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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 8, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 8, 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 two petitions.

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PETITIONS

NATIONAL PEDOPHILE REGISTRY

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents from Ontario with respect to concerned parents across the country who support the effort to create a national pedophile registry.

The petitioners I represent are concerned about making our streets and homes safer for our children. They are opposed to the current status quo in the screening of pedophiles as they enter our communities.

The petitioners pray that a federally implemented pedophile registry will be established in order to better secure the safety of our children.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have with me over 1,000 pages of petitions, bearing a total of 26,021 names.

Citizens from across Canada are demanding the following of the government: Whereas incidents of serious personal injury crimes and sexual offences involving children are becoming more and more frequent, whereas each incident harms the public, and whereas there would be fewer such incidents if certain legislative

measures were taken, the petitioners pray and request that Parliament establish a procedure of public notification of a sex offender being released and allow such notification to be made available for viewing at RCMP stations and other government agencies. They also request a central registry, amendments to the Criminal Records Act and the Criminal Code.

I hope the solicitor general and Parliament will listen to the plea of 26,000 more Canadians who are demanding greater protection from sexual predators.

CHILDLABOUR

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today.

The first petition was prepared by the third quarter French students of Madam Cadorette's grade 10 class at Cowichan Secondary School who were inspired by young Craig Kielburger to gather signatures for the following petition. That children as young as four years old in the third world are forced into cruel bondage to work as labourers on sugar and coffee plantations and the garment industries requiring inexpensive, intensive manual labour.

For that reason the petitioners call on Parliament to voice formal objections to the United Nations and to enact legislation requiring all goods coming into Canada to be clearly labelled as not having used children under the age of 15 in their production.

GENERIC DRUGS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a second petition which was gathered by the United Senior Citizens of Ontario Inc. and which is supported by the New Democrat MPP for Windsor-Riverside, Dave Cooke. The petition is signed by residents of his constituency and elsewhere.

The petition notes that the safety of consumers, and senior citizens in particular, is at risk because brand name drug manufacturers are attempting to force generic drug manufacturers to market their equivalent products in a different size, shape and colour than the brand name medication. Any action which affects the look of generic drugs could endanger patient safety through improper use of medicines.

Therefore, the petitioners request that Parliament regulate the longstanding Canadian practice of marketing generic drugs in a size, shape and colour which is similar to that of its brand name equivalent.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, question No. 53 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 53—**Ms. Meredith:**

Pursuant to the modification agreement between the Department/Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Stone Ridge Estates Ltd. (British Columbia) for a 20-year extension on the leasing of lands on the Tzeachten Indian Reserve #13, what amount was paid by Stone Ridge Estates Ltd. to the Minister/Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for this extension?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): The amount paid by Stone Ridge Estates Ltd. to the Minister/Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in trust for the band, for the 20-year extension to the lease is simply the amount of ongoing rents during the extended term. Ongoing rents are determined by the minister, based on fair market rent, at the start of each four-year period during the term of the lease. The rent paid from 1992 to 1996 was \$86,400 per year.

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the government House leader when I can expect to receive an answer to my question on the Order Paper numbered Q-52.

I would like to give the House a little background. The question was placed on notice on May 16, 1996.

• (1010)

I requested an answer from the government within 45 days. As of today, 146 days have passed. The answer to this question is about the destruction of millions of dollars worth of assets by the government.

The government has established a pattern of not answering questions within the 45-day time frame. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am asking how long you are going to allow this oversight to continue.

I have had another question on the Order Paper, Q-4, for a very long period of time. If the government does not provide me with this information to do my job, I am unable to represent my constituents in this House. That is the concern.

Mr. Zed: Mr. Speaker, it is important that the hon. member not misrepresent some of the facts. The facts are that the information

he requested is very comprehensive. It requires thousands of inquiries throughout the country.

In theory the 45 days is a guideline that we try to respect. If members look at the record, 75 per cent of all answers are returned before the 45-day period. There are situations with which the hon. member is more than familiar. He has two of the most comprehensive questions that have been put on the Order Paper.

Thousands and thousands of person hours and dollars are going into preparing the information. Perhaps at some other point we could debate the merits of the system but the hon. member should not misrepresent the facts about the information he requested.

An inquiry is going out to the RCMP stations throughout the country asking a very specific question. In order to give a specific answer, we do not want to mislead anybody with the information that is coming forward.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FOREIGN EXTRATERRITORIAL MEASURES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-54, an act to amend the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There is a ruling.

[Translation]

There are five amending motions on the Order Paper for the report stage of Bill C-54, an act to amend the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act.

[English]

Motions Nos. 1 and 2 will be grouped for debate. A vote on Motion No. 1 applies to Motion No. 2.

Motions Nos. 3, 4 and 5 will be grouped for debate but voted on separately.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Douglas Peters (for the Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-54, in Clause 7, be amended by adding before line 40, on page 3 the following:

"7.1 Any judgment given under the law of the United States entitled Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 shall not be recognized or enforceable in any manner in Canada."

Government Orders

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, in order to save time, I think you would find unanimous consent in the House to deem that Motions Nos. 1 through 5 have been moved and seconded.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Douglas Peters (for the Minister of Justice, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-54, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 24, on page 5 with the following:

“judgment has been satisfied outside Canada, or where a judgment has been given under the law of the United States entitled Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996.”

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-54, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 32 and 33, on page 5 with the following:

“recover, under the provisions of section 9 that the Attorney General identifies, any or all amounts obtained from that party under the judgment, expenses incurred by that party, or loss or damage suffered by that party.”

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-54, in Clause 7, be amended by

(a) replacing line 4, on page 6 with the following:

“by that person under the judgment,”

(b) replacing line 10, on page 6 with the following:

“judicial and extrajudicial costs, and

(iii) any loss or damages suffered by that party by reason of the enforcement of the judgment; and”

(c) replacing line 21, on page 6 with the following:

“which the judgment was awarded,”

(d) replacing line 25, on page 6 with the following:

“judicial and extrajudicial costs, and

(iv) such proportion of any loss or damages suffered by that party by reason of the enforcement of the judgment as the Attorney General may specify.”

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-54, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 7, on page 7 with the following:

“is rendered, or any person who controls or is a member of a group of persons that controls, in law”.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of this legislation and to the amendments that have been put forward.

The Canadian government has been seized with the actions south of the border with respect to the reprehensible piece of legislation put forward, not affectionately know here as the Helms-Burton legislation.

The Helms-Burton legislation is a piece of work that has come at the height of the U.S. presidential silly season of U.S. politics. The Helms-Burton bill defies the recent trend both in the United States and in most western countries to try to remove those impediments to free trade in goods and services.

When we speak of the free trade agreement that has been negotiated between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, the Helms-Burton bill—it is the strong view of the Government of Canada and I think of most in this Chamber—is not only extraterritorial in its application but is contrary to the free trade agreement that was negotiated between these three sovereign states.

• (1015)

In order to figure out exactly what Helms-Burton seeks to do and to figure out the response of the government and the amendments we are debating today, one has to look back and understand that there has been an increasingly protectionist move in the right wing of the U.S. Congress.

We have to recognize that during the period in question when we see these pieces of legislation which are contrary to the direction forged over the last number of years, we must recognize that it is the U.S. presidential election season. In the United States there some on both the Republican and Democratic sides who will try to curry favour with Cuban Americans who are very important electors in some states such as Florida.

Because the president did not veto this piece of legislation, he allowed this backward looking revisionist piece of legislation to be put before the U.S. Congress and passed. It seeks to punish Canadian and other foreign companies that are doing normal business in Cuba. The Canadian government has followed a foreign policy with respect to Cuba that is different from the foreign policy followed by the United States for a number of years. We have done so because we believe that it is only through a policy of engagement, of increased trade in goods and services and also investment that the current regime in Cuba will be replaced by one that is more respectful of human rights and which would be more democratic in its orientation.

We have not followed the policy of the United States of isolationism, whereby it seeks to cripple not only the economy of Cuba but also to bring undue hardship to its people because the United States government has an aversion to the political regime which is in place.

The Canadian government has voiced its concerns about human rights abuses in Cuba. The Canadian government voiced a strong objection when the Cuban government shot down a plane a few months ago which in many respects precipitated this piece of legislation, the Helms-Burton Bill, being passed by the U.S. Congress.

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The Canadian government is strong in its resolve to continue its policy of engagement economically with Cuba. We believe that Canadian businesses and the Canadian government have a role to play to ensure that the good people of Cuba are not further disadvantaged by protectionist rhetoric from places like the United States.

The Helms-Burton legislation seeks to punish Canadian and foreign companies that are doing business in Cuba. The Canadian government voiced very strong reaction to this type of legislation immediately upon its passage. The Prime Minister and other ministers of crown, the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, have consulted widely with our friends around the world and with our friends in the European Union and in Mexico. We have launched a number of initiatives on a variety of fronts to clearly indicate that we believe that this type of legislation has no place in a modern trading system. We believe that this Helms-Burton legislation is a blatant exercise in extraterritoriality by the United States. Indeed, it is in violation of the responsibilities and rules of both NAFTA and the world trading organizations.

The bill we have introduced is a measured response. The bill and the amendments we are debating here today seek to ensure that any judgments which are rendered in U.S. courts as a result of the Helms-Burton legislation will not be enforceable in Canada. It allows for blocking orders to be issued, which is extremely important so that judgments which are rendered against Canadian companies and against Canadian property, individuals and businesses doing business in Cuba, the laws will not be enforceable in Canada.

It also ensures that under the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act the penalties which can be applied under the U.S. legislation are equal in measure. This is very important. We do not want to penalize Canadian companies that may be penalized under the act. We want to make exactly sure that Canadian companies do not make choices which may be contrary to their interests and indeed contrary to international law because of a difference in potential penalties in the United States jurisdiction and in Canada.

• (1020)

Under this legislation we have made sure that we are not going to play the same games as the Americans have with respect to other measures such as trying to give ministers of the crown in Canada the right to block individuals from coming into our country.

We believe that some of the measures that are inherent in the Helms-Burton legislation go beyond the realm of reason in trying to stop principals or families of Canadian companies that may be named according to the U.S. in trafficking in confiscated property.

We believe that is contrary to the rules and regulations under the NAFTA. We have made sure that in our response we have not become, as the U.S. has been, contrary to the rules and regulations under the NAFTA.

The amendments put forward today, the ones we are debating now, are measures which strengthen the bill. They are measures that have been discussed with all members of the committee under the chairmanship of the member for Rosedale, who has done an expert job in ensuring that this bill gets the type of quick passage required to give the Canadian government the tools it needs to defend against the intrusion into our jurisdiction and into our sovereignty.

Members of the opposition have seen this as a very positive piece of legislation, one required in order to ensure these incursions outside of jurisdiction by the United States do not go unanswered by our government.

I want to commend the members of the committee for not only ensuring the speedy passage through the committee of this legislation but also for their support of the amendments which have been put forward today which vastly strengthen the bill.

It is my hope that at the end of the day, at the end of third reading after we hear from the chairman of the committee and from members of the opposition who support the bill, the bill will receive speedy passage at report stage and as well at third reading so that the Government of Canada has the tools at its disposal that are required under the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act to counter the most negative consequences of this piece of legislation, the Helms-Burton act in the U.S. Congress.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, later on in my speech I will explain to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade why I was so surprised when he said that the government was producing a measured response. I would like to elaborate on this aspect later on, because I think the expression "measured response" means one thing to our party and another thing to theirs.

The government has tabled five minor changes, five minor amendments to Bill C-54, which was tabled in two stages, seven months later. My they are quick, those Liberals! The American government acted seven months ago by imposing extraterritorial measures, and now, seven months later, we are discussing an amendment before we adopt our own legislation.

The five amendments proposed by the Liberal Party are minor amendments, and as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade pointed out earlier, the Bloc Québécois will support those amendments as, I assume, will our Reform Party colleagues.

However, since these five amendments have been divided in two blocks, the first two amendments made us wonder about this direct reference to the Helms-Burton act, or should I say its formal name, in Bill C-54.

Had the government given this more thought or taken a more practical approach, had it said the following in amendments 1 and 2: “bills extraterritorial in nature, pursuant to schedule 1”, as it appears in the bill, there would have been no need to open Bill C-54 if in the future—and we should adopt legislation with the future in mind—other countries implement extraterritorial measures.

• (1025)

By introducing these first two amendments to Bill C-54, the Liberal Party is, as it were, painting itself into a corner. In other words, if there is more legislation of this kind, we will have to come back to the House, reopen Bill C-54, which will be law by that time, to add these extraterritorial bills to the schedule and amend these two amendments.

We tried to influence the Liberal Party somewhat by making this suggestion. We got these amendments, be it somewhat late. We in the Bloc Québécois understand that it is very important to protect Quebec and Canadian businesses. That is why we will go along with the case by case approach, as described, and we will agree—let us hope it will not be necessary—to reopen the act if we are faced with further extraterritorial bills.

I repeat, the amendments tabled by the government are really technical amendments. That is why we cannot object, but we cannot improve on them, because these amendments are intended to make Bill C-54 refer specifically to the Helms-Burton act. They said it was a mirror of the Helms-Burton bill.

The changes proposed in the amendments do not alter the substance of the bill, but rather help clarify it. Anyway, as I said in my first speech on Bill C-54, at second reading, we will vote for the bill since its thrust is to protect Canadian and Quebec companies doing business in Cuba.

However, as I said before, we are wondering why the Canadian government has waited seven months to take action. We know that first it trails behind the US foreign policy, second there is the American presidential campaign, and third international foreign policy.

Just when, to all intents and purposes, dangers have disappeared from the political map, the Canadian government says: “the American president has decided to postpone the implementation of title III of the Helms-Burton act, which could penalize Canadian and Quebec companies; since it does not cause too much harm, we might consider doing something about it”. This is the kind of rigour, or vigour, the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are showing here.

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However, even with the five amendments introduced this morning by the government, title IV, under which relatives or descendants of employees of Canadian or Quebec firms may be banned from entering the United States—as is currently the case of the Sherritt corporation—is still in force.

There is no mention of title IV in these amendments. Earlier, the parliamentary secretary said that we did not want to do like the Americans who, under the Helms-Burton act, are trying rather clumsily to block Canadians doing business in Cuba from entering their country. We do not want to do the same thing.

Then why did the government call Bill C-54 a mirror image of the Helms-Burton act if it does not want to do the same thing? The parliamentary secretary said: “As much as possible, we oppose—”. I will respectfully mention that, talking about what is possible, his government and himself could have appealed to a NAFTA panel since July.

Everybody agrees, the Helms-Burton act contravenes NAFTA. Everyone is now in agreement with that. Since July, the Liberal government could have appealed to a panel to have the Helms-Burton act declared invalid. The Canadian government knows that, since Bill C-54 cannot be amended to defeat title IV, the only way to do that is to ask a panel to declare the Helms-Burton law invalid.

• (1030)

The Canadian government has had this bargaining chip in its hands since July. It is clear it will not use it before the next elections in the United States. Meanwhile, we see what is happening to Canadian companies like Sherritt and others. Are we going to wait for other business managers, and even their families, to be denied entry in the United States before we contravene title IV?

In conclusion, we will support these five amendments to Bill C-54 because we want to protect Canadian companies and Quebec companies doing business in Cuba. However, we also want to reiterate, to restate our dissatisfaction with the federal government, which acted first too late and then, too quickly.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party will be supporting these five amendments which are of a technical nature to bolster Bill C-54, commonly known as the blocking legislation for Helms-Burton.

It is clear that the United States has a dispute with Cuba that needs to be resolved. However, it is a dispute that should not be taken outside of the United States.

The question here is whether the United States has the ability or the right to apply its law outside of its country. I submit it clearly does not. It is in contravention of NAFTA and Canada should have moved this dispute to a NAFTA panel long ago.

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My colleague from the Bloc has said that Canada has been sitting on this problem since July, and I support that view. We have fought long and hard to have a dispute mechanism set up to settle these kinds of problems both at NAFTA and at GATT. We now have the World Trade Organization, and Canada seems to be afraid to take these matters to final resolution at these international bodies.

What is the use of having negotiated agreements through a long period of time to settle problems of this nature if we never use them?

The parliamentary secretary pointed out that this was an election year in the United States and sometimes during an election year things get a little strange down there in terms of foreign policy. I support that view, but I do submit that the democratic president of the United States did sign the Helms-Burton bill. This is not a bill that just came out of the Republicans. The president did give a bit of an exemption to Canada for a period of time, but the meter is still ticking.

The Canadian companies involved still have liabilities accruing and I believe that C-54 does not address a couple of issues. It does not address the issue of liabilities that are continuing to accrue. It does not address the issue of blocking Canadian executives and their families of companies that are affected from entering the United States. Therefore I see Bill C-54 as a half measure, one that needs to be taken, but we should have taken this to a dispute panel at NAFTA long ago.

I believe there is a disturbing trend coming out of this Liberal government. We saw it back in 1994 when we had a dispute with the United States over durum wheat where Canada accepted export caps. Is that in the spirit of free trade? I submit it is not.

Clearly Canada and the United States agreed under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement that there should be no restriction on trade between the two countries, there should be a phase down of tariffs and that the whole idea was to try to establish a market economy based on the ability of producers to have some regional advantage possibly.

However, what we have is a government that seems to be willing to cave in to the United States every time we have a dispute. This is just one more example of it. We saw it in the Canada-U.S. wheat dispute in 1994. We saw it again in the softwood lumber dispute where Canada has decided to impose restrictive quotas on ourselves which is very cumbersome to put in place and to administer. In fact, the whole process has been delayed another month because they cannot agree on how provincial allocations should be set out and we have not even arrived at the allocations that go to individual companies yet.

• (1035)

Now we have a dispute over a situation in which the United States is trying to apply its law outside of its own country which is clearly in contravention of a NAFTA deal that we have signed, and this government continues to use a process of stalling. If we had taken this issue to a NAFTA panel it probably would have been resolved by now. I believe the panel would have found in favour of Canada.

We support the amendments which strengthen Bill C-54. They are of a technical nature. The bill will be of some help to Canadian companies but clearly this dispute should be resolved on the basis of the international agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico.

We will be supporting this bill, but this government must start to show some backbone in responding to the United States. With regard to trade policy the United States tends to act like a bit of a bully. If we do not respond with corresponding strength I do not think the Americans will respect us. We must show them we have some strength and are willing to stand up to them in this type of dispute.

Therefore we will be supporting these amendments at report stage, but we must move far beyond this, show some strength and challenge countries like the United States when they try to apply their laws outside their own countries.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to participate in the report stage debate of Bill C-54. This gives members of the Canadian Parliament who speak on behalf of the people of Canada a clear opportunity to send a very strong message, a strong message to American politicians, to the American people. It is also a message of solidarity to the people of Cuba. I support the principle of this bill and I support the amendments which strengthen the bill.

It is important to look at the context of this legislation. It is very clear what is happening in the United States. A small group of powerful and influential legislators led by Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Dan Burton are pandering to what I have called the Miami mafia, the Mas Canosas, the Cuban-American Foundation. In doing so they are not only in breach of international law but they are promoting policies which I believe are profoundly immoral and repugnant in a civilized society.

This is an opportunity for the Parliament of Canada not only to condemn the Helms-Burton law, a law which is clearly in breach of international law with respect to the application of extraterritorial measures to foreign countries, but I think this Parliament should go further. This Parliament should also clearly and unequivocally condemn the longstanding American blockade of Cuba.

I am a member of the Canada-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship Association, an all-party grouping of members of this House and the other place. We have attempted to promote dialogue and

understanding between the people of Canada and the people of Cuba. The member for Bourassa and the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore are active members of that group as well.

We had the opportunity to visit Cuba to meet with representatives of that government and to meet with President Fidel Castro. We also met with ordinary Cuban citizens. Earlier this year we hosted a visiting delegation from Cuba which was led by the minister of education, Luis Gomes.

It was very clear to all members of the parliamentary friendship group that the people of Cuba at this very difficult time are struggling against terrible odds. This blockade, this illegal, immoral blockade which has been condemned in ever increasing numbers at the United Nations, must be strongly condemned by our own government and by this Parliament.

• (1040)

The people of Cuba and the Government of Cuba are challenging the wave of right wing orthodoxy, the neo-conservative wave that has taken hold in too many parts of the world. What they are saying is that an economy should serve human needs, an economy should not just be there to serve the interests of the corporate elite to maximize profits. The Government of Cuba and the people of Cuba have had great success despite terrible odds when we look at the socioeconomic indicators: one of the lowest rates of infant mortality in Latin American, one of the highest rates of literacy. The rate of child poverty is far lower than anywhere else. This is despite the terrible difficulties faced by Cuba following the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

I would note that when one looks at the conditions in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with the advent of unbridled capitalism, when one looks at the corruption, at the growing gap between rich and poor, at the poverty among young people and seniors, I certainly understand why the people of Cuba and the Government of Cuba have said they reject that model, they believe in an economic model, a model of socialism based on Cuban needs and the unique aspirations and conditions of the people of Cuba. That is what really angers the American political establishment.

Yes, there are concerns about human rights in Cuba. The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights has visited Cuba and has reported. Those concerns are real and I know they must be addressed. However, I suggest that the approach of the American government in lecturing the people of Cuba, lecturing the Government of Cuba on human rights violations is in fact steeped in hypocrisy.

This same government that lectures the people of Cuba on human rights violations of course was and is silent on massive

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human rights violations in other parts of the world, the genocidal policies of Indonesia in East Timor, massive human rights violations elsewhere in Latin America. Not only were the Americans silent on the death squads in El Salvador, the brutal bloodshed in Guatemala and the blood thirsty junta in Chile, but the CIA was actively involved in those countries. The Americans have no business lecturing other countries on human rights.

What about basic economic, social and cultural rights? Look at the growing gap between rich and poor, between powerful and powerless in the United States itself. What about democracy and free elections? Look what it costs to run as a candidate; millions and millions of dollars in that great bastion of democracy in the United States of America.

The tragic irony of the U.S. blockade is that it even hurts the American people. I visited a biomedical technology centre, and Cuba is one of the leading countries in the world on biomedical technology. It was pointed out to me that one of the drugs produced in Cuba for dealing with trauma, cardiac arrest and so on, which can save lives by taking precious moments off the response time, a drug called streptokinase, is not available to the people of the United States because of this blockade. It is madness.

I want to take this opportunity during this debate as well to pay tribute to the many Canadian individuals and organizations working in solidarity with the people of Cuba at this very difficult time, the groups helping to ship medical supplies, computers and other badly needed supplies.

• (1045)

There are various solidarity groups in the labour movement. Brigadista groups are travelling to Cuba and other groups are working closely with the people of Cuba at this time.

I want to encourage Canadian businesses to invest in Cuba. Congratulations to Sherritt Gordon which is standing up to this legislative thuggery by the United States Congress. It has recently convened a directors meeting in Havana.

I encourage Canadians to seriously consider spending their winter holiday in Cuba rather than in Florida. That would be a tangible expression of our support. It is a beautiful country.

I support this bill. I urge the people of Canada and the Government of Canada to support the people of Cuba by speaking out strongly against that repugnant piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question!

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The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried. Consequently, Motion No. 2 is also carried by virtue of my ruling this morning.

Motion No. 1 agreed to.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on the second group of amendments to the anti-Helms-Burton legislation which was introduced in the House today.

Before turning to some of the technical purposes behind these amendments I would like to add to some of the comments which my colleagues in the House have made, particularly the hon. member for Terrebonne, the hon. member for Peace River and the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway. All of them have indicated that they are in agreement with the principles espoused in the bill and with the purposes of the amendments.

The hon. member for Terrebonne expressed some reservations in respect of the timing of the amendments. The hon. member for Peace River felt that we should be more aggressively pursuing action against the Americans. Perhaps he is getting the tanks in Peace River ready to drive down the highway toward the U.S. border. His grain trucks will be surrounded by mounted patrols. We will see what we can do in that respect.

I would like to remind members of the House about the principle reasons for which the bill was introduced and then turn to the amendments.

The hon. member for Peace River put it well when he said that we are entering into a period when we have to recognize that while we live in a world of free trade rhetoric, in fact, there are constant threats against the free trade regime of which the United States government purports to be the greatest proponent. The United States while talking free trade has long been an active user of other non-free trade vehicles.

The U.S. uses unilateralism, as it does in section 301 of the Trade and Tariff Act. It says to countries: "If you do not do it our way we are going to hit you with trade sanctions, even if it may be contrary to our international legal obligations". It does it particularly offensively when it uses extraterritorial measures as a way of trying to bring other countries to heel.

This is an old problem. We lived through this in the 1950s when Ford Motor Company was told under the U.S. export control laws that it could not export trucks to Red China from Canada, even though it was a Canadian company doing business in China.

Canadian workers suffered and Canadian jobs were lost, but the U.S. made Canada do that because it was part of its foreign policy.

Similarly, anti-trust laws were applied in an extraterritorial manner to enforce American anti-trust laws which, however laudable they might be in their own way, when they are enforced in another country contrary to the espoused political purposes of that country are unacceptable.

As a result, in the last Parliament the Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act was introduced and adopted by the House. It follows the model of British legislation and French legislation which has both blocking provisions in it and an opportunity to claw back excessive damages which have been awarded by United States courts. That is another unfortunate aspect of the American legal system. That legal system is such that it allows what are called treble damages claims.

• (1050)

This is the threat of Helms-Burton if we want to get into the legal nicety of it. The problem that Helms-Burton and much of this American legislation when it is applied extraterritorially represents is that a Canadian, a non-United States citizen, is threatened with a legal action in which \$5 million in damages is claimed, multiplied by three, which is \$15 million.

These are used as interim measures to drag people into the U.S. courts or ultimately to achieve what has been achieved to some extent by this Helms-Burton legislation, a chilling effect. It says to people that if they have assets in the United States, if they carry on business in the United States, the Americans are going to make it so expensive for them that it is not going to be worth their while to go to Cuba. It is not going to be worth their while to go to Libya. It is not going to be worth their while to go anywhere the Americans do not approve of. That is where we have problems with the Helms-Burton legislation.

We have problems with it because it has been applied in a way that is totally contrary to public international law. It gives a cause of action for expropriation not to people like the Americans who had property in Cuba at the time it was taken. That might be acceptable. But it gives it to people who were Cubans at the time. These actions will not be started by people whose property was expropriated. It will be started by their families, their grandchildren.

We sympathize with people whose property was taken. We do not believe that in public international law property should be taken, but it is very clear there have to be rules in public international law which set out the parameters under which actions of this nature can be undertaken. That is where Helms-Burton goes beyond and gives a cause of action for the political reasons the member for Burnaby—Kingsway alluded to in his speech to people who in normal situations would not have it. As such it is extremely troubling to international trading arrangements.

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I have pointed out to my American colleagues what is going to happen if Canada decides to do the same thing for example with Ukraine. There are one million Ukrainians in this country. Why not give a cause of action about all the property that was taken in Ukraine? How would we ever be able to do business with Ukraine if we adopted that type of approach?

What will happen to the United States of America when China says to the United States of America that it is going to adopt Helms-Burton type legislation in respect of Taiwan? What will be the principled response of the United States of America when the Chinese government with all its force says to the Americans: "If you carry on business in Taiwan, you will not be able to carry on business here. We will do the same to you for the same legal reasons that you say you are using for Helms-Burton". What will be the response?

The Americans will have no response and that is why fundamentally the bill is not really in the interests of the United States of America. It is not in the interests of anyone who believes in an open trading system because if other countries choose to adopt similar measures, we will soon have created a world in which no business, no capital and no labour will be able to move around the walls that have been created by these treble damages actions.

The response we have in Bill C-54 is a principled response to that problem. It blocks American attempts to enforce the judgment here. It gives a clawback which we are not talking about in connection with these amendments. It also increases fines against companies which carry on American policy decisions out of this country instead of Canadian policy decisions.

We believe that an open trading system with Cuba is the best way to advance the cause of liberty in that country, the cause of human rights in that country, the cause of justice in that country. We have pursued those goals consistently and we will continue to pursue them. It is not something we are doing on behalf of Mr. Castro or some regime in Cuba.

This bill ensures an open trading system. We believe if properly applied it will ensure that we have open doors, that we will have cultural exchanges to enable the Cuban people to see the benefits of democracy, the benefits of an open system. That is the way in which we will achieve change in that country. We have applied that principle consistently in other countries, for example, Vietnam and China. There is no logical reason why the same approach cannot be applied in respect of Cuba.

The second group of amendments which I am presently addressing are basically of a technical nature. They address problems which relate to the fact that we have had to specifically make Helms-Burton unenforceable in Canada. I appreciate the acceptance of the amendments by the opposition parties. I appreciate

their comments that these came forward after the bill had been introduced in our committee. The members were there when we discussed it.

It was felt on mature reflection that we had to address a specific problem. The problem is if we in Canada are threatened with a treble damages lawsuit in the United States, it is all very well to say: "When that is over, we will get an order from the Minister of Justice to block the application of that order in Canada and we will be safe in Canada". But our lawyers are going to ask us how we know we will get that order from the Minister of Justice, how do we know we will not be dragged into that American lawsuit.

• (1055)

The lawyers will probably say that we will have to go to the United States and defend ourselves. We will probably have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe even millions of dollars, in these large, complicated United States lawsuits to defend against a claim which is unmeritorious and should be totally unenforceable in this country.

For greater certainty, the government has introduced a provision which says that right here and now, no judgment under Helms-Burton will be enforced in this country. This is a clear marker to enable Canadians doing business in this country to know that they do not have to participate in a U.S. lawsuit.

In my view, this and the other amendments which we are presently discussing on the same issue, are clearly a way in which we enable our citizens and others carrying on business here to know they will not have to participate in that expensive litigation game the Americans like to play. They will not have to worry about a treble damages lawsuit.

I will finish by making just one comment.

[*Translation*]

To conclude, I will make comment on the statements made by my colleague from Terrebonne. He said we have been waiting for seven months.

Mr. Speaker, you know, and members of this House know very well that international negotiations with the Americans are tricky and difficult. We acted very responsibly by waiting to see what the President of the United States was going to do, since he had a veto on this law.

As soon as it became apparent that the President would not exercise his veto authority on this law, we took action. We took action as soon as possible. We introduced this bill to the House at the opening of this session. We could have acted more rapidly, but I think we could not have acted reasonably to protect Quebecers and Canadians on the international trade issue.

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

The question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion No. 3 agreed to.)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The next question is on Motion No. 4. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 4 carried.

Motion No. 4 agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The next question is on Motion No. 5. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion No. 5 agreed to.

[English]

Hon. Douglas Peters (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill as amended be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to.)

The Deputy Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

* * *

CANADA SHIPPING ACT

On the Order: Government Orders:

September 19, 1996.—The Minister of Transport—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Transport of Bill C-58, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act (maritime liability).

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Bill C-58, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act (maritime liability) be referred forthwith to the Standing Committee on Transport.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to begin debate on the bill, an act respecting ship owners liability for maritime claims in general and for oil pollution damage in particular.

• (1100)

The purpose of this act is to modernize Canadian legislation concerning the limitation of liability of maritime claims, which are set out in part IX of the Canada Shipping Act and with liability and compensation for oil pollution damage set out in part XVI of the same act.

The revision of the existing limitation of liability for maritime claims is a very important step toward modernizing this legislation.

[Translation]

This regime is unique to the marine mode. Its intent is to allow shipowners to limit the amount of their financial responsibility for certain types of damages occurring in connection with the operation of a ship. The limitation is calculated on the basis of ship size and applies to all claims arising from the same accident. This feature enables the shipowners to assess their potential liability, which is an essential condition for commercial insurability.

Over the years, the current limitation of liability as set out in the Canada Shipping Act has become hopelessly outdated.

The regime is based on an international convention adopted in 1957 and, consequently, the limits of liability have lost much in their value due to inflation.

[English]

This has led to constant efforts by claimants and the courts to find ways to break the limitation order and to recover fully the losses incurred.

Another area of concern is the limitation of liability to the owners of vessels of below 300 tonnes, including pleasure craft. Recreational boating has by far the largest number of accidents and these involve, many times, serious injuries and loss of life.

Therefore we need to raise substantially the current limit of liability which stands at approximately \$140,000, which is applicable to pleasure craft so that claimants have a better chance of recovering their losses.

In short, the inadequacy of the limitation amounts, coupled with consistent efforts by claimants to break the limitation to obtain full compensation, is the principal reason for the revision of this regime.

Maritime claims were adopted by the International Maritime Organization to replace the 1957 convention. Because the limits of the 1976 convention have been eroded also by inflation, the International Maritime Organization revised the limits by a protocol adopted in May of this year. Thus, our proposal provides for the

adoption of new limits which meet fully Canadian needs at this time.

[*Translation*]

With regard to pleasure vessels, the proposed limit of liability of \$1 million for loss of life or personal injury will be more in line with the liability levels long established in the automobile sector.

The new limit is not expected to have any dramatic impact on the insurance cost of pleasure vessels. As with other types of insurance, it will be the future claims experience of pleasure vessel owners which will determine the cost of their insurance under the new regime.

I will now turn to the second issue presented in this bill, the revision of the existing legislation concerning shipowners liability for oil pollution damage.

[*English*]

We have come a long way since the *Nestucca* and *Exxon Valdez* incidents on the west coast of North America which first brought home to us, particularly to those in my home province of British Columbia, the dangers of marine oil spills.

In British Columbia we have benefited from the province's role as an international maritime gateway, one whose dynamic ports channel millions of tonnes of goods around the globe.

On the other hand, we must live with heavy maritime traffic negotiating some of the narrowest passages in the world and bearing cargo that if spilled would spell disaster for our fragile and irreplaceable marine ecosystem.

• (1105)

More than 20 years ago in this House I founded the House of Commons Special Committee on Environmental Pollution.

From 1969 to 1973, along with various other groups including the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Defence Fund, the Cordova District Fishermen's Union of Alaska and the Friends of the Earth in the United States, we were before the U.S. courts under the National Environmental Policy Act, 1969 to deal with the issue of the then proposed Alaska pipeline.

Our court activities were successful. We did, through the courts, require that an environmental assessment, including an environmental assessment of the marine aspects of that proposal, be done.

At the time there was an Arab oil embargo, an OPEC oil embargo, and President Nixon was determined to change the outcome of our legal case.

Therefore through a little used device in the American system which required the executive and legislative arms of government

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determining that their legislation should not go before the courts, we ultimately were denied the fruits of our legal victory.

Even so, I should add the issue was hard fought and in the final vote in the Senate of the United States there was a tie vote. Then Vice-President Spiro Agnew cast the deciding ballot against our case.

Nevertheless, the battle was worthwhile and success did come in a somewhat unexpected way. To obtain the approval of the line, many concessions were made.

With respect to the sea route, which is the major cause of concern for Canadians, many concessions were made with respect to the type of ships and marine safety. Yes, there was some eight years ago the *Exxon Valdez* incident. Yes, it is possible there will be another, but the risk to our coast was substantially reduced by that battle some 20 years ago.

In 1989 I again studied this matter for the provincial government. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to recommend to the House my study at that time, which runs to 184 recommendations which I am sure members will find of interest.

It also gives me great pleasure at this time to bring forward the legislation that will do a great deal to deal with the issue of compensation. Bill C-58 will enable Canada to accede to the 1992 protocols on civil liability and the fund convention.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. minister's time has expired. Is there unanimous consent to give him another minute or two?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Anderson: I thank hon. members. I have only a couple of sentences left.

The amendments to the Canada Shipping Act contained in Bill C-58 will harmonize our Canadian maritime liability legislation with that of other maritime nations. Equally if not more important, the amendments will improve the amount of compensation available to claimants for maritime claims in general and oil pollution claims in particular.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion to refer to committee before second reading Bill C-58, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act.

As the minister indicated, this bill is to bring the Canada Shipping Act up to date and increase the shipowners' limits of liability to public and private claimants for oil pollution damage in particular.

The bill will also bring Canadian legislation in line with a number of protocols and international conventions signed over the

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past 20 years. The Bloc Québécois obviously agrees in principle with the objective of the bill.

I can tell you up front that all these fine principles will be carefully considered in committee to see if they are just as fine in practice.

In his speech, the minister mentioned the *Exxon Valdez* disaster.

• (1110)

We would have liked him to mention the *Irving Whale* disaster as well. As you know, decades ago, this barge sank off the Magdalen Islands. This summer, the barge was lifted. It was the property of a large Canadian corporation well known not only for its commercial activities, but also for certain characteristics that became known to the public after the owner died.

It became obvious that the owner, the promoter, the founder of the Company had made it clear to his heirs that, in business, what mattered was interest, but not public interest. The fact that the company benefitted from the support of the people and the legislation of the various levels of government in the province and the country where it was established did not count as much as the bottom line, interest.

On the positive side, this reminds us that a business is a business and, as such, it is ruled by its interests. The expression “corporate citizen” should be banned from our vocabulary. There are citizens, individuals who are dignified with the status of citizens, but, as committed as a business may be to the community, it does not have that dignity.

That is why I think we should ban the expression “corporate citizen”. Without any negative or bitter attitude toward business, it is from this perspective that we will be examining the legislation. We will ensure that this act goes beyond the current one and makes shipowners more responsible, particularly when accidents result in the leakage of hydrocarbons in the waters.

It is very important to implement a recognized principle in our society, namely that the polluter must pay. This is indeed a popular principle, but we have to be careful. These days, to justify certain bills and given the new ideology, governments often say that polluters must pay and so should users, which seems perfectly normal.

However, implementing this principle is often much more problematic, as we recently saw in the legislation imposing user fees for Canadian Coast Guard services. As you know, the Bloc opposed a number of measures. We fought hard and people said time and again that, before imposing new fees, the government ought to first clean up the coast guard.

We were told about truly shocking administrative practices. Still, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans dismissed all these arguments and did not follow up on any recommendation made by those who came to submit briefs. Seventy-five per cent of all those who submitted briefs and who made representations were opposed to

the new fees. Eastern Canada, and particularly the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes region, is clearly penalized by this new fee structure.

This is how a commonly recognized principle in our society, namely that the user pays for the services provided to him, is applied. This principle was applied to justify measures which are harmful to a region of Canada, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Great Lakes, but which benefit the Atlantic coast—but we will not get into this again.

• (1115)

The Bloc will carefully examine the bill in committee and keep in mind what happened with the *Irving Whale*.

To Canadians, it is totally unacceptable that a company could renege on its responsibilities, let the government, in other words the Canadian taxpayers, pay to refloat its barge and then have the government, pursuant to the current legislation, obliged to give the barge back to its owner. In a year or two, or maybe just in a few months depending on how long it will take to repair the barge, we might see the *Irving Whale* off the Magdalen Islands. It is outrageous, since it cost \$30 million to Canadian taxpayers.

The government might be looking for ways to get compensated, but I do not think that current legislation gives it the power to do so. We will examine the bill in committee in the light of recent events. I think we will have some interesting amendments to bring forward, based on the briefs we will receive and the evidence the witnesses will give during the committee’s hearings.

[English]

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Reform Party’s critic for transport, along with several other members of the transport committee, was involved in a transport problem. Their bus was hit by a flying wheel from another vehicle, and so today you are getting the B team. It is most unfortunate. It seems to be endemic in the province of Ontario. Maybe they should start tying the wheels on to their equipment.

The Reform Party supports the hon. minister’s motion that this bill be sent to committee forthwith. It is good legislation. It addresses a problem of great magnitude.

There is a longstanding and ongoing problem in the shipping industry relative to this which is the indirect cause of an awful lot of problems in the marine environment. Many ships are flying flags of convenience and therefore it is very difficult to enforce environmental regulations, safety regulations, labour regulations and so on against them.

Canada has some means under existing law of exerting pressure on its nationals to register. This mechanism is simply to deny access to Canadian ports to foreign registered ships that do not meet our safety, sanitation and environmental standards. However, some ships that fly flags of convenience will slip through that net even though they do meet those standards. They fly flags of

convenience primarily to avoid labour laws and taxes. It is very difficult to deal with these ships.

I have a very modest proposal. Since the Minister of Canadian Heritage is giving away free Canadian flags, maybe she could give some to the Minister of Finance to put on certain ships, of which we are all well aware in this House, that are presently flying foreign flags.

• (1120)

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Transport. I would also like to put on the record that the official opposition parties appear to be in favour of this legislation.

It is an historic day for the House of Commons. This legislation will complete the job of environmental protection, as far as substances such as PCBs are concerned, as it will regulate their use and transport in Canada.

We have a law in Canada today which prohibits the use of polychlorinated biphenyls. That law was brought in by a former minister of the environment in a previous Liberal administration, Madam Sauvé. It followed the adoption of other great bills by the Liberal administration of the day: the Environmental Protection Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the Fisheries Act, which govern the protection of the environment as far as the oceans are concerned. This will complete that protection. It will not only ensure that polychlorinated biphenyls are not present in our environment, it will also increase the liability for those companies which have to move the PCBs.

It is one thing to outlaw a substance such as polychlorinated biphenyls, but it is another matter to move it to the location which has been chosen to destroy it.

I would again like to congratulate the Minister of Transport. This is a wonderful bill. I also congratulate the opposition parties for agreeing with it.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill referred to a committee.)

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OCEANS ACT

The House resumed from October 7, 1996, consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, an Act respecting the oceans of Canada, be read for the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand today to speak on Bill C-26, an act respecting the oceans of Canada.

Many speakers have dealt with this bill since it was introduced in Parliament, and everything would indicate that, true to the spirit of his party and of the government, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will refuse to entertain the amendments proposed by the official opposition.

It must be said that the Prime Minister and his cabinet have a tendency to draft legislation without taking into account the official opposition's criticisms and analyses, which are all the more significant since they often represent the concerns of those most affected by the actions of the government, and that the government responds only to the large corporations that give substantial amounts to the Liberal coffers. The lobbyists that gravitate around the government are so powerful that we have to ask ourselves who really runs the country. Is it the Prime Minister, from his offices in the Langevin Block, or the Yonge Street moguls?

• (1125)

In any case, there are so many examples of this that it would take all the time allocated to this debate to list them all. I propose to examine Bill C-26, before the House today, and you be in a better position to understand my point of view.

The rules proposed by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans are certainly commendable in many respects. Setting up a system of standards to regulate the marine sector and allied industries demonstrates a willingness to harmonize the government's vision with the outlook of the major players in this field. However, if we take a closer look at the main elements of this bill, we see, surprisingly, that this is not the case.

Let us take, for example, the pleasure craft registration plan. If the minister limited this scheme to the registration of merchant vessels and tourist ships, it would provide for a better control of shipping. In this perspective, the government could ensure a logical and accurate classification of craft. But this is not the case. The minister is proposing to have all types of craft registered, whatever their intended use. Can you imagine the costs related to such an initiative? I think the minister's idea is totally absurd and suggests a certain lack of vision on the part of his advisers.

The minister's bill proposes a fee schedule based on the type of craft, ranging from \$5 to \$35 annually. Would it really be

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necessary and appropriate to register one's pedal boat for \$5 a year? I ask the question, Mr. Speaker, and it has nothing to do with the minimal costs involved.

Of course, the first year, Canadians will be told they must pay a \$5 annual fee to register their pedal boat. So it may be \$5 the first year, but since the government will have the self-financing of this registration system as a short term objective, I can assure you that, within five years, the cost of registering a pedal boat will no longer be \$5, but \$20, \$25 or \$30 annually. But the government is not telling us that now.

It is nice to know that ridicule never killed anyone because if it did, while we are debating this absurd idea, all the flags in this country would be lowered at half-mast and Canadians would be in mourning for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

But let us get back to what interests us, rather than the minister's state of mind. Setting aside the legislative excesses of the minister himself, this bill is the result of public consultations. At least, that is what the minister says. According to research done by the Bloc Québécois, three quarters of the witnesses that appeared before the fisheries committee said they were against the introduction of this legislative measure. The Canadian coast guard itself carried out a series of consultations in which almost all those interviewed were against the proposed fee structure.

If you are still with me, and I am sure you are, you should see the connection with my introduction very easily. I continue.

• (1130)

In no way has the coast guard taken into consideration the representations and testimony heard during its consultations. From this point of view, what makes the minister think he can draft even the most elementary bill? I put the question again.

With a consultation process that was biased from the beginning, it was inevitable that they would come up with a hodge podge of vaguely logical standards that are so ridiculous as to defy comprehension, which in the end is rather typical of the present government and its leader.

Furthermore, one is entitled to wonder how appropriate it is for the coast guard to register all pleasure craft for control purposes, when this body, which reports through the department, only patrols the St. Lawrence, the Saguenay, the Richelieu and the Ottawa rivers.

Why should the coast guard take it upon itself to tax pedal boats on the Lac de l'Est, when the coast guard will never in its life be seen on that lake, its work in Quebec being limited at present to the St. Lawrence, the Saguenay, the Richelieu and the Ottawa rivers.

They would have us believe that the user pay concept is involved, but what about the thousands of lakes and the hundreds

and hundreds of navigable rivers in Quebec? In my region, for example, there is Lac Aylmer, little Lac Saint-François, big Lac Saint-François, Lac Bisby, Lac Rond, Lac à la Truite, Lac William, Lac Bécancour, and Lac Bolduc by Saint-Méthode, where people will eventually have to pay to register their rowboats, 6 h.p. outboards, and pedal boats, but where no Canadian coast guard officer will ever be seen.

The real reason, the reason the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is trying so desperately to keep from us, is very simple. Furthermore, the coast guard official from Quebec mentioned it. He came right out and said it: "We are \$14 million short in our operating budget". I bet that getting the missing \$14 million will cost the coast guard some \$16, \$18, or \$20 million in administration costs, salaries and paper work. That is administration as this government sees it, and clear proof of what the federal government really has in mind, and particularly of its roundabout way of getting what it wants.

Still, I never would have believed that the government would stoop so low as to make people register pedal boats, rowboats or kayaks. Why not those little rafts that we probably all built as teenagers in May, then left to rot away on shore when fall came around? And all for the purpose of cost recovery.

Of course, people might well support charging registration fees for seadoos or high power launches. But imposing a fee for a sailboard, when the coast guard provides no services to its owner, might be overdoing it just a bit. And they dare bring up the concept that is so popular right now: user pay.

The minister does not even stop there; he proposes a pleasure craft handling course, and fines, somewhat along the line of the firearms safety courses that are given everywhere in the country. Could the department be intending to make the owners or operators or rowboats and pedal boats take training? You can see just how silly it could all get.

• (1135)

I cannot help but be amused at the idea of my children having to take a pedal boat handling course, or my son Martin having to pay a fine for having done some fancy acrobatics on his sailboard. Of course he would have to have been caught in such an act on the St. Lawrence, Richelieu, Saguenay or Ottawa rivers, for the coast guard does not, of course, patrol Lac Aylmer behind my house, nor indeed other lakes such as big Lac Saint-François or Lac de l'Est.

I just mentioned the less subtle measures in this bill. I could have taken an entirely different approach to demonstrate the absurdity of the proposed legislation. The hon. member for Gaspé broached the subject, without getting the slightest bit of attention from the minister. At best, certain amendments may be discussed, but the impact of that exercise is predictable.

The federal government, through its Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, has once again shown its lack of concern for public consultation. The public disagrees with the principle of this bill, and the government insists on adopting it regardless. One wonders about the real motives of this government, in the course of an exercise that has been under way for nearly a year.

We can readily conclude that the federal government is once again trying to invade the jurisdictions of the provinces, not only by wanting to control vessels on the waterways of Quebec and other provinces but also by setting certain environmental control standards, which clearly gives more extensive powers to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans while diminishing the role of the Department of the Environment.

The minister is intent on duplicating controls within the federal government itself, at a time when we are all desperately trying to limit and reduce this phenomenon as it occurs between the central government and the provinces. No doubt about it, the minister is going through a serious power crisis, which may explain the leadership problems within cabinet and the Prime Minister's failure to make him see reason.

Before I finish my speech, I would like to draw your attention to a situation that is even more critical and revealing of the government's intentions. Bill C-26 does not make it incumbent on the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to reach agreement with other members of cabinet, any more than with officials of the Department of the Environment. This situation could lead to the kind of overlap and duplication that has not existed so far but will with the forthcoming passage of Bill C-26, since the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, on the basis of the mission he has given himself, will be able to appropriate the role of the Minister of the Environment as he sees fit.

The federal government would have the public believe it is intent on putting its financial house in order. Why not call a spade a spade? The people of Quebec are starting to understand what the federal government is really driving at and it will soon be in a position to establish its own rules, and I for one certainly hope so.

• (1140)

Instead of chasing after people with pedal boats or rowboats using them for recreation on provincial waterways such as Lac Saint-François, Lac William, Lac du Huit, Lac à la Truite or Lac de l'Est, in my riding, the Liberal government would be better off ensuring that the 2,000 jobs in our asbestos mines can be kept.

Instead of going after young people, instead of asking that boats such as pedal boats be registered, what is the government waiting for to invest equivalent amounts of money in defending the asbestos industry, to fight against the type of misrepresentations that were aired on TV5 in the special report called "Amiante: 50 ans de mensonges"—50 years of lying about asbestos?

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To conclude, I again urge the government to listen to its ambassador to France, who only two weeks ago suggested it launch a major campaign to promote the safe use of asbestos.

[English]

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the Bloc who just spoke is doing exactly the same thing as the other Bloc members are doing concerning this bill.

He is concentrating, as the hon. member from the Gaspé did, on just six or seven clauses in the bill. There are 109 clauses in the bill. The Bloc has picked out six clauses, about that, from clause 47 to 52, regarding the wording that the minister "may". It is not the minister "shall". It is not the minister "will". It is not the minister "has to". It says "the minister may" do this or that.

Then it has to be published in the *Canada Gazette* after 30 days of its passing. Then it goes before a committee of the Statutory Instruments Act and to be reviewed by a House of Commons standing committee.

The hon. member has not even commented on the main thrust of this bill, which is that the Canadian government on behalf of the people of Canada is declaring an economic zone, that there will be an exclusive economic zone that runs 200 nautical miles out from the territorial sea which goes to the low water mark.

An historic bill in the House of Commons by the Government of Canada to protect the marine resources and the seabed of Canada is the main purpose of this bill.

All one has to do is read what the Department of Justice has put in the summary of the bill, which is exactly what I said, to meet the changing law at the United Nations under the United Nations law of the sea convention.

They decide to not even comment on that. What they are talking about are fees that were introduced under previous legislation that enabled the minister to do this or that in the past. Under this act, the six sections they are dealing with, it does not say the minister "shall". It says the minister "may". There is a whole procedure under this act that the minister has to go through.

I am sure the hon. member will stand in the House and praise the government for the general thrust of this bill that will protect the fishing rights of the fishermen of the north shore of Quebec and the Gaspé.

For once a government in Canada is turning around and doing what a lot of other nations have done in this world. We should have done this years and years ago. However, it is to the credit of this administration that it is now being done.

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● (1145)

I hope that the hon. member will rise in his place and congratulate this Liberal Government of Canada for what it is doing for the fishermen of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague had only listened to my whole speech, and not only to the parts he did not like, he would know that I think some components of Bill C-26 are commendable.

However, for this strategy to be implemented successfully, we had better define the relations between partners clearly. Why is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans interfering in provincial jurisdiction once again? There is Lac Aylmer, big Lac Saint-François, and Lac Bisby, where the water is barely 18 inches deep. You want to have licences for pedal boats? This is utterly ridiculous. These taxpayers will never see a coast guard officer.

I can just imagine the Minister trying to get teenagers of 14, 15 or 16 years of age to take a training course on the basics of pedal boating. Are you seriously trying to run the country, Canada, by interfering in such a blatant and clumsy way in areas under provincial jurisdiction?

Then there is Saint-François River, that I used to go down on a makeshift raft when I was a kid. Will children at play have to get a \$5 to \$20 licence from the department when everybody knows that, according to the user pay principle, we should pay for services we get, patrols for instance?

In this regard, I named the bodies of water where the coast guard might be seen, but in my riding, in all of the Eastern Townships, we never see a coast guard officer. What we will see is collectors. To begin with, the fee for a pedal boat will be \$5 but, again, in five, six or seven years, \$5 will escalate to \$60 or \$70. This is utterly ridiculous.

This is why we in the Bloc Québécois are afraid of these new fee setting powers, and why we did not hesitate a moment to vigorously condemn Bill C-26; of course, all of us in the Bloc Québécois will vote against it. I sincerely hope that the Liberal government will sit down and go over the consultations it held, as well as those held by the coast guard, and change its mind. To err is human, and going ahead with this piece of legislation will be one of the worst mistakes the government has made over the past two years.

In spite of a few good things in Bill C-26, when you look at the whole thing, it is glaringly obvious that it must be defeated.

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Frontenac, explained the position of the Bloc Québécois on Bill C-26 very forcefully in his comments to the member for Gander—Grand Falls, and I admire him for it.

● (1150)

The Bloc Québécois is not opposed to the purpose, to the validity of a national strategy on ocean management. However, we have always said that the relationships between the partners involved should be better defined, and this was supposed to be at the core of the bill. That is what my colleague said; failing such a clear definition, we are very concerned about the new powers the minister is grabbing under this bill.

The minister did not have all those powers before, and look at the horrendous things that went on last spring. It is certainly not for the beauty or the grandeur of Canada they are proposing a national strategy. There are other reasons behind these new powers of set fees.

If Canada really wants its national strategy to succeed, it will have to establish clear relationships with its partners. The member for Gander—Grand Falls knows what I mean. He has been in this House for 22 or 24 years in this House; he has seen Tory prime ministers. He will recall that there once was a Liberal premier in his province called Brian Peckford. Mr. Peckford was a fervent defender of cod conservation but he never got a hearing in Ottawa as long as the Tories were in office.

If we want to avoid repeating past mistakes—and the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls will surely agree that the good standing of the prime minister or his success on the campaign trail, both in Ottawa and Newfoundland, will not go on forever—so, if we want to prevent bickering in the future, we must clearly define the roles of all partners and the relationships between them. That is what we must do. I am sure that my colleague shares my views on this.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, under the Constitution Act of 1867, there is a division of powers. There is little doubt that navigable waters come under federal jurisdiction, since many people in this huge country could use waters like the St. Lawrence River, the Richelieu River or the Ottawa River, too name only a few. We agree with that.

However, I mentioned a moment ago some lakes in Northern Quebec. There are thousands and thousands of lakes and rivers which, I am sure, are totally under Quebec jurisdiction. The minister is trying to assume control of navigation on lakes by requiring the registration of boats, and I am not prepared to accept that. We must condemn such action.

I remember the former Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, who, little by little, assumed powers which were not federal to start with. His philosophy was a weak Quebec and a strong Canada, the goal was to bring the provinces down to the level of small municipalities. These was your goal, was it not? You were in this House at the time. We will not let you do it. We will not let this government do it and I can guarantee that we will make sure that Quebec jurisdiction is fully protected.

Once again it is shameful that the Liberal Party, using its majority in the House, should impose a fee structure so ridiculous that it will require registration of all boats and penalize children who are simply going to play on the rivers and the lakes. The Liberal Party will be held responsible for penalizing young people, in Quebec and elsewhere in this huge country.

Once again I urge the government to sit down with the provinces and talk strategy with its partners. You are not the only government in this country. There are other provinces, there are two territories. Do you think that the other provinces are willing to give up their jurisdiction? I do not think so. If you give an inch to the federal government it will take a foot and if you give it a foot it will take every last body of water.

● (1155)

I hope the government will review its positions and will reread the notes from consultations it held throughout the country, since more than three quarters of those who were consulted are opposed to Bill C-26.

This reminds me of the Prime Minister, who said last week that General Boyle was the best and that there would not be a new defence minister every 12 months, as under the Conservatives. He insisted on defending his general and his defence minister, and today, the whole house of cards is collapsing. I think you and I, Mr. Speaker, could get a bet going on how long General Boyle will keep his job. Will he hang on till the end of the week?

In conclusion, I urge the government to show some humility by withdrawing large portions of Bill C-26, particularly with regard to the registration of craft on small bodies of water under provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-26, the oceans act.

I am going to deal with very specific areas that the government and previous governments have failed to deal with in an extremely important aspect of Canadian society. The oceans surround our country on three sides. Within those oceans exist enormous opportunity and responsibility: commercially, socially, with respect to protecting the environment and the species that live within them. These waters can benefit not only Canadians but also people around the world.

First I want to speak about the minister's plan dealing with the commercial fishing strategy, which to me, living in British Columbia, is a huge disappointment. The various sectors in the commercial fishing groups have met with the minister and have expressed concrete, specific and reasonable proposals that are fair to everybody and would save our fisheries for today and into the future.

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Instead, the minister proposed the Mifflin plan which unfortunately is going to decimate the commercial fishing strategy on the west coast. It will produce an east coast disaster on the west coast. This is an entirely preventable situation. What is the minister going to do?

The minister is going to centre the commercial fishery into a very small number of hands. He is decreasing the number of fishing boats, which is a good thing, but instead of doing it in a fair way, he is making sure that commercial fishing in British Columbia is in the hands of a very small number of large players. The outcome will be great unemployment among the commercial fishing sector. The little communities up and down the coast of British Columbia that have survived for decades on fishing for their livelihood will be decimated. The social implications cannot be underestimated.

It is clear to everybody in the House what it means to a small community to have its single industry ripped from it. This does not need to happen. Because of the fees being implemented, the commercial fisheries in British Columbia will be in the hands of the large boats and producers. The little people will be out of a job, out of work and up the creek.

An intelligent strategy needs to be put forward. Along with scientists, the minister should define what the allowable catch should be. That information should be given to the different groups that will decide for themselves how they are going to divide it up. In that way the government does not get involved in how this will be done and it does not get the flack for it. The sole responsibility lies within the different commercial fishing strategies themselves. It would also include the sports fishing strategy which must not be underestimated as it has been in the past.

In British Columbia there are 300,000 sports fishermen. These individuals inject billions of dollars into the British Columbia economy every year.

● (1200)

This minister and previous governments have utterly ignored this important sector. They tell them how much fish they can catch every year far too late. For example, beginning in January are the first trade shows for the sports fishing groups in British Columbia. They need to know before these shows how much they are allowed to catch, where they are allowed to fish, to be able to get visitors and tourists from around the world to come to our waters to fish.

Last year those data came down in the spring. As a result visitors who would normally come to the waters of British Columbia to fish said they are not coming because they believe there will not be any fish to fish and they do not know how much they can fish. A lot of people from around the world felt there was simply no salmon to catch in British Columbia. That is an avoidable tragedy.

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If this continues the sports fishing groups within British Columbia will be decimated at a huge loss to British Columbia and the Canadian economy.

These data are available in November. I am proposing that the minister, with scientists, determine how many fish the sports fishing groups can take and where they can take it from. The minister will let them know what that catch is going to be by December 1. That is a challenge I put to the minister of fisheries and the people who work in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

If he can do that one thing then our sports fishing groups will have the opportunity and the ability to get fishermen from around the world to come to Canada, to spend their money and inject money into the Canadian economy. This can happen and I implore him to do this now rather than waiting until the spring when it is too late.

One of the things the minister is not doing is addressing the commercial fishing strategy in an intelligent fashion. He is not setting appropriate limits, he is setting them too late and he is not enabling them to divide up the catch among themselves in a way that is appropriate.

Many intelligent ideas have come from commercial fishing groups such as catching at the mouths of rivers or outside of certain areas and not setting up a wall of net so that the fish do not get vacuumed out of the ocean. The minister must let the fish go up the river in adequate numbers to lay their eggs and smaller fish to come down later one. If he does not do this the stream will die.

The minister has been negligent in addressing the whole aspect of enforcement. It is critically important when you are speaking about enforcement that it take place fairly and equitably regardless of nationality, the colour of skin or ethnic origin. It is imperative that the minister tell his Department of Fisheries and Oceans officers who are currently hamstrung by the upper echelons in the bureaucracy that they must enforce the law to the benefit of all.

I do not care who you are, everybody will benefit by the fair and equitable enforcement of the law. Currently that is not happening. A blind eye is given to certain segments of our society that fish and poach. The officers of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the RCMP are told not to deal with them because the government is afraid of having a confrontation with these people or being labelled racist or anti-aboriginal, and that is not acceptable.

It does a huge disservice to the aboriginal people who, for example, are fishing within their limits in a fair and equitable way, as the vast majority are, and who are interested in having a long term sustainable fishery. It does a huge disservice to the non-aboriginal community members who feel left out of the loop and who feel they are being treated as second class citizens. One law for

everybody and it has to be enforced. That way you get respect for the laws of the land. Without that no respect exists.

• (1205)

The minister must also bring together the people who actually damaged the environment in which the fish are living. Habitat rejuvenation is one of the key elements in rejuvenating our west coast fishery. There are a large number of streams that have been decimated by logging and mining.

It is important that these streams get back to where they were but it is equally important that the taxpayer not pay for that. Those who actually polluted are those who should pay. That is where the minister's job comes in. That is where the minister has to take a leadership role and say "you damaged the stream, you are going to fix it up but we are going to work in a co-ordinated way to provide you with the ability to do this". Perhaps some tax benefits for doing this would be advisable.

In doing that we can rejuvenate our streams, increase the flows of wild stocks of salmon and thereby increase the economic viability of our west coast fishery. All of these things are interwoven and all of them must be addressed: adequate dealings with the commercial and sports fishing sectors, setting adequate limits for all of those groups, habitat rejuvenation, law enforcement.

If the minister could stop studying these issues and start acting on them, perhaps we will be able to save our west coast fishery instead of looking into the eyes of the east coast disaster.

Another aspect that is critically important on the west coast which this bill could deal with but does not is the whole aspect or lighthouses. It has been shown quite unequivocally that the destaffing of lighthouses on the west coast is going to have a negative effect on the safety of the people who ply our waters in that area. It has been shown not only from a safety aspect but, more important, from an economic aspect. If we are going to deal with cold, hard facts, let us deal with them.

If we destaff a lighthouse it is going to cost the taxpayer more money to service that lighthouse than if there were somebody there right now. The amount of money that person actually puts into maintaining that lighthouse far exceeds that person's wages, far exceeds the cost to the taxpayer. It is senseless and utterly idiotic to destaff lighthouses on the west coast.

I implore the minister before it is too late to look at this again, look at it intelligently, look at the facts. I am sure he will come to the conclusion that it is better not to demand our lighthouses on the west coast.

There are also other local initiatives that can be supported. The western marine community in British Columbia has put a proposal for the funding of our coast guard. It is a sensible proposal. It is a proposal that would not cost the taxpayer more money. It is a proposal that would provide for effective coast guard search and

rescue responses in British Columbia. I ask the minister again to look at this very good proposal by the western marine community.

As well, there are a lot of local initiatives where the people have come together to put forth search and rescue capabilities in the smaller communities which are not easily serviced by the coast guard. These are inexpensive ways of providing safety on the west coast. The minister can take a leadership role not by putting more money into the system but by encouraging these initiatives with the local groups and again have a user pay situation.

I am sure the boaters who ply the waters on the west coast will not mind paying for this service that they will desperately need at some time in their lives.

Another large area that this bill does not deal with and one that is very close to my heart and I am sure the hearts of many Canadians, in particular the youth of Canada, is the environment. As we speak, there are huge problems with respect to pollution within our oceans. That is manifested, for example, in the elevation of toxic carcinogenic, teratogenic materials such as PCBs and many other substances that are going through our food chain and are magnifying themselves as they go up the food chain. The outcome of that is these animals are dying but in the larger area we can see that if we are at the top of the food chain, these toxins and carcinogens are also accumulating within us.

• (1210)

We may think this is not a problem, but I would draw the attention of the House to the Arctic. The people who live in the Arctic are suffering from greater teratogenic effects, genetic abnormalities and cancer rates than would normally occur. The reason this is occurring is that toxins and carcinogens are accumulating in the food chain. When people eat, the toxins and carcinogens accumulate in them and the outcome is a medical disaster.

I plead with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of Health and the Minister of the Environment to bring forth intelligent and effective solutions to this problem. It cannot be done in isolation. The pollutants in our Arctic also come from other Arctic countries.

I was in Yellowknife earlier this year where the countries of the Arctic got together to discuss this issue. I had hoped to see some action. Unfortunately they chose to study the problem and create an Arctic council to look at the problem. The time for studying and examining has run out. The time has long past for another royal commission or for a House of Commons committee to study the problem. We need action now. The people of the Arctic need action now. If anyone doubts me, let them go to the Arctic and let them look at the horrible diseases which are affecting those people. It is going to get worse.

We are a leader in a number of areas. One of the areas in which we are a leader is research. On the west coast, in Victoria, there is a

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superb research facility which provides research that is commercially applicable and scientifically applicable. Scientists from all over the world look to us and derive information from our research for their own uses.

Cuts must be made, but we should not cut important research. The research done in these areas will have a dramatic effect on our society which will benefit all of us. It would be penny wise and pound foolish for us to cut research in these areas.

A few years ago we had an excellent opportunity to be a world leader in fish farming. The Chileans took it away from us because we let them. Icelanders came to us a few years ago and said: "Canada, we are very good at fish farming. We are very good at managing our fisheries. Let us work with you in developing co-operative strategies to improve commercial and sports fishing within Canada". They went home disgusted. They went home despondent. They could not believe that Canada did absolutely nothing to save its fisheries. They saw the potential which existed within our great country. Why could we not?

Our fisheries and our oceans provide an enormous opportunity. With that opportunity comes a great responsibility. We have done a huge disservice to the oceans. Instead of taking a proactive, intelligent and effective role in managing our fisheries and oceans we have abrogated that responsibility to the detriment of this sector. We will pay for it in the future. It is not too late to do something about it. I know the minister would like to work with my colleagues in the Reform Party and with members of the Bloc Quebecois. Together we can work with members of the public and interested sectors to provide good, effective strategies to save our commercial and sports fishing and our oceans and their environment.

• (1215)

I put that challenge to the minister. I welcome his response forthwith.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member could comment on the general thrust of the bill which is of course aimed at conservation, aimed at better fisheries management and the fact that Canada is now declaring its own 200-mile exclusive economic zone outside the territorial sea for management and conservation purposes. Perhaps the member would praise the federal government, praise the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the parliamentary secretary for finally taking this magnificent move for the people of Canada.

The hon. member mentioned the fact that toxins and pollutants are getting into the streams and waterways in the province of British Columbia and in other parts of Canada. Does he agree with a recent move by the Canadian government, this administration, instead of using toxic chemicals such as Matacil and fenitrothion and other chemicals over wide areas of forest land in our provinces,

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to the biological use of bacillus thuringiensis, commonly referred to as BT? This was developed in Canada by Canadian scientists. In fact, the scientist who developed it was Professor Smirnos in the Quebec region.

Does the member agree with the shift away from the use of chemicals in forest protection and in other areas, which chemicals inevitably find their way into the streams and thereby into the oceans?

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, the fact is that we cannot manage a 20-mile zone, let alone a 200-mile zone. That is the reality we face on the west coast.

For example, right now fishing boats are vacuuming our oceans, going offshore taking fish and putting them on commercial packing and freezing vessels from other countries on the Pacific rim. This is all done under the table. Enforcement officers and the coast guard know this and absolutely nothing is done.

I know the member is very sympathetic and is involved and has done a lot of good work for the people in his area. He knows this is happening.

We can extend the zone out to 500 miles if we want to, but it will not make any difference because there is no political will to do anything about it. That is the problem: political will. The rest is merely a sham.

I implore the hon. member who has worked so hard for his people to put pressure on the minister, as we are trying to do, to provide effective solutions within the 20-mile zone, the 200-mile zone, or whatever zone he wants to extend it to, because it is not happening now.

• (1220)

To answer the member's other question, the DFO bureaucracy is extremely top heavy. It is working against the very good people in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the ground who feel extraordinarily frustrated. The best DFO officers are moved away from their areas of most effectiveness to areas where they are least effective. This is happening to them right now purely because of political reasons. They are doing this because the DFO bureaucracy at the top do not want to see these people carrying out their jobs because part of their job is politically incorrect.

The DFO bureaucracy are afraid of actually living up to the rules and regulations upon which they are supposed to operate but do not. The DFO officers on the ground who are committed, hard working individuals want very much to save our fishery for everybody. It breaks their hearts and demoralizes them to see their own bureaucracy hampering them. Those are the facts.

To answer the hon. member's last question, I agree with him that the movement away from chemicals that are teratogenic and carcinogenic and damaging to the environment is excellent. He raised the example of BT, a Canadian discovery. I would also remind the hon. member that we are probably not going to have any more BT discoveries in Canada because research has been gutted by his own bureaucracy and ministry.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the member's speech. The facts are quite different from the arguments he made here.

The member is trying to do two things at the same time. His party makes an argument as to why there should be further cuts in every department of government. Then he gets up in his own local interest, decries the government for the cuts it has made in trying to balance the budget and have a streamlined administration of departments, such as fisheries and oceans.

Quite clearly he cannot have it both ways. He cannot have the leader of his party or his finance critic get up day after day in this place and say: "Cut, cut, cut, cut, cut", and then get up during debates in the House of Commons and criticize the government and say: "Do not cut; put more resources in".

I am quite familiar with this diverse view that is shared by members of the Reform Party. As chairman of the committee that examined this bill, I had to live with it almost daily. Members of the Reform Party would sit down and agree with the individuals who came and made submissions. They indicated quite clearly that this bill was long overdue, that it was a courageous act by the minister of fisheries of the day, who is now the premier of Newfoundland, and the Prime Minister of Canada to come forward with such a consolidation.

Each time they would agree with the witness but when it came time to debate the principles and to support what the evidence had told us during the committee hearings, they ran away and scattered. And then they get other members who were not on the committee to stand up in this place and try to have it both ways. That is not going to be the case today.

The member just said that this government and the current minister and the previous minister basically did not have the intestinal fortitude to deal with the issues of the day. I would ask him whether or not his party supported, when we were at committee, the consolidation of programs and legislation inherent in the oceans act.

Did Reform support the efforts of this government to go in and reduce a bloated bureaucracy in many departments, including fisheries and oceans which was reduced by 40 per cent, most of which was at head office? Did Reform support the efforts of the former minister of fisheries and this government in going before

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the court of world opinion and saying no to overfishing when it came to Spain and the raiding of our turbot stock on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks?

The member cannot have it both ways. Is he prepared to get up and tell us that yes, in those areas we have been courageous and yes, that what we have done is right, not always what was easy but that we have taken our responsibilities as we should have as a government? If he is, then it is fairly clear to me he is more concerned about playing to a diminishing local audience of supporters in his riding instead of getting up here and engaging in the type of vigorous and knowledgeable debate that is normally the case when bills come before this place.

• (1225)

Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member agrees with me that the former minister did not have the intestinal fortitude to make the changes that are required to save our country's fisheries.

Let us examine the kinds of cuts this government is prepared to make. In my riding, in Sooke which is about 35 or 40 kilometres from Victoria, the government closed the local DFO office. Why did it take two active enforcement fisheries officers away from Sooke, one of the most active fishing areas on the west coast? Why did it close that office? Because it wanted a half day secretarial position in Victoria. These are the types of cuts this government is prepared to make, what it calls effective cuts. It gets rid of two enforcement officers and puts forth one half time equivalent in a secretarial position.

I would like to go on but I know I do not have the time. If those are the kinds of cuts this government is prepared to make and is making, we do not support that at all. We support effective cuts that will get rid of the bloated bureaucracy here in Ottawa in an effective way. Bring the power to the local people. Support local initiatives and give the DFO officers the backing they require.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-26, an act respecting the oceans of Canada.

The purpose of this bill is to allow the coast guard to charge for its services, including navigational aids and ice breaking, by giving the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans the power to impose such fees.

This bill also deals with the environment, as well as the registration of pleasure craft by the coast guard and related fees, aspects I will address later.

The imposition of fees for coast guard services is another fine example of a measure taken without really consulting or co-operat-

ing with the main stakeholders, and without knowing the real impact this will have on the affected regions.

Bill C-26 is a fine example of the current Liberal government's real consideration for the respective roles of the federal government and the provinces. In fact, it is impossible to understand or to accept that this bill places the provinces on the same level as any other player like lobby groups, municipalities and industries. This shows a blatant lack of respect and common sense, and we are entitled to think this bill may provoke several other conflicts between Ottawa, the provinces and the various stakeholders.

As for consultations, the Liberal government behaved in its usual fashion. It pretended to consult and listen, but it always ends up doing what it wants without considering the comments made by other parties. All the witnesses who appeared at the hearings held by the fisheries and oceans committee deplored the coast guard's decision making and consultation process, especially the fact that the minister went ahead with the new fee structure without first assessing the economic impact on shipping and related industries.

Furthermore, 75 per cent of witnesses asked the minister to call a moratorium on the new fees while waiting for the impact studies commissioned for this fall. The witnesses also suggested that the minister co-operate with the shipping industry in carrying out economic impact studies. Finally, there was a clear consensus among the stakeholders from the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, in particular the Governments of Quebec and Ontario, against the minister's proposal, which was deemed totally unacceptable.

Everyone agreed that, to avoid causing irreparable harm, we should wait for the results of ongoing studies. But, not surprisingly, the minister completely disregarded all these recommendations and objections, and decided to go ahead with his fee structure, with no regard for its potentially devastating effects on jobs in the shipping industry, a very developed economic sector, especially in Quebec.

How else can we explain that, after weeks of consultations where stakeholders from all regions and all sectors told the government not to go ahead with its proposal, the original version of the bill was not amended in any way? Once again, the costs will trickle down to the public through the user pay principle. This is nothing but a smoke screen.

• (1230)

What is really ridiculous is that there is no indication that the coast guard even tried to downsize its operations before passing on these costs. According to the testimony, the government simply did not do its homework and ensure that such an effort was made.

We therefore find ourselves in the situation where, instead of downsizing its staff, the government is imposing fees on the industry and thus jeopardizing not only the industry but the jobs that depend on it. There is no indication that the coast guard made any effort at all. If the coast guard, which is costing us over \$860

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million a year, had managed to streamline its operations, that would have meant less money to collect from those who use its services.

Moreover, it is difficult to know what services are actually provided by the coast guard. There was no real effort to make in the most logical and convincing way possible a rational demonstration of the services actually provided to those users and that from now on will have to be paid by the population.

The federal government, for the purpose at hand, is dividing Canada into three regions in order to regionalize its fee policy. Even though the problem is completely the same from east to west, the government is dividing Canada into three big regions: west, central, that is the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, and finally the maritimes. As if by chance, Quebec is the one being taken for a ride since, along with the Great Lakes region, it will assume some 48 per cent of the \$20 million that will be collected this year.

Thus Bill C-26 is dividing up the fee structure very badly between different regions and different Canadian harbours. Consider for example the ship crossing the Atlantic to unload its cargo at Sept-Îles. It will have to pay a much higher fee for services whereas the ship going to Thunder Bay will have nothing to pay. Yet the latter navigated 3,700 kilometres more on the river, a waterway maintained by Canada.

Another example: the Canadian owner of a ship registered in a foreign country will pay seven times less than the owner of a ship registered in Canada. The finance minister is certainly aware of this fact. These two examples show that the fee structure presented in Bill C-26 is causing problems. Many things are unfair in this piece of legislation. Whether it is plan B or mere chance, this bill is sure to greatly impair the competitiveness of Quebec ports compared with ports in the maritime provinces.

Another major problem is the drop in competitiveness of ports in the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes compared with American ports. On the one hand, ships passing through the St. Lawrence and the seaway to reach the United States will not pay for coast guard services if they do not stop at Canadian ports. That is a serious threat to the competitiveness of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes ports.

How competitive will our ports be, as compared to those in the northern U.S. states? Take for instance a ship coming from Europe. It goes in the St. Lawrence River estuary, makes its way up the river, goes by Saint-Lambert, ends up in the Great Lakes and heads straight for Pittsburgh. It pays nothing, even though it used the channel, the water and the St. Lawrence. It pays for the locks in Saint-Lambert, but it is getting the rest free. On the other hand, the

small coastal trade carrier on the North Shore, or on both shores of the St. Lawrence will be hit hard.

Moreover, the user pay principle advocated by the minister is not consistently applied. In several instances, in Sept-Îles and Port-Cartier for example, users will pay up to \$5 million a year for only one buoy.

Finally, the fees the minister intends to apply are only the tip of the iceberg since they cover only navigational aids. Harbour and seaway dredging and icebreaking in the seaway are other targeted services for the imposition of fees.

These other fees might be much higher than those for navigational aids and we have every right to be concerned about the survival and competitiveness of the St. Lawrence harbours, especially the port of Montreal and several ports in the regions.

• (1235)

However, several amendments to these clauses were brought forward by the Bloc Québécois, especially by my colleague, the hon. member for Gaspé, who went to great pains to find a way to work with the government. The proposed amendments tried, for instance, to make the fees principle more fair and to force the minister to co-operate with the industry and the provinces before applying or increasing the fees.

The amendments would have prevented the minister from acting unilaterally, without taking into consideration public consultations, as he did when the fees were first introduced back in June 1996. Of course, the minister continued to turn a deaf ear, as his government likes to do.

Now let us turn to the environment aspect of the bill. The bill also deals with environmental issues in a way that will affect the Department of the Environment. This new bill will transfer to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans powers currently belonging to the Minister of the Environment. This is a further example of overlap between these two departments. Again, it is like yin and yang, as the former Minister of Fisheries Brian Tobin told a parliamentary committee last year, when he commented on the relationship between him and Sheila Copps, the Minister of the Environment at the time, by saying that it was like yin and yang.

By creating more overlap, Bill C-26 seems to establish a sectoral environment department, something like a department of coastal environment.

If each department did that, we would end up with an environment transport department in the Department of Transport, or with an environment industry department, and all the government's ministers would have powers regarding environmental protection and preservation. We can easily imagine how dangerous it could get if environmental issues were to be addressed by various

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departments. If this is the way this government wants to go, then it only has to abolish the environment department.

The government's approach to the environment is to centralize powers in Ottawa because of the national interest and of the globalization of environmental problems. Of course, Bill C-26 matches this approach.

Some clauses give the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans the powers to develop and implement a national strategy for the management of estuarine, coastal and marine ecosystems. This strategy calls for the development of activity management plans, of managing or advisory agencies, of numerous programs and of environmental standards, as well as the collecting and analysis of scientific data on the ecosystems concerned.

We must realize that several of these activities were already being carried out by the Department of the Environment. This is another case of duplication, as if we could afford such overlap among federal departments.

Nothing in the legislation compels the minister to reach agreements with other federal departments or the provinces. In most cases, he can ask for the co-operation of other authorities, but only if he wishes to do so.

Such duplication, in the long run, will jeopardize the effectiveness of environmental action. It is incomprehensible and unacceptable for the minister not to have to work in co-operation with the officials of other federal departments, in particular the Department of the Environment. There should have been more reflection and more consultations on these points before such changes were made, since in environmental matters, partial responsibility is tantamount to responsibility for the whole ecosystem. When one tries to do too much, one ends up doing nothing right.

Finally, Bill C-26 is another step towards centralization in environmental matters. In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada, in a four to three decision, dispossessed the provinces of the management of the marine environment and territory in favour of the federal government. Today, with Bill C-26, the federal government is trying to get the most out of that ruling. This trend toward centralization may lead the federal government in the medium or long term to try to claim overall management of waters and their use.

Let us talk now of pleasure boating. A real user pay principle implies that we go and ask the people who use these services which one they really want to have. Furthermore, the people who are going to have to pay for this service have the right to be heard. They are asking the government if the service will be offered to them at the lowest cost, taking into account what the socioeconomic and human impacts will be for them.

• (1240)

The principle of user fees is not respected at all in Bill C-26 since the coast guard has announced it intends to make major changes to pleasure boating in all the country's waters. Consultations have been announced, but knowing the importance the federal government attributes to the results of consultations, we have no reason to believe that it will be any different with the coast guard.

In its partnership plan, the government neglected to say that, behind this initiative, there is the recovery of \$14 million, whatever what the people will say during the consultations. This is basically a hidden tax hike badly disguised as an effort to promote user safety.

Among other measures, the coast guard wishes to register all types of craft, from the 30 foot sail boat to the row boat. Moreover, fees for all types of craft will be collected by requiring all users to get a registration permit at cost of \$20 to \$35 annually. The government also wants to require minimum skills for everyone who handles a boat and to introduce a system of fines similar to those that apply to drivers.

According to the coast guard, these measures are essentially aimed at increasing safety on the water by improving the skills of small pleasure craft users. But one has to be blind not to see that safety is only an excuse to impose a fee structure. It is hard to see how paying a \$20 to \$35 fee to put a boat in the water will make people more cautious. It is a well known fact that information and awareness are the best ways to change behaviour.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say a few words on the impact of this bill in a riding like Drummond. In Drummond, there are great numbers of pleasure craft, and water sports are very popular. In those conditions, you can imagine the impact of a fee system on pleasure craft in an area like mine. Even the possibility of fees on pedal boats and sailboards has been raised.

Just think of the impact on all the small and medium size businesses which rent this kind of equipment during summer months and which will have to pay registration fees in addition to all their other expenses. All these companies, which do not make a lot of money, will have to pay additional costs to register their boats. Will people who rent this kind of equipment be more cautious because of the fees?

People who own boats, for their pleasure or for renting, are being designated as users of coast guard services. But in a riding like Drummond, there is no coast guard. The main waterway used for pleasure boating is the Saint-François River, a small river running between Lake Champlain and Lake St-Pierre. It is not a river like the Ottawa, the Richelieu or the Saguenay, which are patrolled by the coast guard.

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But the thousands of recreational boaters who use the small navigable portion of that river will have to pay for coast guard services in the same way as those who sail on the St. Lawrence. And yet the least we can say is that we do not often see icebreakers on that river during the winter.

In conclusion, why should we adopt this type of fee structure today? Have we done all we can to try and find another solution? Absolutely not. Through Bill C-26, the federal government is launching an attack against Quebec by imposing service fees, and we must not forget that this comes with the divestment of ports.

On the one hand, the government is opening the door to an interesting future by decentralizing the management of ports but, on the other, it is increasing service fees on the St. Lawrence, which will make ports in the maritimes a lot more competitive. So what the government is giving in terms of autonomy, it is taking away by changing the rules and by imposing service fees that are unfair to Quebec ports.

In Bill C-26, the government takes the liberty of transferring the coast guard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans without knowing exactly if there will be a reform and if services provided by the coast guard meet users' needs, all that without allowing users to have their say in the matter.

• (1245)

We cannot predict the economic consequences Bill C-26 will have on users. No serious study has been made. Yet the government is going ahead with this legislation, saying that we will see how it goes. When we look at the various pieces of legislation the Liberals have introduced, very often it has not gone well because of constitutional or economic problems.

The government does a lot but achieves nothing. This bill is very typical of the way this government has been acting. Again it is interfering unilaterally in all areas without any real consultation, which does not solve anything. On the contrary, it creates problems.

As a member of the Bloc Québécois, I will vote against this bill.

[English]

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand what the hon. member is doing. Like other members of the Bloc, she is concentrating on fees which will be charged by the coast guard. She is suggesting that the fees will be charged on bathtubs as well as on pedal boats.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on the main purpose of the bill before the House today. I wonder if she could comment on the main thrust of the bill. It is an incredible piece of legislation. It is an historic piece of legislation.

There is no agreement with another nation. It is taking a convention of the United Nations and it is saying that Canada will manage conservation systems on behalf of the people of Canada. The zone will be extended 200 nautical miles outside the territorial sea, which is 12 miles, which goes from the low water mark all around the coasts of Canada.

This is an incredible piece of legislation. We have not seen the likes of it since Canada was created. It is what is commonly called the EEZ, the exclusive economic zone. The Liberal administration promised to bring in this bill during the last election campaign. The United Nations has held meetings on this subject for years, advocating that this was the way to go for conservation purposes.

I wonder if the hon. member can stand in her place to praise the Liberal government for taking such a historic step as declaring the exclusive economic zone, which is the main purpose of the legislation.

[Translation]

Mrs. Picard: Madam Speaker, I believe these are the same as the comments and question directed at my colleague, the member for Frontenac, so my discourse will be almost the same as his as well.

The Bloc Québécois is not against a national oceans strategy. What the Bloc Québécois is critical of in Bill C-26 is that the minister had announced that he would take the various partners in the shipping industry and the provinces into account. Right now, what we are seeing in Bill C-26 is that he did not do this. Instead, he turned a deaf ear, as usual.

I congratulate my colleague, the opposition critic for fisheries and oceans. He did an excellent job, and tabled amendments, which once again the government has ignored.

• (1250)

I think that one person who truly saw the need for changes in this bill, because he comes from a region that depends on the fishery, is my colleague, the hon. member for Gaspé. He was completely ignored, as were the various stakeholders in the shipping industries and the provincial governments.

What we are criticizing is the lack of a clear policy to define the relations between the various partners. We are also criticizing the fact that, under the Constitution, it was established that navigable waters come under federal jurisdiction. Along comes Bill C-26 and in they charge once again, as my colleague, the member for Frontenac was saying, duplicating services and meddling in provincial affairs.

I was referring earlier to my riding. In my riding of Drummond, there are people who use the small Saint-François river, people who belong to organizations such as Chasse et Pêche, recreational

boaters, owners of small sailboats and so on. My mandate is to represent these people, who came to me and said that they hoped I would speak out against this completely ridiculous fee structure. That is why I have taken part in the debate on Bill C-26 today, to make known the needs of my riding and the wishes of those who elected me.

It would seem that government members have no problem. They have no representatives, no small lakes, no small rivers, and no constituents opposed to this bill.

It is revolting that they should ask my daughters, who have a pedal boat, to register it, telling them they must do so because the coast guard is supposed to be looking out for their safety. The public is not stupid. That is my comment in response to the question from my Liberal colleague.

[English]

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the hon. member's speech. I understand that the member opposite is doing what she thinks is best with respect to protecting the interests of her constituents.

I want to say two things. She devoted most of her speech to the proposed fee structure for recreational vessels. I guess that is fine. It is her nickel, she can do what she sees fit.

I believe it would have been wise for the member to check the degree of consultation that went into the formulation of the bill and the almost unprecedented level of acceptance by the government of recommendations from committee members to change the bill after it came to committee.

The member said something which is not true, which is not based in fact. Members of the Bloc Quebecois would like to stand in their place on every single issue that comes to the House and paint it black and white, that everything is somehow against the rights of Quebecers. This government governs as a national government. For the member to stand in her place and indicate that the province of Quebec was not consulted on this legislation is simply untrue.

In the lead-up to this legislation the department and the minister consulted extensively with the bureaucracy of the government of the province of Quebec. Indeed, in a previous life as chair of the committee that studied the bill, I can tell the House we asked the minister responsible in the province of Quebec to come and testify before the standing committee so we could find out the concerns of the Government of Quebec. However, the minister declined. What were we supposed to do? Were we supposed to play footsie with the separatists in Quebec City and drag them kicking and screaming to a House of Commons public hearing on this legislation to find out what was their position?

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Members of the Bloc Quebecois sat on the committee and had full access through me as the chair to talk about the interests of Quebec and since they are supposed to be a national opposition, to talk about the interests of Canada with respect to this bill.

I am quite frankly getting a little tired of accepting these statements by the Bloc Quebecois which are not based in fact. The people of Quebec, like the people of Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, had access to the committee throughout the process. They still have access through members of Parliament. For anybody from the Bloc Quebecois to get up and say that access was denied to the people of Quebec is simply false and cannot be tolerated in this place.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mrs. Picard: Madam Speaker, the Liberal member can go ahead and make a fine long speech, but I would like to point out to him that the problem at present is that the relationships between the various partners are not clear.

What I would like to have him think about is this: how can it be that, last June, the B.C. representatives slammed the door because they felt they were not being paid attention to? Just as I feel that my Liberal colleague is not paying attention to me, the same principle. How is it that the B.C. representatives slammed the door?

Let him spare us the reply that they are just the Bloc Quebecois' demands, that it is just Quebec, and that it would be done just for Quebec. We too are in agreement with a national strategy, but one discussed among the various partners, not unilateral.

What is being asked for and what all the partners are asking for is very clear: a six month time frame in order to study the situation and reach an agreement between the partners. That is what is being asked for.

[English]

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it seems to be quite a long time ago since we first had an opportunity as a Parliament to debate this legislation. It was introduced in a previous session of Parliament, but the government, and I think all members of the House, in their wisdom thought that this was the type of bill that should be reintroduced and not be allowed to die.

This legislation is very important. As my colleague from Gander said earlier, it is historic legislation. Many times in opposition and in government I have been critical of the slow processes of government when it comes to rectifying wrongs by way of process or when it comes to trying to consolidate various arms and regulatory bodies of government so that the public good is executed and dispatched in a fairly hasty manner.

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One of the areas I have always been concerned with is that when we start dealing with ocean management as distinct from fishery management there are far too many cooks at the pot. Far too many departments and programs have some vague cross jurisdiction that really stops the imperative of coming up with a comprehensive policy for the management of Canada's oceans and the resources that are inherent in it.

As the member from Gander indicated, even to modernize the territorial boundaries, the water boundaries, the economic zone, the 12-mile limit, all those regulations and legislation had to be modernized. Because over 14 different departments all could claim some degree of responsibility in jurisdiction for the various and complex issues relating to ocean management, many times the problems would be identified but leadership was clearly lacking in the past to try to pull all of those various departments, programs and ministers together and to have someone who instinctively, inherently and by law had the responsibility to lead on this issue.

This bill sought to rectify that. It is for the first time a comprehensive approach to ocean management based on the precautionary principle of sustainable development and integrated resource management.

This bill was first introduced by the former minister of fisheries, who is now the premier of Newfoundland. It staked out his territory very firmly after he was appointed minister of fisheries. It indicated that he was prepared not just to talk tough but to take tough action in order to preserve our fish stocks.

If anybody doubts the resolve of that former minister of fisheries, currently the premier of the province of Newfoundland, he need only look back and see that for the first time in our history he stood up against international bullying in the rape of some of our transborder and highly migratory stocks off the east coast of Canada.

• (1300)

He was the minister who stood up and said: "I am prepared to say that there will not be another species lost in our ocean on my watch". He was prepared to take on the Spanish and the European Union. He was prepared to stand tall. He was prepared to lead to ensure that the wrongs of the past, the scattered responsibility with management of our ocean resources with regard to the fisheries, were going to come to a close.

That former minister of fisheries did not just gain the support of his colleagues on the government side, he gained the support of his colleagues in the Reform Party, in the New Democratic Party, in the Conservative Party and indeed in the Bloc Quebecois.

As I recall, looking back at the issue of the great turbot dispute, the current premier of the province of Quebec, who was the then

leader of the opposition, supported the measures which we put into legislation in this place to ensure that we had the legal tools at our disposal to stop that type of overfishing which had decimated stocks on the east coast of Canada and was a contributing factor to thousands of Canadians on the Atlantic coast of Canada being thrown out of work.

It should not be any surprise to the Bloc Quebecois, to the Reform Party or to any Canadian that it was that same minister at the time who said there is another piece of unfinished business, to come up with a comprehensive consolidated approach not just to fisheries management but to ocean management.

I do not think it is easy at any time to go to cabinet and say to other ministers: "There are certain pieces of legislation and certain jurisdictions which we have in our departments and are part of our responsibilities as ministers. But I think they should be removed from your areas of responsibility because it is in the greater public good that it be a consolidated approach to ocean management". That minister did that and the current minister continues in his footsteps. He saw fit to make sure that this bill, the bill that we are debating today, was reintroduced in this Parliament.

This bill consolidated activities in 14 different departments. It made it extremely clear that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was the one in the government, in the cabinet who had primary responsibilities to ensure that Canada had a comprehensive oceans policy. It made sure that some areas of jurisdiction which dealt with Canada's oceans and how we manage them were consolidated into one department. It put the Canadian Hydrographic Service, the coast guard services and many other programs and agencies of government under one roof and put them under the sole jurisdiction of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The opposition has talked at great length about the fee structure. I can understand its concerns. This government has ensured that when it came to the striking of new fees with respect to coast guard services that there has been broad consultation.

For the member opposite to indicate there has not been some type of a public process by which the proposals could be debated, adjudicated and if necessary changed is simply not the case. I remember quite clearly, because I am concerned about the impact of coast guard fees on the commercial shipping and also as they are applied to recreational boaters, that there was a process in place which was led by the commissioner, Mr. Thomas of the coast guard, now the associated deputy minister of fisheries and oceans. He led a very open and transparent approach. He went into the lion's den in places like Quebec City, Halifax, Saint John and St. John's. He was also on the west coast of Canada. He said: "These are the fees that we are proposing for coast guard cost recovery. I am prepared to listen and to find out what the impact is of these fees and what is a fairer approach".

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As much as I may be concerned about the impact I know that I and the people I represent have been allowed to have a say through a very transparent process. For the opposition to hone in on this one area where it has concerns and to neglect to speak about the rest of the bill tells me what an effective opposition it has not become after three or four years in this place.

The other thing this bill does, and it is very important, is for the first time it recognizes the importance and sets up a structure to implement a thing called marine protected areas. Many lobbyists in the past said that because we were first and foremost a maritime nation with literally tens of thousands of miles of nooks and crannies along our three coasts, the Arctic, the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, there was a requirement in the management structure and in the line of responsibility for the establishment of marine protected areas.

• (1305)

Indeed this government has received accolades not just from those in Canada who have an interest in this field but from people around the world.

This piece of legislation sets in place a process for the establishment of marine protected areas. Once again Canada has shown that it is prepared to put its money where its mouth is when it talks about conservation not just within Canadian national waters but also in the international waters for species which are endangered for whatever reason, whether toxic pollution, overfishing or any other reason.

We had unprecedented consultations. If opposition members wish to give a true reflection of how this bill came about they will have to acknowledge from the documents that were provided to them as opposition members of the committee that there was an almost unprecedented level of consultation with those affected in the industry prior to this bill.

The Canadian Arctic Resources Committee did a tremendous amount of invaluable work to ensure that those in its sphere of influence who had a reason to be concerned about the new Canada oceans act were fully consulted. At the end of the day, the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee gave full marks to the federal government and to the ministers involved for being bold enough and for having the foresight to come through with such a comprehensive piece of legislation.

In the committee which I was very pleased to chair at the time we heard from individuals from around the country. In the interest of trying to save money, the committee did not travel since it takes a lot of the members' time which they need for other responsibilities in this place and in their constituencies. Instead we used teleconferencing which other committees have done in the past.

We used teleconferencing in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and the west coast. We listened intently. Positions were put forward by many of the presenters to indicate there could be improvements in this bill. The committee examined those improvements. I believe many of those individuals who participated in that very broad consultative process would agree with me that if there were ever a committee that did its work and that truly had an impact on a final piece of legislation it was this committee.

The minister responsible at the time had given me his undertaking that if we dealt with the bill in a fair and reasonable manner, he would be prepared to accept any amendments that bettered the bill. As a result, what we heard in these very broad consultations at the committee stage resulted in a substantial number of amendments which were moved and agreed to and which have now found their way into this piece of legislation. In my view they have made this piece of legislation a much stronger, more enforceable and supportable piece of legislation.

The member for Gaspé, who is not only a good friend of mine but also has a deep and abiding interest in the fisheries and oceans portfolio, might remember this, as we would all remember. During one of our teleconferences we heard from some fishermen in Nova Scotia. The member for St. John's West will remember this clearly. The fishermen were waiting away at the government and the committee for coming in with these changes which were going to do all these terrible things with respect to access fees in the fisheries.

We all scratched our heads and out of respect for our witnesses I asked: "Has anybody there read this bill?" They answered that they had not read it all but that Mr. Chisholm had. As it turned out he was the person who would soon become the leader of the New Democratic Party in the province of Nova Scotia.

He had done something which I think was very unfortunate. I want to put it on record today that he was irresponsible in his approach to this bill. He obviously did not read it. If he did read it, he did not comprehend what was in it, which would not be a surprise.

• (1310)

What he did was misrepresent, in a major way, the provisions of the bill. He tried to tell the fishermen in Nova Scotia whom he purports to want to represent as the premier of the province of Nova Scotia, since he is now the leader of the New Democratic Party, that this bill had to be opposed because it was going to impact on access fees for the fisheries. This bill does absolutely nothing of the sort.

Anyway, I digress. I just wanted to make sure that the record showed unfortunately that the time we spent with some of our very good witnesses who gave up their time in Nova Scotia was spent

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trying to correct a misapprehension that was either intentionally or unintentionally put forward about the impact of this bill by the current leader of the New Democratic Party in the province of Nova Scotia.

This is a good piece of legislation. I would have hoped that the Bloc Quebec would have recognized it. I understand it has have a particular bend. Every time something comes up in the House of Commons it feels compelled to get up and see it as somehow something that infringes on the legal rights and obligations of the people of Quebec.

I also understand, because I can be highly partisan at times, that this can take on a partisan tone. I would have thought that in dealing with a bill that had such broad support across Canada and internationally, the Bloc for once would have laid down the increasingly discredited arguments for sovereignty and dealt with the substance of the bill on behalf of those Quebecers, just like the rest of those in Canada, who have an interest in Canada's oceans and conservation who would have been well served by this bill.

I still appeal to them—there are still probably a few more speakers left—to drop this silly approach to legislation. After all, in the greatest of democratic traditions, although it is somewhat repulsive to some Canadians, the Bloc Quebecois is the official opposition, properly and duly elected by its constituents. It holds the second highest number of seats in this place.

As such, in dealing with bills such as this, which have broad implications and very positive implications for Canadians in all our provinces, it should deal not as a separatist opposition but as the official opposition and work with the government, not just in committee but also on the floor of the House.

I guess, again, it is not in its interests to show that the House of Commons and the committee structure work well for all Canadians, no matter what their language, no matter what their colour, no matter what their creed or their province of origin.

To Reform Party members I would like to say that we heard during the committee hearings and since then that they have some concerns with respect to the fee structures as proposed by the Canadian coast guard on cost recovery. They have a right and a responsibility to debate those things on behalf of their constituents and indeed all Canadians. I look forward to the continuing debate on that issue.

Let Reform members also look beyond this narrow yet important aspect of the subject matter at hand today and deal with the overall bill, whether or not this government and its ministers should be applauded for being so bold, so innovative and so forthright that they opened up a process and asked Canadians to give their input in a consultative process. It has taken many of their suggestions and come forward with what most in the world who have an interest in this area would agree is a milestone piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that will become a model for many other states.

In conclusion, there is still some unfinished business with respect to the consolidation of various pieces of legislation and responsibilities. At the end of our hearings we had indicated that we wanted to see a few more things done with respect to the oceans act.

We thought there should be a further committee study done, perhaps a joint committee, between the Standing Committee on the Environment and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, to look at a further consolidation of part VI of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act relating to ocean dumping, pollution and waste as well as certain provisions of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act within the Canada oceans act.

In recognizing that we have gone quite a long way, we must also recognize there may be a ways to go yet.

• (1315)

Let us not condemn the government for being bold and taking an initiative that was difficult to put together but has such positive results for Canadians. I hope that this bill would be able to garner the high level and degree of support in this place that it has garnered with the Canadian public and the international community.

Because it is probably the last time I can do this with regard to a bill that I might have had something to do with by way of process, I want to thank all the members of the committee, my colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party, and in particular my vice-chair at the time, the member for St. John's West, for their incredible dedication and hard work. At the end of the day they proved that this place does work when you get good people who are committed to public service. I want to thank them for that type of commitment and for the example they have shown.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Madam Speaker, to begin with I would like to say hello to my colleague for Dartmouth. I had not seen him for a while. It is true that we no longer sit on the same committees.

I would like to go over some of the points he made in his speech, and above all mention that indeed the Bloc Quebecois did help improve this particular point in the bill. We did not oppose the main thrust of this legislation, namely the national oceans management strategy.

Nobody can oppose virtue, but to make sure that we go beyond wishful thinking and that this becomes more than a pile of papers on a shelf, we must ensure that the partners in charge of developing and implementing this management strategy feel comfortable with the lines of communication that are established with them. I can tell you right away that if we cannot define clearly, with everybody's agreement, the kind of partnership it will be, the national oceans management strategy will not be worth the paper it will be written on. This is the gist of what we have been saying in the House, and this is also what we opposed in committee.

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The member for Dartmouth is quite aware of this. The then fisheries minister, Mr. Brian Tobin, even assured us that the spirit of partnership would be respected. But when people are told that they will be respected, when an individual provides a definition and is told that there is no problem with it, how is it that it does not appear as the preamble to the definition of what the national oceans management strategy will be? How can this be?

If the member for Dartmouth had carefully looked at the subject of today's debate, he would know that we are dealing with an amendment to postpone third reading for six months. Why? In fact, to give the government a chance to remedy these flaws, define partnership, and clarify the grey areas in the bill. With regard to the environment and open spaces, we are told by the federal government that it does not want to intrude on matters of provincial jurisdiction.

Fine. You do not want to intrude? Fine. We will make sure this is very clear when we enter into partnerships. Since the government needs the provinces to act as partners with respect to this strategy it should say so. Why all the secrecy? They accuse us of partisanship. Let me remind you, and the member must remember, that the Bloc was the first to extend a helping hand when Brian Tobin wanted legislation against overfishing on the nose of the Grand Banks. We reached out and offered our co-operation.

I remember, and I think the parliamentary secretary was present at the time, that we passed a bill through all three stages in one single day. That is real co-operation, not stubbornness. Today we ask that the same good faith be applied in the case of a strategy we feel is necessary. If we want it to pass and be efficient afterwards, we must respect that.

• (1320)

To conclude my comments, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary a question: if relationships are so clearly established, why is it that a premier, namely Mr. Glen Clark, a man I greatly respect, slammed the door during the premiers' conference in June because he felt Ottawa was not listening to what he had to say on fisheries management and all related problems he was faced with at home?

Mr. Clark has now reached an agreement with the present Minister of Fisheries and Oceans whereby they will see what powers they can share. That is the type of relationship we must develop and should find in this bill. So if what the Bloc member said is false, if we are blinded by sovereignty, how is it that someone at the other end of the country, someone definitely in a different party, is reporting the same problems as we are? How can that be? That is my question.

[English]

Mr. MacDonald: Madam Speaker, it is good to get into a bit of a debate with my good friend and colleague from Gaspé. However, members of the Bloc Québécois have to learn at some point that each piece of legislation which comes before this place is not an opportunity to rewrite the Constitution of Canada. That is exactly what they do. Every time something comes up they either see it as an affront to the powers of the province of Quebec or they think the bill should be rewritten to give more powers to the province of Quebec.

It is obvious that the previous government sought, within the Canadian context, to rebalance the powers between the federal and provincial governments. There is a process to do that. It should not be done, with the greatest of respect to my colleagues, on every piece of legislation that comes before this place.

I want to make this abundantly clear to anybody who cares to listen. This bill does not shift powers away from or to any government in Canada. The powers of the province of Quebec are respected in this legislation. The powers of the federal government are not enhanced by this legislation. The responsibilities of 14 different departments have been consolidated and transferred to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, under the jurisdiction of the minister.

Perhaps Bloc members could speak to the principles of the bill instead of wasting their time in the House by getting up and talking about constitutional matters.

I say to the member, as I said to the previous speaker, it is absolute nonsense for any member of the Bloc Québécois to indicate that, under the Canada oceans act, the government of Quebec was not asked for input and did not have an avenue to be heard. The member's voice was loud. It was strong. He participated in the committee process, as did some of his colleagues. It was a very transparent and open process which showed what can happen when we have transparent and open processes and people who are prepared to work within the committee structure of this place. It was a model, in my view, of what can be done when good people sit down and use the rules which they are given through the parliamentary committee structure.

I say once again that there was plenty of opportunity. We heard from Quebecers during our committee deliberations. We did not hear from the minister responsible in Quebec. That was not because we did not ask, it was because the minister did not want to appear.

Perhaps the vision of Bloc members is clouded. Perhaps their minds are clouded by visions of grandeur and a separate state of Quebec. Surely to goodness, when we are elected by democratic principles in every province in this great nation, we have a fundamental responsibility to participate in the processes on behalf

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of the people. The minister responsible from the province of Quebec chose to be negligent in that regard and did not participate when asked.

• (1325)

With respect to my colleagues on the other side, and I have a great deal of respect for many of them, they would serve their constituents and all Canadians better if instead of constantly going off on their jurisdictional rants, they leave it for other forums and venues. They should use the grey power that some have to try to ensure that the processes we are privileged to avail ourselves of as members of the House of Commons, the highest court in the land, are used appropriately on behalf of their constituents to ensure that the legislation that comes before this place is the best it can be for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Question period has now expired. The period of 20-minute speeches followed by 10 minutes of questions or comments has also expired for this bill. We will now start the period of 10-minute speeches.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I had prepared a 20-minute speech, but still. Stimulated as I was by the hon. member for Dartmouth, I could have gone even longer. At the outset, I would like to say it is annoying to be called to order when, on the introduction of a Canadian bill, we, of the official opposition, claim the issue of power sharing is not relevant.

It is exactly because we are the official opposition that we have to point out that, in a bill like this one, the confusion is such that it can only cause major problems, or else, and this is another possibility, this bill does not mean anything.

Before continuing, I would like to remind the House that when provincial premiers met recently on the unity train, they were confronted with a new document on social union proposed by Ontario. A document by Mr. Tom Courchene proposing what exactly? The co-ordinated management of Canadian federalism by the provinces, without taking into account the province of Quebec and the willingness of a great number of Quebecers to achieve sovereignty and to negotiate a partnership.

There is a problem of distribution of powers within Canada. Our reform colleagues talk about it in their own way by saying there must be decentralization. Others, such as Ontario and British Columbia, talk about it differently, saying the provinces must manage Canada. And there is Quebec, which jealously wants to maintain its historic prerogatives for its people. I do not accept the lesson given by the hon. member for Dartmouth. And I think I can say on behalf of the Bloc that we do not accept it.

Let us talk now about this great bill, worthy of a Captain Canada, who has invaded territorial waters that were not his, to seize a ship he had no right to. The motive was noble, but the means amounted to taking justice into one's own hands. In international institutions, this is not particularly appreciated.

I would like to talk about the "whereases" that precede the bill and that seem to make it a proposal from a convention rather than a bill, even though Parliament is mentioned.

Since I do not have much time, I will go right away to the first and third amendment. We could talk about the others, but I think these are the most important.

• (1330)

It reads:

Whereas Parliament wishes to reaffirm Canada's role as a world leader in oceans and marine resource management;

Of course, no one will object to that. To wish to be a world leader is one thing, but to claim to be the world leader in oceans management is pushing it. What kind of actions back this statement remains to be seen. It is understandable to want to be, but to proclaim oneself is another story.

The third element reads, and I quote:

Whereas Parliament wishes to affirm—

in Canadian domestic law—

—Canada's sovereign rights, jurisdiction and responsibilities in the exclusive economic zone of Canada;

Does this mean that Parliament is giving itself new sovereign rights on Canadian territory? Because it is not saying reaffirm but affirm. This could raise concerns about oceans, rivers and all waterways.

I raise this whereas clause because it seems to me that, like the rest of this bill, it is vague and opens the door to, at best, interdepartmental quarrelling. What does this bill say about the provinces? I just said that, at the social and economic levels, they have started to look at managing things together. I did not mention Quebec, however.

Historically, even before the days of sovereignist governments, Quebec has made it clear that it wanted to look after the economy and social affairs of the province, considered by many to be an "état", a future country. I am talking about the provinces on the ocean, because they are in this situation I am describing. How much attention is paid to the provinces in this bill?

Consultation has been promised. But consulting the provinces will not be a requirement, even in the cases where regulations are put in place that affect them. Suffice it to mention the regulations with respect to the fee structure, which would appear to come under provincial control. Even in this case, consulting the provinces will not actually be a requirement. Looking at the role of the provinces

in this bill reminds us that Canada, and I am excluding Quebec here, is far from having settled its problem of “governance” as it is called today in intellectual circles.

I wonder if the member who sponsored it at the time would still agree now that he is premier of a province that must deal with this issue on a continuing basis, but this bill leaves only crumbs to the provinces and shows that the will of the first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald—who wanted to create an undivided country but was unable to do so because eastern Canada, which is now Quebec, objected—is still alive and well in today’s Canada.

There is a problem in the division of powers and responsibilities. There is an effectiveness problem, which eventually becomes a money problem. Being a world leader in the management of oceans and their resources requires money. Where is the money to implement this bill?

• (1335)

I saw no money anywhere. The only money I can see will come from fees that are unfair to Quebec and to the ports along the St. Lawrence. I hope these fees are not the only way to finance Canada’s intended role as a world leader in the management of fisheries and oceans.

This project is disturbing in several respects, including the environmental aspects. As we know, Environment Canada’s budget will be cut by 32 per cent over three years. This bill allows the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to form his own department in this area. There is a serious co-ordination problem within cabinet, not to mention the co-ordination problem with the provinces.

Perhaps cabinet did not really review this bill, because we wonder how it can be managed jointly by the Minister of the Environment and the minister of fisheries. We will vote for the amendment, because I think we demonstrated convincingly that this bill is not worthy of its stated objective of making Canada a world leader in the management of oceans and their resources.

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate, at third reading, on Bill C-26. As you know, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill, which, like several others introduced in this House since the beginning of the second session of the 35th Parliament, does not at all take into account the interests of the provinces.

More specifically, this bill makes no attempt whatsoever to get the provinces involved in the management of fishery resources. During the debate at report stage, in June, the Bloc Québécois tabled numerous amendments proposed by the hon. member for Gaspé, who sits on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, precisely to ensure that the provisions contained in the bill would force the federal government to take into account the provinces’ interests regarding the management of marine resources.

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The bill does refer to the provinces, but merely to put them in the same category as any other organization such as a municipality, a public or private law entity, an aboriginal organization, or a coastal community.

In spite of the nice rhetoric used by the Prime Minister and his lieutenants on progressive and co-operative federalism, the fact is that this government, like its predecessors, is unable to renew federalism because federalism is not renewable.

So, in June, the Bloc proposed amendments to the bill that would have allowed the provinces to get involved in the management of marine resources even though, according to the Constitution of 1867, oceans come under federal jurisdiction. A true federal-provincial partnership could have been established to ensure the sound management of our marine resources.

Instead of promoting such partnership, the government preferred to turn a deaf ear and flatly rejected all the requests made by the Bloc Québécois. Clearly, the government is adamant about holding on to these areas of jurisdiction and has no intention of sharing them with the provinces.

What are the arguments used by this government to continue to refuse to share this responsibility with the provinces? One is the requirement to comply with the UN convention on the law of the sea, which came into effect on November 14, 1994. According to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans during the June 10 debate, our proposed amendments went against this international convention.

• (1340)

In fact, on June 10, 1996, the parliamentary secretary said, as we can see on page 3606 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

Bloc Motions Nos. 15 and 16 regarding the continental shelf make the same erroneous implications, namely that the continental shelf could be within the boundary of a province. The continental shelf is well beyond provincial boundaries. To amend this bill as proposed by the Bloc would make Canada’s new ocean statute contravene international law. This is neither proper nor legally correct.

It is important to note, by the way, that it is always easy for government members to accuse us of making erroneous implications rather than debate the real issues.

However, in the United States, the federation closest to Canada, at least physically, the central government shares with the States its responsibilities over part of its coastal territory. That does not mean that the United States are contravening international law. It does not prevent the United States from exercising unfettered jurisdiction over their coasts and territorial waters. It is rather a new vision of federation.

Another argument used to refuse to clearly state the role provinces could play in the management of marine resources is that it would go against the Constitution of Canada and it is not up to this House to make constitutional amendments. But that is nothing new. For the federal government, everything that is in Quebec’s

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interest goes against the Constitution. Again, I find such an argument rather astonishing.

Since the throne speech last February, the Prime Minister keeps on saying that Canadian federalism is constantly evolving, that we do not need constitutional amendments for the provinces to become more involved in various areas, that administrative arrangements are the way to go in the future.

In fact, when the time comes to adopt clear legislative provisions, when the time comes to share jurisdictions with the provinces or even to respect the provinces's jurisdictions, the federal government rejects Quebec's demands and falls back on a Constitution that is cast in stone.

Indeed the federal government shows little respect for the Constitution when it wants to interfere in areas under provincial jurisdiction. That was the main point I wanted to make concerning this bill which, like many others, does not show any willingness to co-operate with Quebec and the other provinces on the part of the federal government.

This government is showing us once again that it does not want things to change, and Quebecers will clearly express their feeling about that the next time they are consulted about Quebec's future.

Of course, I am concerned about other aspects of this bill, particularly about the impact they will have on Quebec ridings that have a port.

First of all, concerning the whole issue of fees for services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard, we feel the government is acting much too fast. The maritime industry is not totally opposed to some charging of fees, but it does want studies in order to find out the effects this would have. This is the reason the great majority of witnesses heard by the fisheries and oceans committee have called for a moratorium on coast guard fees. The impression we get from the government's attitude is that it wants to get its hands on considerable amounts of money without any regard for the consequences.

Another aspect of this bill which affects all ridings is the fees for pleasure craft. If such fees were charged, organizations in all ridings would be affected.

Non-profit organizations concerned with preserving the flora and fauna of our rivers and educating the public about these issues would be affected.

• (1345)

Funding of these organizations is partially public and partially private, and they will have to face the consequences. A group can own 10 war-canoes, 120 canoes or 20 kayaks, while another has 10 rowboats, 26 pedal boats, and so on. They will be affected by the

fees provided for in the bill. The survival of these groups, which have always played an important role in the economic and social activities of the communities in which they are located, will be compromised.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): I apologize, Madam Speaker, but I rushed in when I saw there were fewer speakers from the other parties than scheduled in this important debate. I welcome this opportunity to rise in the House to object to the adoption of Bill C-26. Among other things, the government wanted to put pressure not only on the opposition but also on the stakeholders in this area. For that reason alone, the bill is totally unacceptable.

We heard Liberal members say earlier that this was an historic bill, and we heard them brag about the broad impact of this bill on the lives of Canadians and Quebecers.

Before going any further, since I believe I will be one of the last speakers in this debate, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Gaspé on a job well done. Thanks to his persuasive arguments and the groundswell they provoked—I am referring particularly to what I called the rowboat debate—he managed to make the minister backtrack temporarily. I say temporarily, because this should not be a reason for the hon. member for Gaspé to relax his vigilance concerning the registration of rowboats, pedalboats and light craft.

All Bloc members talked to their constituents, and as people heard about the government's plans, they said it was ridiculous and incredible. Since when is the coast guard interested in the light craft that navigate on our lakes? The presence of DFO makes sense if you are on the Pacific, the Arctic or the Atlantic ocean, and even on the St. Lawrence River. We are used to seeing them there. But on the tributaries of the St. Lawrence? People could not believe their ears.

The work done by the hon. member for Gaspé raised the interest of the media, so that the minister delayed the coming into force of the registration of light craft. I admit I am still apprehensive, because after all, this is a pre-election year. We do not know when the Prime Minister will call an election, and it is clear that the government is playing for time.

With this bill the minister wants to make it easier to issue such regulations. In a previous attempt, he used legislation on financial administration. In this case, he wants to make it much easier. This is exactly what people do not want.

The worst thing is certainly the lack of consultation, of listening, of understanding on the part of the minister as to what the participants said. He listened to them, but he did not take their suggestions into account, except for postponing registration of small craft. As for the rest, the minister wants to reaffirm Canada's

sovereignty on its inland waters but also extend and confirm the 200 mile zone. We have no objection to his speaking of sovereignty.

• (1350)

We Quebec sovereignists are well aware of the true meaning of the word sovereignty. However, when speaking of co-operation, the government says it is possible, but we know its habits. We did not have that many examples of co-operation between the federal government and the provinces up to now, over the past three years, and we have been following all the debates closely. There was some talk of co-operation, but rarely, and I daresay almost never, did it translate into action.

This bill is a further example of this bad habit. The minister wants to decide with his officials in Ottawa. Whatever the provinces may say, the minister will do as he pleases. He did not even listen to the Premier of British Columbia. In his last speech, the hon. member for Gaspé reminded us of the time when, during a first ministers' conference, the Premier of British Columbia—not Quebec—walked out, saying that he felt he was wasting his time, that it did not serve any purpose, they did not listen, they did not want to know.

So a bill was introduced. I see some members, for example the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls who, with elections in the offing, wants to make a name for himself—he has a reputation as a dissident, even a critic, one of the rare ones within the government party to voice his opinions—and suddenly he has found a mission for himself: Bloc bashing.

That is a well known trick. It has been used many times. I am a fairly new MP. I have been here only three years. But the hon. members for Richelieu and Rosemont, who have more experience, have often told me that it has always been that way. What do MPs or government members do to make a name for themselves outside Quebec? They attack Quebec, they attack MPs, they sometimes try to insult them. This was not the case here. The hon. member did not stoop so low, even though his comments were not particularly appropriate.

Having sat on the opposition side for a long time, he should understand that members of the Bloc Québécois are trying to do an important job in this place, to be the official opposition and as such to represent those who feel the government has not listened to them, or at least has not understood them.

But no, the government is forging ahead, passing this bill the member for Gander—Grand Falls called the most important piece of legislation since Confederation. I believe in his view it is, especially in his area bordering the Atlantic ocean. I can understand his point of view. But then, if it is that important, why not proceed more carefully and clarify many areas which are still grey.

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I worked a long time for the former Quebec agriculture and fisheries minister and I remember that, up to 1984, the federal government was delegating part of its responsibilities regarding fisheries management to the provinces. And it worked. We were doing fine in those days. We know what happened to the fisheries after this was taken away from Quebec; we are actually looking for fish now. The stocks of just about every species are dwindling. Things have been going wrong since that time.

Instead of broadening its horizon in order to protect the fisheries through its strategy, the government is saying that it will be done in Ottawa, by Ottawa.

I remember a historic remark a politician made in Quebec to the effect that it was harder to have a bureaucrat leave Ottawa to go and see what was actually going on in the fisheries than to have a fish swim from the Gaspé to Ottawa.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Madam Speaker, after those impressive speeches on the part of the member facing me and of the member for Lévis, I am surprised that our Liberal colleagues are not rising to approve these very sensible arguments.

• (1355)

The member for Quebec explained quite well the unfair situation this bill would create for Quebec. When a government is so irresponsible as to table a bill taxing pedal boats and rowboats, there is definitely something wrong, something out of whack in the operation.

By tabling this bill and not realizing that it will adversely affect all small touristic parks and outdoor recreational parks in regions like Quebec and other provinces, the government is showing to what extent it is oblivious of the day-to-day life of ordinary citizens.

We have seen that this fee for pedal boats and small rowboats will have an incredible financial impact on small outdoor recreational businesses which can barely make ends meet sometimes, particularly when we get rainy summers like we did this year.

Fortunately, the Bloc proposed some amendments and brought witnesses to be heard by the committee to make the government understand to some extent, maybe temporarily, that it was taking a wrong path.

In the documents the government used to explain its position, we can see that, once again, its actions are diametrically opposed to its red book commitments, where the government said it would reduce the public service, really streamline it, and it would legislate less in order to give businesses—

The Speaker: My dear colleague, as it is nearly two o'clock, you will have to resume after question period.

The House will now proceed to statements by members.

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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TEACHERS

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 5 has been designated by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization as World Teachers' Day. I am sure that all members will join me in saluting the efforts of the men and women who devote their lives to teaching.

Educating our children is a vital task that often receives far too little recognition. Not only is education fundamental to our future economic success, it also lays the foundation for our successful democracy and the development of a more tolerant and caring society.

All too often we focus on the negative when discussing our education system and ignore the wonderful contribution of all the dedicated teachers who, despite all the challenges of a rapidly changing society, manage to instil a love of learning.

I am sure all members will join me in saying thank you to all Canadian teachers for their dedication and hard work educating our children.

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[*Translation*]

CRANBERRY INTERPRETATION CENTRE

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to salute the management and employees of the Centre d'interprétation de la canneberge, or cranberry interpretation centre, which opened its doors last week in Saint-Louis-de-Blandford. This event, unique to Quebec, will fill with wonder those who visit the centre.

Since the centre is built in the middle of a cranberry production facility, visitors will be able to see how this fruit is harvested. Under a huge tent, many charts and pictures will help them get to know everything about this fruit.

The cranberry is a small wild fruit from North America. Natives had called it atoca.

At present, in Quebec, some 1,000 acres have been set aside to grow cranberries.

In fact, 95 per cent of Quebec's cranberries are grown within a radius of 20 km around the municipality of Saint-Louis-de-Blandford. Furthermore, the neighbouring municipality of Villeroy hosts an annual cranberry festival.

Consequently, the riding of Lotbinière is the best location for the production of cranberries in Quebec.

[*English*]

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers are noted as masters of understatement. Therefore suffice it to say that 1996 will not go down in history as a banner year for agriculture in western Canada.

Farmers in Prince George—Peace River are accustomed to tough years and hard conditions. As someone who has been directly involved in agriculture for most of my life, I am well aware of what a year like this means to a farm family.

● (1400)

After suffering years of low returns the future was finally beginning to look a bit brighter with the improvement of grain prices, but then crop year 1996 came along. A long cold winter and a late wet spring, followed by almost continuous rain over the growing season, have resulted in a dangerously late harvest.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians from coast to coast depend on the successful grain harvest for their livelihood. Farmers not only in my riding but across Canada are struggling to bring in the crop. I ask all colleagues to join with me in wishing them the very best in their endeavours.

* * *

RAIL LINES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other day I asked a question of the Minister of the Environment with respect to rail line abandonment. I asked him if he was willing to bring forward an environmental assessment of the various abandonments which are affecting my home province of Manitoba, for instance the possible abandonment of rail lines in the north and the Lyleton subdivision in the south.

I got a cute answer. The minister got up and said: "Not yet". It seems that the Trudeau shrug is back in style.

The fact of the matter is there is a good case to be made for doing an environmental assessment of these various rail line abandonments and what effect they have on the environment by increasing truck traffic and a variety of other things which need to be considered.

I would urge the government, pursuant to its commitment to the Bruntland commission, to do these kinds of environmental assessments. That is what governments around the world committed themselves to do when they endorsed the work of the Bruntland commission to environmentally assess all major policy initiatives; not just the environmental ones, but transportation and all kinds of

other policy initiatives. That has not been done by this government and it should be done.

* * *

VIOLENCE

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, one week ago today Morley Sangwais was convicted of murder in the first degree of his common law spouse Kelly Howe in Calgary.

I could stand here and reflect on the bitterness and the frustration that the victim's family has experienced through this whole traumatic episode, but rather I am standing here to urge women across the country who find themselves in situations of domestic abuse, who find themselves brutalized, terrorized, demoralized and compromised daily, to find a secure, safe haven for themselves and their children.

We can also talk about restraining orders and all the paperwork that abounds in supporting our legal structure, but for Kelly Howe that restraining order had about as much value as this paper airplane.

* * *

PARKDALE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, students at Parkdale collegiate in my riding of Parkdale—High Park deserve to be congratulated. The collegiate itself is found in a less affluent area of Toronto; however, this has not dissuaded the students from believing and living the Canadian dream.

According to Jim Craig, the high school English teacher, 99 per cent of his students go on to university despite the fact that most came as immigrants from non-English speaking communities. Sadly, many came as refugees from war zones.

Recently these students have compiled a collection of prose and poetry describing their views of life, *Images of Parkdale*.

Images of Parkdale is truly unique in that it allows us to see life through the eyes of young people who have endured very difficult times and have yet gone beyond this by putting together a truly remarkable and inspirational book.

I fully commend the staff and the students of Parkdale Collegiate Institute for their excellent work.

* * *

LEONARD BIRCHALL

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 400 people gathered at Norman Rogers Airport in Kingston Township on October 6 for the official opening of Len Birchall Way. The new street name, officially unveiled by Kingston Mayor Gary Bennett and Kingston Township Reeve Isabel Turner,

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recognized Air Commodore Leonard Birchall, a former commandant of the Royal Military College.

On April 4, 1942 Leonard Birchall was on air patrol off the coast of Ceylon, where the British navy was stationed. He was turning around when he spotted the whole Japanese fleet heading toward Ceylon. It is said the Japanese were planning an attack similar to the one at Pearl Harbour. Leonard Birchall managed to signal the British fleet before the Japanese shot him down. He was captured and survived four years of beatings and torture in a Japanese prisoner of war camp.

Sir Winston Churchill hailed Leonard Birchall as the saviour of Ceylon. Had the Japanese attacked, they could have wiped out the British navy, with unknown consequences for the outcome of the war. Air Commodore Birchall is truly a great Canadian war hero. He was well saluted last Sunday.

* * *

• (1405)

THE FAMILY

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week families all across Canada will be rediscovering family strengths, this year's theme for National Family Week.

In my riding of Saint-Denis I have organized a drawing contest for the second year in a row to encourage elementary school children to rediscover their family strengths. Last year's contest was a success and this year's will have even greater participation.

[*Translation*]

As members of Parliament, we have a responsibility to teach and show young people, tomorrow's decision makers, how important family is in our society.

Family values are our greatest resource. Without the love and support of our families, it would be difficult if not almost impossible to realize our full potential and achieve our own goals and those of our society.

[*English*]

Indeed, without the love, support and strength of my parents, my husband and my two daughters, I could not do my job as well as other colleagues in the House.

Let us rediscover our family strengths and rejoice in our families not only this week but all year long.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WORLD TEACHERS DAY

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known as UNESCO, has designated October 5 as World Teachers

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Day in honour of the men and women who dedicate their lives to teaching.

For teachers, the vision of a world where people will live in a climate of harmony, tolerance and mutual understanding is more than a dream; it is a goal.

The president of the international educational association, Mary Hatwood Futrell, said this: "When a student's developed potential meets a teacher's liberating art, a miracle occurs". This miracle happens every day.

On behalf of all my colleagues, I want to thank the men and women who make this miracle possible.

* * *

[English]

ELIZABETH ROUX

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Elisabeth Roux, assisted by her mother, Senator Therese Lavoie-Roux, defrauded the Canadian government of thousands of dollars through unemployment insurance fraud.

The RCMP recommended that Elisabeth Roux be charged because she, by trickery, lies, or other misleading methods, defrauded the Government of Canada of more than \$5,000. The justice department has refused to lay charges against the senator or her daughter even though federal employees point to the numerous examples where other Canadians have been prosecuted for UI fraud.

Consequently, by refusing to lay charges, this Liberal regime is sending a message to Canadians that the law applies to everyone unless you are a political friend of the government. In the senator's case she was a former provincial Liberal cabinet minister.

Shame on the justice minister for allowing two tier justice to reign in Canada. Shame on the justice department lawyers who quashed the RCMP charges. Shame on this Liberal government for demonstrating its contempt for the principle that all Canadians are equal before the law. Charge the senator and her daughter.

* * *

EXPO 2005

Mr. John Loney (Edmonton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today as the member for Edmonton North to recognize and provide my support to the city of Calgary in organizing its bid for Expo 2005.

This international event will be an economic and cultural boon to Calgary, Edmonton and Canada, drawing tourists from around the world, and will serve as a showcase of our great country and people.

Traditional western hospitality will certainly transform all visitors into Stetson wearing, roving ambassadors of Canada who will

proclaim to all who listen what a special country we are privileged to live in.

So widespread is the support for this bid that even the city of Edmonton, Calgary's traditional rival, is strongly supporting our southern neighbour's bid. Combine this support with that of the province of Alberta, the campaign for Canada sponsored by the Calgary *Sun*, and the future looks very bright for Calgary.

Once again, I applaud Calgary's bid for Expo 2005 and encourage my fellow members to take up this challenge for our country's benefit.

* * *

LAND MINES

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, worldwide there are more than 110 million active land mines waiting to explode. These deadly devices claim 10,000 lives every year and more than 16,000 people are injured annually.

• (1410)

Five hundred land mines explode weekly. The vast majority of victims are innocent civilians, often women and children. At the IPU Canada worked to pass a strong resolution to have a total ban on anti-personnel land mines.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Foreign Affairs who has taken a leadership role in convening a conference here and following it up in December.

I wish him the best of success to have a total global ban on anti-personnel land mines.

* * *

KEITH MILLIGAN

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, October 5, saw the largest political convention in the history of Prince Edward Island. For the first time, every member of the Liberal Party had the right to vote directly for the new leader. Almost 5,000 Liberals turned out to exercise their franchise.

This great demonstration of democracy in action resulted in the election of transportation minister Keith Milligan as the new leader of the Liberal Party and premier of the province of Prince Edward Island.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate premier-elect Keith and his organization on a superb effort which produced his weekend victory.

I want to congratulate Wayne Cheverie, Tex MacDonald and Daniel Mullins for running great campaigns and making a major contribution to the revitalization of the Liberal Party on the island.

As the convention concluded it was heart warming to hear that all factions were united behind the new leader and anxious to contribute to a Liberal victory in the upcoming election.

I want to wish Keith and his family well and to give my heartfelt thanks to Premier Callbeck for a job well done.

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[Translation]

WORLD TEACHERS DAY

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like UNESCO, a number of provincial, territorial and municipal governments have proclaimed October 5 as World Teachers Day.

Having retired from teaching after 46 years, I wish to mark this day in a special way. Many members of Parliament, including some 20 members of the official opposition, a few ministers and yourself, Mr. Speaker, have worked in that sector. The vast majority of politicians used to come from professional environments. We now see how teachers can also influence the future of a country.

Teaching is the greatest profession in the world, since our social values and assets depend on its quality. On the eve of the third millennium, teachers assume a major responsibility.

On behalf of all my Bloc colleagues, I wish to thank them for their commitment and professionalism.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this government's fiscal restraint is a sham.

Fact one: the entire deficit reduction of \$25 billion is matched by \$25 billion extra collected from the taxpayer. Fact two: the cuts in program spending needed to pay extra interest on the debt were achieved mainly by downloading on the provinces. Soon cuts in transfers for health and education will account for 84.3 per cent of all the federal government's cuts.

Ontario's minister of intergovernmental affairs put it this way: "Well, Mr. Minister, it is time to come clean. You will reduce transfers to the provinces by 42.2 per cent while you have only reduced other federal program spending by 1.3 per cent".

Downsizing of government is largely a Liberal myth. Revenue grabs and deficit shifting are despicable facts.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec minister responsible for international relations,

S. O. 31

Sylvain Simard, recently illustrated how true the old saying about travel broadening the mind is.

Upon returning from a journey in Asia, Simard observed that, in Asia, the business culture relies heavily on governments and that government assistance is necessary to support the economic stakeholders. "Agreements must first be entered into by the various countries for the foreign business community to have access to this market. It is a matter of trust. That is the only way to do business in Asia", he said.

We are happy to see that the Quebec minister responsible for international relations recognizes how important the presence of and role played by Canadian first ministers was in Team Canada's first mission to Asia.

Hopefully, next time, they will be able to convince Lucien Bouchard to come along, in the best interest of all Quebecers.

* * *

• (1415)

PREMIER OF QUEBEC

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the PQ premier of Quebec made an important speech in Laval at lunchtime today.

In essence, Lucien Bouchard reiterated the main economic principles that have guided our government since we came to office. Fighting the deficit must be our top priority in order to protect our social benefits, create jobs and improve the competitiveness of our economy.

However the separatist leader should not look too far for the reasons explaining his province's financial distress. Since his party took office in 1994, there has been one referendum after another and it is threatening to hold a referendum when the circumstances are favourable.

Lucien Bouchard must eliminate the climate of economic insecurity created by his plan to achieve sovereignty. That is the price to pay to ensure Quebec's future and prosperity. Two referendums is already two too many.

[English]

The Speaker: Colleagues, before we begin question period today, I noticed that in the statements over the last few days we have been using the term "you" as if speaking directly to another person or a minister. I have been loath to intervene, but we do not use that particular word when we are having questions or answers. I wonder if you would consider putting it in a more roundabout way rather than attacking directly.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[Translation]***CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned a few minutes ago that General Boyle, the chief of defence staff, has handed in his resignation.

We have known since yesterday that the discussions between the Office of the Prime Minister and his own department, the Privy Council, and General Boyle have been very lengthy and probably very difficult. However that may be, members will recall that, for over a month now, in response to our questions, the Prime Minister has been rising in this House and telling us time and again that he has confidence in his minister, in his former Minister of National Defence, and that he has confidence, every confidence, he said, in General Boyle.

How can the Prime Minister explain his sudden about-face today regarding the individual in whom he had such confidence a few days ago? What has changed?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Boyle, who met with the defence minister, sent me his letter of resignation this morning. I accepted it with regret. I did not ask him to resign, but he felt it was in the interest of the Canadian armed forces and of the defence minister that he hand in his resignation.

It was his personal decision. He made it in the interest of the troops. We were of the opinion that he could have waited until the end of the inquiry to see whether he had committed an error or not. But he thought, because of the controversy in which he found himself, that it was in the interest of the new defence minister to be able to choose his staff. I think his consideration is very admirable and very courageous.

I thanked him for his service to the country. Now that he has gone, the defence minister will recommend, in the near future I hope, a successor. In the meantime, General Boyle's assistant will perform his duties on an acting basis.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister tried to convince us that the former defence minister had resigned over an action that had absolutely nothing to do with the Somalia inquiry. The minister was saved by an unfortunate letter.

Now, he is trying to convince us that the chief of defence staff has resigned, but that nobody had anything to do with it, when we know that officials from his own department were talking with the

general for several hours yesterday afternoon. The Prime Minister can always take another run at it.

I would simply like to say this: Will the Prime Minister not admit that the fact is that he was too protective of his friend, the former defence minister, who in turn protected his friend the chief of defence staff, all in order to avoid admitting that he made a mistake in choosing the former defence minister, who made a mistake in choosing General Boyle?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister's letter of resignation Friday was very clear, and that was his only reason for resigning. He sent me a letter of resignation, which I accepted, because he had been informed that he had committed an error, in contravention of the guidelines issued to all ministers. He assumed his responsibilities with great honesty. I know that all members in this House will want to acknowledge that over the last three years the Minister of National Defence who resigned Friday did an exceptional job, efficiently carrying out the necessary cuts, closing bases, and reducing the number of employees and generals. I am very proud of him.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perhaps we should take a leaf from the army's book and record the exploits of the former defence minister on video?

Can the Prime Minister assure us, first of all, that the lengthy discussions in his own department yesterday, between his officials and General Boyle, were not for the purpose of making General Boyle's exit an easy one, and second, will he promise that no offer will be made to General Boyle before we know the conclusions of an interim report that will shed light on the falsification of documents in the Canadian armed forces?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Boyle has handed in his resignation. He has not asked the government for any favours. He even clearly said that he did not wish to receive an appointment, even if we had wanted to offer him one. And he will leave under conditions suitable for a retiring chief of defence staff.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Defence.

Yesterday, the new Minister of National Defence stated that the problem would not be solved by assigning responsibility to a single individual, but by tackling the whole system.

Yesterday, the new Minister of National Defence said that the idea of an interim report to cast light on operation document tampering, as demanded by the official opposition, was an interesting one.

Does the minister realize now that this is not merely an interesting idea; the government has no choice but to require an

Oral Questions

interim report, and promptly, if it wishes to get to the bottom of this scandal and find out all those involved. [English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to keep tabs on what one says in this House and elsewhere. What I said to the hon. member and others is that I was going to look at the suggestions made by Mps and others.

What is important for me at this time is to acknowledge that the chief of staff has submitted his resignation and that it has been accepted. Now we will proceed to investigate the Somalia situation thoroughly.

Perhaps this is the time to indicate that those calling for an interim report on what has been found out to date in the Somalia inquiry ought to keep in mind as well that it is also important to find out exactly what went on in Somalia.

We ought not to lose sight of the fact that what is important here for Canadians is to know what happened there, who was responsible, how such a thing could happen, and how it can be prevented from happening again. That is what we will be trying to find out.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, having an interim report does nothing to prevent a complete investigation of what else went on in Somalia.

Does the explanation of the minister's reticence to call for an interim report not lie in the fact that his government does not want a report on document tampering to come out before the next elections. This could smear not only General Boyle but also, of course, the former Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister himself?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent days, two people have taken some very difficult steps. First my colleague, the former Minister of National Defence, resigned, and now today, General Boyle has done so as well.

• (1425)

I will take advantage of this opportunity to ask my honourable colleague whether he is serious about wanting to find out just what happened in this entire incident, as he was calling for yesterday in terms of an interim report on the entire Somalia situation. I am prepared to commit the government, provided we have the support of the opposition and the other members of this House, to making a request to the Parliament of Canada from the House of Commons, asking those who are investigating the Somalia events not only to provide us with an interim report, but also to give us a report on what went on in Somalia so that action may be taken as soon as we have it in hand, by the end of March, as set out in the instructions given to the inquiry.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as all members know, on Friday the Minister of National Defence resigned and today the chief of defence staff has resigned. These resignations have been accepted by the government. We want to congratulate the Prime Minister on belatedly and finally acknowledging that there has been a leadership problem at the top.

As recently as last week the Prime Minister was telling this House that General Boyle and the former Minister of National Defence enjoyed the government's complete confidence. Will the Prime Minister explain to the House what happened between last Thursday and today to destroy that confidence?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Minister of National Defence gave me a letter of resignation. I accepted it. The letter of resignation was very clear. The letter of acceptance of the resignation was very clear. They are public documentation.

The former Minister of National Defence showed a high degree of public service when he said: "Unfortunately, I broke the guidelines that you have established, Prime Minister. I resign". I said that I hope some day I will have the opportunity to welcome him back in the cabinet. He is a very honourable man, a good parliamentarian and a dedicated Canadian.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's explanation is incomplete and contradictory.

The former defence minister was allegedly forced to resign for interfering with a quasi-judicial tribunal. This apparently violated an ethical guideline of cabinet. Yet over the last two years, seven other ministers of the government have interfered with the CRTC, a quasi-judicial tribunal, and have gotten off scot free.

Will the Prime Minister release to this House these ethical guidelines which permit seven cabinet ministers to interfere with the tribunal without penalty, but which required the minister of defence to resign for doing so?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I formed the government three years ago, there were no guidelines of conduct for ministers in relation to their communications with quasi-judicial bodies.

When we had a controversy in the House, I said that they were to be clarified. I have clarified them. The ministers received new instructions after that. Unfortunately, in the case of the former Minister of National Defence, he broke the guidelines.

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These guidelines existed in writing in previous governments. They were never made public. They are instructions from the Prime Minister to his ministers. It is for the ministers to deal with the Prime Minister.

In the case on Friday, I received a letter of resignation and I accepted the letter.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question was simply, would the Prime Minister release to this House these guidelines that permit this contradictory behaviour.

Some of us come from jurisdictions, for example a jurisdiction in Alberta, where the most rookie minister of the government knows there are only three ways to communicate to a quasi-judicial tribunal: through the statutes, through an order in council, or through public testimony before the tribunal.

Why is it so difficult for that rule to get established in practice here? I ask the Prime Minister, will he submit to the House these ethical guidelines which permit such contradictory behaviour from his ministers?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a reality that we debated in this House. A minister of the crown at the same time is a member of Parliament. He has some obligation to the people who vote for him to try to help them solve their problems. The minister as a member of Parliament indicated in his letter what he had done. He broke the guidelines but he will always have the responsibility of being a member of Parliament.

• (1430)

It is very difficult to combine the two responsibilities. I advise the ministers to be very prudent. In this case the minister felt that he had been imprudent. I checked and the guidelines were broken and I have accepted his resignation. It is a very honourable thing.

If the hon. member thinks that this is not severe enough, tell me, should there not be any members of Parliament made cabinet ministers? It is that way in other jurisdictions. In France a member of Parliament has to resign his seat as a member of Parliament to become a member of the cabinet, but I am a defender of the British tradition and I am following the British rules.

* * *

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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

According to today's issue of the *Globe and Mail*, the government has devised a parallel system enabling the Prime Minister's

Office to organize as it pleases the management of information requested under the Access to Information Act.

Will the Prime Minister confirm the existence of such a system?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is the government. The Privy Council must ensure that what goes on in all the departments is co-ordinated and that, if there is any problem in the public administration, the Prime Minister is informed.

Putting in place the necessary mechanisms to know what goes on in the public service is the first rule of good management for a Prime Minister. This is precisely the way I run the government.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the access to information request concerning the former defence minister goes back to August.

How does the Prime Minister explain that he stood up for his former minister throughout this period, when he was fully aware that his minister might have violated the code of ethics for cabinet members?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day, hundreds and even thousands of information requests are made by journalists, academics and members of Parliament. It costs millions of dollars for the public service to find the related documents.

My office was informed on Tuesday evening. I was personally informed on Wednesday morning, and the minister handed me his resignation on Friday morning. I think the government did what it had to do. Once we were informed, we took action within hours.

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[English]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

For months now the Prime Minister has said that the former defence minister and General Boyle were operating the armed forces to the satisfaction of the government, no major crisis. Since then the minister and the chief of defence staff have resigned under a cloud and on the heels of many scandals. Yesterday the new defence minister admitted that the armed forces face a major crisis.

How can the Prime Minister explain the flip flop? Does the Prime Minister believe there is a major crisis in the armed forces or not?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the first place the hon. member alleges something the Prime Minister had said, that there is no crisis in the armed forces.

Oral Questions

I know that the hon. member and every member of the House is aware of the Somalia inquiry, not just the situation with respect to the inquiry surrounding the activities of General Boyle. General Boyle was not in Somalia. General Boyle was not in the videos that the hon. member and others have seen. General Boyle was not a commanding officer in Somalia.

The hon. member I think does the House a service in raising the question as to whether or not there is a crisis in the armed forces. I said yesterday and I repeat today, the replacement of a defence minister and the resignation of the chief of defence staff will not correct serious problems in the Canadian Armed Forces that were reflected in the activities in Somalia.

• (1435)

I am sure the hon. member will join with me in ensuring that we encourage the commission to report as quickly as possible on what happened, why it happened and who was responsible for what happened in Somalia.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, again Canadians are getting used to no answers in the House of Commons.

We have to remember that nothing honourable happened today. The person who resigned admitted to lying to the military police. They have admitted to lying and to breaking the spirit of the Access to Information Act. The government is responsible for those actions.

The Canadian public have listened month after month, day in and day out to this Prime Minister saying there was no problem at the Department of National Defence. Does the Prime Minister accept full responsibility for the mishandling of the appointment of the former chief of defence staff, General Jean Boyle?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the House and Canadians have listened to questions being put with respect to the situation which surrounded General Boyle.

The hon. member refers to honour and that there was no honour in what was done today. I believe that anyone who has as much respect as the hon. member does for the armed forces would recognize what kind of a heart wrenching situation it had to be for an officer of the calibre and the age of General Boyle to have to come to the conclusion that it was in the best interests of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and in the best interests of Canada for him to offer his resignation to the government.

The hon. member and I may agree on some things, but I have to disagree, and I believe that most fair thinking Canadians would disagree, when he suggests in any way that what General Boyle did today was not the honourable thing to do.

[*Translation*]

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. While on probation, inmate Marcel Blanchette was involved in the horrendous murder of Isabelle Bolduc, committed near Sherbrooke, last July. However, the probation officers in charge of his case had refused to punish him, even if they very well knew that he had broken the conditions of his parole.

Can the Solicitor General tell this House why this offender, who was not abiding by any of his parole conditions, could remain free instead of being sent back to prison?

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that the National Parole Board is a quasi-judicial body. We should get its recommendations any time now.

I cannot comment on the decision made by the National Parole Board, because it is a quasi-judicial body. However, I can tell the hon. member that the board is investigating and that we should receive its report in a few weeks.

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what specific guarantees can the minister give the House that there will never be another case like the Marcel Blanchette incident ever again in the Canadian prison system?

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one such incident is one too many, I agree. However, our system is working very well. I cannot believe that the hon. member is suggesting that we get rid of the review process and the National Parole Board.

The system is working very well and has been fully tried and tested. In this case, we will check with our sources and, as I said earlier, wait for the upcoming report before taking all appropriate measures.

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[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday could have been a glorious day for the minister of agriculture. His news conference could have been his opportunity to be king for a day but sadly he remains the king of delay based on his press conference on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Oral Questions

The minister promised Reformers in the House: "I will give a detailed response to the panel's recommendations". In fact, his message was so unclear it took his officials four more days to write up a press release.

After three years of preparing for this big day, why was the minister's statement so vague and underwhelming? When will the minister specifically tell prairie farmers what he plans to do?

• (1440)

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the hon. gentleman's frustration. Of course he is perfectly at liberty to call his own news conferences, but he prefers to come to mine in order to guarantee some attention.

On Friday I had the opportunity to outline to the news media in Regina and across western Canada the general directions being pursued by the government with respect to grain marketing and changes in the Canadian grain marketing system. Yesterday a very detailed statement was issued outlining the focus of those changes.

Legislation is presently being prepared. It will be presented to the House of Commons at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly had a lesson on how not to hold a press conference. It is a good thing the minister is not the chief electoral officer because our democratic process would be in shambles.

How can the minister call a plebiscite of producers when he does not know what the question will be, he does not know who can vote, he does not know what constitutes a majority and he does not know if the vote will be binding?

Will the minister commit today in the House to giving all western Canadian barley producers a clear, honest question on whether they want the choice of how they market their barley?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I indicated very clearly on Friday and very clearly again yesterday what the nature of the question would be.

Let me quote: "They", that is farmers, "will be asked a clear cut question about whether they wish to put all barley, both feed and malting, on to the completely open market for all sales or would they prefer to retain the current marketing system through which the Canadian Wheat Board, as modernized by the other changes announced by the government, remains the single desk seller for all barley sales for export and domestic barley sales for human consumption". It is very clear and very specific.

[Translation]

THE CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Canada Post Corporation.

Today, the minister finally tabled the report on the review of Canada Post Corporation's mandate. She has stated she will not privatize Canada Post Corporation so long as it has a public policy role to fulfil.

Can the minister tell us how she defines the public policy role that Canada Post Corporation has to fulfil?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we live in a vast country that includes a number of remote areas, and I imagine Quebec also has remote areas. It is obvious that all Canadians across the country want to receive their mail; it is a necessity for them.

As long as this necessity exists, Canada Post Corporation will have to keep on serving Canadians.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister has announced today her choice to stop the delivery of unaddressed advertising mailings, while rejecting the recommendation contained in the report regarding an increase in postal rates.

Will the minister wait after the next election to authorize a five cent increase in postal rates as recommended in the report?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that is the Bloc's position. Does it want us to increase postal rates? We think that small and medium size business and people living in remote areas would have to bear the cost of such an increase, and we are not willing to do that at this time.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the new Minister of Human Resources Development.

On July 1 the first phase of Bill C-12 came into effect. Could the minister tell the House exactly how the new employment insurance legislation provides income protection for low income earners everywhere in Canada?

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada needed a new and modern system of employment insurance. We have actually ef-

fecting a very dramatic shift from a passive role to an active role in assisting people to go back to work, which was absolutely necessary. The changes are about getting people back to work, allowing people to help themselves and responding to the way people work today in the new economy. It was important for us to address the issue with the new economy.

The goal is to help people to go back to work when there is work available and for employers to accept a larger responsibility to create more employment for these people.

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CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government is proposing to partially de-index Canada pension plan payments to Canadian seniors. This will mean less income for seniors and breaks a promise that the Prime Minister made during the last Quebec referendum.

Why is the government reducing Canada pension plan benefits when it promised it would not?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has not made a proposal along those lines. When the federal and provincial governments came together, both examined a series of options. This happens to be one of the options. It was set out in the consultation book that was signed on by all of the provinces unanimously.

That option was discussed. A number of individuals throughout the consultation process, in fact some in the hon. member's own province, subscribed to this as a thesis. However, no decision has been taken. What was agreed to by the finance ministers was that we would examine the situation, look at the total package and eventually come to a consensus.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his response because there are a good number of seniors who are very nervous about what is likely going to happen to their pensions and other income. The last budget cost seniors up to \$1,200 each through the elimination of the age limitation tax credits.

We know that the provinces are very upset about allowing the federal government to use unemployment insurance premiums to offset the cost of the CPP premiums. They think the two should be linked in that the unemployment insurance premium should be reduced while the others go up.

Why would the government break faith with Canadian seniors, especially the most needy seniors, when we look at all of these threats to them, particularly the 50 per cent tax on income? Why are the Liberals breaking their promise?

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I can answer the question, but first I have to figure out what the question is.

The government made it possible for Canadian seniors and for a whole generation of young Canadians to know that the Canada pension plan, the OAS and the guaranteed income supplement would be there for them. We did not want to make the same mistake the previous generations of politicians did, which was simply to defer this problem until such time as the Canada pension plan got into such difficulty that there would be no other solution except the terrible one that is advocated by the members of the Reform Party.

In our budget we brought down a seniors benefit that will be as good if not better for 75 per cent of Canadians, better for nine out of ten women in the country, that will allow Canadians to hold their heads high as they recognize the—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Since 1986, the Canadian government has required Portuguese citizens visiting Canada to have a visa. However, Portugal does not require Canadians to have a visa to visit that country. In fact, it is the only country in the European Union on which Canada imposes this requirement. When it was in the opposition, the Liberal Party was against this requirement.

• (1450)

When will the minister decide to remove the visa requirement for Portuguese visitors as it has in the case of other countries?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, we regularly review our visa policy in this country.

A number of factors are taken into consideration. As you know, many visitors come to Canada, and at the same time we must also control our borders. As for the situation concerning Portugal, this week I will have the pleasure of discussing the matter with the Secretary of State of Portugal who will be visiting us.

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I may remind the minister that this measure is utterly discriminatory against a friendly and allied country.

Could the minister explain why she has maintained this visa requirement, although Portugal is the only country in the European Union to which it applies?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, situations vary from country to country. We decided some time ago to remove the visa requirement for Chile. As you know, we have to reinstate this visa due to a very particular problem we have with illegal immigrants to this country coming from Chile.

When we make a decision of this kind, we have to look at several factors, which means finding out whether the country where these people come from properly controls the passports and visas it issues and whether or not a large percentage of visa applications are turned down.

That is the context we are looking at. And that is why I am quite prepared to the reopen discussions with the Portuguese authorities on this question.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is national family week and it is a good time to focus on the safety and security of Canadian families.

This morning I presented a petition from more than 25,000 people from across Canada asking the minister to toughen up the justice system for criminals who have committed sexual acts and crimes against children.

Does the solicitor general agree with these petitioners? Does he agree with their specific demand that local RCMP officers be given permission to notify Canadians whenever sexual offenders are about to be released back into their communities?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was just those concerns that lead the government to consult and then produce Bill C-55 which was tabled in the House some two weeks ago.

Through Bill C-55 changes were proposed to the criminal justice system that will enable us to take that burden from the shoulders of police. This will be done by enabling sentencing judges, in the cases of repeat sexual offenders, to impose not only a prison term but to ensure that at the end of that prison term there is an appropriate period of supervision in the community to safeguard the interests of Canadians and their families.

After the sex offender is out of prison at the end of the sentence, there will be a period during which the offender will have to report, if appropriate, to police, let authorities know of the whereabouts of the offender, continue treatment if that is required and even in the appropriate cases wear an electronic monitor. That is the most effective way to deal with this threat to our security.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that in Bill C-55 the only communities that

must be notified of a release of a sexual predator are aboriginal communities. There is no such provision in his bill for the rest of the communities. It is a weakness in that bill.

Since April of this year there has been a delegation order sitting on the solicitor general's desk. The solicitor general merely has to sign that order and local police officers will be given the authority and the permission, the delegation, to release that information to communities when those sexual predators are released back into the community.

Will the solicitor general sign that delegation order and will he do it today?

Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that order but I will bring it to the attention of the solicitor general at the earliest convenience.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. I would like to give credit where credit is due and thank the minister for continuing the moratorium on the closing of rural post offices. Rural Canadians thank her for that.

● (1455)

In one of her recommendations the minister directs Canada Post to improve rather than reduce the quality of service in rural areas and to include the establishment of a reasonable delivery standard for rural areas.

Will the minister guarantee to the House today that she will establish these standards, ensure that rural service will meet the needs of rural Canadians and not just Canada Post and include all rural Canadians in setting up these standards?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we responded immediately to certain areas of recommendation in Mr. Radwanski's report is exactly because of our concern for all of the regions of the country, and in particular the rural areas.

In order to ensure that service standards are increased I have directed Canada Post to move forthwith in this area. As well, I am preparing to meet with stakeholders myself. I am waiting anxiously to hear their suggestions.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Oral Questions

In an article published last weekend, the minister wrote that the number of francophones outside Quebec has increased by 50,000 since 1971. What she failed to mention is that 90,000 francophones stopped using French during the same period. In other words, their assimilation continues.

Why is the minister trying to hide the fact that a total of 340,000 out of the 1 million francophones outside Quebec have become anglicized and that the assimilation rate is growing?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should keep in mind that the question comes from a member who compared francophones outside Quebec to paraplegics in wheelchairs.

We should also emphasize that this member, who speaks French rather well, is a Franco-Ontarian who learned to speak French in the great Province of Ontario. So when the member claims that francophones outside Quebec are not very good in French, he should first look in his own mirror.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, on page 84 of its red book, the government made a promise “to take strong measures against violent and degrading pornography”. This was part of a larger strategy to attack the factors that led to domestic violence and sexual deviancy.

The government has done nothing to curb the production, sale or possession of violent, degrading pornography.

Why has the Minister of Justice gone back on his commitment to take strong measures against this sort of filth?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two concrete measures come immediately to mind. We have taken these measures to do exactly what we said we would do.

First, working with my colleague, the Minister of Industry and his blue ribbon panel on the information highway, we are looking at specific measures we can take with the international community to deal with violence and pornography on the Internet.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rock: Second, the justice committee has produced a paper which identifies a variety of strategies to deal with violence and pornography in television and movies and the entertainment industry.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rock: They are measures we are sure will strengthen our ability to halt the kind of unacceptable material to which I know the member and I do not want to see our society exposed.

Those are only two of the many measures we have taken to fulfil our commitment in the red book.

The Speaker: Colleagues, whenever a question is being asked or an answer is being given, may I ask you please to listen to both the question and the answer. I do allow a certain amount of time and that time will be allowed.

* * *

• (1500)

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

He knows there is strong support across the country and in the Association and Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Federation of Students and the National Consortium of Scientific and Educational Societies for renewal of a federal infrastructure program that would earmark 20 per cent to upgrade labs, libraries, technology and other research and development infrastructures.

Will the minister agree to support this very important proposal that would both create jobs and meet the very serious need for academic infrastructure upgrading?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are at present looking at an infrastructure program. As the hon. member mentioned, there has been a submission by the universities of very high quality based on research and development. This in itself would be one very good reason for going ahead with an infrastructure program.

* * *

TOURISM

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tourism is estimated to be a \$26 billion industry in Canada. To help it expand, the Canadian Tourism Commission was launched over a year ago to stem Canada's international tourism deficit.

Would the minister tell us, has the Canadian Tourism Commission been effective? Is it generating new tourism business in this country?

Hon. John Manley (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.): Mr. Speaker, the member represents one of the finest tourism destinations in Ontario.

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The member will know what a fine example the Canadian Tourism Commission is of partnership between the federal and provincial governments, the private sector and the tourism industry. It has led year over year to a \$1 billion reduction in the tourism account deficit; a 13 per cent increase in international tourism receipts; and an almost 2 per cent increase in employment in the tourism sector.

Tourism is big business and this government is seeing it grow even further.

* * *

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in our gallery of His Excellency Taib Fassi Fihri, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[Translation]

THE OCEANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion and the amendment.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will just take a moment to conclude by reminding this house that the amendment we have brought forward is in keeping not only with Quebec's claims but also with the claims of other provinces.

We will recall that the federal and British Columbia government have agreed, for instance, to a bilateral review of salmon fishing. After British Columbia withdrew from a provincial table where all the provinces were represented, a bilateral relationship was eventually established. The review of the responsibilities should be completed by February 1997, that means in five or six months from now. In the release issued in July, the federal and British Columbia governments announced this as good news.

• (1505)

Our amendment goes along the same lines, more or less. Let us take the time, with regard to part II of the act, to clearly define the role of each partner, their responsibilities, and so on. Let us give ourselves a few more months, to ensure that the bill will have the desired effect, as stated at the beginning, and that it goes along the same lines as the claims made by British Columbia and other provinces asking for the same thing, including Quebec, as far as this bill is concerned.

Asking for a six month period as we do in this amendment, which we hope all the hon. members will support when it is put to a vote later today, seems perfectly justified to me. In terms of time frame, of timing, it seems quite reasonable to table this amendment today, since bilateral agreements like this one have already been entered into in relation to a fee structure in similar areas or other areas. Discussions could take place between the provinces to determine what the needs are. Then, as I said earlier, the role of each partner could be established, so that we could achieve a better result and make this bill more useful.

I will close on this, hoping that the government will listen to these legitimate demands of the opposition for a six month extension through this amendment.

[English]

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the division bells having rung:

The Speaker: At the request of the government whip, the vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the end of Government Orders.

* * *

[Translation]

MANGANESE-BASED FUEL ADDITIVES ACT

The House resumed from September 27, 1996, consideration of the motion that Bill C-29, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese-based substances, be read the third time and passed, and the amendment.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, like my colleagues did earlier, to oppose Bill C-29, an act to regulate interprovincial trade in and the importation for commercial purposes of certain manganese-based substances.

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This bill, as its title indicates, seeks to prohibit the importation of certain manganese-based substances, specifically MMT, in Canada, and their interprovincial trade.

• (1510)

The debate on this bill is very interesting, because this is a rather unusual piece of legislation.

It is unusual in that this government attempts to prohibit the use of MMT, not through the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, as one would expect, but through a roundabout means, at the commercial level, by using a false pretence, namely the harmful effects of this product on health and on the environment.

Instead of prohibiting the sale of MMT in Canada, or simply saying that this is a toxic or dangerous product, the government is trying to legislate to prohibit the importation of this product and its trade between the provinces. This is a blatant violation of NAFTA and interference in a field of provincial jurisdiction. It is strange however that a company could produce and sell MMT in a province without violating in any way the provisions of Bill C-29.

If the government is so afraid of the alleged toxic effects of MMT, why did it not completely prohibit its use, instead of restricting its importation and its interprovincial trade?

If the Minister of the Environment had any proof of MMT's harmful effects on health or on the environment, he would have drafted his bill differently but, unfortunately for him, the minister does not have any such proof. Incidentally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, also tried to prove that MMT is harmful to one's health, but it failed in its attempt to do so.

Until last year, the use of MMT in unleaded gasoline was prohibited in certain American states. However, in April 1995, Ethyl Corporation, won a legal battle against the EPA. The U.S. court of appeal for the district of Columbia ruled that the EPA had not proved its allegations to the effect that MMT is harmful to one's health.

As for the auto industry, it was not able to prove that MMT is harmful to cars' anti-pollution systems. The EPA did not appeal the decision. Therefore MMT is now allowed in some American states. In the circumstances, I wonder why the Minister of the Environment assumes he could prove this product is harmful.

Furthermore, on December 6, 1994, Health Canada published the results of an independent study on the so-called risks connected with the use of MMT. The study concluded that the use of MMT in gas did not constitute a health risk for any section of the Canadian public.

Finally, a number of international and Canadian scientific organizations have all concluded that low levels of manganese, as in the case of MMT in unleaded gas, do not represent a health risk.

Therefore, contrary to what the Minister of the Environment seems to think, for the time being there is no hard evidence for banning MMT. Consequently, Bill C-29 is redundant until such time as respected and serious studies provide evidence of a negative impact of MMT on health and the environment.

To prohibit MMT and replace it with another product such as ethanol, for instance, which does cause environmental problems, is merely deferring the problem. It would be better to do a number of serious studies before passing a bill than to do so after the fact.

The Bloc Quebecois is, of course, very concerned about the health of Quebecers and Canadians, as it is about environmental issues, and that is why we want these studies to be done before prohibiting MMT.

I might as well say right now that the bill in its present form will always be unacceptable, since the Minister of the Environment wants to regulate the market, not the environment.

And in that case we have some serious questions about the real motives of the Minister of the Environment for going ahead with Bill C-29, although he knows perfectly well that the bill will generate considerable costs for Quebec and Canadian taxpayers, including a likely increase in the price of gas, loss of jobs in the oil industry and the cost of a possible request for compensation under NAFTA.

• (1515)

It may be that privately, and I am sure unconsciously, the present Minister of the Environment, like his predecessor, has realized that the product that would replace MMT—by the way MMT is manufactured exclusively by Ethyl, an American company—is ethanol, which, coincidentally, is manufactured using corn, which is grown mainly in Ontario. We note that ethanol creates environmental problems.

However, there is one aspect the minister has not yet understood, although his colleague for international trade may have tried to explain it to him. Bill C-29 goes counter to a trade agreement we signed with the United States and Mexico: NAFTA. Under this agreement, the Canadian government does not have the right to restrict trade and allow goods to be produced only within its borders, as it intends to do with this bill.

By banning interprovincial trade in and the importation of MMT, the bill before us today requires that all MMT sold in Canada be produced in this country. Furthermore, the minister wants to stop

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the importation of a product that is not necessarily harmful to the environment by hindering the free flow of goods. By violating NAFTA, the federal government lays itself open to a compensation claim as provided for in NAFTA.

In a letter dated February 23, the Minister for International Trade warned the Minister of the Environment that Bill C-29 violates some of NAFTA's basic principles and that, if this bill is adopted, Canada might receive a compensation claim under NAFTA. But the Minister of the Environment dug in his heels, preferring to expose the Canadian people to possible, even probable prosecution involving millions of dollars. I feel like quoting an excerpt from this very eloquent letter. The Minister for International Trade feels that, and I quote:

[*English*]

“An import prohibition on MMT would be inconsistent with Canada's obligations under the WTO and the NAFTA: (1) it would constitute an impermissible prohibition on imports, particularly if domestic production, sale or use is not similarly prohibited; and (2) it could not be justified on health or environmental grounds given current scientific evidence”.

[*Translation*]

The Minister for International Trade concludes by asking his colleague to drop Bill C-29. The possibility of a lawsuit looms closer every day since a notice of intent to submit a claim was formally filed September 10 by Ethyl Corporation from the U.S. Ethyl is asking for US\$201 million in compensation. A claim may be submitted within 90 days of the notice of intent.

This claim process under article 1116 of NAFTA has already been used in the past in two other areas. In fact, two other notices of intent to submit a claim under article 1116 of NAFTA have already been filed against Canada this year and are still pending. One is from a Mexican pharmaceutical company called Signa for \$50 million, and the other is from Waste Management Inc. for a secret amount.

The U.S. company feels that its Canadian subsidiary will be hurt by Bill C-29 and that is why it is asking for compensation under article 1116 of NAFTA. This article provides that an investor of a party may submit to arbitration a claim that another party has breached an obligation under NAFTA and that the investor has incurred loss or damage by reason of, or arising out of, that breach.

Some say that NAFTA allows the Canadian government to pass legislation aimed at protecting human, animal or plant life and health. The exception procedure under NAFTA is complex and the Canadian government must at least be able to demonstrate that the substance in question has an adverse effect and that there is indeed a need to restrict this substance. The Canadian government could not do that in the case of MMT.

The tragedy is that, if Ethyl wins and the Canadian government has to pay the company several millions of dollars in compensation, this money will come out of the pockets of taxpayers in Quebec and Canada.

• (1520)

Ethyl Corporation, the sole manufacturer of MMT and sole exporter of this substance to Canada, claims that the Canadian government was in breach of its obligations under NAFTA on three counts: article 1110 on expropriation and compensation; article 1106 on performance requirements; and article 1102 on national treatment.

Under the expropriation provisions, Ethyl complained first about a loss of goodwill because Canada tarnished its reputation both nationally and internationally by saying without proving it that MMT is harmful. The American company also complained about the expropriation of its Canadian investments since Bill C-29 would preclude the commercial use of MMT by Ethyl Canada.

Moreover, Ethyl claims that the bill would create a preference for national content by authorizing the production of MMT in Canada, which violates article 1106 of NAFTA. International law requires governments to pay compensation each time they expropriate.

Finally, Ethyl claims that article 1102 dealing with national treatment was violated because it is discriminatory for the Canadian government to prohibit the import of MMT knowing full well that Ethyl is the sole manufacturer of this product.

In closing, how much is the government prepared to pay in compensation? As the Minister of the Environment so eloquently said, in response to a question I asked him on September 25, a U.S. multinational corporation should not dictate what the Government of Canada should do in the best interests of Canadians, both environmentally and healthwise. However, such a corporation has every right to remind the Government of Canada of the trade agreements it has signed.

Considering the enormous cost for Quebec and Canada taxpayers due to the absence of any advantage in prohibiting MMT in the bill proposed by the Minister of the Environment, I can only ask members to vote against Bill C-29, thus avoiding a financial disaster in Canada.

In closing, I would ask unanimous consent of the House to table a letter written by the Minister of International Trade to the Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne is asking for permission to table the letter.

[*English*]

Is there unanimous consent to table this letter here in the House of Commons?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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An hon. member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no so we will proceed from there.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, am I to take it from the member's remarks that his party supports the continuing use of MMT as a gasoline additive? We now understand that this additive contributes to the build up of ozone levels and smog in urban areas. It is suspected but not proven to be a health hazard. It very clearly harms the diagnostic systems of currently built motor vehicles in North America and indirectly contributes to increasing smog if those diagnostic systems are not maintained properly.

Second, he suggested that the replacement additive ethanol was a health hazard. I believe he said that. If he means it I hope he will be in a position to explain why his party believes that ethanol, which is proposed here in Canada to be a replacement additive for MMT, is a health hazard or not a good replacement for MMT.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to try to answer the two questions put by the hon. member.

First, I am somewhat surprised that he would ask me to prove that ethanol is a good product, given that he says, without any proof to support his claim, that MMT is not a good product. I should ask you to prove to me that MMT is a good product.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member claims that MMT is harmful to one's health, that it contributes to smog, that it is harmful to the ozone layer and that it creates problems when diagnosing automotive systems. Where does he get his information, regardless of how accurate it may be? Let him prove his claims in this House.

If the EPA came to the conclusion that MMT is not harmful to one's health and to the environment, and if major automakers cannot come up with a sound study confirming that MMT is harmful to the exhaust system of cars, how can the hon. member say that MMT is harmful?

The Bloc Quebecois is only asking the member to prove that he is right. And we are not the only ones. Sometimes, when we form the opposition we may wonder whether we oppose a measure just for the sake of it.

But this time I am not the only one opposing this measure. Even the Minister for International Trade, whose letter I was not allowed to table in the House, wrote to the Minister of the Environment to tell him this: what you are doing is dangerous; first, because it is not a proven fact; second, because this bill is not the appropriate measure, since it deals with trade, not health; and third, because it violates at least four or five articles under NAFTA.

I will reply to the member's question by asking him a question of my own, as the Minister of Finance often does. First: does this bill violate three or four articles under NAFTA, yes or no? Second: can you, or your government, prove to me that MMT is harmful? Third: if you do this, I will answer your question about ethanol.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague on his speech. Obviously, we are not here to oppose everything systematically.

However, if you read the amendment I put forward in this House a few weeks ago carefully, we were simply asking the government to wait six more months so that we could have conclusive studies, and I stress conclusive, that would prove something to us. The fact is that we have nothing of the sort for the moment; when we asked the automakers to provide us with specific and clear studies, they told us that their studies were confidential. It is rather strange for Parliament to be told that something is confidential.

We asked the health department to confirm whether this substance was dangerous to health. The most recent study confirms that it is not. That is why we are asking the government to wait, to make sure that the right decision is made. As for a North American market, the United States have just reintroduced this product on the market, but we are going contrary to a North American policy.

Ethanol too is an additive. Nothing shows that ethanol will do a better job than MMT. It is a new product on the market. The real solution would be that one day we no longer have to use any additives at all. That is the dream solution. But we are not there yet.

I will tell you something that happened in my riding. The electric car has been launched there. That is the solution of the future. However the technology has not yet been sufficiently developed to commercialize it.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the idea of developing in the near future a different but truly environmentally friendly technology, instead of replacing one additive by another. We are talking about two lobbies.

• (1530)

Mr. Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I agree with my colleague for Laurentides that we have to choose the lesser of two evils, but we would still be better off trying to find a better alternative.

Obviously, I support all research and development on an electric car or another more environmentally friendly vehicle, but I would also like to comment on the remarks of my hon. friend.

If in fact he is right when he says that MMT is bad for human health, for the environment, for cars and all the rest, why was it not declared a toxic and dangerous substance? What the Liberals are trying to do is simply to prevent the importation of MMT in

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Canada, period. We will be able to go on producing it, selling it, using it and what not, but not importing it.

If what the hon. member says is true, he should advocate a total ban on the use and sale of MMT.

As my colleague said, we are suggesting a six month moratorium so they can bring some coherence into what they think and say. After that, we will take concrete and coherent measures.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments about the bill. As he said, this is not the first time we have debated the potential banning of the substance MMT in this Chamber. I am quite appalled, as I am sure he is, that this piece of legislation is back before us in an unamended form.

I would like to quickly point out that it is very unusual for the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party of Canada to agree on anything. In this case, we are in agreement that this is a bad piece of legislation. Any time it was to happen that both opposition parties were united in their opposition to a piece of legislation, I would hope the federal government would take note. Maybe some alarm bells would go off and the government would say that maybe there really is something wrong with the legislation. I put that forward for the hon. member's comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, my answer will probably take less than one minute. I am really happy to hear that my Reform colleague is proud we can agree on something. One more step and we can agree on sovereignty and partnership.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two fundamental questions we should ask ourselves during this debate on Bill C-29 to ban the use of MMT in Canada.

The first one is: Do the Canadian government and the Minister of the Environment have the authority and the right to pass an environmental act concerning the composition of the gasoline sold in Canada and, by the same token, to promote the use of alternative fuels, or should we give up this right for the sake of an American multinational corporation, that is threatening to take us to court for hundreds of millions of dollars?

I see that the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois have entered in a very interesting alliance. The Ethyl Corporation does not even need lobbyists with all the friends it already has on the other side of the House.

The second question is: Is MMT the safest fuel additive we can have or are there other alternatives that present no health hazards to Canadians? These are the two main questions that need to be asked.

In answer to the first one, I want to say that I do not support the Ethyl Corporation, a company that spends all of its time in court in the United States, that has spent years in court in the States to fight the EPA and that is now threatening to take the Minister of the Environment to court for \$201 million, hoping that the Canadian government would soon retreat.

• (1535)

We are talking about a very powerful American multinational that, up until recently, only sold its product in Canada. Japan was not buying, Germany was not buying, Denmark was not buying, Sweden was not buying, no other country besides Canada uses MMT.

Everybody is wrong, except for us. But we now have come to realize that there are safer, more secure alternatives. In this battle, Canadians do not want to be used as guinea pigs by the Ethyl Corporation.

[*English*]

We do not want to be the guinea pigs of the Ethyl Corporation. In fact, EPA in the United States lost the battle in the courts but it certainly is still very much of the opinion today that MMT is unfavourable to Americans.

To quote from the head of the EPA, Carol Browner: "The Environmental Protection Agency believes that the American public should not be used as a laboratory to test the safety of MMT". Nor do we Canadians want to be the laboratory for the Ethyl Corporation in regard to MMT.

In the United States today, despite the court challenges on MMT and the fact that MMT got a reprieve, it is not allowed as an additive in reformulated gas in California, in New York, in Pennsylvania, in Wisconsin. Almost one-third of the United States want nothing to do with MMT. These states use reformulated gas which includes additives which they believe are much safer for the health of Americans.

I hear there has been no conclusive proof that it is harmful to the health of Canadians, yet I have quoted several studies that raise the precaution that MMT can be potentially very dangerous to human health. I will quote again from a study I received before the last debate in November 1995. It was completed by three scientists: Kimberley Treinen of the Sanofi Research Division of Collegeville, Pennsylvania; Tim Gray of the Alnwick Research Centre in Alnwick, Northumberland, England; and William Blazak of Nycomed, Collegeville, Pennsylvania:

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In summary, the data presented here indicate that a specific syndrome of skeletal malformation in rats was induced by MnDPDP, which occurred in the absence of maternal toxicity at four times the intended clinical dose. The same specific malformations were also seen with intravenous administration of equivalent or lower doses of manganese. Since manganese has been shown to cross the placenta (Jarvinen and Ahlstrom, '75; Koshida et al. '63; Rojas et al. '67) it appears that manganese is the active teratogenic moiety in MnDPDP.

If we wait to find out if manganese is bad for human beings, if it affects people's brains after it affected the brains of rats and other lab animals, is that the precautionary principle Canadians should use?

This is what we used to say about DDT when Rachel Carson wrote her famous book. This is what we used to say about PCBs; they were also safe. This is what we used to say about CFC gases. They were the intended gases that were the purest of gases until we found out they perforated the ozone layer. It is what we used to say about lead. We used lead in gasoline every day of our lives. Many people in the world used lead in gasoline until we found out that it causes cancer.

So do we wait until we have this final and conclusive proof that will satisfy my friends from the Reform Party and my friends from the Bloc Quebecois? When we find out, what happens if it is too late and the effects are irreversible? If there were no alternatives, they would have a case, but we have alternatives.

• (1540)

Before going to Montreal from Ottawa I stop at McEwen's gasoline station on Bank Street. It serves an ethanol blend of gasoline. My car runs just as well on that as it does on ordinary gasoline with MMT. In fact, as my colleague says, it runs better.

My friend from the Bloc Quebecois said this was a plug by the Liberals to sell corn in Ontario. I could introduce him to a big firm in Quebec that produces ethanol from wood. Ethanol can be produced from sugar cane remnants, from wood and from all kinds of things. It is not a plug by the Liberals to sell corn.

The time has come to say that manganese is not good for us. In the latest surveys in Canada, surveys about health and the environment, at least 75 per cent of Canadians consistently said that until we are sure, we should not use manganese. They said it should be banned.

The people who are for the banning of MMT are not just those involved with General Motors and Honda. They are those involved in the Asthma Information Association, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the City of North York Public Health Department, the City of Toronto Public Health Department, the Environmental Defence Fund, the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, the Ontario Public Health Association, Pollution Probe and Sierra Club of Canada. They are not automobile manufacturers. They are all terribly worried about manganese.

I do not care about Ethyl Corporation. I do not care if it loses money, so long as the health of Canadians will be better off.

The challenge is: Do we let Ethyl Corporation threaten us? Do we let Ethyl Corporation dictate the policy of Canada? Why does it not sell its product in Japan, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Holland? Those countries believe in the environment. They do not use it. Why should we be the only guinea pigs in the world? Why should we accede to the threat of an American multinational which uses the courts to browbeat us into a policy that is supposed to be so wonderful? If it is so wonderful, why do so many countries in the world not want it?

The case is: the environment, the health of Canadians, the precautionary principle and the autonomy of the Government of Canada and of the Minister of the Environment to decide that yes, we will ban MMT and use better alternatives. That is the case and I make it today.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make a few comments and ask a question to my colleague across the way.

I took some notes during his speech. The member started his speech by saying: "Does Canada have the power to legislate in this matter?" His answer was yes. "Would it be the good solution to ban MMT?" Yes, he said. He ended his speech by talking about the pressures exerted by American multinationals. However, he said nothing about the pressures exerted by the auto makers lobby, which do want to get rid of MMT.

Is the member across the way saying: "No, we will not give in to pressures by American multinationals; however, we are ready to give in to pressures exerted by multinationals that build cars here"?

The real point at issue here, and I think the Bloc and the Reform Party made it quite clear, is the amendment of the member for Laurentides to postpone third reading of this bill for six months. Why? And this is where we, of the Bloc, are not giving in to any pressure. We are not giving in to any pressure.

• (1545)

We expect impact studies on MMT to be made. We want to know the impacts of this product and we want to know if there are substitute additives that could be used. Those studies are needed. Why does the government want to have its bill adopted so quickly since we could get clear answers to our questions six months from now?

We have to ask ourselves this kind of question. We must ask why the government is so anxious to pass its bill when the Bloc and the Reform Party are making a constructive proposal and asking that passage of the bill be postponed for six months. If the hon. member across the way is truly sincere when he says that health and a clean environment must be considered, that his main concern is the health of Canadians and Quebecers, I think that a six month delay, which would allow us to find out what the alternatives and the

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impacts of MMT are, would be an wise, fair and reasonable decision.

I would ask the following question of the hon. member: Considering his concern for the well-being of Quebecers, does he not think that it would be advisable to wait six months and have all the necessary information to make the right decision?

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do not think that the member listened carefully to what I said. I was not speaking only about automobile manufacturers. That is their business. They have their lobby, and that is their business. I mentioned companies, health institutions and environmental institutions. I said that a poll showed that 75 per cent of Canadians felt that if MMT and manganese cannot be shown to be 100 per cent safe, they should be banned.

Furthermore, the fundamental issue is this: we are going to wait another six months to please the official opposition. But that is not what we are talking about today. I think that the predecessor of my colleague, the member for Lambton—Middlesex, Ralph Ferguson, had been talking about it since 1988.

If the members of the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party are interested in this issue, let them look over the proceedings of the House committees, which have discussed this issue ad infinitum. Mr. Ferguson himself made it a personal crusade here in the House of Commons. The time has come for action.

Manganese is potentially dangerous to the health. Even Mrs. Browner of the EPA says so. We do not want to be guinea pigs for Ethyl corporation. That is not what Canadians want. They can go sell their manganese somewhere else if it is so good. Nobody wants to buy it. Why would we be the only ones in the world to do so?

That is why MMT must be banned now. Enough stalling around. This is a cause that the great majority of Canadians support.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite attentively to the hon. member. I noted that early in his remarks he said that we must not capitulate to Ethyl Corporation. It is threatening to take us to court. He accused the Reform Party and the Bloc of somehow being in cahoots, being lobbyists for this huge multinational.

The member from the Bloc raised a good point. It is not only the lobbyists on one side of the argument who are making points here. If we want to get into throwing accusations across the floor, some Liberal members of Parliament could be accused of being lobbyists for automobile manufacturers. I do not think that would do us any good in the debate today.

I have a couple of questions for the hon. member. I noted that he used the words “potentially harmful health effects of MMT”. He was very careful to use the word “potentially”.

Why did the Department of Health not support the findings of this raft of studies he has put forward. If it can be substantiated why did the Department of Health not recommend an outright ban on MMT?

• (1550)

The second question is if that is the case, that he truly believes and his government believes that MMT is harmful and has been proven to be harmful, which I do not believe it has been proven to be so, why is his government not moving to completely ban MMT instead of bringing forward this half measure of banning the transportation of MMT across borders?

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health confirmed in July 1996 that he is totally supportive of the ban on MMT. That is the first fact.

The second fact is that the responsibility happens to be that of the Minister of the Environment. It was the minister of the environment in 1988 who proposed the banning of lead from gasoline, not the Minister of Health. That is his prerogative and the Minister of Health is fully supportive as is the total Government of Canada. That is the position. Even the Minister for International Trade, after having issued a caution, has now reversed himself and said: “Yes, after studying it, I agree there is no problem with NAFTA”.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lincoln: Would you let me speak, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Let me just see if I can help the hon. member and ask for the House’s co-operation that we might be able to resume this debate and facilitate even more questions and consequently more answers.

Mr. Lincoln: My point is I am not a lobbyist for the automobile industry. I do not care about the automobile industry. It is big enough to fend for itself.

I resent the threat of a multinational corporation which sold its product exclusively in Canada, until it won a court case in the United States, to brow beat us into saying: “If you don’t keep MMT, and remain the only territory in the world, the only suckers that sell MMT all over the world, if you don’t do it, then I’m going to take you to court for \$200 million”. As far as I know the automobile industry is not taking Canada to court or any of the members here for \$200 million.

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Why do we ban MMT? For my sake, as one member, it is because I think the potential risks—

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lincoln: Will you please allow me to speak. The potential risks to health and the environment are not worth taking the chance. If the Bloc Québécois and the Reform are so keen about MMT that they want to take a chance, we do not want to take a chance. We think there are severe potential dangers and we want to ban MMT. That is what we are going to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by pointing out to my hon. colleague for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis that I understand, since he is a former environment minister, that he would get carried away about a bill affecting the environment.

Quite simply, my question is a kind of follow-up to the question asked by our colleague from the Reform Party. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, through you, to point out where in my speech I formally support the sale or production of MMT. That is not what I am saying.

If this product is as toxic or dangerous as he suggests, why is the bill aimed at banning its importation, thus opening the door to actions under NAFTA? The Minister of International Trade has also said this. Why is its importation banned, and why is its production, use and consumption in Canada not banned as well, through another department and another bill?

Mr. Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I am not the Minister of the Environment, I am not in the Canadian cabinet. The government chooses the alternatives it deems most appropriate in a given circumstance. In this case, it has chosen this bill. What is important is the facts.

What we are aiming at is results, one way or another, and we have chosen this bill as the most expeditious means to an end. We want to ban MMT, no matter what. We do not want it in Canada. Quite simply, that is what we want.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I think we are all at the point of exhaustion with this piece of legislation. For a year and a half we have debated the issue of the gasoline additive MMT. To say the least, we have debated the issue enough that by now the Liberals I think should be embarrassed, but we drag along while more pressing issues remain.

• (1555)

Since the bill was first introduced in May 1995 by the former minister of the environment, arguments have been made on both sides of the House, round and round. The government states that

MMT should be banned from being used in gasoline in order to protect the environment as well as the health of Canadians. Yet this bill does not directly ban MMT. It merely bans the importation and the interprovincial trade of MMT.

When one bans something from being allowed to enter the country does it necessarily mean that it is harmful? What about prohibiting something from being moved across the country freely? If it is harmful should not banning it once be enough?

When a particular substance is harmful to our health or to the environment there is a regulatory authority in place to take care of such a problem. It is called the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, better known as CEPA. Within CEPA there is a schedule of substances that have been deemed to be hazardous either to our health or to the environment. CEPA is in place to protect Canadians. In fact, this government is responsible for making amendments to CEPA in order to place added protection on our already fragile environment.

However, if we take CEPA and look at the back of the act in the schedule section, MMT is not to be found nor will it ever be found in that section. Why? It is not harmful to our health nor is it harmful to the environment.

For a substance to be placed on the schedule under CEPA it must first be declared hazardous by Health Canada. I believe the public has a right to know how Health Canada views MMT. Anyone who has listened to any of the debate on this bill over the last year and half is well aware of the December 6, 1994 Health Canada report entitled "Risk Assessment for the Combustion Products of MMT".

Even though the following statement is on the record, I feel it is such an integral part of the issue that it should be read again. The study states:

All analyses indicate that the combustion products of MMT in gasoline do not represent an added health risk to the Canadian population.

I suppose it appears that MMT is no more harmful than benign dust on the ground.

On October 18, 1995 a Health Canada official appeared before the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and concurred that the 1994 report remained the position of the department.

Therefore I want to urge all members of the House not to include in their speeches during this third reading stage any reference that the removal of MMT will improve health quality. I heard several government members make mention of this during second reading. It is false and inaccurate information. A member may make an unprecedented or unpredicted mistake; however, in this case the evidence gives very clear direction.

I want to bring up one more revelation from Health Canada. It has to do with MTBE, of which Environment Canada officials say could be a replacement for MMT.

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On October 18, 1995 Mr. Rod Raphael, the chief of the monitoring and criteria division of Health Canada, appeared before the environment committee with the following revelation about MTBE:

We have concerns with respect to MTBE. MTBE was on the CEPA priority substances list, an evaluation was done under a particular scenario, and that is the present use and containment situation for MTBE. Should MTBE be added to Canadian fuel as a replacement for MMT? That exposure scenario changes for us and we are in the process of evaluating it at the request of the Canadian General Standards Board which is considering MTBE as part of gasoline formulation. We are also concerned about MTBE because of new data that is now available but was not available at the time of the original CEPA evaluation. There is a long term cancer study now available and it needs to be evaluated and brought into the assessment.

From the very beginning, Reformers have unequivocally stated that they would support the banning of MMT if the government could prove through independent scientific tests that MMT was harmful to automakers onboard diagnostic systems in cars or to the health of Canadians and the environment.

Let us talk a bit about these OBDs. Onboard diagnostic systems simply monitor the emission control systems on most late model automobiles. It needs to be reiterated that they do not reduce emissions directly. In fact, if the OBD system were removed from the automobile completely it would make absolutely no difference to the exhaust coming out of the tail pipe.

The OBDs were set to be installed in the 1996 line-up of automobiles. The former environment minister had assured the automakers that this bill we are talking about today would be quickly passed in 1995 in time for manuals to be printed up and the OBDs to be hooked up. Well, such was not the case.

• (1600)

Within the auto industry it is no secret that the technology surrounding the OBD systems is new and full of bugs. In the United States where MMT is not currently being used widely in gasoline—although I might add that a recent court decision has allowed MMT to be sold—OBDs have been found to malfunction.

This poses the question: Is it MMT that is causing the problem or is it simply the fault of the new technology malfunctions? If I happened to be a betting man I would go with the latter.

In response to these malfunctions in the U.S., automakers have a bevy of scapegoats that they are using to justify the problems: altitude, temperature, sulphur, poor fuel quality, road conditions, customer driving habits and extreme weather conditions. However, in Canada according to the automakers, there is only one reason for the OBD malfunctions, namely, MMT.

What is wrong with this picture? The government and our two environment ministers have been hoodwinked into believing that keeping MMT will cause catastrophic events to occur. Sadly they have convinced many of their colleagues into thinking the same. However, what is interesting is to see how the Liberal cabinet is split on this whole issue.

The Minister of Industry stated that he hoped for a uniform standard in fuels between the U.S. and Canada only to see this all crushed with a U.S. court decision permitting the sale of MMT. The Minister of Natural Resources has been particularly quiet on this whole issue because she knows what the costs will be to refineries in her Edmonton riding should the bill pass.

Then there is the Minister for International Trade who on February 23 of this year wrote a strong letter to the Minister of the Environment urging him to put the bill on the shelf for good. The trade minister stated “the claims of the automotive and petroleum industries conflict markedly with common ground between them”. The minister went on to say that the bill “could have many adverse implications for Canadian trade, without compensating environmental benefits”.

These are only three ministers that have declared their frustrations publicly. It would not surprise me if many more ministers are expressing doubts about the validity of this legislation behind closed cabinet doors.

The Reform Party’s position is very solid. We want protection for Canadians with respect to their health. We also want to keep our environment clean and free from harmful pollutants. The Reform Party will support this legislation if the government can prove that MMT is harmful to our health and to our environment. Otherwise we are totally opposed. Ours is a reasonable approach as there are environmental benefits for the use of MMT.

The Minister of the Environment has a choice and the choice is rather simple. Withdraw the bill from the Order Paper and conduct a series of third party independent tests to prove without a shadow of a doubt the effects of MMT. Canadians do not want to see tests from the automakers nor do they want to see tests from the oil companies. We know how tests can be skewed to reflect the views of those paying to have the tests done and I think this is what has happened so far. There needs to be a fair process and it needs to be done by someone not connected with either of the interested parties.

The minister is going to have MMT as his political legacy and the legacy will not be favourable. He inherited the environment portfolio from a minister who acts before she thinks. Bill C-94 came into being because the Deputy Prime Minister reacted to one lobby group without knowing all the facts. Now the same minister has covered herself in the flag, not realizing how much trouble she is in.

I want to encourage the environment minister to do the right thing, withdraw the bill and instead proceed with tabling legislation that will really bring protection to our environment, namely, changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and bring forward a new federal endangered species act.

In closing I want to read two letters that pertain to Bill C-29. My colleague for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca recently read to this House several letters from provincial environment ministers who opposed the passage of Bill C-29. Further to this I want to read a letter

written to the Prime Minister from the chairman of the board of the Federated Co-operatives Limited based in Saskatchewan. It was addressed to the Prime Minister with copies to three cabinet ministers on September 23 of this year:

We were very disappointed to learn that Bill C-29, an act effectively banning the use of MMT in gasoline in Canada is again being considered.

Federated Co-operative Limited (FCL) owns Consumers' Co-operative Refineries Limited (CCRL), which operates a petroleum refinery in Regina. CCRL produces gasoline and diesel fuel for co-op members and other customers.

On behalf of our members, we oppose any legislation that would ban the use of MMT as a gasoline additive until an adequate technical evaluation has taken place. We have used MMT for 18 years with no consumer complaints. MMT has allowed the production of high quality gasolines from our refinery at a lower cost and with lower environmental emissions that would have been required without MMT.

We do not believe the petroleum refining industry, and ultimately our members and other customers, should bear the costs of MMT elimination unless it can be shown conclusively that there is a legitimate need.

We had believed that if MMT were approved for use in the United States that, in the interests of harmonization of gasoline qualities, the proposed Bill C-29 would no longer be considered necessary. Certainly, a substantial amount of fleet testing and study took place prior to the approval of MMT in gasoline in the U.S.

If further scientific study and testing is to be carried out in Canada, we suggest that it be done in conjunction with the petroleum industry (CPPI), and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, (MVMA), under the auspices of the CCME task force on cleaner vehicles and fuels. We believe the banning of MMT without scientific evidence of negative effects due to the use of this additive is premature.

We also wish to emphasize that there is no relationship between the banning of MMT and increased utilization of ethanol. MMT is an octane-enhancing additive and ethanol is a high octane blending material that has both positive and negative effects when blended in gasolines. The refiners preferred route to offset this proposed ban on MMT would be to increase the severity of gasoline processing (at an increased cost). Ethanol considerations are a totally separate issue that our organization is very familiar with.

FCL provides central wholesaling, manufacturing and administrative services to more than 800 locally-owned retail co-operatives across western Canada and western Ontario. FCL is owned by its member retailers, which are in turn owned by an estimated 750,000 individual co-op members. Together, FCL and its member co-operatives are known as the Co-operative Retailing System in western Canada.

Yours truly,
E. Klassen, President, Chair of the Board.

• (1605)

Last, I want to read a letter that was sent to the Minister of Natural Resources from the co-chair of the Council of Energy Ministers. It is dated September 20, 1996. It is addressed to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Industry and the Minister of the Environment:

Dear Minister:

During the 1996 meeting of the Council of Energy Ministers in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, ministers discussed the federal Bill C-29, the Manganese-based Fuel Additives Act, the bill to eliminate import and trade of MMT.

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During the meeting, concern was expressed about the lack of effective consultation of both industry and provinces on a proposal which will impose direct costs on industry and consumers and will directly affect provincial jurisdiction.

Additionally, it is apparent that there is no clear consensus from a technical point of view concerning the impact of MMT, and whether or not MMT is, in fact, a significant problem for vehicle diagnostic systems.

Ministers are aware of the very helpful September 11, 1996 proposal to the Prime Minister from the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute and would like to recommend it to the federal government.

In brief, the CPPI has offered that "CPPI member companies will stop using MMT if an impartial review process involving ourselves, the federal government, and any other stakeholders you deem should participate, determine that the product is flawed in terms of impact on human health, air quality, or vehicle compatibility". The CPPI suggests that a credible evaluation process could be completed within a matter of three months.

The CPPI proposal is very constructive. Provincial and territorial ministers in attendance at the Council meeting (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) and the Deputy Ministers and officials on behalf of Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Yukon urge the federal government to immediately announce delay in passage of Bill C-29 to enable the time limited evaluation process suggested by CPPI to be convened to report on technical related issues.

Sincerely,
Stephen Kakfwi

Canadians expect government legislation to be drafted following extensive study and scientific reasoning. Canadians expect the best from their government. Passage of Bill C-29 will only show Canadians that changes to regulations can be bought if the price is right. Passage of Bill C-29 will surely be a sad day for the democratic process of this country.

Delay the bill and let the independent science come in. Let the government demonstrate, then legislate, and then we will support to do the right thing, rather than the bidding of special interests. As a country, let us be good neighbours and not violate our international trade promises and also the goal of complete economic union within our Canadian borders.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has raised a number of good points, particularly around the issue of independent science. However, this seems to be a game of whose science is on whose side.

We have studies that indicate that MMT can cause neurological damage, both in terms of speech and physical movements in humans. I would like to know what side the Reform and Bloc parties stand on? Do they stand on the side of public interest and public good, or do they stand on the side of CPPI, the refineries.

• (1610)

I would like to ask the member why he would side against the majority of Canadians when it is his party that purports to be a party of the people. The majority of Canadians overwhelmingly support our initiatives on this matter.

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I would also like to ask him why he would stand against the Allergy Asthma Association, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the city of North York public health, the city of Toronto public health, the Council of Canadians, the Environmental Defence Fund, the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, the Ontario Public Health Association, Pollution Probe and Sierra Club when these organization quite clearly are not asking in the name of any particular vested interest other than the public good?

Mr. Forseth: Mr. Speaker, that comment just highlights what I have been trying to point out, that the comments are all over the map. We have been proposing conclusive independent evidence. To say that my list of lobby groups is longer than your list of lobby groups really does not add anything to the debate.

The issue is that all the scientific material was taken into account by Health Canada and it was determined that the use of MMT in a vehicle was no more harmful than dust on the ground. We do not recommend that people eat the dust from the ground, however, Health Canada stated MMT is essentially benign and not relevant to the previous problem of lead in gasoline.

The lead in gasoline was a health issue. Scientists were very clear on that point and Parliament finally moved on it. But the science on MMT is completely different. We take no position on one side or the other.

We challenged the government that it had better demonstrate scientifically before it legislates. Because it has not done that and has gone the trade route, it is now in trouble as being a bad neighbour under NAFTA and it will be challenged. We have been warning about this for quite some time.

We say that we are not in support of one side or the other. Let the true scientific evidence come forward and then we will do the right thing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a little earlier, the hon. member for Terrebonne tried to table a letter here in the House but was denied permission to do so. I would like to quote a few excerpts from this letter, which was written by the Minister for International Trade on February 23, 1996, and addressed to the Minister of the Environment.

I quote:

[*English*]

“My department continues to have certain reservations concerning this measure which I wish to draw to your attention. Recently

the U.S. Court of Appeal overturned the U.S. ban. This has effectively removed harmonization arguments in support of Bill C-94. Indeed, since adding MMT to petroleum products is now permissible in the U.S., harmonization would now be promoted by introducing no new Canadian regulations.

An import prohibition on MMT would be inconsistent with Canada's obligation under the WTO and the NAFTA. The possibility is that the United States could mount a challenge either on USDR's own initiative or pursuant to a section 301 petition. Also Ethyl Corporation may try to advance an argument that such a ban would be a measure tantamount to expropriation of Ethyl's investment in Canada. Thus Canada may also be susceptible to an investor state challenge under chapter 11 of the NAFTA.

In view of the presidential and congressional election this year, American politicians are particularly sensitive to any foreign initiative which might injure their domestic industries.

In conclusion, let me stress my department's belief that Bill C-94 should not be reintroduced, as it could have many adverse implications for Canadian trade without compensating environmental benefits”.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, for once we agree with the Reform Party, and we repeat our request for a six months' hoist.

• (1615)

We know that today, in fact for the first time, the automobile industry has invested enormous amounts in research and studies to determine if MMT is really harmful to automobiles and to our health.

Let us wait for the results of these studies and have our say at that time, instead of adopting a bill in a terrible rush—because that is what we are doing—without waiting for the findings of these studies. We are not taking sides, not for Ethyl and not for the automobile association, although I am not sure we could afford being sued for \$201 million in American currency, considering Canada's financial situation.

I would appreciate the opinion of my Reform colleague on the subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Forseth: Mr. Speaker, it is good that we were able to put the letter on the record. It indicates that the Liberal cabinet is split on this issue. There is not conclusive scientific evidence to do what is being proposed by the bill.

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In view of the long debate in which we have been involved on this matter, one begins to wonder who really is in charge. Is the minister in charge, or is the bureaucracy in charge? We can change ministers but the same unsubstantiated stuff still comes forward. Sometimes departments develop a life of their own. I am wondering who is in charge in the government. Is it the minister and the cabinet, or is it the bureaucrats who, once they get an agenda, are going to drive it home?

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to take part in the third reading and final debate on Bill C-29, formerly Bill C-94. The primary purpose of the bill is to ban the additive MMT from gasoline in Canada. As hon. members are well aware, this debate has been going on in the House since May 19, 1995 when Bill C-94 was tabled and read for the first time. It is time for the House to make a decision on the bill.

The bill has been characterized as a war of interests between two powerful groups: the automobile manufacturers who want the ban, and the manufacturer of MMT, Ethyl Corporation, and its oil industry allies, that want MMT to remain in Canadian gasoline. For us on this side of the House it is not one way or the other; it is purely a debate on environmental and health issues, on sustainable development issues resulting from automobile emissions that are the greatest source of noxious gases in the atmosphere.

We are taking this action because we need to protect the latest onboard diagnostic systems that North American car manufacturers are installing in their vehicles. These systems are extremely important for the environment. They are responsible for monitoring the vehicle emissions controls and for alerting the driver of malfunctions. Without this kind of technology one cannot be aware of how well the car is working or if it is functioning at all in terms of its emissions control processes.

These systems ensure that the cleaner burning engines of today and tomorrow operate as designed. They ensure that automobiles are properly maintained, resulting in decreased tailpipe emissions and improved fuel economy. In other words, this new technology is one more important tool to help us address air pollution, smog and climate change.

This government will not allow MMT to get in the way of the automobile industry's efforts to make cars cleaner, more efficient and less polluting. Canada's environment and Canadian consumers have the right to the best anti-pollution technology possible. In fact, it is our duty as parliamentarians to do all we can to maximize environmental conditions through the legislation we pass in the House.

Yet Ethyl Corporation, the manufacturer of MMT, through its subsidiary Ethyl Canada, denies the vehicle industry's conclusions

regarding the ill effects of MMT on vehicle emissions control systems. In fact, it makes the counterclaim that MMT is environmentally beneficial. Whom do we believe?

What is certain is that the efforts to reduce motor vehicle pollution can no longer be addressed by just the petroleum industry, the auto industry or the federal government. Progress in reducing vehicle pollution requires simultaneous action by all. The petroleum industry needs to keep making improvements in the composition and the properties of the fuels that engines burn. The automobile industry needs to keep making improvements in the vehicle emissions control systems, such as those offered by onboard diagnostic systems. The government needs to take decisive action in Bill C-29 which will remove a major obstacle to the introduction of these technologies. That obstacle is MMT.

● (1620)

An Environment Canada report states that on a national basis, gasoline and diesel powered vehicles still contribute some 60 per cent of the carbon monoxide emissions that are present in the atmosphere, 35 per cent of nitrous oxide emissions or smog, 25 per cent of our hydrocarbon emissions and 20 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions. Obviously these vehicles, both gasoline and diesel powered, are very big contributors to our smog and pollution problems.

The same report stresses the need to proceed on all fronts at the same time in all these areas. It states:

Vehicle technology and fuel composition, although two separate industry sectors, must be treated as an integrated system in the development of policies and programs in order to successfully reduce emissions from motor vehicles.

This is very sound advice. It should complement this government's work in preparing our comprehensive motor vehicle emissions standards. To meet these standards we are counting on integrating improvements achieved in emissions control technologies and fuels. However, we clearly cannot hope to meet these standards without the kind of action we are taking against MMT as contained in Bill C-29.

This is not an act of impatience as some members opposite have suggested. On the contrary. Since 1985 the federal government has waited for the automotive and petroleum industries to resolve the situation without legislation. It has not been resolved. The time for waiting is over. It is now time for the government to act.

In October 1994 the former Minister of the Environment gave a final warning to both the petroleum and automotive industries to voluntarily resolve the issue of MMT in Canada by the end of 1994, otherwise the government would take action. The deadline was subsequently extended to February 1995 with no resolution in

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sight. Therefore the government tabled Bill C-94 in May 1995 and we have been debating it and its successor, Bill C-29, ever since.

The MMT issue is no longer an industry dispute. Its outcome can affect the vehicle emissions program which we as a government are putting into place, such as the new emissions standards recently announced by the Minister of the Environment for the cars in the 1998 model year. Part of these new emissions standards will include mandatory testing which will ensure that the only automobiles allowed on the road will be those that are equipped with proper emissions systems.

As was recently pointed out to me by one of my constituents, a retired zone service manager for Ford Motor Company of Canada, one of the main reasons for vehicles pumping huge amounts of pollutants into the air is that many cars have been equipped with cheaper but inferior after market exhaust systems. Mandatory testing would ensure that these inferior exhaust systems are replaced by the latest systems.

However, all these efforts will go for naught if they are not accompanied by laws that require cleaner burning fuels. That is what Bill C-29 is all about. In the long term, failure to take action could also negatively impact on the entire automotive sector.

Canadians are ready for this legislative action. The results of a poll conducted last May by Compas Incorporated show that Canadians have some clearly defined opinions on this issue. The most revealing finding from the survey reflects Canadians' preference to exercise caution when asked to choose between two potential approaches of dealing with MMT.

The question was: In assessing whether MMT should be used in Canada, which one of the following two points of view best reflects your own: MMT should be banned unless it is proven that it does not have any negative effects on people's health; or, MMT should be allowed to be used unless it is proven to have negative effects on people's health?

The survey showed that 64 per cent of Canadians believed MMT should be banned unless it is proven that it does not have any negative effects on people's health. In other words, approximately two out of three Canadians are concerned enough about the potential health effects associated with MMT that they would prefer to have it banned.

Canadians do not want to be used as laboratory rats. They have heard enough evidence regarding the toxic effects of manganese. Canadians remember hearing the argument from oil companies concerning the use of lead in gasoline. We were all told not to worry about it. Manganese, like lead, is also a heavy metal and like lead, manganese definitely acts as a neurotoxin.

A full 75 per cent of the respondents to the survey said that the argument that MMT should be banned in Canada because scientific evidence suggests airborne manganese has adverse effects on people is at the very least a good argument in support of a ban. Somewhat fewer but still a strong 65 per cent also said this about the argument: "MMT should be banned in Canada because it harms emissions control components in automobiles which monitor and reduce automobile air emissions".

• (1625)

I believe the jury is out concerning the reactions of the Canadian people to the legislative initiatives before us today. It is quite clear to me that the Canadian people support us in our desire to finally remove MMT from Canadian gasoline.

Passing this legislation will accomplish a number of important things. It will deliver a long standing commitment to ban MMT in Canadian automotive fuels. It will advance efforts to reduce vehicle emissions and to contribute to air quality improvement in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment in its October 1995 report. It will minimize the potential risk to the health of current and future generations of Canadians by taking a precautionary approach until the effects of chronic low level exposure are fully understood. It will defend the interests of consumers by ensuring that gasoline free of MMT is available across Canada. It will expand existing and new market opportunities for acceptable alternatives to manganese based gasoline additives, such as renewable fuels like ethanol which are already widely available in Canada.

I urge my colleagues in this House to support the bill. Ensuring that fuels free of MMT are available means that Canadian consumers will receive the emissions reductions and air quality they have demanded and have every right to expect. As their representatives, we owe it to the Canadian people to pass this bill.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that six out of ten provinces are opposed to Bill C-29. Once again, the federal government has interfered by deciding to go ahead with this bill. It wants to replace MMT with ethanol. I do not know if studies have been done on ethanol production, but we have received nothing so far. Ethanol production is very expensive and its environmental impact is unknown.

We know that ethanol production causes considerable soil pollution. Ethanol is made with corn. Is ethanol production viable? It is highly subsidized by the government, but will this product

eventually become viable? Will we have to switch back to MMT five years from now?

Can the government not wait six months as we requested? Six months is not the end of the world. Can the government not wait six months for independent researchers, not lobby groups, to carry out conclusive studies so we can find out if MMT is really dangerous?

[*English*]

Mrs. Ur: Mr. Speaker, there appears to be a great concern in this House as to whether ethanol is a pollutant and to its cost.

I would strongly encourage members to take the time to read the information on ethanol to see how cost effective it is. Burning wood, using corn, as pollutants I can hardly see that being a heavy metal. I would strongly encourage members to read that information.

There is ethanol, there is MTBE, there is ETBE, but there seems to be a red flag in this House when we mention ethanol. It is not a polluting agent when we use a byproduct such as wood shavings and corn to produce a product like this. It is an environmental concern that helps all Canadians to breathe cleaner air.

All of us should be on the bandwagon to support this issue.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened, as I always do, very attentively to the hon. member's dialogue on Bill C-29.

During her speech she referred to the fact that the government had been hoping that the automobile industry and the oil industry, and specifically Ethyl Canada as a subsidiary of Ethyl Corporation of the United States, would have come to some voluntary arrangement on the issue of MMT. That is what she said during her discourse.

• (1630)

What I found interesting in that is that 1984 to 1996, by my calculation, is 12 years. I would have thought that in 12 years, if this government and the government before had really wanted to do something to drive this to resolution, as she said, they would have insisted that these two opposing factions would have got together and had an independent study done, which is what the Bloc and the Reform have been calling for for a year and a half. Clearly we have had 12 years where we have had conflicting testimony and studies.

It is interesting to note, as an hon. Bloc member did before, that the automobile industry has been very reluctant to bring forward any proof of its studies and its findings. All they say is that they do find that MMT is harmful to the onboard diagnostic systems and to health.

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I have two quick points. In the hon. member's speech she said, as did a preceding Liberal member, that MMT is harmful to the health of Canadians. Yet Health Canada does not support that, as the hon. member from Burnaby stated earlier in his remarks.

The second point is whether the hon. member is aware, when she makes the point about how MMT gums up the onboard diagnostic systems in new automobiles, that it is claimed by the automobile manufacturers that they are experiencing just as many problems with the onboard diagnostic systems in the new automobiles in the United States. In the United States MMT has not been in fuel for some years now. What is the problem down there?

If this government is going to blame the malfunctioning of onboard diagnostic systems on the use of MMT in Canadian gasoline, then clearly there should not be a problem in the United States. However, my information is that there is. Does the member know that?

Mrs. Ur: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

As to knowing the concerns of the automobile diagnostic systems in the United States, I am not totally aware of that. I am going by the recommendation of one of my constituents, whose party partisans I do not know, who told me emphatically that it was my duty as a Canadian, because of the knowledge he had working in the industry, to come to this House and support Bill C-29 because of information he had at his fingertips.

I am not a service manager. I do not know the components, but he told me that once MMT was in the gasoline, all kinds of cases with spark plugs in the mobile service managers' cars or vans and catalytic converters rose in numbers because of the MMT. He feels that banning MMT would certainly be the right approach for this government to move forward with.

The statement was made that MMT was not used in the United States. Actually 85 per cent of U.S. oil refineries have confirmed they are not currently using MMT. Obviously they have inside knowledge not to promote MMT in their fuels because of what the hon. member is talking about. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to put those two things together.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing—Unemployment insurance; the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake—Canadian Wheat Board; the hon. member for Bourassa-Immigration.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-29 would prohibit the importation of the manganese-based

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gasoline additive methylcyclopentadienyl manganese tricarbonyl, a chemical expression that sounds complicated but is sometimes more straightforward than the government's logic.

When the people of my riding chose a young person to represent them in this House, I think they were fully aware of the fact that one of the benefits of electing young politicians is to be able to plan ahead, 30 years ahead maybe.

The environment is an issue very close to my heart because decisions made today might have disastrous effects 30 years down the road. I hope that I will still be around in 30 years. There is a fairly good chance of that. At least, I hope so.

• (1635)

Carbon monoxide emissions must be reduced to an absolute minimum. Studies show that there is a gasoline additive that helps reduce by up to 20 per cent these carbon monoxide emissions which are so harmful to our environment and to our health.

This additive is manganese, or MMT if you prefer. Even those who oppose the use of MMT agree that using this substance helps cut carbon monoxide emissions by approximately 5 per cent.

So, if we try to understand the reasoning of the Liberal government, something not always easy to do, it agrees and even seeks to let our atmosphere get polluted even more than it already is. Once again, the government wants the public to believe that the environment a priority. However, this bill is proof that it is really not the case.

When I talk about the environment, I always feel a twinge of sorrow because, in spite of what some may claim, the current situation is not pretty. There are problems with the ozone layer in the north, and the smog is everywhere in the south. Our water is highly polluted. We can no longer drink the water of our lakes and, in some places, we cannot even swim or fish any more. Clear-cutting is also a widespread phenomenon.

Recently, the Minister of Human Resources Development said I was a frustrated young person. He was right, because it is not always easy for an environmentalist to speak in this House.

Indeed, I am somewhat frustrated because the previous generations were a bit careless and now we have to pay the price. With bills like this one, it is hard to say: "Yes, we know what is going on and this is where we are headed". I feel this bill is a step backward. It is disappointing.

Hubert Reeves said: "The universe gives rise to complexity. Complexity gives rise to efficiency, but does efficiency make sense?" Looking at all the pollution created worldwide, I think that efficiency does not necessarily make sense.

Unfortunately, a lot remains to be done in the environmental sector. I sometimes have the impression that we have been mistaken in a number of areas, but the time has now come to take concrete action, and I think it is still taking too long. There is a

tendency to stick one's head in the sand, to try to show that things are just fine.

I cannot overlook the fact that last week I heard a very influential minister in the government saying that things were going well in Canada. It is unbelievable, when we know that the unemployment rate is over 10 per cent, that young people are fed up. Even when they graduate with a university degree, there are almost no jobs. Canada has the highest rate of suicide in the world. The debt is over \$600 billion, but things are going well. It is too bad, but it is an indication of where we are headed.

I see that some members of this House are reacting, and I am glad, because they should. You will tell me that you find me rather pessimistic, but what I want to be is realistic. The bottom line is that I was recently reading in a Quebec publication that 50 species disappear every day worldwide. The bottom line is that we are destroying the habitats of these species every day, by destroying our soil, our waterways and our air. The bottom line is that it is the air we breathe that we are talking about today.

When all is said and done, what must be understood is that this will probably have repercussions 20 years from now. The food chain being what it is, when something happens to the smallest components, the effect continues on up the chain. When I speak of the smallest components, I am speaking of species that many people have still never heard of today. Unfortunately, ecologists are still misunderstood.

When Galileo said the earth was round, people laughed at him for years. Many ecologists today are raising the alarm and there are still too many people on this planet laughing at them, and at the rate things are going, I am very worried. When we see that countries like those in Asia are modernizing and that soon everyone will have his own car, as we do here, I think we should be worried. But let us limit ourselves to the smaller picture.

• (1640)

I said earlier that the fringe elements and ecologists are misunderstood. Which reminds me a little of the plan for sovereignty. When all is said and done, it is about taking a different route, a new route, which is something that scares people or for which they are not yet ready. It takes several years before people can support this kind of thing. But the environment is an issue that has to be settled now. It takes concrete action.

There are still fringe elements, as I said before. The other day I heard someone in my riding saying we should not eat meat more than once a day. This is the kind of thing even I have trouble with. But we must listen to the environmentalists. I think there is hope. I know I seem rather pessimistic, but I am not that pessimistic. I would say I am a realist and a reasonable person. I am an optimist, but I do not want to bury my head in the sand. I want to face the facts. I want to see the kind of problems we have, but I also realize

that good work is being done today, which gives me hope for the future.

I will first give an example from my riding, and I will then look at all this globally. Not long ago this year, we stopped the practice of log drives, which were polluting our rivers to a tremendous extent. The Péribonka river which flows along the north side of my riding may be developed for tourism in a dozen years or so. We would even be able to swim in the river. In my riding we also have a ZIP committee, Zone d'intervention prioritaire, which is supposed to raise public awareness of environmental problems. A river flows near my town, and I hope that someday we will be able to swim or fish in the river. I know I am talking about just one river in my riding, but it is not the only one. I have travelled across Canada, and there is pollution everywhere.

I have further cause for hope. The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region is a laboratory for sustainable development. You can see progress has been made. There are people who opposed plans to develop the Chamouchouane, a river in my riding, which we decided to keep in its natural state—one of the few rivers in Quebec where that is the case.

We even have town councillors involved in politics, and I am thinking of one in particular, Gérald Scullion, of the Town of Alma. He is probably the first “green” councillor in Quebec to be involved in the “negawatts” project of Métabetchouan. A village decided to set up the “negawatts” project. It decided to raise public awareness, and all energy savings would be reinvested. This project is headed by Mr. Paradis from Lac-Saint-Jean. At the regional level, I think we should pay tribute to these attempts to build a better world.

Of course there is all the recycling as well. Whether we like it or not, we are increasingly seeing blue boxes next to the garbage cans. There is also the electric car, which is quietly making its way. In fact, not long ago a research centre was set up in the riding of the hon. member for Laurentides. These projects give me cause for hope. And there are of course movements like Greenpeace.

Slowly but surely, we can come up for air. Except that when you do come up for air and go to Parliament and see what is going on—They try to act like environmentalists, although direct action, which was one of my slogans when I entered politics, is what makes lobbying a powerful force.

The government says it is going to be more environmentally conscious by replacing MMT with ethanol. In fact, when I did my research for this speech, I found there were no specific studies that said that ethanol was safer for the environment. Well, perhaps in the combustion process, ethanol leaves fewer residues in the air, but look at all the consequences. When you grow corn, which is used to manufacture ethanol, you have the whole ethanol production process. That is the problem. That is where we see that in the end, we lose out.

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Actually, all this is pretty useless since we have no studies on the subject, and this bill is taking us down an uncertain path. We can no longer afford to play around with the environment. There is too much at stake, and this worries me. When I an ordinary bill like this one, it is just one of many things people can do. Much remains to be done.

• (1645)

In concluding, I will say that what saddens me is these short term policies. There is no long term view. Everything is short term. People build big stacks so the smoke will go to the village next door. It is really too bad, but that is how some people still think.

In concluding, I would like to say the following: We do not inherit the earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the member for Lac-Saint-Jean has a catch in his throat when he talks about the environment.

It is wonderful to know that we have an ally on the other side of the House. However, I am a little troubled in understanding why he is against Bill C-29. And perhaps the people in his riding would like to know why this member is going against the direction of the former leader of his party, the new premier of Quebec.

This talk about politics, I am wondering where the politics is really coming from, if we are really concerned about the environment.

I would like to quote a former minister of the environment on April 21, 1989. Maybe this was such a long time ago that the members of the Bloc have forgotten these things. The minister said he was aiming for the toughest regulations that technology can provide.

The regulations he was referring to were the tough new standards for emission control technology on new model cars, which is the OBD-II system that we are talking about. We will not have effective operation of those OBD-II systems on our cars unless MMT is taken out of gasoline.

I would like to ask the member opposite if, indeed, his throat catches when he talks about the environment and his love and his concern. How can he be so against what the previous member for his riding was advocating?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the province of Quebec, of which Lucien Bouchard is the premier, is against this bill. I am not referring to when the Conservatives were in power, I am talking about the present.

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I think my colleague across the way has not properly understood where my disagreement lies. Perhaps I digressed. Concretely, in short, imports of a product are banned without any certainty that it is harmful for the environment.

In reality, we are well aware that interprovincial trade will not occur. The provinces are entitled to produce manganese, no problem with that. Yet we know that they will not. We know that the Ontario lobby has said that, if the government were to ban manganese, that would make it possible to add ethanol to gas, and ethanol is produced in Ontario. As I have just said, there are not even any studies available to demonstrate that ethanol is environmentally any cleaner.

As my colleague has just pointed out, I am asking for a six month hoist to find out where we are at with this. I get the impression that a bill is being introduced just for the pleasure of introducing a bill, in order to show they are looking after the environment by passing some wonderful bill.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House of a few facts. The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of the Environment, who sits on the environment committee with me, is fully aware of the work we did in committee. However, when there is a need for the Minister of the Environment to do something, nothing happens.

We spent a year and a few months reviewing the CEPA with no results. Nothing came out of the department. We are supposed to review a bill on endangered species. Despite the urgency, nothing is moving at Environment Canada.

• (1650)

The Minister of the Environment even told me the other day he thought we did not ask him enough questions. The environment committee does not even have a legislative agenda. Instead of steamrolling bills like C-29 in order to satisfy Ontario, the ethanol plant announced by the former Minister of the Environment, which is currently under construction, as well as Ontario farmers—as we know, 75 per cent of Canadian corn comes from Ontario—we should perhaps think about this and, as we requested and as I will never stop saying, wait long enough for concrete studies to be carried out before we make a real decision.

Mr. Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I will speak along the same lines as my colleague. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about a letter I have here that was sent by the Minister for International Trade to the Minister of the Environment, asking him to wait. Once again, we see a lack of consistency even within the government.

As far as I am concerned, all I said today sums up the matter well.

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks made by the opposition critic, who said that this bill was of interest to Ontario manufacturers, who were pushing for it.

It think there is something else at stake here: the health of Canadians, Ontarians, Quebecers, everyone. I do not think that health issues know boundaries and stop at the Quebec or Ontario border.

I would simply like to ask my hon. colleague who raised the issue of the environment a moment ago a short question. How can he justify something like this going on for so long? The facts speak for themselves. Even manufacturers outside of Ontario, those for whom I worked many years ago, are concerned not only about what will happen to their product but also about the health of the public.

There are many people asking this House to pass this bill. How can the hon. member turn his back on people and their health?

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): This is quite unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member opposite is giving us this rhetoric about his bill preserving life on this planet, when there are no studies backing his claims.

Here is a member's statement under Standing Order 31, announcing the opening of a \$153 million ethanol plant in Chatham, Ontario. The debate today is not about the environment, it is about patronage and lobbying.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reply to the statement which was just made by the hon. member for Ontario. He stated that it really comes down to a health issue. Nothing could be further from the truth. If it is a health issue, why has Health Canada not recommended that MMT be banned? It does not support all of the so-called studies that the Liberal members are bringing up today. It simply does not support those studies. If Health Canada cannot find reasons to proceed with the banning, then I would say that hon. members opposite are simply puffing hot air on the issue. It certainly is not a health issue.

Quite frankly, I find it appalling that they would try to use scare tactics, as they have so many times on other issues, to scare Canadians into believing that what the government is doing is really in their best interests. I find that quite despicable.

• (1655)

As said by a number of individuals who spoke this afternoon, Bill C-29 goes back a long way. The thrust of this bill will be to impose a ban on trans-border transportation of MMT.

It is somewhat ironic that the government would not impose an outright ban if it truly believes that this is in the best interests of the health of Canadians. It is not only harmful to the health but it is going to follow the onboard diagnostic systems in new automo-

biles and all sorts of other issues that it believes are attributable to the burning of MMT in gasoline. If the government truly believes that why would it not just outright ban it, ban the use of MMT in Canada instead of simply banning the transportation of it?

As said by one of my hon. colleagues, I think the House and individual members are reaching a point of exhaustion with this legislation. As an hon. Liberal member noted earlier, it dates back to May 1995 when the previous environment minister brought forward Bill C-94, before Parliament subsequently prorogued in January of this year, and that died on the Order Paper.

I, along with a number of others, had hoped that when Bill C-94 died on the Order Paper the new environment minister, following a cabinet shuffle, would not have seen fit to bring this bill back unamended, despite all the debate that had taken place in the House on Bill C-94, all the points that had been brought forward by a wide ranging number of speakers both in opposition and in government, as well as witnesses and, admittedly, the lobbying efforts on both sides of this argument. Despite all that information being brought forward, the new Minister of the Environment saw fit to bring in Bill C-29 which in reality is the old Bill C-94 virtually unchanged.

It brings into question what exactly is the role to be debated in this House of Commons. Regardless of political stripes, if members bring forward points in debate in the House and they simply fall on deaf ears, what is the point to debate in the House at all when we see a minister bring back a piece of legislation unchanged despite some serious reservations being expressed by a lot of people?

I believe quite strongly that this government with Bill C-29 has fallen prey to the lobbying efforts of the very powerful Canadian automobile industry. I know we have been accused on this side of the House of being in the pockets of the oil industry, which is on the other side of the argument.

While we can defend what we have been saying, it is very difficult for the government to defend the real thrust of why it is bringing in this legislation if it is not to appease the automobile industry. It is bringing in a piece of legislation that will see the banning of a product used by the oil industry.

The Reform position on this is and always has been that we would support an independent comprehensive third party study. When we see that this issue goes back to 1984, some 12 years ago, surely to goodness the two sides could have been brought together and forced by government legislation rather than imposing a ban and taking one side of the argument with what we believe is not substantive evidence against the use of MMT.

Rather than taking one side of the argument surely the government could have brought legislation forward to have an indepen-

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dent study done to substantiate who is right in this argument. We believe quite simply that the whole issue of the banning of the transportation of MMT is one built on fallacy. It is built on scare tactics. When we look at the evidence that is provided by the two sides in the argument, it certainly supports what both opposition parties have been calling for, an independent study. That is why I find myself speaking in support of the hoist motion of the Bloc Quebecois to see this bill put off for six months. That is what we are debating here. It is not specifically Bill C-29 but the amendment by the Bloc Quebecois to see the bill delayed for six months in yet again the hope that a study could be done in the intervening time to bring forward evidence on one side or the other.

• (1700)

If the evidence, clearly supported, is what the government has been saying on this issue, I know all members of the House would support what the government has been endeavouring to do. Currently there is no studies or evidence before us to allow us to make that decision.

I find it quite ironic that when I questioned the previous Liberal speaker during questions and comments she said that her constituent had brought forward information which she listened to and he said there was overwhelming evidence that MMT was harmful to vehicle emission systems, and therefore she was going to support the bill.

I find it interesting that an MP would rise and say that one person had brought forward one side of an argument and therefore that is why she was going to vote a certain way on a piece of legislation. I would hope that all MPs of all parties would be much more comprehensive in studying an issue and looking at both sides of it before they cast their vote. At least that is how I approach this issue.

I want to bring to the attention of the House something that is of importance to me as the member representing Prince George—Peace River. I want to take this whole argument about Bill C-29 and the banning of the transportation of MMT to the level of my riding of Prince George—Peace River which I am pleased to represent in this House.

There is a refinery currently operating in the city of Prince George. This refinery produces some 10,000 barrels per day of gasoline. It is therefore the smallest fully integrated Canadian refinery. It is owned by Husky Oil.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): I hear all sorts of heckling. Is the issue here really that we are supposed to try to represent the interests of our constituents or not? Is that the issue?

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It has been said that the hon. members across the way are supporting the interests of a certain side of this argument. I want to repeat, because of the heckling coming from the other side of the House, that I am not supporting the continuation of the use of MMT, although it would be very appropriate for me to do so in support of the refinery that exists in Prince George.

Quite the contrary, what I am saying is that we need further study. We need a comprehensive study. After 12 years I do not think it is too much for Canadians to expect that the government would conduct such a study instead of going with one side of the argument, as I have already stated.

This refinery, although it is quite small, employs some 80 people.

An hon. member: Eighty people.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Yes, it is a very small number. The hon. member says: "Oh, 80 people". What is 80 people? They are potentially out of work. It does not really matter to him, no doubt. It matters to me. It matters to those 80 people who are concerned about their jobs. The whole point is that it is so needless to bring in something like this without proper study.

Those people would support the banning of MMT if it could be conclusively shown that it was either harmful to the health of Canadians or that it was creating some sort of substantive problems for the automobile manufacturers that could not be overcome in some other way. Other members earlier said that they did not want to see the Canadian government browbeaten with the threat of legal action by Ethyl Corporation.

• (1705)

What about the threats that came from the automobile industry over the last year and half suggesting that if the government did not put this in maybe the price of cars would go up by some \$3,000? If that is not a threat I do not know what is. It is inappropriate to listen to one side of the argument. None of us want to see the price of cars go up. I keep returning to the fact that the conclusive evidence is not there so how can the government arrive at a decision to simply ban this product on the basis of available information?

We could go on and on debating this. I spoke for some 20 minutes in June 1995 on this issue, as did a lot of other members. I find it incredible that a year and a half later we are still debating the same issue. The government has refused to listen to any of the arguments put forward by members in debate. It is simply bringing back the bill to appease the automobile industry. It will force it through and it will get its backbench members to vote along party lines to force this through. I find it disgusting.

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the comments of my hon. colleague for Prince George—Peace River. However, I thought I was probably at a meeting of the flat earth society when I heard what he had to say.

I realize and understand that the hon. member has the interests of a refinery in his riding in mind. I do not blame the refinery nor do I think it is fair to trade off the interests of eight people who happen to work at that refinery. After all, they have health concerns and concerns about the environment just like everyone else.

I should point out to the hon. member that I know a little bit about the automotive industry. I know that there are several Toyota dealerships in his riding, each having 20, 30 and even 40 employees whose livelihood and jobs are at stake simply because the new vehicles that are coming in, not made in Ontario, not made in Quebec which is, of course, the pretext by which the member of the Reform Party likes to side with the Bloc Quebecois. Obviously, Reform members find themselves in a very interesting position. It must be an election year and they are desperate to find any issue, even at the expense of someone's health.

Perhaps the hon. member would like to resolve this question. According to the B.C. motor vehicle emission control warranty regulations by this time next year, for the 1998 models, it will probably be that the emissions, which is what we are speaking about here, will not meet the standards set by his own province. How is he going to resolve this dilemma for his own constituents and for the sake of the car dealers there who are creating jobs and who are trying to make ends meet? He knows this is an important issue that will have to be met, particularly from the health and environmental standpoint.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention by the hon. member for Ontario.

With his extensive background of working for Toyota he would be an unbiased source to make the points for the automobile industry. I appreciate his enlightening me on how many Toyota dealerships there are in my riding. It certainly is of importance as well.

Mr. McTeague: That is a small number too. More than eight.

• (1710)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): If the hon. member is not too busy heckling, I wonder if he would listen to another point? With a nuclear power plant in his riding, would he be so concerned about the environmental issues with nuclear power that perhaps we should just pass a quick piece of legislation this afternoon to shut down the power plant, just on the evidence we have before us today, which admittedly is not very substantive?

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I know, for example, that the industry and refineries in the province of British Columbia are working extensively with the province to move toward stricter environmental standards. The hon. member mentioned them. From what I can understand, in speaking with members of the industry not only from my riding but from the province of British Columbia, they have a good working relationship with the Government of British Columbia. They are working toward adhering to those new guidelines and regulations when they come down the pipe.

I do not think the comment made by the hon. member is appropriate in the sense of again trying to throw out the scare tactic that somehow the industry is resisting, all the way down the line, making the necessary changes to make Canada, environmentally, a safer place in which to live.

As the member pointed out, the people who work in the oil and gas industries, be it exploration, production or refining, all breathe the same air and drink the same water as the rest of Canadians do. Therefore, it is certainly paramount to them to ensure that we have an environmentally sustainable country and a province of British Columbia in which to live.

I believe that using scare tactics and trying to paint one side of the argument as the bad boys in this dispute is not going to do anyone any good. That is why the common sense approach, the approach that is supported by the majority of Canadians where they can have all of the evidence in front of them, would be to support the position of the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party of Canada on this; which we have been demanding for a year and a half to have a comprehensive study done of this issue and have those results made known to the public.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has talked about public support. First, the overwhelming majority of Canadians support the ban on MMT. Perhaps the member should be aware of that point.

Second, the member also has been talking about an independent voice. I believe the member might be considering the public interest. I do not know how many times I have to go over this in the House, but I will try yet again.

When we talk for the public interest, I would suggest that the Allergy Asthma Information Association spoke in the public interest. I would suggest that the Canadian Institute of Child Health spoke in the public interest. I would suggest that the Environmental Defence Fund, the Sierra Club of Canada and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada have spoken in the public interest. I would suggest that all of these associations and organizations spoke in the public interest.

I would like to know why this member is speaking against the public interest and against the Canadian people on this issue.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): I would think, Mr. Speaker, I have been on my feet enough today that we would not have any problem recalling my riding at this point.

I thank the hon. member for her question and comments about my presentation. On the issue of Canadians and whether they support the banning of MMT, I would like to know who conducted that study, how comprehensive it was, how much information was made available to the Canadians who were actually polled, how many were polled, where they were polled and what background they were given. We can all play with statistics. We have done that all day long in this place. Anyone can conduct a poll and get the results they want. If they ask the right question they will get the answer they want. That addresses the issue of the poll to which the hon. member referred.

• (1715)

She also mentioned the need for an independent voice. As I said earlier, and I am getting tired of saying it, that is what we have been calling for. When we consider that this issue has been around for as long as it has, surely to goodness some government at some time could have undertaken a comprehensive study of this issue so that we as parliamentarians would have had enough evidence in front of us to make a decision one way or the other without there being a big question mark.

As to her statement about being on the wrong side of Canadians, when she read off a list of people who made presentations and who have made their views known, certainly those people and those organizations are representing a certain point of view. They are speaking in support of what they feel is in the best interests of the health of Canadians.

What I cannot understand is despite the representations which were made before the committee, the fact is Health Canada did not support the recommendation that MMT is harmful.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about public interest right now, we are talking about commercial interests. On one side of the House, some members have automakers in their riding, while on the other side, some members have refineries in their riding. Since there are no automakers or refineries in my riding, I feel I can be relatively objective regarding this issue.

What we are asking is simple: if the automobile industry has real, independent studies, and I am not talking about lobbying, then let us see these studies so we can be convinced that this is indeed the right thing to do. We have asked time and again for such studies to be tabled.

Government Orders

We also asked Ethyl Corporation to do the same. It did so. It did its homework. It asked independent firms to conduct studies which have shown that MMT is not harmful to the environment or to one's health.

We want automakers to do the same. Let them do their homework and let us wait six months, as we are asking, to take a look at these studies in an objective manner, with no bias towards refineries or automakers. This is what we ask.

It seems very complicated for the government, and when I see Liberal members rise, I find it strange that they all represent Ontario, where ethanol is produced.

I would like to hear the Reform Party member elaborate on this.

[English]

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments and her question, but I honestly do not know how I could possibly elaborate any further on what has been said over the past year and a half on this issue.

I would, however, question her statement about the objectivity of a member who happens to have a small oil refinery in their riding. The reason I say that is I have been very careful not to come down on the side of the oil industry or Ethyl Corp. to say that MMT is not harmful and that we should proceed full bore and forever use MMT in gasoline. I have not said that. The Reform Party has not said that. In its defence, the Bloc as well has not said that.

• (1720)

What we have said repeatedly is that we need this independent study to see which side of the argument holds the most water.

Without using any more time of the House—time is of the essence—we have only debated this for some year and a half, I am sure all of us are hoping to be finished with this.

My only hope is that the government members will break with party discipline and on this issue at least will vote with common sense and support the motion to hoist this for six months to allow a study so that we can really have the evidence placed before parliamentarians.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak in this House to Bill C-29 banning the use of MMT. First of all, I would like to say that I feel like I am trapped in a bad movie. Admittedly, back home in the Gaspé, the air is pure, we do not really have any problems with the environment as such, and given that I come from that area of the country, the fisheries are more up my line.

When I listen in the House today to all the efforts of the Liberal Party to justify its bill C-29, I want to get up and ask them what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, you will tell me if I have misunderstood. The Bloc Québécois amendment proposes a six month delay because no study has been done. We would like to know why manganese is being banned, but we would also like to know what will replace it. When I say it is like being trapped in a bad movie, as the member for Laurentides said a few minutes ago, it is more like a trade war we are engaged in here.

I hear people who seem to be caving in to the automobile lobby and I hear people who seem to be caving in to the ethanol lobby. I wonder if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment has a popcorn solution to the ban on MMT. As you know, popcorn is another way of using corn. As my colleague on the backbench mentioned, it creates energy. When corn pops, it causes movement. But where are they headed with this bill? They have lost me.

Have they a viable alternative in mind? I do not think so. In the case of ethanol production, what are the other negative impacts that have not been studied? I am told that if we launch blindly into large scale production of corn on the same acreage, the soil will be impoverished.

I tell myself that maybe there is enough land in Ontario, in Canada, to rotate crops. Farmers always like to limit their risks. Is there a risk of ethanol pollution? I am told that perhaps not from ethanol as such, but if insecticides are used on corn crops, then there is a risk of pollution. I know that farmers will be tempted to use insecticides.

As you can see, there is no clear solution to these questions, and I am only looking at something that would give the government an opportunity to find an alternate solution. That is why I like the popcorn image. They are looking for an easy solution, but they are not just going to pop this problem away with a poof.

The other questions we might have about MMT concern the studies on the real impact on people's health.

• (1725)

Yes, I too am aware of that, but no one has yet confronted us with any direct cause and effect relationship. You will reply: yes, but as soon as there is any danger perhaps it will be wise to be a little more careful. There are no other solutions. Will any attempts to save money, maybe with impact on people's health, be done away with completely because the next solution has not been worked out properly? I think that the proposal by the hon. member for Laurentides is a very good solution, namely to take another six months, at least.

I wondered whether we were not in a league by ourselves, since the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, who spoke just now, was telling us that MMT was banned virtually everywhere. I

am told that it has just been reintroduced in some states in the U.S.A. That opens the door. I am trying to see whether the Americans have made a mistake. We are 25 or 30 million Canadians, while they are 250 million, 250 million Americans who may be wrong. I think the solution to give ourselves another six months is reasonable.

While my colleague for Laurentides was speaking just now, with her numerous questions, for which I congratulate her—someone has to stir up the government, and she does an excellent job of it—I heard some of the Liberals saying: Yes, and if ever that study is done, it will never come out until after the elections. Once again, we understand the spin the government is trying to put on the debate on Bill C-29—it is pure vote-chasing. On the one hand, if they do want a study, it will be released only afterward, so why are they talking about it now? Because of the automotive lobby, the ethanol producers' lobby, wanting to get its share of the pie—a trade war pure and simple.

I was just thinking that we have been here three years now, and how can it be that the government has nothing better to offer on the environment? A good question, and I would like to hear the Liberal members, the Minister of the Environment, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment give us the answer. What is the story on PCBs in the Magdalen Islands?

Those islands are just across from us in the Gaspé. From what I hear, there was a PCB problem relating to the wreck of the barge *Irving Whale*. PCBs escaped on the ocean floor. Tests were done and, perhaps as in the popcorn solution—poof—the Minister of the Environment sees no more trace of PCBs on the ocean floor.

This is something tangible. The danger relating to contact with PCBs has been proven. As for MMT, there is not yet any scientific proof.

You will understand my surprise, will understand that I am wondering how much the speeches of the government side are based in fact, and you will understand that there is good reason to listen open-mouthed.

The hon. member for Lachine has also asked whether Canada is really entitled to legislate on this. I think the answer is yes, we are.

It is not because we have the right to pass legislation that we have the right to ruin people's lives, because we have no alternative solution to offer. If we really want to act intelligently in this area, I believe that we must stack the decks in our favour as far as possible. That would mean adopting the member for Laurentides' amendment, a six month hoist, and to do the necessary work during that time.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PATENT ACT

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP) moved that Bill C-311, an act to amend the Patent Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to extend my appreciation to my colleague in our NDP caucus, the member for Burnaby—Kingsway, for seconding my bill.

Bill C-311 is a very important bill with respect to prescription drugs in this country. The bill will limit the life of patents for medicines to 17 years and allow for compulsory licences to be granted for the manufacture and sale of medicines after the original patentee has had the medicine approved for marketing for four years.

The royalty rate is to take into account the amount of medical research carried out in Canada by the applicant and the patentee. There is provision for refusal or deferral of a licence if a patentee has been unusually delayed in commercializing a medicine.

What is compulsory licensing? Compulsory licensing is allowing generic drug companies to produce a copy of a brand name drug. Generic drug companies pay a royalty of 4 per cent to the brand name company. Compulsory licensing can only occur after the patent set by the federal government has run out.

Before Bill C-91, passed in the previous Parliament, the length of drug patent was seven to ten years which was set by Bill C-22. Bill C-311, my bill, would shorten the length of a patent to four years. Bill C-311 does not set a royalty rate to the brand name drug companies but states that factors such as the amount of research money spent in Canada be rewarded under the royalty system. A name brand drug company that does original research and development in Canada would receive a higher royalty. This would increase job opportunities in the industry by encouraging drug companies to do their research in Canada.

Every opinion poll that has been conducted in this country in the last 10 years in terms of important concerns for Canadians has listed health care. We have seen the cutbacks to health care. We have seen a great deal of problems with respect to the federal government's offloading to the provinces. This is a major concern for poor families, for middle class families and for working families.

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Rather than address the concerns of these families, the Liberal government in Ottawa has turned a blind eye to the anxieties of these people. In fact, the Liberals have taken a simplistic approach by cutting back billions of dollars from health care and transfer payments and offloading to the provinces. There are better ways to address rising costs to health care. Prescription drug costs, for example, are the fastest growing component of costs to health care in Canada. Bill C-311 offers a better way to curtail some of the rising costs.

Since the introduction of Bill C-22 in 1988, the average prescription bill has gone from \$12.48 in 1987 to about \$24 in 1993. This average prescription drug bill represents a 93 per cent increase as a result of providing these manufacturers with a 20 year monopoly to charge whatever they want for these prescription drugs without competition.

If we look at the increase of the licensed drugs alone during that period the average prescription has gone from \$16.92 in 1987 to \$43.42 in 1993. This represents on the licensed drug alone an increase of 258 per cent. Prior to Bill C-22 and Bill C-91 of the last Parliaments, drug costs amounted to 8.9 per cent of total health spending in Canada. In 1993 it had risen to 15.1 per cent of total health spending. That is a 70 per cent increase with respect to health care costs in the drug component alone. Rather than address this particular problem the government cuts back health care further. My Bill C-311 deals with this issue of rising costs in the health care programs in this country.

In total, Bill C-91 will cost the Canadian health care system between \$4 billion and \$7 billion according to research by respected U.S. health economist Stephen Schondelmeyer. The financial impact of Bill C-91, which my bill in effect repeals, will accelerate dramatically during the years 2000 to 2010.

• (1735)

The passage of Bill C-91 was supposed to increase employment as well in the brand name pharmaceutical industry. Since the passage of these bills we have seen not an increase in R and D jobs but in fact a decline. We have seen a 1,200 job cut in the R and D sector of the pharmaceutical industry in Ontario alone, and about 800 jobs in Quebec have been cut as a result of these bills.

This was on the promise by the pharmaceutical companies when they came to this Parliament and asked for protection for up to 20 years. They promised jobs; we have fewer jobs. They promised stable cost in terms of pharmaceuticals; we have seen those costs sky-rocket.

We have also seen some very important developments with respect to what the generic drug companies have done for our health care plans and for our country. Here are examples of some of the drug costs that are generic brands which are cheaper brand drugs, which my bill would encourage in terms of production in Canada. An ulcer drug, brand name Zantac, costs about \$1.10 and

the generic price is about 42.5 cents, which is a 61.1 per cent saving on a generic drug. An asthma drug, Ventolin, is \$12.27 for 15 millilitres versus \$4.95 for the generic price. That is a saving of nearly 60 per cent. On blood pressure drugs as well, brand names are roughly 41 per cent to 45 per cent more expensive than generic prices. Anybody who has children will know that with the antibiotic Amoxil there is about a 44 per cent to a 45 per cent saving when purchasing a generic drug.

Bill C-91 and some of these bills prevent those sorts of generic companies manufacturing generic drugs under a licence and a royalty fee for up to 20 years. That is why my bill is very important. It basically rolls back that period from 20 years to 17 years, but after four years generic companies can license and manufacture drugs in competition.

We have had support from a number of organizations, provinces and individuals across this country. The minister of social services in Saskatchewan, Mr. Lorne Calvert, who was the associated minister of health when this bill was being reviewed in the House of Commons, represented Saskatchewan at the Senate hearings on Bill C-91. He brought all of his research on the prescription drug program in Saskatchewan and warned at that time that the bill would drive up Saskatchewan drug costs \$6 million to \$10 million a year.

We have had about a three year passage of time since this warning was made by the provincial Government of Saskatchewan and this has proven to be more than accurate because we have seen not a \$7 million to \$10 million increase but something much more substantial.

Mr. Calvert gave the example of generic drugs and the savings they provide: "Generic drugs save the provincial government drug plan millions of dollars yearly. Enalapril, a commonly used prescribed heart drug, would have been available as a generic in 1994 prior to the introduction of Bill C-91. The bill delayed the proposed entry of Enalapril until the year 2007". As a result of a drug dispute this drug was available for a short time as a generic and in one year saved the province alone \$2 million. That is on one drug. Yet we see members in this House are concerned about protecting their own position with respect to drug companies and patents.

We have had thousands of letters and calls. In this House as the New Democratic Party we have done a number of things. I have tabled thousands of petitions calling for the repeal of Bill C-91 in support of my Bill C-311. I have had hundreds of people write letters to me. We have had motions raised and debated in this House. We have had questions raised with the government with respect to Bill C-91. They seem to fall on deaf ears.

I have some letters I want to share with my colleagues in the House of Commons today. One says: "You have my heartiest agreement on your attempt to rescind the legislation on Bill C-91. It is my profound belief that this perpetrates a distinct hardship on

those who pioneered our country, suffered through world wars and a traumatic depression and now in their latter years are held ransom by the greedy drug corporations. I can personally attest to the horrendous gouging because my mother in her last two years of life was paying monthly bills in the hundreds of dollars for prescription drugs”.

• (1740)

This is an example of many that I have received. I have another one here which I think is really important for members to pay attention and listen to: “My wife and I are senior citizens on fixed income and it costs me approximately \$100 per month for prescribed medication. The only thing we have to cut back on to pay for our drugs and our prescription drugs is food and clothing”.

Bill C-91 and Bill C-22 have resulted in sky-rocketing prescription drug costs and many people in the country have to make a choice between a life sustaining prescription drug or a life enhancing prescription drug and purchasing food. What kind of a government is this that would not pay attention to these problems in our communities, particularly to those pioneers, those seniors who have built our country? I think we have to get to the bottom of this.

Perhaps we have some information which will provide the House with a bit of insight in terms of why the government is not taking any action. In contrast to the letter from Mr. Nord who wrote saying that he is making a choice between prescription drugs which are necessary and food which is absolutely necessary, the Minister of Health of the Liberal government says that it is more important to protect patents and the big multinational pharmaceutical corporations.

I quote from an article on “the surprise the minister gave to the brand name drug manufacturers who are pushing for maintaining a 20 year control over the sale of pharmaceutical drugs that they have developed”. The minister said this at a pharmaceutical convention: “I have not come here tonight to talk about Bill C-91 because no one wants to hear about that. This government believes that intellectual property rights are important and they ought to be protected and enhanced at every opportunity in this country”.

The article goes on: “One industry spokesman said the minister’s comments were a ‘victory’ for the pharmaceutical research companies”.

This is a problem with this government. It does not seem to have its priorities straight. It would rather embrace and protect the multinational oil companies, protect and embrace the multinational pharmaceuticals than look after people like Mr. Nord who has to make very crucial decisions on a daily basis about whether he can continue to live because of his medical condition. What kind of empathy is that?

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I hear the Liberals all the time in the House and it makes me want to puke. We close our eyes and listen to all the wonderful things they say. Then when we open our eyes and see what they have done, they have always done the opposite. They get up and talk about the great things they are doing for social programs. When we look again they are slashing health care and encouraging pharmaceuticals to gouge Canadians for prescription drugs. It makes people absolutely sick. The Minister of Health is a nauseous part of this entire Parliament as far as I am concerned.

Members are probably saying the member for Regina—Lumsden is on a bit of a crusade here and does not have much support. I have support from the Consumers’ Association of Canada, seniors organizations, the National Health Coalition, a number of organizations from across the country. The CLC is another sponsor and supporter along with many organizations and individuals from the province of Saskatchewan and other parts of the country.

I want to share with members today an experience I had meeting with an Argentinian parliamentarian, Ernesto Algaba, a national congressman who came to see me because he heard about the work I had been doing in the past three years with respect to Bill C-91 and the pharmaceutical patent protection.

He told me: “In Argentina we are very concerned. We are being pressured by the American Pharmaceutical Association to institute a drug patent law like that in Canada, the United States and Mexico. The American Pharmaceutical Association came to us, promised us jobs, promised us low cost, stable price prescription drugs. We are kind of worried about this because we said no initially. Then the U.S. ambassador came to our Parliament and met with some of the parliamentarians and threatened us on behalf of the American Pharmaceutical Association saying either we pass this legislation or they are going to pull out some of their economic supports and maybe they will pull their embassy out of our country”. He wanted to check and see what was going on.

• (1745)

Mr. Algaba said that they went to Chile. He told me: “Do you know what they found in Chile?” The Chilean government was given the same garbage that the government was given about Bill C-91. “Pass the legislation, Mr. and Mrs. Chilean Parliamentarians. You will have jobs galore in R and D and you will have stable prescription drug prices”.

Do you know what happened? The Chileans passed legislation. Their jobs are gone and their drugs are almost more expensive than they are in Canada. That is what we hear from Argentina and other countries. The government has to pay attention to some of the very serious charges by other parliamentarians.

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There is also some confusion about profits with respect to the pharmaceuticals. I have some information here.

From 1987, when Bill C-22 was passed, to 1992—it looks pretty darn good for the pharmaceuticals—the revenue of Miles Canada Inc. grew 52 per cent. The revenues of Merck Frosst MSD AGVET grew by 111 per cent. The revenues of Burroughs Wellcome Inc. grew 172 per cent. The revenues of Merck Frosst Canada Inc. increased 185 per cent and Abbott Laboratories had a 1,120 per cent increase in revenues as a result of these drug patents and the jacking up prices and gouging consumers.

I want to save my last few comments to talk about what the Liberal Party did in opposition. The NDP was the only party that spoke and voted unanimously in opposition to Bill C-91 when it was passed. The Liberals joined with the New Democrats in 1992 and voted against Bill C-91. They said: “If we are elected, Bill C-91 will be repealed”.

We even have some reference in a famous red book of broken promises—this is just one more—which is found on page 81. It speaks of a national forum on health which the Liberal Party would undertake to institute. It says: “The forum must be part of a thorough study of the health of Canadians and of our health care system. It will be mandated to consider questions such as the goals, results and evaluation of our system as well as the costs of care, including prescription drugs”. That is what the red book says. That is what will be done on the national forum on health.

I have here a speech from the Prime Minister. They are opening remarks by the Prime Minister to the national forum on health, his Liberal baby in the red book. There is not one reference, inference, suggestion or idea about the words drugs, prescription drugs, pharmaceuticals or anything of that nature. There is not one reference in the speech with respect to some of the action they were going to take.

I wonder why. I think he who pays the piper calls the tune. It seems to me when a former Liberal cabinet minister, Judy Erola, is the chief lobbyist for the international pharmaceutical corporations lobbying the government, it is going to be pretty easy to get their attention.

What about some of the contributions? Bristol-Myers Squibb gave the Liberals \$4,800. Eli Lilly Canada Inc. gave the Liberals \$5,200. Burroughs Wellcome Inc., to which I made reference in terms of its huge increases in revenues, gave \$8,700 to the Liberal Party and Merck Frosst, to which I also made reference, gave a paltry \$11,000.

These guys are getting billions of dollars in revenue. I think the Liberals are missing an opportunity. They should be gouging them a little more. Get a few more bucks from your buddies in the pharmaceuticals. That is the only thing that is going to happen.

The last straw is when the Liberal members of Parliament sent out letters to their friends in the pharmaceuticals. I note that a member from Winnipeg sent a letter out trying to collect some money from pharmaceutical companies. Of course, the pharmaceuticals are more than happy to comply, although it looks almost like a bribe. Who knows? We have seen these sorts of articles appear in newspapers, particularly in the *Hill Times*.

I am going to wrap up my comments but I want to underline the importance of this bill as I have stated in my remarks today. I want to ask members here who believe that this is an important bill—we should address the concerns of Canadians with respect to prescription drugs and their skyrocketing costs—that this bill be designated a votable item.

• (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the terms of the request of the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden to make his motion votable. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): There is not unanimous consent.

Mr. Solomon: Mr. Speaker, if the motion is not votable, could I have the unanimous consent of the House to refer the bill to committee?

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): There is not unanimous consent.

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, it is very interesting to listen to the political posturing of the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden. He knows very well that Bill C-91 is up for review in 1997. Unfortunately, he is trying to show how conscientiousness and how concerned he is about this matter.

I speak against the bill presented by the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden. I would like to explain why the bill is not appropriate.

First, it ignores the important role that intellectual property protection plays in the Canadian economy by reducing the patent term for pharmaceuticals and by reintroducing compulsory licensing.

The bill would shorten the patent term for drug patents to 17 years from the date the patent application is filed. It reintroduces the compulsory licensing regime that was eliminated when the Patent Act was amended by Bill C-91 in 1993.

The House will recall that before the Patent Act was amended, patented medicines did not enjoy full patent protection. Instead they were eligible for a period of marketing exclusivity for seven to ten years. This bill would not even allow innovative drug companies that protection. The holder of the patent under this bill would have only four years before the generic companies could copy the formula under a compulsory licence. The bill would allow the patentee to receive a royalty and the compulsory licence could be refused or delayed if a patentee has been unusually delayed in commercializing the medicine.

Perhaps the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden believes that these provisions would be sufficient to encourage companies to continue research in Canada. Perhaps he thinks that Canada would continue to attract R and D investment under these terms. Perhaps he thinks that these measures would be suitable in today's knowledge based economy. I assure the hon. member that these measures would not be sufficient. Why would a company invest in a country where it is not assured adequate property protection, including patent protection?

The hon. member should know very well that he comes from a province where the government quite often will attract businesses and will change the agreements for those businesses halfway through the agreement period. That is why that province is not attracting this type of R and D. In particular, the province of Saskatchewan does not attract this R and D because the government changes rules on companies that come into that province.

Since patent protection was first enhanced in 1987 through Bill C-22 the ratio of R and D to sales by pharmaceutical patentees has continuously increased. Last year the innovative companies spent \$624 million on R and D. That represents 11.8 per cent of their sales revenue, nearly doubling the ratio of 6.1 per cent achieved in 1988.

The brand name pharmaceutical companies are among Canada's leading investors in research and development. Last July, when the publication *Research Money* listed Canada's top corporate R and D performers, 17 integrated brand name companies were among the top 100. This investment in research and development means highly qualified jobs for Canadians. It means jobs in the brand name companies, jobs in the universities and hospitals that support

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their research, and jobs in the many small and medium sized businesses that have flourished in the past few years as Canadians respond to the challenge of designing new products for the health care industry.

The growth of small and medium sized biotechnology companies has been particularly impressive. In fact, when we look at the *Research Money* list of the top 100 R and D performers, seven of the companies are Canadian research based biopharmaceutical firms. The growth and success of these young companies has been built on a solid foundation of world class intellectual property protection in Canada.

• (1755)

During this period of increased R and D, the prices of patented drugs have been kept under control. According to the Patent Medicine Prices Review Board, an independent body which regulates the price of patented medicines, the prices of patented medicines actually fell by 1.75 per cent in 1995. They dropped at a time when the consumer price index rose by 2.14 per cent. This is the second year in a row they have dropped.

Furthermore, an international comparison of the top 200 selling patented drug products produced by the Patent Medicine Prices Review Board showed that for the first time Canadian prices on average were below the median international prices in 1994.

If this bill was passed, Canada would become one of the only countries in the industrialized world where pharmaceutical intellectual property would not be effectively protected. Canada would become the only developed country in the world with compulsory licensing regimes for drugs. In addition to the detrimental effect on jobs and growth, we could expect a strong reaction from our trading partners.

This brings me to my second reason for opposing Bill C-311. The measures proposed in the hon. member's bill contravene Canada's international obligations under the World Trade Organization and the North American free trade agreement. The patent term of 17 years from date of filing for drug patents would violate Canada's international obligations under the WTO. These drugs require a minimum patent term of 20 years from the date of filing a patent application.

There is another aspect of this bill that runs counter to our international trade obligations. Both the WTO and NAFTA require that patent rights be enjoyable without discrimination as to the field of technology. A compulsory licensing regime for pharmaceuticals would constitute discriminatory treatment toward pharmaceutical patentees. We could expect action under both the WTO and NAFTA as a result.

The government has signed these international treaties because we believe they will promote economic growth. Canada must

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compete with other countries not only for global market shares but also for investment and technology.

International trade agreements that provide for strong intellectual property protection create the necessary climate for investment and technology transfer. Canada, as a trading nation, is not prepared to ignore its international obligations. The challenge with Canada's drug patent policy is to ensure that it conforms with our international trade obligations and supports the development of our pharmaceutical industry while making patented drugs available at prices that are not excessive.

With respect to some of the comments that were made by the hon. member, it is very interesting that he referred to the growing revenues of these companies. He never referred to what their profits are. Revenues are not necessarily profits. It is also interesting that he wants millions of dollars to be spent by companies on R and D. Then he wants the fruits of this R and D, which is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, to go to other companies that have put no money into R and D.

Mr. Solomon: There's a 4 per cent royalty.

Mr. Bodnar: That is what he wants, and that is what he has proposed to this House.

Now is the time to look for a balance in this legislation with a review of Bill C-91. It should not be dealt with in the theatrics that have been proposed by the hon. member in this House with this bill. He is trying to show how conscientious he is when he knows that a full review is coming before the industry committee on Bill C-91. I wish he would attend some of those meetings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to the bill introduced by the hon. member for the NDP, a bill that basically, and very briefly, will reduce the protection granted the drug manufacturing sector. There are patents that protect the industry for a period of 20 years but in fact have an effective duration of about ten years.

We should realize that it takes about ten years from the time a molecule is discovered that will be used to manufacture a drug to the actual marketing of the drug, so that unlike other products, where the actual marketing takes place very quickly after the development of a product, the actual protection of the patent extends well beyond the 20 years allowed by law, because the initial date applies from the time the new molecule was patented.

• (1800)

Of course when we are talking about the pharmaceutical industry, we are talking about one of the major sectors of the economy, especially in Quebec and Ontario, and in other provinces as well.

But when we are talking about the innovators, the companies that do research and discover drugs in Canada, they are mainly concentrated in Quebec and Ontario.

In fact, more than half are located in Quebec, in the Montreal area, and quite a few in the Toronto area as well. This is the reason why both the Montreal Chamber of Commerce and the Toronto Board of Trade are recommending not only that we maintain a legislative framework to support and protect pioneering industries, but that we upgrade it.

As we know, this debate has taken place twice since 1987. The first time, in 1987, the law was changed to extend patent protection. If I recall, it was extended to seven years. The member is suggesting that we revert to a system of compulsory licences. In 1993, the Conservative government returned to the attack, increasing patent protection for drugs to 20 years.

Of course, there were very active lobbyists on both sides. These people are always part of the picture. Behind the humanitarian reasons often quoted to give less protection and allow for drugs to be copied earlier, on the grounds that they would be cheaper, there are the industries which make a lot of money copying these drugs.

It should be emphasized that since this bill came into effect, we have seen an increase in research activity in the pharmaceutical industry, and an increase in job creation both in the area of patented drugs and pioneering industries and in the area of generic drugs, or copied drugs. Both sides have been expanding.

This bill was aimed at striking a balance. It is true that there is always a risk when granting a patent. One should be very careful and monitor the situation closely. There is a risk of creating a monopoly, pushing prices upwards. The government created the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board to keep track of the situation. There are standards, guidelines that ensure that, when the drugs developed reach the market, their price will not be unreasonably higher than the costs involved.

So the review board tables reports. What do these reports say? I heard the member sponsoring this bill talk about sky-rocketing costs and give us some examples. In fact, since 1987, the cost of patented drugs has increased only by 2.1 per cent a year. According to the report of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, the increase has been lower than inflation. It is always appropriate to monitor the situation, but in fact the legislation and the regulations have been well enforced and are very efficient.

Sky-rocketing costs might be due to other factors. If health costs are increasing in Canada, it is also because the population is aging. There are other similar phenomena that have to be considered. I would like to remind you that, in 1993, when health costs were being examined throughout Canada, 3 per cent of expenses in the health system were related to patented drugs, that is, drugs coming

from the innovative industry. We must be careful, therefore, not to fall into the trap and stick to the facts.

I would like to remind the hon. member that the current act comes up for review in 1997. We are talking about spring 1997. Of course, people are wondering if election deadlines will change the situation. We will see. However, the current act must be reviewed in 1997.

At that time, each of the industries and groups concerned will have an opportunity to be heard and explain why they want changes, why they want more or less patent protection and how. They will have an opportunity to present their cases.

It would be premature for Parliament to draw conclusions from a very partial analysis of the situation—which, according to the arguments I heard, is not always connected to the actual figures—and pass this bill reducing patent protection to 17 years, as the hon. member proposes.

• (1805)

We know that in reality this would be reduced by three years. It is a lot. It is important to note that putting a drug on the market is very expensive and time-consuming. Many research initiatives never pan out. In all areas involving research and development, many research efforts never lead to real-life applications. Considerable amounts of money are invested in R and D.

If we limit the protection they enjoy and their ability to market their products and recoup their investments, how will this translate into reality? There will be a drop in research activities. The focus will shift to generic products, duplicating and selling various drugs.

This brings us to the social aspect. All of us in this House expect help if we take ill. We expect to have access to drugs or care, palliative or otherwise. Now, for these drugs to be available, someone has to do research in their applications. Unless our legal, fiscal and economic framework does not create incentives, these drugs will just not be produced and we will find ourselves with another problem on our hands: not having access to the drugs we want.

Caution must be exercised in saying that drug patent protection should be reduced on compassionate grounds. This has a serious and major perverse effect. Therein lies the social dimension.

Should the act be amended, the economic factor would also affect the balance that currently exists whereby, in Quebec and in Ontario in particular, a lot of people are involved in research and development.

Let me give you a few figures. In Quebec, there are over 6,000 jobs in the research sector for this industry. This is a large number. These jobs are in areas where knowledge and technology are

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important, and where major infrastructures and investments are required, in excess of \$600 million for the companies located in Quebec.

So, we are talking about 6,000 jobs and, in 1994, the most recent data I have indicate that research activities totalled more than \$240 million. This is quite a sum of money. The government itself could not do as much in the present context. Who is going to do the research if, through this bill, we reduce the incentives these companies have? Many of them are concentrated in the Montreal area. Some of them are also located in the Laval area, in Metro Toronto and just outside Toronto.

We find many generic drug companies in Ontario and Manitoba, and a few in Quebec. There has been a slight shift since 1993.

We now have a situation that makes development, research and job creation possible. The hon. member talked about jobs. Jobs have been created in both generic and new drug companies. It has been possible to achieve a good balance under the present legislation. Should we be doing more? We will have to take a look at that. Do we need to monitor more closely price control? We will also have to consider this issue.

Right now, the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board argues that the situation is under control and that everything is going relatively well. Under these circumstances, it would be ill-advised to jeopardize an industrial structure that is so important to our future. We need think only about the existing relationship between the scientific community, the universities, and the companies that have developed in the last few years a very important rapport, which will give our country an edge in this area.

Lastly, I want to remind the House of our international obligations. Canada has some obligations under NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, what was formerly known as the GATT. If we pass this bill, we will be violating these international agreements, which require us to provide the same protection we were giving in 1993. We have to be very careful before adopting such a bill and make sure that what we are doing will be good for employment and medical research and will promote economic growth in Quebec as well as in Ontario and in the rest of Canada.

• (1810)

In this regard, this is not a votable bill, but had it been a votable bill, we would have had to vote against it. I invite the member to come and express his views next spring when a broader and more public debate takes place. We will get the facts straight and review the situation.

[English]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting bill that has been presented to us, Bill

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C-311. I want to commend the purpose and the intent that prompted this private member's bill.

There is no question at all that we all would like to reduce the cost of medicare in Canada and in the provinces and in the individual lives of people. We would like to do that but we have to recognize within this context that we are entering into an extremely controversial area. In fact, the practice of medicine itself is rather controversial.

The whole concept seems to be evolving around the fact that there is a single variable that will change the cost of medicare and that is the matter of the cost of pharmaceutical drugs. Admittedly it is one factor and it is a variable. To suggest that it is one of the major points has as much to do with the cost of the drug itself as it does with the practice of medicine in the first instance. There was a time when the prescribing of drugs was not as rampant as it is today.

With all due respect to the intent and purpose of the bill, I think I will have to take exception to this bill on several grounds. The first of these has to do with our position in the overall world. We do not live any longer as an island called Canada on the globe. We must compete on an international, global basis.

We need to recognize that there are a number of countries that have accepted the 20 year patent protection. There is a list of not less than 50 countries that have accepted this as a way of doing business. If we are going to compete in that world we need to recognize that it is the field on which we are playing.

Let me give a sample of some of these countries: Germany, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. There are a number of these countries which have used 20 year patent protection. I could name more countries.

We need to recognize that there is a major competitive issue at stake here. I want to suggest that this bill take recognition of the fact that essentially the production of pharmaceutical drugs in the first instance is basically a knowledge based industry. Knowledge does not find itself limited by political boundaries. Knowledge can leave as easily as it comes.

The one thing we want, which leads me to the second point as to why we want to protect this particular patent, the intellectual property, is the business of attracting the skill, the ability, the knowledge and the know how of doing the research necessary in order for us to be competitive in the international field.

I would like to refer to what happened in 1987. With the 1987 amendments to the Patent Act the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association of Canada made a public commitment that its mem-

bers would increase their annual R and D expenditures as a percentage of sales to 8 per cent by 1991 and 10 per cent by 1996.

I just received the annual report of what actually has been the experience. As a result, the ratio of R and D expenditures to sales revenues for the patented pharmaceutical industry was 11.8 per cent in 1995, up from 11.3 per cent in 1994. They have lived up to their particular suggestion.

I would like to give the House some numbers that I think illustrate this rather well. In 1988 the amount of money spent on R and D expenditures by the pharmaceutical companies was \$165.7 million. Then it rises all the way to 1995 when that number went to \$623.9 million. Somebody will immediately suggest that it includes certain government grants. Indeed it does. In fact in 1995 the government grants to the pharmaceutical industry doing research were \$7.6 million out of \$623.9 million, a small amount.

● (1815)

We then also have to ask in what areas these companies have done their research. Have they done their research in basic research, which is the curiosity driven research, how we find a new idea, a new way of treating various ailments and applied research. The distribution goes this way: 22.2 per cent of the R and D expenditures were for basic research which is the basis on which new discoveries are built. If we do not have that, we do not have advances in knowledge and we do not move back the walls of ignorance. There was 61.9 per cent given to applied research.

What else would one expect? Here we have manufacturing agencies that recognize the need for new knowledge to be developed and at the same time how that knowledge can be commercialized. Logically they would put more money into that area. In total, that was \$623.9 million in 1995 alone. Look how many jobs that created.

When the hon. member presented his bill he said that jobs were lost, some 1,200 in Ontario and some 800 in Quebec; \$623.9 million was spent, whether it was the research people who lost their jobs or whomever, I do not know, but \$623.9 million created other jobs. I wish the member had indicated that perhaps not only were some jobs lost but there were a lot of other jobs created.

The net position on \$623.9 million has to have created some jobs. Therefore, I will not accept that we had a net loss in this particular area. When we put \$623.9 million into the economy, nobody can tell me there is a reduction in the number of jobs in Canada.

I would like to move now to a couple of provisions in the bill itself. Bill C-311 is suggesting that we replace the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board with a patented medicine review board, taking out the word prices. The member is probably suggesting that the marketplace will maintain that the prices be

kept in some sort of a competitive position. Essentially if the playing field were level, I would agree.

However, knowledge and the advancement of knowledge sometimes require special protection which is exactly what the patent law does. It provides protection until that knowledge has grown to the point where it can play its competitive role in the world and where the marketplace has indeed determined the prices.

The important thing to remember here is that the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board has in fact been able to control the prices during the time when the pharmaceutical companies did have a monopoly in the distribution of those drugs. There is evidence and there is an annual report. If it has not been the case, then the time has come to review what that board is doing. If it is not doing its job, then the House of Commons needs to take issue with that board. It does not become a matter of standing up and saying that this ought not to be the case. Therefore, we have to be careful as to just exactly what it is that this bill does.

In conclusion, I need to remind all members that the provisions of Bill C-91 are coming up for a major review. At that time we need to look not only at this particular aspect but at the whole business of medicine and how pharmaceuticals fit into the medical patterns as such in Canada. We have a big job before us. It is a challenging and wonderful job. I wish that we and medicine would do the right thing.

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to participate in this debate on behalf of the Minister of Health.

• (1820)

I would like to correct a couple of misperceptions and misinterpretations that have been brought forward by my hon. colleague who presented the legislation for our consideration today. If we want to be fair and sincere about the issue at hand, and I believe all members in the House do, then we cannot begin by misrepresenting what the minister has said outside this Chamber.

The Minister of Health has said repeatedly that he is committed to a parliamentary review as is mandated by Bill C-91 and identified by my colleague a moment ago. It is unfair to suggest otherwise. Not only is he committed to that, he is not engaging in the kind of rhetoric that my colleagues opposite enjoy by trying to predict what the parliamentary review will produce or by trying to influence it. It is important to understand that the minister is going to abide by the regulations and by the legislation as presented by Parliament. We would all do well to honour the same thing.

My colleague from Regina—Lumsden presented the legislation for two basic reasons. I would like to focus attention on the issue of addressing drug costs. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry has already addressed the licensing component. I would

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like to focus for a few moments on drug costs and health expenditures.

Make no mistake. The government is concerned about both the level and rate of increase in expenditures for pharmaceuticals in this country. Expenditures for drugs make up 12.7 per cent of Canada's total health expenditure. It is the third largest component of health expenditures behind only hospitals and physicians.

Not only are drugs the third largest component in Canada's health expenditures but these are increasing faster than any other component in health spending. In 1994 drug expenditures grew by 3.8 per cent. Even factoring in the population growth, the rate of growth is 2.1 per cent. Other speakers have already pointed out that in the late 1980s and early 1990s the situation was worse than it is currently, with increases in drug spending of well over 10 per cent per annum, year after year.

If we are really serious about addressing drug costs, then we must look much deeper than these facts and figures. We must consider the extent to which patented drugs contribute to the overall drug costs.

The federal government currently regulates patented drug prices through the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board.

An hon. member: That is the biggest joke.

Mr. Volpe: There may be people who share a different opinion, but in our view the regulations under the PMPRB are strict. The prices of existing patented drugs cannot increase by more than the consumer price index. Introductory prices for new drugs are limited to the range of prices for other drugs which treat the same disease, unless the new drug represents a breakthrough or a substantial improvement. In that case, its price cannot exceed the median of prices charged for those drugs in other industrialized countries.

The evidence, notwithstanding the objections opposite, indicates that the PMPRB is doing its job in controlling patented drug prices. I ask members to consider some of the facts.

The member for Regina—Lumsden will note that in 1995 patented drug prices actually decreased by 1.75 per cent. That was the second year in a row that prices actually declined. By comparison, in that year the consumer price index actually rose by 2.14 per cent. My colleague may not be impressed with that but the fact is that there was a decrease.

• (1825)

Price increases for patented drugs have consistently been below the consumer price index ever since the PMPRB was created in 1987. Before that the member will know that drug prices were increasing at rates well above the consumer price index. As I said

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earlier, I want to address the element of this bill that takes issue with health expenditures and drug costs.

In 1994 for the first time, patented drug prices in Canada were on average below the median international price. In 1994 the prices of new breakthrough drugs in Canada were on average 11 per cent lower than the median international price.

The reason I highlight these facts is to show first, that even in the absence of compulsory licensing, patented drug prices have remained under control and second, to show that influencing patented drug prices will not necessarily lead to reduced expenditures on drugs. The reason for this is not that difficult to see.

Overall drug prices and overall drug expenditures are influenced by additional factors such as the price of non-patented drugs, pharmacy dispensing fees, and the rate of utilization. All of these are factors which provincial governments are finding much to their dismay are contributing to a very large extent to the overall health costs. No matter how low prices are, the more drugs people take, the more drug expenditures will increase.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers of health have recognized that action on drug costs can and must occur on many fronts. In April 1996 they directed deputy ministers of health to review and to report back on six pharmaceutical issues: price; utilization; marketing; consumer education; research and development; and waste.

Current estimates of wastage would astonish even the members opposite. They are well over 10 per cent of the overall costs. I am confident the work by the deputy ministers will lead to collaborative initiatives that will have a real impact on drug costs, the effective use of medicines and the health of Canadians. Working together with provinces and territories to discover and address the root causes of increasing drug costs is the way to achieve results.

We need to encourage pharmaceutical investment and research and development in Canada. It is in these kinds of jobs and these kinds of job creation opportunities that we can bring Canada's economy into the 21st century and make substantial contributions to the health and well-being of Canadians.

The factors that have helped Canada to attract this investment in R and D, and I refer to our excellent university structure, a competitive tax regime, and a supply of eminent scientists, would not be able to overcome the negative impacts of this bill. I refer back to Bill C-91 because what the member's bill does is it pre-empts what is required by Bill C-91 and that is a parliamentary review four years after royal assent, i.e., in 1997.

As I said in my opening remarks, it is one thing to propose an item of legislation and it is another one to pre-empt a process that is already in place and to try to predict and influence its outcome when it is going to be open for all members of this House.

• (1830)

Only when that review is completed and only when we have struck the appropriate balance between industrial objectives and health issues in Canada can we look at the patent policy to examine how it should be adjusted.

As I said earlier, this bill would pre-empt the process of that parliamentary review and presumes that change is needed without giving stakeholders a chance to participate and without allowing the evidence to be considered.

My minister has already indicated an openness and a willingness to ensure that the process works and works properly. In fact, he has already asked the national forum to speed up its work and to produce the work on its consultations for the benefit not only of that review but for the benefit of other reviews on health.

Mr. Solomon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Now that we have heard the debate on this bill I was wondering if we could have unanimous consent to refer the bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the request of the hon. member. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): There is not unanimous consent.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a while ago I asked the former minister of human resources development how he expected public trust and confidence in government to be restored when his government pulled an about face on unemployment insurance. We all remember the red book promise about public trust and confidence in government.

How did he see the serious hypocrisy of his actions, I asked. While in opposition he and his Liberal colleagues opposed Conservative cuts to UI which were not nearly as deep as those they recently pushed through the House.

In today's economic climate support programs like UI are necessary to help workers adjust to changing technological and global economic circumstances; however, income support alone

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has not and will not create the long term economic growth and jobs that today's economy demands.

Clearly our aim should be to move the debate forward and develop a bold new approach to unemployment and unemployment insurance reform. It is no longer enough to focus solely on the unemployed, who have clearly been made a scapegoat by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. Instead I believe it is time to focus on what is required from society as a whole, from those who are looking for work, those who are able to supply it, and the governments which facilitate relationships between the two and which help to shape the way we do business in Canada.

A creative and modern approach would include a scheme which would of course provide the unemployed with adequate resources for living for themselves and their families but which would also enable unemployed Canadians to get back to work and, when possible, to get the kind of jobs that match their needs.

Real UI reform involves helping Canadians to find the kind of work they need and to help in creating the kind of workforce which can win a place in the global economy. This certainly means that overlap and duplication must be dealt with. It means establishing partnerships between federal, provincial and municipal governments and the private sector.

The issue of dependency and abuse must also be dealt with, but separately from issues surrounding benefit levels and conditions so that eligibility benefit levels, training, job creation schemes and other active measures can be discussed in a more rational way.

Unfortunately this has not been the case in Canada when UI reform has been discussed by the government. With the present policies, these crucial objectives are farther from being met than ever before.

It is clear that the kind of reform carried out by successive Liberal and Conservative governments amounts to little more than thinking up new wheezes with which to bash the unemployed. Liberals on the government side opposed those measures when they were in opposition but now support them. The approach of the current government to unemployment and UI is more a restatement of the problem than a strategy to improve active support and develop truly effective measures to deal with unemployment and the transition of the unemployed into the labour market.

The primary solution being offered is that the unemployed should receive less in benefits for a shorter period of time and the benefits should be harder to get; a strategy that has been tried and shown to have failed over the last decade and a half.

Further, perhaps one of the most troubling measures with the government's UI reform constitutes the theft of \$1.9 billion belonging to employers and employees. Even with the reinvestment into so-called active programs, the government admits to stealing more than \$1.1 billion, money which plainly does not belong to the government. The government expects that two years

from now there will be a \$10 billion surplus in the UI fund. Instead of using these surplus funds to establish more aggressive and more constructive active support measures that would help the unemployed get back to work, measures that have been proven highly successful in other countries, the Minister of Finance will use this money so that he can meet his deficit reduction targets. This is theft, plain and simple, and we cannot afford to continue in this way.

• (1835)

Canadians understand the need for a UI program that is fair, which provides basic financial support and which encourages and makes available the tools they need in order to re-enter the labour market.

Canadians support aggressive active support measures that help people get back on their feet. The unemployed want a system that focuses on moving UI recipients into the workforce and which will support them in their efforts to achieve a greater degree of independence. This is a modern and progressive agenda which this legislation falls sadly short of. There are active measures but we know that they are simply not adequate for the needs of Canadians.

I want to remind the minister that Canadians are watching as this government continues to listen to and give unfair and undeserved tax breaks to banks and big corporations while cutting funding for unemployment insurance, health care, education and other services needed by people.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the hon. member seems to imply in his question, this government does not assume that public trust and confidence in government can be gained only by ever increasing spending. Governments everywhere of all political persuasions must address the real limits imposed by debt and deficit.

The previous unemployment insurance program was no exception. In the first half of the 1990s UI premiums rose by more than one-third and neither employers nor workers could afford any more. At the same time, there was widespread recognition of the need for structural reform of the previous program.

In response to these realities this government has implemented, after consulting with over 100,000 Canadians and hundreds of stakeholder groups throughout the country, a new modern system of employment insurance.

The new EI system represents a dramatic shift from a passive role to the active role of assisting the unemployed in becoming re-employed as soon as possible. These changes are about getting people back to work and providing a fair and balanced approach to the needs of unemployed Canadians. For employers, more simple EI requirements and less red tape will save time and money. The goal is to encourage and help workers to accept available work and

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for employers to accept a larger responsibility for providing that work.

Last May the minister issued a proposal to the provinces and territories offering them responsibility for active employment measures and labour market services funded from the EI account. The proposal is flexible enough to result in programs tailored to the different needs and priorities of each province. Negotiations are still going on.

In short, by consulting widely, by protecting the most vulnerable and by providing affordable programs that best serve the needs of all Canadians this government is giving an example of how we can act most effectively to restore public confidence in government.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday last week the minister of agriculture was in Regina to make an announcement concerning the future of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Prior to the announcement I heard a rumour that the minister was considering the possibility of putting the question of barley marketing to a plebiscite. Indeed, the minister did say that he was considering a barley plebiscite to be put to producers next year.

My question, which the minister's parliamentary secretary could not answer at the time, can be answered today.

Of course, the minister did not call it a plebiscite. Instead he opted for the more friendly term poll, but the bottom line is the same. This kind of action is typical of the minister who has spent most of his time in cabinet finding ways to avoid making decisions. And when he does, he makes decisions that try to please everyone.

In this case it appears the idea of a plebiscite is aimed at appeasing barley producers, particularly Alberta producers who want an open market for their product.

Unfortunately if the Liberal government goes ahead with the plebiscite, the net result will be continued uncertainty over the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. If the results of the plebiscite support the open market over single desk selling, then the long term future of the Canadian Wheat Board itself remains in doubt.

The minister, knowing the vast majority of western Canadian farmers support a strong, even enhanced Canadian Wheat Board, has purposely chosen to support the corporate interests of the grain trade over the collective interests of the prairie farmer by doing so. Obviously the plebiscite continues the slow but determined process to ultimately do away with the board, as was started by the Tories in the last Parliament who removed oats from the jurisdiction of the board. Remember, they did that without a mandate from the people.

• (1840)

In Canada, the government is continuing the dismantling of the board by commissioning the marketing panel, which travelled the country earlier this year, and now on the plebiscite issue as well as internationally with a debate among officials at the World Trade Organization level.

Forgotten in the debate seems to be the fact that the minister of agriculture is not taking responsibility for farmers' interests. He is asking farmers who do not have sufficient technical or financial support to take on the major players in this debate, the grain companies and the Alberta government.

If the agriculture minister were truly representing farm interests and if he continues to insist on holding a plebiscite, he would consider enhancing, rather than disturbing, the board's jurisdiction.

There is strong evidence to support expanding the powers of the board. A good question would include the possibility of adding oats, rye and canola to the jurisdiction of the board. It should be done.

Perhaps the most troublesome element of the entire process so far is that the minister is proceeding with major legislative changes to the wheat board and is proposing to schedule a delicate plebiscite without consulting the producer elected representatives of the Canadian Wheat Board advisory committee.

This committee was elected by farmers to represent the interests of farmers across the prairies and to, in that capacity, advise the minister of agriculture on matters pertaining to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Each member of this committee has studied the operations of the board, has reviewed the recommendations of the Western Grain Marketing Panel and has evaluated how each will impact on their own regions of the country. Their input into this process should be invaluable, yet they have been ignored.

Worse, it is proposed that they be replaced by an appointed interim board if the government goes ahead with the announced changes to the way in which the board should be governed. The minister has really missed the boat on this one.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would assure my hon. colleague that I was not here on Friday and therefore did not respond to a question.

On Friday, October 4 and again on Monday, October 7 the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food outlined the federal government's policy response to the intensely emotional debate among

farmers in western Canada about the western grain marketing system.

Our policy position builds on the proven strengths of the current system for marketing western wheat and barley while at the same time modernizing the governance structure of the Canadian Wheat Board, enhancing accountability, introducing new operating facilities to accelerate cash flow to farmers and empowering farmers with a great amount of decision making.

Included in the package is a vote this winter among farmers on a clear cut question about the marketing preferences with respect to barley. This is fully consistent with the establishment of policy positions of many of the western farm organizations.

Overall, the government's plans on the thorny and diverse issues related to grain marketing have been developed following the most extensive consultations in the history of the western grains industry.

Throughout, the Western Grain Marketing Panel has been very much involved. Otherwise, the Canadian Wheat Board producer advisory committee has let its views be known very loudly and clearly, as have well over 12,000 other farmers who have participated in these consultations.

It is still very early in the going, but we are pleased to note that many of the major farm organizations have reacted favourably to our policy package, including the Prairie Pools Inc., Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba and Wild Rose organization from Alberta.

The Canadian Wheat Board itself has responded very constructively. There have been encouraging editorials in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Regina Leader-Post*, the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* and the *Calgary Herald*. All that appears to me to be a very good start.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on May 27, I asked a question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on the growing number of refugee claimants in Quebec. Of the 26,000 claims made in Canada in 1995, more than 12,000 were transferred to the Montreal IRB. For the first time, more refugee claimants landed in Montreal than in Toronto.

• (1845)

I also asked the minister if her government was willing to share the cost of social benefits provided to refugee claimants.

Finally and fortunately, the minister and her counterpart in Quebec met on September 6 and agreed on a number of measures to respond to Quebec's concerns. As a result, health care costs for

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refugee claimants in Quebec will be covered by the interim federal health program, as is the case in the other Canadian provinces. As of November 1, 1996, the Government of Quebec will gradually withdraw from health care funding. However, health insurance will continue to be covered by Quebec until cards have expired.

At the same time, the Quebec government reaffirmed its intention to maintain a range of services that will permit these people to wait for a ruling on their claim in safety and in dignity. They will thus remain eligible for social and legal assistance, temporary accommodation and help in finding accommodation. Quebec will also continue to take responsibility for unaccompanied minor children. It will assume the costs of primary and secondary education, as well as of francization services on a part time basis. In the year 1994-95, \$125 million were spent on these services.

In addition, the minister responsible for relations with citizens and for immigration, André Boisclair, called on the federal government, and rightly so, to process refugee claims submitted in Quebec more efficiently and more rapidly.

On a number of occasions, I have criticized how long it takes for claims to be heard by the IRB, particularly where appeals are concerned. It is not acceptable to have to wait one year for a hearing, and sometimes years for a final decision.

IRB commissioners must issue their decisions rapidly so that refugees who have been accepted can have immediate access to all the programs and all the protective measures.

I am glad to see savings and arrangements between Ottawa and Quebec. However, the international obligations of Canada, as a signatory to the Geneva convention on refugees, must never be forgotten. We must constantly reaffirm our deep attachment to the humanitarian principle of protecting those who are persecuted and in distress. For my part, I am very proud of the tradition of open-mindedness and solidarity expressed by Quebecers.

[English]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am not exactly clear what the member for Bourassa is implying with his question. Does he want us to stop refugees from coming to Montreal? Does he want us to say we will close the doors to legitimate refugees? Does he want us to somehow intervene and ensure greater refusal rates in Montreal? I hope not. That certainly is not something we are prepared to do and certainly is not something that the Canadian people want.

The hon. member has implied that Montreal gets an inordinate number of refugees. It is true that a large number of refugees do arrive in that city. This should not come as a surprise to anyone. Montreal is a major international port of entry and is very close to other large gateways such as New York.

Adjournment Debate

I would also be surprised if refugees did not come to Montreal. We should not forget, however, that other international ports such as Toronto and Vancouver also attract a very large number of refugees. In a lot of cases it is a question of geography. We should not forget most refugees do not have the luxury of picking or choosing their destinations. People fleeing persecution will go wherever they can.

We have an international obligation to consider refugee claims on our territory and we are living up to those responsibilities. We are good global citizens and we take our obligations and responsibilities seriously.

The hon. member suggested in the House that we should work more closely with the Government of Quebec on these issues. We agree and that is what we are doing. Our refugee policies are formulated in consultations with many different interested parties. These include the provinces.

The question of international immigration is one which affects all of us and one we need to address as partners. Indeed it was with this in mind that the minister met with her counterpart from Quebec, André Boisclair, on September 6. At that meeting it was confirmed that, as of this coming November 1, the Government of Canada will be assuming responsibility under the interim health program for the medical costs incurred by refugee claimants who are living in Quebec and awaiting a decision by the Immigration and Refugee Board.

As in other provinces, it is the responsibility of the Government of Quebec and not the federal government to decide which services are available to refugee claimants.

At that meeting Minister Boisclair was also assured that measures to speed up the processing of refugee claims before the IRB, such as the appointment of members, have already been put in place or are being put in place. Since this minister assumed office, more than 60 per cent of new IRB members have been assigned to the Montreal regional office.

At present, both governments are working together in a spirit of co-operation. Our respective teams are in close contact with a view to promoting a greater exchange of information and better understanding of the policies that affect refugee claimants.

Contrary to the hon. member's position, the minister is also pleased with Minister Boisclair's strong support of the proposed Canada-U.S. agreement on refugees.

Canada has a fair and just refugee system. It is one of the best in the world. It is not perfect, no system is. We are continuously working to improve it to weed out the few bad apples who abuse the system. But we should never forget that the majority of those who come to Canada for protection need that protection. Are we going to close the doors on these people? Of course not.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.50 p.m.)

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