what they think.

While there are lawyers out there who would love to make some money bringing forward a charter challenge, and while the Liberal government is even willing to pay the lawyer to bring the case forward under the reinstituted court challenges program, and while there are judges who might agree with their claim regarding seven years in jail for impaired driving causing death, the government will lose the case in the most important court, the public opinion of this land.

Frankly, I believe we need to support this bill. I think I have put forth some good arguments and hopefully all members will be open to it.

• (1745)

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton who also supports this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: My colleague may not realize that the debate ends at 6.11 p.m., so there should be time for both to speak. I am not sure that on a private member's bill unless except by unanimous consent we can split 10 minutes into five and five, but if there is unanimous consent we certainly can. Perhaps the member will indicate his position. This time will not count against him.

Mr. Hanger: I would request that unanimous consent be given then.

The Deputy Speaker: Very well. Is there unanimous consent to split the 10 minutes into two parts?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: That will be five and five.

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, impaired drivers kill innocent Canadians. No one in the House would dispute that fact which is so obvious. The question therefore is to what extent do our laws deter the impaired driver from getting behind the wheel of a car. I would like to contribute my perspective on this matter highlighting some

of my firsthand experience which I gained as a police officer who served in Calgary for 22 years.

First I can say with assurance that the current Criminal Code section 255(3) penalty for impaired driving causing death is not tough enough. When I say that it is not tough enough, I mean that the penalty is by no means an effective deterrent. I would argue that many lives would be saved if the penalty for impaired driving were increased, that is, through increased deterrence.

For my soft on crime friends, let me be precise as to say that the philosophy and definition of deterrence is just that, deterrence. The key instruments of deterrence are the certainty and severity of punishment. Deterrence prevents crime and saves lives. When potential offenders, considering the risks and severity of punishment, decide to commit fewer crimes, logically the number of people willing to commit crimes decreases as the danger of punishment increases.

Consequently the Criminal Code amendment presented today by my colleague from Prince George—Bulkley Valley is not only good legislation but one which is desperately needed by frontline police officers, attorneys general and prosecutors for the crown to deter drunk drivers everywhere.

At present section 255 of the Criminal Code provides a 14-year maximum penalty for impaired driving causing death. The legislation proposed today would require a judge to prescribe a minimum seven year penitentiary sentence to any individual convicted of drunk driving causing the death of a human being.

I can relate a situation that happened in my own riding not too long ago where an impaired driver ran over a seven year old boy, dragged him down the road. The boy died. The driver looked at him laying on the road, got back into his car and drove away. The court case finally came about and the individual driving that car got only nine months. That is totally insufficient. It shows that the sentencing in Canada is far too lenient for impaired drivers.

Let me also say however that the criminal justice system in Canada is at a crossroads. Two competing visions of the future direction of the criminal justice system exist. One view which is promoted by socialists argues that the failure of the criminal justice system to stem the increase in the long term trend of crime can be remedied through the welfare state criminology. This view espouses the belief that the solution to criminal behaviour is to redirect resources away from the punishment of crime toward alternative measures and jailing.

With alternative measures, just exactly what is going to happen now with that provision on the books to an impaired driver and one that may even kill someone? If an impaired driver will receive nine months now for killing someone, what are alternative measures going to do? They argue that crime is a product of social conditions and that the most effective remedy is for the state to intervene through programs such as stepped up welfare payments and other tax funded social experiments.

Thirty years after the first programs of Liberal criminology and penology were introduced, violent crime has increased by 400 per cent. I cannot see why impaired driving causing death should not be considered a violent crime. Property crimes have increased by 500 per cent. And impaired drivers continue to maim and kill innocent Canadians. For this reason, it is time to change the course of our criminal justice system back toward a system that deters criminal conduct through rigid sentencing guidelines for serious crime. Impaired driving causing death certainly falls into this category.

• (1750)

If there is any doubt as to why this type of legislation is needed, consider the lenient sentences handed down by soft on crime judges. Let us look across the country. Regina v. Lewis, New Brunswick 1992: The accused killed a woman after crossing the centre line of the highway. The accused received a one-year sentence. Regina v. McLean, Ontario 1990: The accused struck a motorcycle and killed its rider. McLean received only a two-year sentence. Regina v. Elkas, Ontario 1990: Elkas rear ended a car and killed two people. Even though the accused had a lengthy criminal record, the judge ordered only a four-year sentence.

Let us look at some other facts. In 1994, 87,838 people were charged with impaired driving. Also in 1994, 1,414 people were killed as a result of impaired driving, which is three times higher than deaths resulting from murder. Ninety per cent of impaired drivers are primarily responsible for fatal crashes in which they are involved. Out of the 1,315 fatalities in 1993 in Ontario, 565 were alcohol related. The statistics go on and on and on.

I will conclude by saying that every member in this House has an opportunity to take some action on this type of crime. I would urge them to vote in favour of this bill.

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in favour of Bill C-201, which as we have heard, is an amendment to section 255(3) of the Criminal Code dealing with impaired drivers.

I do not want to go into the background. I know a lot has been said on this. There has been a lot of talk of victims. I think everyone in this room and probably people who are watching these proceedings, we all know of someone or some family who has been touched by this.

I will deal with a particular part of this bill. I have heard the criticism that any minimum sentence fetters the discretion of the

judiciary. As a general rule, I believe that is true. There is no question that we do not want to fetter the discretion of the judiciary.

Judges have to deal with all the facts. They have to consider all the evidence and then they will pass a sentence. That is why in our system of laws, as a rule we do not impose a minimum sentence. We impose a maximum. In the case of section 255 it is 14 years. However, we are dealing with the exception here. There are always exceptions. In law there is the old expression of exceptions to the rule.

The hon. member has struck on one topic that has become a problem in this country: Too many people are careening around on the roads in an impaired state. According to the most recent statistics, approximately 88,000 people were charged with impaired driving. More important, more than 1,400 people in 1994 lost their lives as a result of impaired driving. To me the telling statistic is that this is three times higher than the murder rate in terms of victims.

The argument could be made that we do not have a minimum sentence for murder so why would we want to impose one on impaired driving? The answer is quite simple. We recognize that murders are committed for various reasons. Some are premeditated but more often they are crimes of passion; they are done on the spur of the moment.

• (1755)

Impaired driving involves two steps. One is putting yourself into the position of being impaired and that is not an act of passion. That is not an act that happens on the spur of the moment. That is something that in most cases people can control. I do acknowledge there are people in our society who have addiction problems, but people have some degree of choice in whether or not they will drink. They ought to realize before they start drinking that they have a vehicle somewhere in the neighbourhood.

Once people get into that impaired state they lose all judgment. As a result we see there is a problem on the roads and highways in this country. In 1994 it caused 1,400 people to be killed, not by a crime of passion, not by somebody who got into a state on the spur of the moment, but they were killed by someone who ought not to have been behind the wheel. As I said earlier, we all know someone who has personally been affected by an impaired driver.

There were 1,400 people in 1994, three times the number of people who were murdered, acts of passion, being killed. It is a problem. We do move to address problems in this House. We are required and it is our duty to address problems. I commend the member for moving to do it.

I want to deal with the whole question of minimum sentencing. Whether seven years is appropriate or not, I am not certain. Whether two years is appropriate or not, I am not certain. But this is a situation that we have to deal with. This is a signal.

There are those who suggest that we could use the money we are going to spend incarcerating people on an education campaign. Education campaigns on this have been going provincially for years. There are road checks, spot checks, the RIDE program in Ontario. They have reduced it some. Every year there are various ways of dealing with it. Some people are either immune to it or not affected by the education programs, whichever. The end result is we have to take a more extraordinary measure to tell people they have a choice as to whether they are going to drink. We have to tell people to think about it before they climb into that car if they have had a drink because they are the risk on the road.

The time has arrived for this place to send this bill to committee and let the committee decide whether seven years is too severe, or maybe three years is more appropriate, perhaps one year. In principle, without any equivocation I believe that we have to look at a minimum sentence.

This is not saying to the judiciary that we want to fetter their discretion. This is saying to the judiciary that we believe this is an extraordinary circumstance and we believe we have to tell them what the parameters are at the bottom and at the top rather than saying just what the top is.

People in this country want this. This is not falling into a trap. It is an exception to the rule. It is an exception to our normal rules of jurisprudence but this is an exceptional problem and sometimes we must take extraordinary measures.

• (1800)

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, first on a question of timing, I am going to try very hard to leave a little time for my colleague the member for Skeena to say a few words. However if we fail, we would like to receive a one-minute warning from you, Sir, at five minutes after the hour so that there are five minutes left for the sponsor of this bill, the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of Bill C-201, an act to amend the Criminal Code in the case of impaired driving causing death. This is a bill that Canada really needs. It is long overdue and it deserves the support of members from both sides of the House.

I respectfully ask that all members dispense with partisan beliefs in order to pass this bill. With this in mind for the remainder of my intervention in this matter, I will refrain from any political implications of any type. All I ask in return is for hon. colleagues on both sides of the House to do the same so that we can avoid the usual political sniping that seems to plague our deliberations.

I firmly believe that the subject before us now transcends political differences and should unite us in a common cause. This is not a bill reflective of any given political party. It is a bill that seeks only to protect Canadians. Nothing more and certainly nothing less is asked for.

We have all heard the horror stories associated with driving while impaired accidents. They are called DWI. The yearly carnage which is altogether senseless and tragic must end. I do not delude myself into believing that the passage of this bill will entirely stop people from dying in DWI accidents. However, it will go a long way to giving the family and friends of victims some semblance of closure and the idea that justice was served.

This bill's greatest value may also be in its deterrent value to new drivers. They are the ones who can be educated on the perils of driving while impaired whereas those who are repeat offenders would only be stopped by the punitive sanction of a minimum seven-year sentence.

Organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving will say that the status quo in sentencing can no longer be tolerated. They have seen too many tragedies and buried too many loved ones.

We have all heard the stories. Each member in this House has one and I will share yet another. His name was David Peters, a local boy, 25 years of age who was somebody's son, brother and friend. On June 24, 1989 he drove his motorcycle down Albion Road, south from where we are. A car travelling at a high rate of speed crossed the dividing line and hit him head on. He was killed instantly and the driver, as well as the passengers in the other vehicle, were taken to hospital with various injuries.

The driver was subsequently charged with impaired driving causing death. In the end, however, he walked free and received no custodial sentence. David Peters family and friends were crushed. A life had been extinguished and they deserved at the very least to see the perpetrator punished. Still, they resigned themselves to the fact that this cruel scenario plays itself out time and time again every single year.

It has been said before by the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley but it deserves to be said again. Victims should not pay the penalty for impaired driving. Here are some government statistics that members heard a little of already to show how much of a problem this has been.

A 1992 Ottawa *Sun* editorial pointed out that over 13,000 people in that one year were killed or injured because someone drove while impaired. In 1994, 1,414 people were killed as a result of impaired driving. This is roughly three times the number of people murdered in Canada but one could argue that it is essentially the same thing. It is murder. Think about that number, 1,414 people. If this Chamber were made four times larger, it still would not hold all those people. In 1993, of the 1,315 people who died on Ontario roads, 565 were alcohol related deaths. Sentencing for this crime, especially if it involves a fatality, is too lenient. That is the rationale behind this bill.

There is no ulterior motive save to bring justice to the families of victims and the sentencing of offenders.

● (1805)

I would like to close on that note and again urge members to put aside politics and vote, please, in support of this bill.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief because I know my colleague from Prince George—Bulkley Valley would like to say a few words in closing the debate.

I know my friend from Prince George—Bulkley Valley brought this bill forward in response to a very horrific accident which happened in his riding. It had very clear implications for my riding because a father and his two children were killed in an accident by a drunk driver who had previously been charged twice for the same offence.

This victim, Mr. Jim Ciccone, lived in Prince Rupert for many years. The victims of this particular accident are not just Mr. Ciccone's family, relatives and friends. It is the whole community of Prince Rupert because he and his family were well established in that community. There were very valuable members of the community, well known and well regarded. I cannot communicate how important this family was to the community.

In one thoughtless evening of drinking and driving three members of that family were killed. The people of Prince Rupert and I am sure the surviving members of the Ciccone family waited to hear what would happen as a result of this. When the sentence was announced it was three and a half years, just a little more than one year for each life that was taken by an individual who had a record of disregarding the law and driving while impaired.

What do we say to Mr. Ciccone's family when that kind of a sentence is given? Is that what their lives were worth? The question we have before us today is, are we in the House actually prepared to do something about this or are we just going to continue to talk about it while these kinds of horrific accidents take place and lives are lost?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley will now close the debate.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to close the debate on the second reading stage of Bill C-201.

I close the debate on Bill C-201 on behalf of all the victims of drunk drivers and on behalf of the families of victims who have died at the hands of a drunk driver and, unfortunately, on behalf of people who will in the future become the victims of drunk drivers.

Impaired driving is an issue which touches every single region of our society. I would hazard to say that there is no one in the House tonight who does not know of someone, a family, a relative who has not been a victim of impaired driving. This issue touches everyone.

Many provinces in Canada have taken positive steps to deal with drunk driving. They have taken some very positive steps and we are happy to see that. But there have been no steps made at the federal level, no changes in the Criminal Code that would send a message out to the people of Canada that the Parliament of Canada takes impaired driving seriously, that reflects a zero tolerance toward impaired driving. The time to take that step is now with the passing of this bill.

Since introducing Bill C-201 in excess of 25,000 signatures have come into this Parliament and to the office of the Minister of Justice supporting this bill.

I did a walkabout on Sparks Street yesterday and talked to over 20 people. The media was there. We wanted to see what the person in the street had to say about it. There was 100 per cent support for this bill.

The Liberals know that this bill is supported by millions of Canadians who are fed up with the weak manner in which drunk drivers who kill are treated in the courts in this country.

This bill is also supported by numerous anti-drunk driving associations across the country, most notably MADD Canada, Canadian Students Against Impaired Driving, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, the Nepean Association Against Drunk Driving. This bill deserves the attention of the Liberal government.

As was pointed out earlier, and I am really saddened by the action on behalf of the government, but yesterday, purposely in this House, there was an attempt at circulating disinformation among the Liberal members. That was talked about by those who spoke earlier. The disinformation attempted to convey the message to Liberal members that MADD Canada did not support this bill.

I am absolutely ashamed of the people responsible over there who sent out this letter in a deliberate attempt to misinform the members and sabotage this bill on the very eve of the vote. They clearly knew, because we dealt with this in the spring, that MADD Canada's association with 110,000 members across this country, were 100 per cent in favour of supporting this bill. However, because they knew that this bill has broad support among the Liberal members, they attempted, through a disinformation program, to sabotage this bill. I am ashamed of that and ashamed for them.

Bill C-201 is not the magic bullet to eliminate impaired driving but it is an important first step. Other measures need to be pursued in order to stop this crime. Let us get this bill to the justice committee so that witnesses can be called and this bill can be discussed and receive the attention it deserves.

In closing, I would say to every Liberal member who is thinking about voting against this bill, if there are any, to ask yourself the question: Can you face the family of a victim of an impaired driver and tell them why you will not support this bill? I ask them to ask themselves that question.

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, conforming to an order made earlier today, the motion is deemed to have been put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, September 24, 1996 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[*Translation*]

It being 6.12 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.)

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