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Monday, February 3, 1997

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 3, 1997

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

VACANCY

CALGARY WEST

The Speaker: Colleagues, it is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Stephen Harper, member for the Electoral District of Calgary West by resignation effective January 14, 1997.

Pursuant to section 25(1) (b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed on Monday, January 20, 1997 my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

Also, today is the anniversary of the fire in 1916 which destroyed our original House of Commons. It is the wooden Mace but it will serve, of course, today as always our symbol of our authority to make laws.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADIAN VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL FOR UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING ACT

The House resumed from November 25, 1996 consideration of the motion that Bill C-300, an act respecting the establishment and award of a Canadian volunteer service medal and clasp for United Nations peacekeeping to Canadians serving with a United Nations peacekeeping force, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back again for another session. I am sure you have had many anxious moments over the last few weeks wondering just what was going to greet you when you got back to the House. To think that I would be the first person to wish you a happy new year,

what a way to go. Happy new year, Mr. Speaker. It is only going to get better after this in this parliamentary session.

This bill before us, Bill C-300, is a fascinating one which has gone through Parliaments before. One of my colleagues, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, thought that it was important enough to bring it up again and finally do something about it before the turn of the century. Therefore I am pleased that hopefully we in this House will find unanimity and be able to move forward on this.

When we talk about peacekeepers we talk about an amazing group of people willing to put their lives on the line, perhaps not in active duty but in what we would call a safe zone. One wonders if there is such a thing as a safe zone in this world. It is one thing for a peacekeeper to say “I am going in there to try to hold two groups apart”, but when there has been strife and a great deal of human pain and tragedy, it is very difficult to be the person who walks into the middle to say “here I am to try to keep peace”. It is essential to make peace at the beginning but it is also important to be able to keep the peace.

Canadian peacekeepers have an incredible reputation around the world. Therefore to honour them and give them a medal for their service is something that is long overdue. Hopefully we will be able to put this bill through the House very quickly.

This medal would provide a distinct Canadian recognition for all Canadians who have served with the United Nations peacekeeping force by awarding a Canadian volunteer service medal for peacekeeping, which is what we are focusing on today.

If we want to talk about the difference between active soldiers or those who are involved in a fight, we may consider that peacekeepers may not necessarily be involved in active fighting. However, when the question is asked whether peacekeepers fight, I think the answer is yes, they do. They fight for many things. They fight for justice, order and maintaining the peace. One may say that they do not have weapons in their hands but I think they have an even more tenuous task because they do not have those defence mechanisms but they do fight.

They fight fear and terror. There is no guarantee that they are going to be safe in a safe zone. They may be lunged upon from either side or both sides. Therefore when we say they are not active fighters I would have to disagree with that. They fight fear, terror and the unknown. The unknown is probably more frightening than anything else.

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Those of House sitting in the House of Commons came in here for our first day at one point, whether it was two or three years ago or whether it was eight, nine, twelve or even thirty-three years ago, but there was a first day for all of us and it was unknown. It is the same for any student or teacher going into a new school or someone going into a new business. It is the same for a peacekeeper going on to a peacekeeping mission. They have a fear because they are fighting the unknown. They are not sure what is going to meet them there.

It is one thing to come in here and face adversaries in the House of Commons but surely that is not as terrifying, although some days it seems like it, perhaps even uncivil. However, to know that you are there on the line trying to hold peace and being there as a Canadian peacekeeper, one of the proudest in the world, not knowing if either side that you are trying to hold apart is going to go after each other, that is unknown and it is fear. It is also very difficult.

Probably the most important fight that peacekeepers have is the fight of loneliness. Perhaps they are not engaged in active battle, but they battle loneliness. I believe that is one of the most insidious forms of fighting that anyone ever faces. For those peacekeepers who are thousands of miles away from home, family and friends they do not have a cell phone at their beck and call to just ring someone up and say "Hi, I just wanted to tell you I love you today". They fight that loneliness of knowing if and when they will ever get home again.

Mr. Speaker, you are not terribly far from this place, but for those of us who come from a great distance I think we have the same analogy in this House as well.

• (1110)

I have drawn parallels to that in some of these other areas, about fear and the unknown, something which is a new situation. We battle that as well here in the House of Commons. We battle and fight against loneliness because we are thousands of miles from home. We are away from friends. We are away from the people who support us. That plane ride every Sunday is difficult for all of us to take. We could multiply that for every peacekeeper who has left our country's soil and gone on a UN peacekeeping mission. Imagine how we would feel as we climbed on that plane.

I want to take my hat off today and talk about how important it is that we recognize these peacekeepers.

Probably first and foremost, peacekeepers need to be honoured because they have to work with a government which is unfocused. The peacekeepers are not sure exactly what it is they are supposed to be doing. How do they know they are doing their job when their job description is not clearly laid out? They need to know what their mission is. They need to know what their support system is. They need to know what their staffing is. They need to know what their equipment level is. If we were to ask many of them, they

would probably shrug their shoulders and say they are not quite sure, but because they have pride and passion in what they are doing to defend their country they are going to go ahead anyway and do as much as they can.

Without trying to sound cynical, maybe it is harder for the peacekeepers to work for and deal with the government than it is to work in their peacekeeping situations. Maybe they deserve a medal for that.

There are many veterans on the government side. It is important for them to finally realize that we could give ourselves credit in the 35th Parliament for being the group of people who had the nerve and the fortitude, the parallels, to be able to say yes, let us honour these peacekeepers.

There are members in the House today who are nodding in agreement. They are saying yes, we have watched this for several years. As we get closer to the turn of the century it is important that we finally do it. We should not just think about it and talk about it; we should do it.

Let me say again that the last Parliament supported this initiative through the introduction of two private members' bills and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Defence and Veterans Affairs. They talked about the Canadian volunteer service medal for United Nations peacekeeping. Some wars have begun and ended while we have been talking about this in these hallowed halls.

Let us do it. As we get closer to an election, the government has the mandate to get this done now and put its stamp of approval on it. Also, as we get closer to the turn of the century, we will be able to say to our Canadian peacekeepers "way to go, well done, you have done a super job".

At a time when the military has been going through such pain, this would be a way of saying "we celebrate you and we appreciate the many things that you have done on our behalf".

I want to talk about another thing that went through this Parliament in June of 1991. At that time the Canadian voluntary service medal for Korea was approved for the Canadian military personnel who participated in that conflict. It was in addition to the UN medal awarded to the veterans of the Korean war. It was a terrific job and certainly something we needed to see action taken on.

We are speaking specifically of our Canadian peacekeepers. They have done a superb job in their United Nations peacekeeping missions. They have fought well. They have fought nobly. They have fought fear. They have fought terror. They have fought the unknown. They have fought loneliness. They have fought the battle for all proud and passionate Canadians when they were not quite sure what their mandate was. I take my hat off to them. I trust that all of us in the House will take our hats off to them today. I urge the government to move ahead quickly and say "yes, we will bind

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together in this House, regardless of political background, regardless of political persuasion". We are Canadians. Let us join together under our Canadian flag, link arms and say "yes, peacekeepers, you have done a good job, we will award you with the Canadian volunteer peacekeeping service medal". We rejoice because we trust that is happening.

I am a woman of faith. I am a woman of optimism. Therefore I trust it will happen in this House today.

• (1115)

Mr. John Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Beaver River for her kind words in support of this medal. I would also like to recognize the person whose bill is on the table, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for his hard work to produce this program.

This medal has a lot of merit. It is long overdue. The thought that is behind it is genuine. It is universal in nature and will certainly fill a gap in the rights of those who serve to receive a medal.

Some things regarding the design elements will have to be corrected, but that does not mean we are against the bill. Some small amendments have to be made. Some of the design elements of the bill are a little too specific, aside from usurping the authority of the chancellery which it would like to maintain. The final design needs to ensure that it will serve for some time and that it will not just create another problem in a couple of years.

We want to see that this bill passes. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has put his whole heart into this. Without question the intent is honourable.

There are some the things we would like to see which could be corrected very simply. If this bill could be moved to committee, the committee could make the minor amendments that would be necessary to take it forward. Then it could be brought back to the House where I am sure it will receive passage on its return.

Certain things have to be looked at and I will pick up on them more specifically: the protocol dealing with the chancellery, some of the design elements which are minor and would require minimal discussion. The rightful place to do that would be at the defence committee. When the bill is brought back to the House with those minor details amended, I am sure it will have the support of the whole committee and of the whole House.

Other features this bill has deserve a lot of commendation. It fills a gap. It recognizes the winning of the Nobel peace prize. It recognizes actions thereafter. We would have to look at this being fundamentally a base medal because Canada is getting so many

volunteer service medals or related medals that we would like to be able to indicate the theatre, the area specifically. This medal would continue to be given with a clasp designating the theatre of operation. People could have the basic medal and pick up a fair number of the theatre operation designations.

I commend the hon. member for bringing this forward and I hope he will understand that if we could make these small changes the House will give the bill speedy passage.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am excited to be back here. I am as excited as I can possibly get to come back to Ottawa. I am so comfortable when I go back to my riding, if I can use those terms, that it definitely feels like I am away from home when I come back to Ottawa. I will get on with my presentation, Mr. Speaker.

• (1120)

It is encouraging to hear the parliamentary secretary support the creation of this peacekeeping medal. I trust he will follow through with his suggestion of just looking after some minor amendments to make it happen.

It is my distinct honour to speak to Bill C-300 which is the design of my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I support without reservation the spirit and the substance of the proposed legislation before the House today.

It has been said that this bill seeks to correct a wrong, to correct a very serious omission of not awarding recognition in a formal sense to the tremendous contribution that Canadian peacekeepers have made. The bill asks that the Canadian government make available a medallion and clasp in recognition of the bravery of our peacekeepers.

If there is any question of the appropriateness of bestowing such recognition one should consult history. I quote Commander General Guy Simonds in 1942. He surmised: "The final criterion of a good or bad award is the reaction of the troops. If the troops feel it is a good award, it is a good award. If the awards are criticized by the troops, they are bad awards". He goes on to say: "Before forwarding any recommendation, at each level the commander should ask himself the question 'would the front line soldier, if he knew the facts, consider this well deserved?'"

In light of General Simonds recommendation for the criterion one should use in consideration of an award to the peacekeeping personnel, there can be no question of the course of action we, as parliamentarians, should pursue. We know that it was input from the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association that moved my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands to introduce Bill C-300.

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I suggest that everyone in this House has a friend, an acquaintance, who has served on a peacekeeping mission. In fact, in my own riding, I have a consistent visitor, Mr. Ron Howard, who has conversed frequently with the Department of National Defence over this peacekeeping initiative. He has been keeping me up to date on the feelings of the veterans, those who really laid their lives down to make this world a better place. I respect him for his persistence. I respect him for his consideration of his fellow soldiers, his colleagues. I certainly respect him for his dealings with myself in pushing me forward and keeping me abreast of the concerns that many of the veterans have, especially the peacekeeping veterans.

They appreciate their United Nations medals and it is their hope and desire that Canada provide a distinctive recognition for their peacekeeping efforts. It is therefore only fitting that a volunteer service medal be awarded by the Government of Canada to peacekeepers who have served our nation well. This legislation would authorize the issuance of such a medallion.

I would also like to state for the record that there can be no question that Canadians soldiers are the bravest in the world. Time and time again our personnel have demonstrated ability and courage under difficult circumstances and in perilous situations. I think of Bosnia and some of the very tense moments when our peacekeepers were nailed down and sequestered, even entrapped in some areas in a very dangerous situation. They are recognized for their bravery and courage.

It is noteworthy that in this legislation there are provisions for the recognition of members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other Canadian citizens who qualify. This is a significant and proper recognition, given the increasingly perilous situations RCMP officers find themselves in overseas.

I had the opportunity to ride back on a plane with a troop of RCMP officers who had served in Bosnia. I do not think it is well known that we have RCMP officers serving in that capacity, teaching the rule of law to those in other nations where there is conflict. Of course there is more recognition in Haiti.

• (1125)

It is a tough situation to be in an area of conflict without any weapons. Those officers inform me that often they were sequestered in one room with really nothing to defend themselves because of the conflict raging on around them. That is a tough situation to be in. I believe that it is fitting to recognize them for those brave acts. They are jeopardizing their lives by falling into those circumstances.

The RCMP troops were sent over overseas to train fledgling police departments the principles that are central to our democracy, for example, the fair and unbiased application of the law and the separation of politics from policing, something that is unfortunate-

ly deteriorating in this part of the world. For that reason the RCMP officers should, for their contribution to Canada's peacekeeping efforts, be recognized.

In summary, I would like to state some of the obvious. There is justification for looking at history and bringing it forward in a manner so that it can be recognized by the public that there is a need to recognize our soldiers. Among the reasons for supporting this legislation is providing a distinctive Canadian recognition to all Canadians who have served with the United Nations peacekeeping force by awarding a Canadian volunteer service medal, and to give recognition for the September 30, 1988 Nobel peace prize awarded to Canadian peacekeepers signified by a clasp on the medal's ribbon.

The 34th Parliament supported this initiative through the introduction of two private members' bills. The standing committee on defence and veterans affairs in a peacekeeping report called for the establishment of a Canadian volunteer service medal for United Nations peacekeeping. Another reason for support is the endorsement of a distinct Canadian recognition for our peacekeepers comes from the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association and the Canadian Association United Nations Peacekeeping Chapter.

There is a lot of support at all levels. Other countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Ghana and the United States already have distinctive national medal awards for peacekeeping. We would not be alone.

Parliament set a precedent in June 1991 by approving the award of the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea to its Canadian personnel. This is, in addition to the UN medal, awarded to veterans of the Korean war and a Canadian medal worn with a ribbon shared with the Commonwealth countries of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Recognition would not be limited to the Canadian forces but would include the RCMP and other Canadians who qualify. I believe that would be a wonderful addition because so many others within our different agencies are risking their lives to support world peace.

Finally, other nations such as Sweden and Finland are establishing a medallion award for their peacekeepers. New Zealand and Australia are also considering such an award. It is therefore only fitting that Canada not be left out.

I urge my colleagues on the opposite side of the House to quickly rush through whatever amendments would be deemed necessary to quickly finalize this initiative by my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I begin by welcoming everyone back to the House. I am sure we have all enjoyed a tremendous break and

look forward, as the hon. member who just spoke, to very eagerly returning to the House and working together in an enthusiastic and co-operative manner.

• (1130)

Before I address the matter at hand I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for reaching this far with his private members' bill. I know full well the hurdles one has to jump in order to get this far. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you it is not easy.

Moreover I would like to pay tribute to the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. As I understand it he will not be seeking re-election and I am sorry to hear that. He certainly is an honourable member and a good friend. I enjoyed working with him while serving on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, particularly on the Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy. He has been a competent adversary and a diligent politician. The House will miss him.

We know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands put forward the same bill in the previous session of Parliament. Unfortunately, like so many other worthwhile private members' bills, it never reached the end of the legislative process. As many members also know, I spoke in favour of that bill then and I am happy to say that I support this bill now.

However, I must qualify that by saying that the bill before us now is not perfect. The concept behind the bill is commendable and I agree with it. Our troops need to be treated with respect and as such should be decorated for their service.

As we all know, Canada is world renowned for its international efforts. That reputation has been over a century in the making. Moreover since the second world war our participation in international peacekeeping missions has enhanced our reputation, as was said earlier here. I am not ignoring the recent revelations about several incidents but I do think our entire Canadian forces should not be marred by it.

The high quality of Canada's troops is envied around the world. In fact it mirrors the quality of life in Canada in general. When travelling abroad Canadians are welcomed more than people of any other nation. The reason for that is our outlook on life. By nature Canadians are fair, patient people. This applies equally well to our troops.

We should not forget the accomplishments of the Canadian forces. We should embrace them. A nation proud of its military is a strong and united nation. I am not suggesting that we become more like the Americans. I do not want us to look at our forces as flexing our muscles. We leave that to the thinking of others. But we should

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look at our forces as an example of what we can accomplish if we agree to work together.

We should look at our forces as one common attribute. Our military is a joint effort by Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Without the participation from all regions, from all provinces and yes, even from all communities, we have no national military.

Our reserves play a major role in providing a link between our communities and our Canadian forces. This particularly was an important aspect which received a lot of attention in 1995 when the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs reviewed the report by the commission on the restructuring of the reserves. Numerous members of this House spoke out on how the reserves expose the community to the military. Without it Canadians would think less of the military than they do now.

Our military can be the foundation to rebuilding our national unity. We should not look down upon them; in fact, we should look up to them. They are willing to risk everything for the sake of not only their country but someone else's.

Millions of Canadians during our history have given their lives to protecting their country, but there have also been countless Canadians who have given their lives going further than that. They have given their lives to protecting not Canada but a foreign country. It would be hard enough to put one's life on the line for one's own country, but to put it on the line for a foreign country, a foreign land, is an entirely different thing. For that reason we should ensure that we properly decorate that service.

Some may say that there are a multitude of medals to award the services of our forces. However there still exist some missions that have yet to receive the proper decoration. Certainly our troops serving abroad in UN led missions do receive United Nations medals and ribbons, but I ask and the hon. member across asks, is that enough? Should we ourselves not recognize that service in the name of this country? Is it not appropriate for Canada to do like other United Nations member countries and present its forces with a distinctive Canadian medal for service in the United Nations peacekeeping missions?

What is proposed here today can alleviate that problem. But as legislators it is our privilege and duty to ensure that we do not create one problem while trying to resolve another. Rarely is anything as simple as it first seems, and this is no different. It is for that reason that I am suggesting that we refer this bill to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs or better yet, to a subcommittee thereof.

• (1135)

It has been said before in the House and elsewhere that this bill has the support of various associations representing current and retired members of the Canadian forces. I need not list them all for

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I believe their names have already been mentioned. But suffice it to say that if these organizations and all the members within support this bill, then perhaps it does deserve a thorough study.

This is further evidence for why the bill should be referred to the committee because it deserves that. It deserves a close examination of its objective, the process of achieving that objective, and whether it will have the intended result.

With the indulgence of the House I would like to spend a few moments providing some positive criticism of the bill. The member's bill as it now stands dictates a very specific medal as was mentioned earlier. However it does not include missions that are not UN led. This may exclude people who I am sure the hon. member intended to include.

What about our troops who have participated in NATO led missions such as IFOR, the peace implementation force in Bosnia? That, as we all know was a very difficult mission. It has been said the mission was to uphold a very fragile peace. In fact, it has been said that there was no peace at all at the time. However, I will leave that debate to another time.

Nevertheless I think we have to be very careful not to exclude some members of our forces who have participated in peacekeeping missions led by either the United Nations or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I firmly believe that if this bill were to be adopted and such a medal awarded, it would be a grave mistake to exclude some soldiers because their mission was led by NATO and not by the UN and I do not think we should bias ourselves on this issue.

Another aspect of the bill that we can improve is the detailed specifications of the design of the medal. I mean the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands no disrespect when I say he has put too much into this bill. The design of the medal as contained in the bill is too specific. I hope the hon. member is open to some alternative design specifications. This could be further examined during committee hearings and a mutually agreed to compromise can be achieved. There the committee members and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands himself could hear testimony from various witnesses and the list could include many people.

I also appreciate that several members have given consideration to the cost of such an initiative, but I do not think we should lose sight of why we want to do this. We should not let money considerations prevent us from doing this properly. Yes, we should look at ways of keeping the cost down but not to the extent of negating the whole exercise.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to speak in support of Bill C-300 and commend the

hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing it forward. I hope that, as has been suggested, it will pass second reading possibly without a vote, if we can all agree to send it off to committee in a spirit of unanimity, to be studied there and possibly improved.

However, to echo some of the concerns I have heard expressed, I hope this is not a means by which the government, or at least some members on the government side, hope to bury it in committee. I hope it is a genuine desire to see the bill improved to address some of its alleged imperfections and have it come back to the House and passed so that indeed we can as a Parliament express through the establishment of this medal the fact that as a Parliament and as a country we appreciate and want to recognize Canadians who have served in Canadian peacekeeping operations and perhaps in other operations which are perceived in the same way but which may not be technically peacekeeping or technically UN peacekeeping.

I hope we can do this quickly because we do not want to see a situation that other veterans have found themselves in. It was not so long ago, at the beginning of this Parliament, that I had a private members' motion, not a bill, calling for the awarding of a medal that would recognize the service of veterans of the Dieppe raid, who for a variety of reasons did not receive the medal other veterans received for serving in World War II. They waited for over 50 years for this kind of recognition. It eventually came as a result of my private members' motion. It was not exactly what the motion called for but it was a form of recognition.

It may indeed be the case that a similar thing will happen here where the outcome will not be exactly what the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has in mind. However, hopefully it will be close enough or perhaps even improved in such a way that we will all be satisfied with the result.

I commend the member and express my support and I am sure the support of my colleagues in the NDP caucus. We look forward to seeing this matter expeditiously dealt with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): It is my duty to inform the House that if the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands speaks now, he will close the debate.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as you will no doubt detect, there is a substantial amount of support for Bill C-300 in this House. It is my fervent hope that the bill can be referred to committee taking into account the thoughtful and constructive criticism that has been presented not only in this House but from people across the country who have familiarized themselves with the bill and that we can bring it to fruition before the 35th Parliament is dissolved for the election.

Government Orders

As my colleague from Beaver River mentioned, this bill has been proposed on a number of occasions by the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs and by two private members' bills in the previous Parliament. I think it would be absolutely abhorrent to have this bill die before it was passed into law.

With that I will conclude my address and seek the support of the House for Bill C-300.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee.)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is it the pleasure of the House to suspend the sitting until noon?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11.40 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 11.56 a.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY ACT

The House resumed, from December 13, 1996, consideration of Bill C-60, an act to establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and to repeal and amend other acts as a consequence, as reported (with amendments) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 24, 25 and 26.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity this morning to speak to Bill C-60 at report stage.

• (1200)

I think we need to refresh our memories, because it has been more than a month and a half since we last discussed Bill C-60, a bill that will have the effect of creating a Canadian food inspection agency.

It will be a parapublic agency, rather like those school boards we have in Quebec. This parapublic agency will be responsible for setting standards for the safety, quality and manufacture of food products.

The purpose of this bill is to consolidate the food inspection services of three departments, which are the departments of health, fisheries and oceans and agriculture and agri-food.

You will probably recall that in December, there was an aspect of the bill that bothered opposition members, and I mean both the Reform Party and the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois. I am referring to the manner in which the executives of this parapublic agency will be appointed. The president and the vice-president will be appointed by the governor in council, and the president can appoint an advisory board of 12 members.

You know as well as I do that the government of the Prime Minister, the member for Saint-Maurice, will appoint a Liberal, and that the president will appoint a vice-president who will be a Liberal as well. I hardly need to tell you what political affiliation the members of the advisory board will have. So we have a nice little board which the minister of agriculture or the governor in council, in other words, cabinet, will be able to control.

This parapublic agency is a very important body because it will employ some 4,500 people. I remind you as well that, to properly prepare everything, under Bill C-60, the hiring rules would be suspended for a period of up to two years. So the new agency, which in theory is to begin operations by the first of April, is being readied as a patronage haven.

We in the Bloc Québécois have proposed amendments that would significantly improve it, because there is obviously some merit in the objectives. We do not, however, agree with the government's underhanded approach to achieving its ends. I hope the government takes a lot of interest in passing our amendments, for the welfare of our fellow Canadians across the country.

By combining the food inspection services of these three departments, we could save a lot of money. Overlap is often criticized, but with this measure, if it is well administered, we could save up to \$40 million annually. That is a significant amount. We salute the initiative, but not so much the way of going about it. There is the issue of transparency.

The aim of the amendments we proposed in group No. 8 is to have the new food inspection agency submit its business plan annually to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Government Orders

• (1205)

Bill C-60 provides for the president of the new agency to submit his business plan to the minister of agriculture, who will have to approve the plan within 15 days. In other words, the minister may, as I said earlier, pull some strings in order to concoct a business plan to his liking.

So, here is what we propose to do to amend clause 22. I would like to read it to you so that all elected members of this House can realize how important this debate is.

As soon as possible after the Agency is established and at least once every five years after that, the Agency must submit a corporate business plan, for study, to such committee of the House of Commons as designated or established to consider agricultural matters for study by that committee.

After reviewing the agency's business plan, the committee referred to in the subsection I just read either approves or rejects the plan.

The Minister of Agriculture should not fear the Standing Committee on Agriculture. Do not think for a moment that the agriculture committee is controlled by Quebec sovereignists, or by Reformers from western Canada; this committee is made up of eight members of the Liberal Party, two members of the Bloc Québécois and two members of the Reform Party. Simple mathematics indicates an easy Liberal majority of eight against four, not to mention the fact that the Chair is also a Liberal. That makes nine Liberals against four opposition members. It would not be such a big deal, since it would involve not just a single individual, but the committee as a whole. So we are dealing with 13 members. This way, the committee could become less of a babysitting service for members and more useful as a place where members of the various committees can take their responsibilities and provide thoughtful advice to their—I am talking about Liberal members of course—Minister of Agriculture, who is, unfortunately, often out of touch with the realities faced by farming communities across Canada.

The Minister of Agriculture, who hails from Saskatchewan, is familiar with the particular difficulties associated with farming in that western province. But when it comes to a highly diversified agriculture like we have in the maritimes, in Ontario and in Quebec, we have to forgive the minister because he really does not know much about that type of agriculture.

So, this is the amendment I proposed in this House with the support of the hon. member for Matapédia—Matane.

Another suggestion we are making here also has to do with clause 22, but at line 9. I will read the amendment that we propose and I hope Liberal members will consider it. I also hope they will not follow the party line dictated by their minister and will not all vote against the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

any person from the agriculture, fisheries, food processing, food distribution and public health sectors whom the Agency considers appropriate to consult;

The agency would not have to ask the minister's authorization to consult groups other than those scheduled to be included in the new agency. It would also be in a position to consult any provincial government that makes a written request to that effect to the agency.

All these reasons should convince hon. members opposite to support these motions in amendment, which seek to improve Bill C-60.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-60, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, and to lend our support to the credible proposals put forward by our colleagues in the Bloc Québécois.

While we do not always support them, and in fact object to many of the principles for which they stand, it is enlightening to hear they want to participate in amending legislation to make it good legislation for the benefit of all Canadians. Therefore, we like to see these types of proposals coming forward from our colleagues in the Bloc.

In general terms, Bill C-60, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, unfortunately is another smoke and mirror policy by the federal government where it says that it is doing something but when you take a real good close look at it you find that it has done next to nothing other than shuffle the numbers.

I think back to when the government created NavCan, an agency to handle air navigation in Canada. It cost \$200 million to provide severance pay to the civil servants who lost their jobs on Friday. Each and every one of those civil servants was hired back by NavCan on Monday morning. The Canadian taxpayers came up with \$200 million in severance pay for those people and not one of them lost his or her job.

The President of the Treasury Board could stand up in the House and claim: "We have reduced the size of the civil service by 6,400 people. That is a great and wonderful accomplishment". In fact nothing really changed except the name on the letterhead and the name on the pay stub of the cheque. This is what I mean by smoke and mirrors.

Once again an agency is going to be set up and these civil servants are going to lose their jobs. They are no longer going to be civil servants. They are going to get severance pay on Friday and start working for the agency on Monday. Nothing will be changed except the taxpayer will be poorer. We have been taken to the cleaners once more courtesy of the policies put forward by the government.

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The motions we are debating at the moment call for a business plan to be put before the agricultural committee to tell committee members how the agency wishes to follow through. Since the agency is a creation of this House it seems only appropriate that agency would come back to the House and tell us its business plan because this House is going to be giving the agency or has been giving the agency about \$300 million a year to do its job.

With that kind of money we expect to know what the agency intends to do and how it intends to do it. How is it going to do the job better than it did it in the past? How is it going to be more efficient? How is it going to be more productive? How are the farmers going to be better served by this agency? If we, as parliamentarians, are being asked to vote on this bill to give the authority to spend taxpayers' money in some new way, then surely we would expect the agency to come to this House and tell us how it can do it so we can pass comment.

It seems to me, since this is a motion being put forward by the opposition party, that the Liberals in a knee jerk reaction are going to say no we do not want to hear about this. We do not want to see if there is common sense or a lack of common sense in the way this agency is being run. We do not want to know if there is waste, mismanagement and incompetence in this organization. But there will be because I have not seen accountability built into this organization.

A group of farmers came to me some months ago complaining about the way the government is building in the cost recovery to these situations. I agree that if the government, through its agencies, is providing service to a group of people, there should be some element of cost recovery thought about and maybe built into the system. That cost recovery program dealt with farmers. The situation was the approval and the licensing of animal feed to ensure that it met the appropriate standards.

• (1215)

I have no problem with our regulating to ensure that the feed we give to animals will not harm individuals as it flows through the food chain for human consumption. However, on the cost recovery methodology that is built in, there is a huge bureaucracy that they wanted to recover the cost of. If they had five applications a year for a new feed to be licensed, the cost of this huge bureaucracy was spread over five applications. If they had 50 applications in another year the cost was spread over the 50 applications. The size of the bureaucracy did not change whether it was five or fifty applications. They were just going to pass their cost on to the unfortunate consumer of their service who happened to pick a bad year for applying for a licence.

That is not being accountable to the consumer. That is being arrogant in the way we can dictate and legislate what people have to pay. It means that they do not give a hoot about the service they provide. They are just going to legislate that everyone will pay for

their costs but will have no input into their cost. People will pay the bill because they cannot avoid the service being provided by government. That is wrong because we need accountability.

The private sector has accountability through competition. I have attended seminars in Victoria where we had public accounts committees from across Canada and representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and various other countries to try to wrestle with the issue of accountability.

I found that in other areas of the world the capacity to create the kind of competition in a market where civil servants have to ensure that they are delivering a competent service, that the price is reasonable, that the quality is good in order for them to keep their job, because that is how it works in the private sector, it does not matter what service or product one produces or sells, if one does not provide good service and quality at a reasonable price they will not be in business.

Government has to learn the same attitude. We need to have good quality, good prices and good services. However, it comes all the way back to what we have talked about here for the last three years, the lack of accountability in this House, the lack of accountability by the government over there and the fact that it has ignored the needs and desires of Canadians, the lack of integrity that we have seen from over there, the fact that it has not been responsible in managing the affairs of this country with the \$600 billion debt that we have accumulated.

We see it more again in the way the government has addressed this bill. Accountability, integrity and responsibility are three individual words that this government has not heard of, has not thought about and has no intention of living by. However, if we were to have that in the legislation that has been brought before this House we would have a government that listens to the people and meets the needs of the people in food inspection, in eliminating the GST, in expense accounts that are proper and just everywhere, in inquiries that are set up because the government wants to shuffle paper and bad press on to an inquiry and then when the inquiry—I am thinking of the Somali inquiry—becomes an embarrassment, the government shuts it down.

Accountability, integrity and responsibility, the overarching theme that every government should think about but which this government has never thought about. We see it again in Bill C-60. I cannot think of anything more accountable for an agency than to have a business plan brought before Parliament for our opinions and input in order that we can see that it is going in the direction that we had anticipated when we gave it this authority. That speaks volumes in the way this government, even in the small things, ignores the wishes of Canadians. That is why we need to see real change. If there is not a change in this government then let us change the government at the next election.

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• (1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-60 at report stage. Members will recall that this is the bill that will establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Before we broke for the holidays, we saw that under this bill the federal government's involvement in this sector would be reduced from three services to a single agency. Members will also recall that this sector comes under provincial jurisdiction. It was nonetheless felt that at last the federal government was doing something constructive after years of being urged to take action.

The bill needs to be improved, however. It is with this in mind that the Bloc Québécois has presented the series of amendments regarding the corporate business plan and the form of consultations to be held in connection with the plan.

Why is the corporate business plan important? It is important because the Canadian Food Inspection Agency must submit to the minister a multi-year plan outlining what it intends to do, its planning strategy. In the bill as it appears, without the amendments, this plan is submitted to the minister. There is no other form of consultation. It is not submitted to the House of Commons, or even the agriculture committee. Nor is there any obligation to consult industry or the provinces. There is not, in our view, sufficient consultation of the auditor general.

Often, viewers wonder what the purpose of this consultation will be. It must be remembered that the agency will play an important role in the competitive aspect of the agri-food industry in Canada. Now that we have an increasing number of international markets, and the prospect of increasing trade in agri-food products, the way the government structures its inspection activities will have a direct impact on the entire industry's production costs.

It is therefore important that this corporate business plan meet more than just the agency's criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, perhaps very, very stringent standards, which is desirable, but which would not, however, necessarily take into account the situation in the various regions of Canada, and of Quebec. It would also not take into account comments from industry. This can be seen in a number of sectors.

I will give you an example that I think is significant. In the dairy production sector, the milk subsidy is quietly being phased out. More and more pressure is being put on the dairy industry to be cost-effective, yet there are fewer and fewer positive federal government programs. Such programs will be absolutely necessary where inspection is concerned.

When the Food Inspection Agency submits its action plan to the government, it will be important for that plan to take into account

that, yes, cost savings must be made, but our industry also needs to be given sufficient support. A balance must be struck between these two elements.

The present wording of the bill does not do this. It does not, for instance, allow the agriculture committee, on which all parties, as well as all regions of Canada, are represented, to gather input from MPs who have been given all manner of comments and suggestions by their constituents. If the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's business plan were tabled in that committee, that would be the time for this to be done.

Let me take the question of slaughterhouses as an example. The Food Inspection Agency will, perhaps, have a Canada-wide view. There may be a regulatory approach to slaughterhouses which meets the requirements of the major ones in Canada, but consultation with the MPs might perhaps provide a different point of view, a view of the particular situations of regional slaughterhouses. This type of consultation by the agriculture committee would, in our opinion, make a substantial positive contribution to the quality of the Food Inspection Agency's business plan, which would then clearly reflect the reality in all parts of the country.

The provinces are another sector it is important to consult. Let us keep in mind that both levels of government are involved in food inspection.

• (1225)

Years ago, provincial governments, and especially the Government of Quebec, did their homework and established adequate systems for monitoring the quality of food inspection services.

The federal government is restructuring, but if there is no proper consultation when the corporate business plan is drafted, as there is in any system, this may cause the following problem: the federal agency will want to expand and take its responsibilities very seriously, and there will be areas of friction with the provinces. If these areas are not cleared up before, as part of a consultation process that is not necessarily costly, this may lead to legal problems, court proceedings and confrontation.

The agency may also be in a situation that often makes no sense at all, where you have two inspectors at different levels of government doing a job that is practically the same or very similar. The private sector is sick and tired of this duplication.

I think that with proper consultation before the corporate business plan is implemented, we could avoid a lot of grief. Quebecers and Canadians would certainly be better off with food inspection services that reflect the real situation.

Elected representatives should be asked about the situation that exists in their ridings, the provinces should be consulted to avoid friction between the federal government and the provincial govern-

ments and we must ensure that all programs that are supposed to assist companies are helpful and not a source of red tape.

Look what happened in England with mad cow disease. Since we may face a similar emergency in the future, the agency's corporate business plan must allow for such contingencies. Because of financial constraints, the plan may tend to overlook such situations and fail to provide for these exceptional cases, but it is important to allow for such occurrences and include provisions in the agency's action plan.

Why can we not rely on the minister alone? This is no reflection on the competence of the minister or on any person who will be in that position. Open consultation on food inspection is just as important as the heart of the question.

This is an area where the appearance of justice and equality and the fair handling of situations are just as important as the essence of the issues. We must make sure that Canadians and Quebecers have faith in their quality control system, know it is closely monitored and understand that it is beyond the grasp of political meddling.

If the agency submits its business plan to the minister only, obviously, the minister will try to protect the government and its interests. He does not necessarily always have all the information he needs to monitor a sector like this one countrywide. Our international reputation is at stake. We must make sure that at any given point our system is beyond reproach and provides a satisfactory guarantee to consumers not only in Quebec and Canada but around the world. It has an impact on various other sectors. We must not forget that food inspection is part of an industry's development programs.

We often speak of genetics programs and of research and development. If the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's corporate plan makes minimal provision for research and development and the sector's monitoring methods, we risk, in the medium term, running into problems.

Some things are not of primary concern to the people in food inspection—that is as it should be—but they are to the people in research and development in the agri-food sector. These people must be given the opportunity to express their views and the fact that experiments may need to be conducted, but not necessarily under the same rules as a product to be marketed.

There are all sorts of considerations like this, which, in our opinion—and I think the Reform Party shares our opinion—point to the fact that consultation as planned with the minister only is inadequate. This bill requires considerable improvement. It requires improvement to ensure that Canadians who see the agency's business plan can say: "This plan has been seen by members of the standing committee, the industry and the provinces. The result is

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truly the product of a consensus and of the actions proposed by the entire population".

• (1230)

In conclusion, I consider the amendments very reasonable and I hope the Liberal majority will accept them so that, in the end, we will have a better bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the opposition for bringing forth amendments which they feel will improve the bill. That being said, there is a little misinformation about what the roles in Parliament are and the latitudes each has.

When we look at the bill and the agency which is being formed in this case, the ultimate person responsible is the minister. There is absolutely no question that if there is a problem with the agency, if corrections have to be made, if budgets have to be altered and if some things have to be changed, the ultimate responsibility falls on the minister and the government. In the amendment the suggestion is that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food be the committee to deal with the approval of the administrative budgets and the approval of the annual reports.

Quite frankly, it is the responsibility of the committee of the House of Commons to examine every aspect of operations in government affairs. Very clearly, the standing committee on agriculture can bring forth any issue. It can bring forward the issue of a business plan. It can deal with that with every industry across the country. It can deal with that with every provincial government across the country. And it can clearly deal with the agency. It is the standing committee's authority given by the House to deal with those issues and bring them forward to the public, discuss them and allow public input.

In fact what is being suggested in the bill goes beyond the latitude of standing committee operations. It is being suggested that the standing committee must approve government operations for which it is not responsible if something goes wrong. It is responsible to the House to investigate issues and make recommendations to the ministry and to the House. There is a misconception about the responsible role of each person in this type of government. That is unfortunate. Again I would point out it is extremely important that the final approval be given to the minister so that the minister can act very quickly.

Food inspection is very, very important to that industry in this country. There is no question that when we ran into some difficulties over food inspection, the minister and his ministry acted very quickly and immediately to make certain the problems were dealt with properly. That is why it is important for the minister to be

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ready to act at any time. We do not put other vehicles in the way of swift action.

The Canadian government has always put food safety as a priority and will continue to do so. There is no question that we have a worldwide reputation for dealing with issues swiftly and conclusively and making certain that Canadians have the safest and best food supply in the world. The minister and his ministry are responsible for that.

If it happened that the House of Commons standing committee would deal with those issues as has been suggested by the opposition, we would have to set up a very large portion of full time staff to deal with consultations across the country, with added expenses to the government and to make certain that hearings are held across the country.

This has been particularly well set out in Bill C-60. It is my understanding that every province in the country supports the fact that this agency will be of crucial importance to the agricultural community in those provinces. All industries across this country support our position with regard to agencies. When we look at it, we have consulted with all of the provinces and the industry. We are accountable through the minister and through the questioning in this House as well as the public hearings that are carried on in the House of Commons standing committee.

• (1235)

Clearly, the support of the provinces and industry in this agency is very important. I might underline the fact too that there is no question that outside reporting agencies such as the auditor general have to comment on the concerns within this bill. Therefore, there is no question that the accountability for this agency is there through the minister's office, through the auditor general's office, through the processes of public consultation, through the department as well as through the standing committee.

I cannot see how we can support this motion. It certainly does not fulfil what I would suggest is the role of responsible government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): After a break of several weeks, Mr. Speaker, the names of the various ridings do not come to us as easily. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you happy New Year.

The three motions made by the Bloc Québécois regarding this bill, which are part of Group No. 8, are very worthwhile motions. Why is that? Because as the legislation stands at present, all that is required is for the agency to submit a business plan to the minister. That is not enough in our opinion because these provisions have caused considerable controversy within the industry. There is a distinct lack of transparency.

This is why, concerned with improving the bill and making a positive contribution to the legislative process, the Bloc Québécois asks that everything be submitted to the Standing Committee on Agriculture. This seems to be the thing to do because this is all new: three former federal inspection services amalgamated into a single one coming under the agriculture minister's authority. Granted, that is a good thing. And the opposition did not object to the consolidation of three federal agencies. That is not the problem.

In this whole process, it is clear that the Minister of Agriculture wants to retain as much power as possible. This is a tendency we have been noticing for a few months with this government, a tendency to have responsibility rest with a minister instead of with the governor in council. You know as well as I do that the expression "governor in council" means cabinet.

Now, under Bill C-25, I think, for what had been the normal process so far to be operative, the phrase "by order of the governor in council" will have to be included, for particular matters to be discussed in cabinet from now on. More importantly our motions seek to ensure that they at least be submitted to the members of this House who sit on the agriculture committee so that they can examine whatever changes the minister may want to make from time to time.

We will support the good ones; opposition members do not sit either on the various committees or in this House to object to changes that may be positive, worthwhile. There is another condition however, and that is the drift of the second motion. The agency should be required to consult both the farming industry or the agri-food sector as a whole and the provinces; in fact, all concerned.

• (1240)

Should this amendment be rejected, there is currently no such guarantee provided in the legislation. We believe such a measure would protect the future of the agri-food industry. It also concerns the health sector, however, since the inspection of food has an impact on health.

I am a now member of the Standing Committee on Health, and I care a lot about public health. It is necessary to inspect food. Just think of what happened in certain countries, Great Britain, for instance, with the whole problem of the mad cow disease. An agency such as this one must be able to protect public health; it must have public health as its main concern. This is why it must operate properly and have credibility. And in order to have credibility, consultation and transparency are required.

We could make other analogies. When it comes to controversial issues relating to health, such as the tainted blood scandal—and I am not only thinking of Canada, but of the western countries—any

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process relating to health, including the inspection of food, must be credible and transparent. People must have confidence in it.

We are not trying to be aggressive. We are not proposing things to make a big fuss. We want the public to feel confident about the food it consumes, thanks to the presence of a federal agency. I am from Quebec and I am still a sovereigntist, but I care about public health.

Again, we do not oppose the agency, particularly since such a change was made in Quebec in 1978. I know what I am talking about because at the time I was the press secretary of Quebec's agriculture minister, Jean Garon. I can name him, since he does not sit in this House. Jean Garon set out specifically to eliminate duplication.

Before the holiday season, I rose in this House, not to lambast the government, but to express a regret that the proposed change had not yet taken place. As I said, such a cleanup was done almost 20 years ago, by merging responsibilities in the food inspection sector.

This is basically what I had to say to support the amendments proposed by the hon. member for Frontenac who, like the hon. member for Lotbinière, also a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, made an extraordinary and sustained effort. These two members often raise this issue within our caucus and with members from other parties, to make people more aware of the agriculture and agri-food sector, because it is sometimes forgotten. A large number of us live in urban centres. However, the agri-food industry is very important for all of us, since it has to do with our food, with good food and good health.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I wish you a long and healthy life.

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-60. The federal Liberal government is giving the minister the power to appoint the president, the vice-president and the 12 members of the advisory board. In addition, the president has the right to review the direction and policies of the agency.

If the minister is allowed to appoint the agency's president, its vice-president and the 12 members of its advisory board, he can also control the agency as well, by influencing its overall policies. None of this is very reassuring when it comes to the transparency of our federal government.

The Bloc Québécois's amendment quite rightly suggests leaving it up to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, a committee of this House, to appoint the 12 members of this advisory board and to see that the agency is run properly.

• (1245)

This will ensure impartiality and transparency, since this committee, like the others, is made up of members of the various parties.

In addition, our partners would be invited to recommend appointees, our partners being the provinces, or representatives from the agricultural sector, in short people for whom agriculture is paramount and who have a stake in the sector.

While we are on the topic, why do we not think the advisory board would be representative of the weight of each province? Democracy means one person, one vote. But in the Canadian confederation, one province does not necessarily mean one vote. Not all provinces carry the same weight. Since the province of Quebec represents 25 per cent of the population of Canada, ought it not to have three representatives out of the twelve on the advisory committee? It would be common sense for there to be proportionality, and therefore greater fairness. Let us not forget that Quebecers who make up this 25 per cent pay 25 per cent, or some \$30 billion, to the federal government.

For as long as we are part of Canada, I will defend the interests of my fellow citizens of Quebec. We will come here to seek what is due to us, to demand what is ours. In short, then, Quebec is fully justified in calling for three representatives on this advisory committee and in demanding to be consulted on the other appointments. In business terms, some would say Quebec is a major shareholder, with at least one-quarter of the shares.

I would like to draw your attention to another aspect of Bill C-60: allowing the minister to approve the business plan. Again, why would this not be submitted to the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food? This would lend more vitality to that committee, which plays a lead role in drawing up government policies. I say this without a great deal of enthusiasm, since we all know that what Liberals want is to pull a fast one on us. The Liberal government is in a hurry to get its bills passed, so that it can then do favours for its friends.

What we want to see, obviously, is for the positions of president and vice-president, and the others jobs in the agency, to go to those who are best suited for them. Provinces and organizations representing the interests of the farming community should submit candidates for these positions to the committee, and be consulted de facto.

Unfortunately, in this area, as with the Constitution, the approach is unilateral. That is the lesson to be drawn from this. I trust that historians, when dealing with the reign of this current Liberal government, will speak out on this.

We are fed up seeing the federal government use its constitutional prerogative, royal prerogative even, to make appointments. This is not always a good thing. One needs only to look at the unsavoury situation resulting from the appointment of Jean-Louis Roux as Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. Now we know the disastrous results of that decision, and I shall say no more on the matter. I am not using examples from the time of Sir John A. Macdonald or Sir Wilfrid Laurier, but from the current term of the Liberals. Wait and see the critical analysis of the Liberal years historians will be making a few years from now. It will be a real hoot to read them on

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screen, for nothing will be on paper any more by that time. We are entering the era of the information highway, McLuhan's global village.

Still in the same vein, the purpose of our amendments is to give more power to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. We want the committee to advise the minister on all matters relating to the mission of the Canadian food inspection agency. We also want the advisory board to respond to all questions submitted by the standing committee of this House.

• (1250)

We think it is very important that not only the minister but also the committee be able to examine the agency's action plan. If two heads are better than one, why rely on what one minister has to say? This is no reflection on the minister, and I am sure he understands that.

To achieve maximum transparency in what the agency does, it is imperative to involve the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Why is the government afraid to give this committee a say in the agency's appointments, its business plan and what it does? If we want transparency, if we want everything to be crystal clear, we must be prepared to do what is necessary to achieve this. It is all very well to preach, but we must also practice what we preach.

Consider also that putting the agency's plan before the members of this House may make the public more aware of the meaning of democracy. It is often said that people are losing interest in public affairs, and the result is a lack of involvement. Did you ever wonder why? Could it be because we fail to tell our fellow citizens what we are doing? Because we keep them out of the decision-making process? Because we want to go too fast and consulting them or delegating authority would slow down the process? Sometimes when a decision has to be made by a group, everyone in the group tends to look after his own interests.

Briefly, in addition to its insistence on transparency, the amendment we are seeking is quite straightforward and logical: the corporate business plan is to be submitted to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and not only to the minister. Second, the business plan should come before the House of Commons so that the people's elected representatives can give their final approval.

Regarding Motion No. 25, the Bloc's amendment suggests that, before submitting its plan to the minister, to the agriculture and agri-food committee and to this House, the agency should consult its partners, that is to say the farming industry, the provinces and the appropriate unions. This will give a better product, or business plan.

I do not have to remind you that, this way, we will ensure that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's corporate business plan will have a much better chance of striking a consensus. Without these consultations, the public and those who use these services are likely not to be well served.

After all, we are here to serve the public and, furthermore, the agency will reassure Quebecers and Canadians about compliance with food safety regulations and, to a point, about their health.

The Speaker: My colleagues, pursuant to the order made on Thursday, December 12, 1996, motions in Group No. 8 are deemed to have been put to the House and the recorded divisions deemed to have been requested and deferred.

[English]

The House will now proceed to debate on Group No. 9.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely right. We are now debating the motions in Group No. 9, which were proposed by the opposition and which seek, as I pointed out earlier, to improve Bill C-60, an act to establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The clerks at the table in front of you have included four motions in Group No. 9, namely motions Nos. 27, 28, 29 and 30, which impact on clauses 24, 26 and 27.

• (1255)

For the benefit of government members, I will discuss each of these motions. I will try to show their merits and also ask members opposite to support these motions which, again, seek to improve Bill C-60.

Motion No. 27 deals with clause 24, which reads as follows:

24. (1) Subject to the regulations, the Minister may fix the fees to be paid for a service or the use of a facility provided by the Agency.

The goal here is cost recovery.

In committee, government members and senior officials told us that it was not their intention to recover every penny spent on the inspection or monitoring of premises, such as a bakery, a fish processing plant or any other similar business.

No details are given in this clause, to which we in the Bloc Québécois are proposing to add, in lines 5 to 8:

24.(1) Subject to the regulations, the Minister may, on January 1, 2000, fix the fees to be paid for a service or the use of a facility provided by the Agency.

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If we are to take seriously what we were told, to the effect that they were not after cost recovery immediately, why not spell it out? Our amendment stipulates that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food may not institute new cost recovery mechanisms before the year 2000. That is what they want, but they do not want to put it in writing.

We are proposing that it be included in Bill C-60. If you are serious, if you mean what you say, do not be afraid to include it in the bill. This is what we are proposing. We will support you.

The senior officials responsible for establishing the agency told us, when they appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, that it was not their intention to collect fees before the year 2000.

I understand that, on the eve of an election, the agriculture minister would not have public servants go after individual or corporate users for every last cent of the cost of inspecting their facilities and their procedures. But after the election, given the finance minister's obsession with eliminating the deficit, this same minister who is making cuts right and left, who is sparing no one in his quest for money, will surely look for some little way to recover user fees. We are therefore asking that clause 24 state that no recovery may be attempted before January 1, 2000. This is what we were clearly told in committee.

The second motion, Motion No. 28, involves clause 26. We are proposing that, before fixing a fee under section 24 or 25, the minister consult with the advisory board.

• (1300)

As I have just said, the advisory committee is appointed by the President, and the President is appointed by the Governor in Council. So, we have the following chain reaction: a Liberal President is appointed; the Liberal President appoints a Liberal Vice-President; the President and Vice-President, both Liberals, create an advisory committee which will, I can well imagine, be composed of 12 Liberals.

Something similar has, moreover, already happened in my riding just recently, when the new returning officer was appointed, a member of the federal Liberal Party, a director of the Quebec Liberal Party, as well as a key organizer of the last Quebec referendum on the future of Quebec. Of course, he got his reward for this. He was André Pomerleau, whom I had the pleasure of meeting last week, when he recommended I start looking for enumerators, since the national enumeration ought to start in mid-April. A good Liberal, as you see.

Also appointed was the daughter of Dr. Lecours, the head of the unemployment insurance board of referees. Dr. Lecours sat for three years in the Quebec National Assembly, on Premier Bourassa's Liberal team of course.

I could list dozens and dozens of other appointments, like the one involving the former Liberal member for Lotbinière, Jean-Guy Dubois, who sat in this House from 1980 to 1984, and then Brian and his team came along in 1984, and the Liberals took a serious drubbing. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, how your majority in your riding of Kingston and the Islands melted like the snows in springtime.

After four years, Jean-Guy Dubois was dumped by the voters, but he was appointed to the Superior Court. It is also a nice reward for him. The only inconvenience, as he told reporters, is that he will have to leave Victoriaville et reside in the fine city of Longueuil. Moving to that city is what he finds the most difficult, and this is not much of a compliment for the population of Longueuil.

I now come back to Motion No. 28 amending section 26.

26.(1) Before fixing a fee under section 24 or 25, the Minister shall consult with the advisory board and may consult with any persons or organizations that the Minister considers to be interested in the matter.

This is what we propose to add to this clause.

We suggest that the president and the minister be empowered to consult with other persons before fixing the costs to be recovered from the user-payer. They should, for instance, consult with industry, fishers and farmers, but also with consumers since at the end of the user-payer chain, consumers are always the ones who have to pay the extra cent for what the federal government is getting.

This is precisely what happened when the federal government announced, in the 1996-97 budget, that it would cut the subsidy to producers of industrial milk. It was then said: "If you cut it today you will have to pay 10 cents more per pound of butter, 30 cents more per pound of cheese". It has already begun.

Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to talk about Motions No. 29 and 30, but one of my colleagues will probably do so.

• (1305)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the amendments we are suggesting in this group are along the same lines as those in the previous group.

As you may recall, the food inspection agency will replace three government services with somewhat overlapping responsibilities. There is a concern on the part of the government to clarify these roles.

However, much remains to be improved in this bill. I hope the government will listen to our suggestions on how to make this legislation the best of its kind. The purpose of the group of amendments now before the House is, first of all, to ensure these changes are not sprung without warning on the agri-food industry and thus ensure there will be no cost recovery before the year 2000, so that companies have time to adjust, to consider the

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changes that will be made and make their operating costs reflect the fees to be introduced by the food inspection agency.

I think it would be very wise on the part of the government to include such an amendment in the bill. Just look at what is happening in another sector where cost recovery has been introduced in a way I would call somewhat ruthless. I am referring to all the fees connected with navigation, especially on the St. Lawrence.

In this sector, the government decided to recover the cost of de-icing, of navigation aids, buoy maintenance, and so forth. The government proposed certain measures which were directly opposed to what the industry wanted, by obliging the industry to absorb year after year additional costs which had not been included in their planning.

In the food inspection sector, we have a wonderful opportunity to avoid this kind of mistake. Let us send a message to the agri-food industry, telling them that until the year 2000, there will be no recovery of additional costs. Tell them they will receive fair warning and there will be consultations. That is what we are proposing in the other amendments requested by the Bloc Québécois in group 9, in other words, to ensure that consultations are held on service fees and on facilities, products and the rights of the agency, so that everyone who has something to say on the subject can do so. We must not end up with absurdities like we have in the case of ice breaking fees, where the industry says it is quite prepared to pay the cost, but perhaps things ought to be cleaned up a bit first.

I think that the food inspection agency in its first year, just starting out, and having to integrate the three government authorities that existed before, would have a hard time increasing fees and asking people to pay more in its start up year, when things have to be amalgamated and operational decisions made.

As there was a certain desire to privatize food inspection, we must make sure that market rules are obeyed and that when agri-food businesses are asked to pay they receive a quality product, guaranteed at the best price, without the fee structure being used to justify an inflated cost. Once the three government authorities involved in this sector are integrated, there should necessarily be economies of scale. Otherwise, the entire bill would be a waste of time and nothing would be settled.

We must make sure that savings are made where there were three authorities in the same sector or in parallel sectors, with similar functions. Let us give the industry time to adjust. Let us send it a clear message.

Let us tell it that, as of the year 2000, significant changes will be made and that there will be consultations on the matter so that, on

both sides of the table, industry, government and consumers are clear about the standard for services in food inspection, what their cost will be and who will pay for them. Industry may have some interesting suggestions.

We might perhaps even contract out to the industry the inspection of certain products and then monitor afterwards, while, in other sectors, the monitoring should come first. There should be a daily production. It depends on the agri-food industry sectors.

I think the government would come out ahead if it set itself a period for consultation to ensure that the fee structure reflected what people want.

● (1310)

We must ensure that there is adequate consultation of another group, the provinces, because the establishment of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency does not change the fact that both the provincial and the federal levels are involved here. We have already congratulated the federal government for having said that, from now on, at least there will be only one player instead of three, but there are still a lot of areas where both levels of government will be working in very close proximity, and it would be utterly ridiculous to end up with completely different fee schedules for similar tasks. It would be illogical, for example, for a province to charge \$100 for one type of activity while the government charged \$150 or \$200 for the same type of activity; the industry would have difficulty understanding such a thing.

Moreover, consultations could lead to one of the two levels of government dropping its activities in one area; for instance, there could be only one inspector acting on behalf of both governments, and, by completing the proper forms, a firm would not have to provide information simultaneously to both governments on different forms, as is now the case for the environment. We must make every effort to avoid this type of situation. The way to do so is to hold proper consultations with provinces. Once the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is created, it will integrate the various government services in its first year of operation. It should therefore be given enough time to consult with provincial stakeholders to ensure the industry's interests are protected.

The last amendment seeks to ensure that the proposed regulations will be studied by a parliamentary committee. In the area of food inspection, it is not enough to be right and to conduct the inspections properly; the process must also appear to be fair so that the general public can have confidence in the tools they are given. For the people's representatives, that is, the members of Parliament, parliamentary committees are a very good forum for this type of consultation.

We believe that, when the government thinks about proposing regulations concerning tariffs, for example, these regulations

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should be submitted to a parliamentary committee so it can express its views as a public advocate. It would present its arguments for or against the proposed tariffs and consider the benefits of having different tariffs for different regions or different products. These are some of the issues that the people's representatives, or members of Parliament, can discuss. They can ask questions and cast a critical eye on the government's actions and on tariffs, so that consideration of the relevant views expressed will give greater legitimacy to the government policy on tariff regulations. This will prevent any subsequent criticism. It will also prevent legal battles because the fee structure will have been submitted to the public through the consultation process; therefore, when it takes effect, it will be impossible to accuse the government of having acted unilaterally.

I ask the government to look at this group of amendments from the same viewpoint as the previous one, where we said we must ensure that food safety standards are adequately covered in the agency's corporate business plan, and that proper consultations are held with regard to this corporate business plan, to ensure its credibility throughout Quebec and Canada. Moreover, in the context of that corporate business plan, the present group of amendments is more precise on the subject of fees because it deals with the issue of whether the corporate business plan will ensure that no one will pull a fast one on the processors, that people will not be surprised by a fee structure causing such cost increases that businesses could question their own future.

Let us say for example that we propose an inadequate fee structure for regional slaughterhouses which would make these businesses non competitive; will we have helped the agri-food industry with such a measure? I think not. The way to prevent such a situation is to submit the fee structure to public scrutiny.

Let us hope the government will support our amendments on this point.

• (1315)

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise for the second time to speak to Bill C-60, an act to establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. As agreed with my colleague from Frontenac, our critic in this area, I will deal with the amendments in Group No. 9.

But first I would like to extend my best wishes to my colleague from Champlain, currently hospitalized in the Hôpital régional de la Mauricie, who is quite concerned by this kind of issues dealing with agriculture. Farming is the mainstay of a good part of his riding, especially the whole area north of Cap-de-la-Madeleine, and I know that he too would have liked to speak to the bill again today.

I particularly want to send him my greetings as he is to undergo, maybe today, a major operation for which he is well prepared. He is very confident and we are looking forward to welcoming him back here.

I also want to mention my colleague from Frontenac, the Bloc's agriculture critic, who has done a tremendous job on this issue, working long hours and making numerous amendments to try to improve this bill we do not support.

We disagree on a fundamental point, namely the food inspection issue, and I would like to digress a moment to show how important this issue is, even though it is not a spectacular one. It concerns the health and safety of every Canadian, every Quebecer, on a daily basis.

When we talk about food, we are talking about everybody's daily life. We should probably pay more attention to this bill than we have so far, because it will have an impact on all of us in our everyday life. This is a public health issue. When we are talking about food, we are talking about public health and the ability to achieve one's full potential. Unfortunately, right now, a food inspection agency is still the privilege of so-called developed countries.

That is why any change we make should be made after thoughtful consideration, because they will reflect on our so-called developed society. We must remember that three persons out of four in the world, perhaps even four out of five, do not have well-paid public servants to inspect or otherwise monitor what they eat everyday. It is hard enough for them to get any kind of food, even something not subject to the controls provided for in this bill.

Yet, we still disagree with this bill, because we consider that it is not the business of the federal government. According to the Canadian Constitution, this area comes under provincial jurisdiction, especially in Quebec, where food inspection was reorganized in 1978, in much the same way as proposed in this bill.

Indeed, when we talk about this food inspection agency, we are talking about a merger of services which already exist within the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. They will now come under a single agency and be the responsibility of a single minister and department, namely Agriculture and Agri-Food.

• (1320)

I remind you that this has already been done in Quebec: there was a consolidation so that there would be no duplication, to prevent a restaurant from having, within two or three days or during the same week, one, two or three inspectors come in, disrupt things and invade the place by demanding, with all the paperwork and energy this implies, that such and such document be filled out, always for the sake of the public interest. Except that, while the

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restaurant owner or other manager is doing this, he is not doing something else, and this may jeopardize service.

This is a jurisdiction that already belongs to the provinces, and which Quebec, in particular, has assumed very well, and we cannot see why the Government of Canada would get involved, when the public interest is already well protected by the Constitution.

It is all the more annoying to see how the minister is going about managing this agency. Like the Liberals and their proverbial solidarity—we know how the Liberals can help each other in all the provinces of Canada—the bill provides that the president, the vice-president and all the members of the advisory board working within the agency will be appointed by the minister, without any mention of an adequate representation for Quebec, that is, 25 per cent of the membership—and this could have been written into the bill—or the representation of some groups, such as the UPA, that are greatly involved in agriculture or food on a day-to-day basis.

The minister has taken upon himself to make discretionary appointments, using criteria that may be his own. We know how the Liberals think, how their feelings are deep when they want. The Liberals have credentials in that respect; just think of the outdated mechanism by which returning officers are appointed in Canada. These days, and you know it as well as we do, the basic requirement is past or present membership in the Liberal Party of Canada or service as association president or vice-president, and we will not name names.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Is that still going on?

Mr. Rocheleau: Yes, it is. You know that this kind of criterion no longer exists in Quebec. Competitions are held and there are several selection stages; as a result, out of x number of candidates, one is selected on the basis of the applicable criteria and this is as neutral a process as can be, while in Canada, the selection method used is a toss between antiquated and imperialistic. To know that the Liberal Party is present in every backroom of the Canadian government is to understand why, today still, positions as influential in our democratic system as that of returning officer are being filled by individuals whose main qualification is the fact that they belong or used to belong to the Liberal Party of Canada.

This in itself is reason enough to voice any concern we may have about the establishment of an agency with an advisory committee whose president and vice-president are appointed directly by the minister.

It is also baffling to realize that the entity created by merging these three departments responsible for food inspection will operate on a \$300 million budget, according to our information. This represents a \$44 million reduction, probably to please the Minister of Finance, whose objectives you know as well as I do.

So we end up with \$44 million less and 600 fewer inspectors who used to work in the fisheries, agriculture and health departments. If I remember correctly, there used to be 3,400 inspectors, 600 of whom will be eliminated. How can we be expected not to worry about the quality and quantity of services that will be offered in the public interest, in an area essential to the very functioning of any society, especially against our claims of being a civilized and developed society, when faced with cuts of 600 jobs and \$44 million, affecting, as I said earlier, all Canadians and Quebecers in their daily lives?

I hope this kind of comment will be heard so that the public interest can take precedence over any other interest in this matter.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the comments of the last speaker that he shares the same concerns as our ministry, the safe food supply for Canadians. There is no question that issue will never be compromised by this government or any other group of people who represent people in this country. I would certainly say that we have shown a record in the past and we continue to show a record that the safety of Canadians is number one.

However, only in government would someone suggest that the people responsible for a whole operation, the people responsible for the operation of government, are not the people who should be setting fees, looking at the costs and looking at the expenses. But that they would take the setting of fees, they would take the operations and push them off to somebody else on a side group. I find that suggestion quite disconcerting.

There is no question that the minister must retain the responsibility of setting fees to any operations in government, not just this agency, but all other operations of government because circumstances change, times change and with those changes there need to be adjustments. Who better than one who consults with industry, the provincial parliaments across this country, with every part of the country to make certain they are up to date with all actions? Who better than the minister to set the fees and set a proper structure in place?

I certainly question the thought raised here that the minister should give up the whole operation of setting fees and making sure that our operations are efficient. At the same time I must point out very clearly that there were concerns raised about how quickly fees would be changed and therefore the minister made a very clear commitment that once the agency is up in operation, in order to study and analyze what is happening, internally with our fee structure, the kinds of consultations that are required, he would not

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alter or change those fees until the year 2000, which is a pretty strong commitment by the minister.

The minister therefore has said once we have the agency up and operating we will look very carefully at how the system operates and we will take a long time to consult with people, making certain that the abuse of industry, other governments in the provinces and others who are affected across this country, namely the consumers, all have their voices heard and brought forward to the ministry.

It is consistent with our policies in health, in industry and in heritage. We have similar processes in place. As a result, the processes that we are talking about here are consistent with the other government agencies and therefore I believe it makes our whole operation in government much easier to understand.

The amendment to the bill suggests consultation is an important part of fee structuring. It suggests in that change that every group affected be consulted before any changes occur. Imagine the legal ramification if someone comes forward and says "I am a consumer and I was not consulted, therefore any change to that fee structure is illegitimate". It certainly does not make sense to say that every person who possibly could have a concern must be consulted.

At the same time, consultation is extremely important and we have various vehicles by which we do that consultation on a daily, monthly, weekly basis all weeks of the year.

• (1330)

There is no question we try to make certain the industry is kept aware by newsletters we send out, by professional publications and by gazetting information. We make certain we have face to face meetings with the people who are affected. Certainly if we make changes within any industry, we have consultations with them. We take their concerns into account. We definitely make certain that the consumer organizations are involved in these processes. There is no question the government takes very elaborate steps to make sure the consultation process is always ongoing and that the concerns of industry, governments and consumers are always filled.

I must say that this consultation has proven to be very good for the government. As I stated before, with this legislation coming forward we know we have all provincial governments onside, we have the industry itself onside. We have allowed it to come and consult. We also had open hearings at the House of Commons agriculture committee in which all kinds of concerns came forward. The government acted upon those concerns and tried to make certain that those concerns raised were dealt with properly in this legislation.

There is no question we look at this in a very serious way. We want to make certain that everyone in this country who is affected is treated properly with open information and that we act upon their

concerns. There is no question the minister places a priority in making certain that the health of this industry is maintained. Through his consultations he takes into account their concerns and acts upon them in a very quick and important way.

When we deal with issues that affect public safety though, we must make certain that all cautions are there to make certain we still maintain as a world reputation food safety and we make certain that the supply of food is there. From our track record over the years, we have and are looked upon as the best food production country in the world. That is why we can ship products anywhere in the world. Certainly they are well respected and well received everywhere they go. There has never been a question nor will there be a question because we put a top priority on inspection and safety.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to listen to the comments of the parliamentary secretary on how this government is so accountable to the people it serves.

We are talking here about the right to be consulted when the government wants to increase fees regarding the agency that is being set up. The parliamentary secretary went on at great length about how everybody cannot be consulted. I read the motion and it did not say he had to consult with everybody but only with the advisory board and he may consult with other interested parties. That gives a great deal of latitude which the parliamentary secretary just rejected out of hand by saying why should he bother.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): They only consult with the Liberal membership.

Mr. Williams: That is right. I was interested in one of the quotes he made. Let me quote the parliamentary secretary who was talking about the consumers who would say: "I am a consumer and I was not consulted on this issue". That was the rationale he gave for not allowing this motion. He would be required to consult with everybody. He said that rather than being required to consult with everybody, why not consult with nobody? He said that if people thought they had not been consulted as consumers, they would be outraged, and rightly so.

Let us replace the word consumer with the word taxpayer. Taxpayers are not being consulted by this government and they are outraged. During the last election they were told that the GST would be axed, scrapped and abolished and they now find that this harmonized HST is being imposed upon them. The taxpayers were not consulted by this government. Their opinions were absolutely ignored. They were trashed.

The government said: "Your opinion does not count. We decided that you did not understand what axe, scrap and abolish meant. Therefore you are going to have an HST or a BST rather than a GST. This still means you are going to pay 7 per cent plus

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provincial tax, plus more tax through harmonization". The taxpayers were not consulted.

• (1335)

Now the parliamentary secretary says: "I do not want to consult the consumers who are going to be affected by this organization because they may have an opinion that is different than the government's. That is why I do not want to listen to them. That is why I do not want to hear from them". Do we call that being accountable? Do we call that integrity in government? Do we call that being responsible to the taxpayers? I do not think so.

That is why this type of arrogance demonstrated by the government in Bill C-60 has got to stop. That is why ramming other legislation through this House by using time allocation has got to stop. That is why this government has got to start listening to the people who say: "What about me? What about me and my family? Do I not deserve to be heard?" They deserve to be heard. They deserve to be heard every time this government introduces legislation or makes a major initiative.

When the parliamentary secretary says: "I am not that excited or interested in talking to the consumers. I do not need to consult them", the arrogance contained in that type of statement speaks volumes. That is why I hope this government will listen to the objections being raised on this side of the House so it can realize that there are valid and necessary changes to this piece of legislation.

The situation is that as soon as a bill is introduced in this House, the government whip says: "What is on the table is what you vote for. We are not interested in hearing what goes on in this House. We are not interested in hearing what MPs on the other side of the House bring back from their constituents who say there are some valid and responsible changes that can be made to this legislation".

These are the types of things this House is supposed to debate. We find that this process is a sham in that the bill as tabled is the bill as proclaimed because this government will not tolerate a contrary opinion expressed in this House even though that contrary opinion is a valid opinion that has come from the people on the streets, the taxpayers of this country who are being squeezed to death every day, more and more to pay for this type of legislation that we know is smoke and mirrors. It is not designed to improve efficiency. It is not designed to downsize government. It is not designed to ensure that service is improved. It is just the idea that the government can say it is doing something when in reality when we look behind the scenes it is doing nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, December 12, 1996, all questions on the motions in Group No. 9 are deemed to have been put and the recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred.

The House will now proceed with the debate on Group No. 10. In accordance with the motion adopted as aforesaid on December 12, 1996, all the questions are deemed to have been moved, seconded and put to the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are now debating motions in Group No. 10, which seek to improve Bill C-60.

I see that members opposite are smiling, but they should listen instead, they should read our motions and take a close look at them, because these motions are aimed at ensuring the well-being of consumers, who are the ones at the end of the food chain. Consumers are the ones who are paying and who will continue to foot the bill.

The clerks at the table in front of you have included three motions in Group No. 10, namely Motions Nos. 31, 32 and 33. In the nine minutes that I have left, I will try, for the benefit of all elected members of this Parliament, to explain each of these motions originating from the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois.

• (1340)

We seek to amend clause 31 by replacing line 29 on page 9. The minister may remit all or part of any fee fixed under section 24 or 25 or under any act that the agency enforces or administers by virtue of subsection 11(1), and the interest on it.

Incidentally, we would also like to see in this clause a provision requiring the president of the food inspection agency to submit a report to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, within a period of one year. I can hear government members sitting on the committee say: "He is raising this issue once again". I am raising this issue once again because, among the elected members of this Parliament, those who sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food are the ones who have the best knowledge of this issue, given that most of them used to farm in just about every sector and region in the country. Some used to grow grain, others were in the poultry or the beef industry, while others still, such as the very knowledgeable member for Malpeque, were active in the dairy industry.

Given its membership, our committee has the required expertise, knowledge and know-how. This is why we would like to see Bill C-60 state clearly that the president must submit his annual report after 12 months at the latest, because under Bill C-60 as written, the he could wait 4 or 5 years before doing so. No precise date or year is given. We pointed this shortcoming out to the senior officials

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who appeared before the standing committee, but no deadline was deemed necessary. Adding one would definitely improve the bill.

• (1345)

We move on to Motion No. 32, which reads as follows:

That Bill C-60, in Clause 32, be amended by replacing lines 40 to 42 on page 9 with the following:

“(c) provide a report to the President, the Minister and such committee of the House of Commons as is designated or established to consider agricultural matters on the audit, opinion and assessment.”

Thus, it is clearly mentioned to whom the president must submit his annual report.

Motion No. 33 also refers to clause 32. We are proposing to improve subsection 32(1) as follows:

“32.1 Before providing the report under paragraph 32(c), the Auditor General of Canada shall consult (a) any person from the agriculture, fisheries, food processing, food distribution and public health sectors whom the Minister considers appropriate to consult; and

This is not clear in the bill, as it says: “any government of a province that has advised the Auditor General of Canada, in writing, of its wish to be consulted”.

Bill C-60 is a major bill, and it will have a decisive impact on all Canadian consumers. The purpose of our amendments seek to set deadlines for submitting the documents outlining the agency's management and administration. It must be remembered that, knowing the finance minister, he will require the agency to recover its operating costs. You can see where this all leads: what might cost 1 cent to begin with will end up costing 10 cents, and the consumers will have to pay.

I see here some of my colleagues who seem to be smiling when they hear me say that there will be an increase of 10 cents a pound. I am well aware that, for some of us, the weekly food basket does not make a big dent in the family budget, but for most of our fellow citizens, putting food on the table eats up a very large portion of the weekly pay cheque of one or both bread winners.

These amendments also seek to revitalize the role of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food by giving it priority with regard to assessment and consideration of the agency's accounting documents, and most of all the role of the auditor general.

Therefore, we want to require the auditor general to consult the groups directly involved with the agency in order to ensure that senior management or the agriculture minister are not trying to hide disturbing facts.

You will find me tiresome about this, I know, but I must insist. I come back to the make-up of the Food Inspection Agency.

The president will be a Liberal; the vice-president, another Liberal; on the advisory board, the 12 members will be Liberals and, moreover, hiring rules are being suspended for two years. So you can imagine who will fill the management positions. In the ten provinces and the two territories, the management positions will be filled—and I see you do not seem to be surprised by this statement—by more Liberals.

• (1350)

I would remind the House that, last week, three judges were appointed to the Quebec Superior Court. One of them comes from the beautiful area of Victoriaville, in the wonderful riding of Lotbinière. I see that my hon. colleague from Lotbinière is smiling; he will be losing one of his constituents, with little regret if any. The appointee made some commendable efforts during the last referendum, but met with little success, since he was well known to the voters. Jean-Guy Dubois is being raised to the bench in recognition of his long-standing service.

I know full well, Mr. Speaker, that being on the bench is not one of your wishes, but I think you would make a good judge with that smile of yours; and you have the right political stripes.

Finally, I want to say that one can never be too careful when putting forward amendments, since patronage could become rampant within the agency, which would not, of course, be in the best interests of the consumers of Canada.

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on this first day back from the Christmas break to the very important issue of food inspection, specifically Bill C-60 and the amendments that are before the House.

We are debating group No. 10 which is comprised of motions Nos. 31, 32 and 33. I have heard it said that no issue is more important for the government and the Canadian Parliament to deal with than the issue of food and food inspection. Along with such things as the air we breathe, the water we drink and shelter in our harsh northern climate, food is one of the staples which maintains life. It is an important subject.

I would like to say at the outset that the Reform Party, in dealing with these three motions, supports motion No. 31. It would add more accountability. As everyone knows, Reform Party members in the 35th Parliament have stressed accountability of government in its operations on an ongoing basis. Therefore, anything that

S. O. 31

could be written into the legislation that would bring about a greater degree of accountability is certainly supported by members on this side of the House.

During an intervention on this bill by one of my colleague's some government members from the far end of the House, from the so-called rump section of Parliament, said: "What about us? Do not forget about us down at this end". He was referring to the fact that the government consistently does not listen to people on this side of the House. I would add that those in the rump section are not listened to as well. They are possibly even more annoyed than we are. It shows us the value of being a Liberal backbencher, especially those who are sitting in the rump section of the 35th Parliament. They are never listened to. It must be incredibly frustrating.

We support the intent of motion No. 32 as well. However, we oppose motion No. 33. We are not opposed to the intent of the motion, however, it deals specifically with outlining how the auditor general should do his job. We feel that should be left to the auditor general. We have supported everything which that office has done in the past and we will continue to support the involvement of the auditor general in all aspects of holding governments accountable. We support the intent of the motion, however, we feel that motion No. 33 goes a bit far in instructing the auditor general in the way he should do his job. We think he is doing a terrific job already and does not need that type of interference or direction.

Reform members oppose the bill. The intent is quite admirable. The government wishes to consolidate and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of federal inspection services related to food, animal and plant health, and to increase the collaboration with provincial governments in this area. It is certainly an admirable goal. It is one which all Canadians would support. However, we do not see the details of that in the bill.

My concern is that, once again, the government, as it has time after time in the past, is passing umbrella type legislation and will bring in the details and the regulations later. We are supposed to take the government at its word and trust that it will accomplish those stated objectives and goals. We have very deep and grave concerns about that because all too often in the past that has not happened. The government has a grandiose plan of how it is going to accomplish certain things. It brings in umbrella legislation, passes it, and then we are stuck with regulations that do not work, which are simply shuffled through by order in council. That is why we are in opposition to the bill.

• (1355)

No provision for a detailed breakdown of the cost savings has been provided by the government. We do not see how a decision can be made about such an all-encompassing bill without that type of detail being brought forward.

We heard statements by the parliamentary secretary earlier when he was speaking about group 9 amendments that the government will make a commitment to take a long time—he emphasized the word long—to consult with all the stakeholders and that the bill is consistent with Liberal policies. I suggest that is because the policy of the government is the status quo. It is taking a long time to bring in legislation which Canadians have been demanding and insisting upon. That is certainly a concern.

While the government seems to move at a snail's pace in some areas, in others when it finally makes a decision it shuts down debate, as was indicated by my colleague earlier. It brings in time allocation or closure and shuts down the democratic process in this place once it decides the direction it wants to go.

Since this is our first opportunity to speak since returning to this place after the Christmas break, it is very interesting that the minister for defence invoked closure on the Somali inquiry. He shut down any further debate.

I made a comment in a newspaper column which I write back in my riding of Prince George—Peace River that I think the hon. minister confused the operations in the House of Commons with the operations outside of the House of Commons. The government has become accustomed to bringing in time allocation and shutting down debate in this place. Now it wants to elevate that one step further and do it across the country. I find that despicable and I believe most Canadians are concerned about that type of operation.

As I have said on this group of amendments, we support the first two amendments and oppose the third. That is the official position of the Reform Party.

The Speaker: Since it is just about two o'clock we will proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

THE LATE FATHER GUY PINARD

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Laval West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my condolences to the family of Father Guy Pinard, who was tragically killed Saturday while celebrating mass in his parish of Kampanga, in Rwanda.

This news has caused great sadness in the whole country and particularly in Quebec where Father Pinard was well known. We have lost a man of exceptional courage and dedication.

His assassination is even more tragic considering that it happened in the country to which Father Pinard had dedicated a big part of his life. He was so attached to that country and to its people

that he had gone back there last year in spite of dangers he was fully aware of.

• (1400)

We deplore this barbaric act which has aroused indignation everywhere. The people of Rwanda, who knew how good a man Father Pinard was, share our feelings.

I ask everybody to pay tribute to this missionary, for whom a commemorative service will be held next Wednesday at the White Fathers' chapel, in Montreal.

* * *

THE LATE FATHER GUY PINARD

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to express our profound sadness on learning of the assassination yesterday morning in Rwanda of Father Guy Pinard, a Quebec missionary from Trois-Rivières, who had worked in that country for 37 years. Father Pinard was parish priest in Kampanga parish.

He was the third Quebecer belonging to a religious order to be killed in Rwanda. Father Claude Simard was killed because he apparently knew too much about the 1994 genocide, and Brother François Cardinal was killed in 1992 after speaking out publicly against the diversion of Canadian aid to benefit the Rwandan government.

This tragic event is a reminder to us of the devotion and, in particular, the courage of all those working abroad to help the poorest inhabitants of this planet.

In my own name, and on behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I would like to express our sincerest condolences to Father Pinard's next of kin.

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[English]

PROGRAM FOR OLDER WORKER ADJUSTMENT

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, POWA, the program for older worker adjustment, provides monthly financial support for older workers unable to find work a year after a major permanent layoff.

The mine in Port Hardy, B.C. closed in 1995. Seventy older workers in good faith and after years of hard work and faced with no job prospects in the North Island immediately made application for program assistance. They qualified as a group.

In October 1996 it was announced that federal support would end for any new applicant. However, now it is unclear that the funding commitment to approved applicants from 1995 and early 1996 is in play.

I want to put the government and the Minister of Human Resources Development on notice that retroactive cancellation of financial support is unacceptable. These older miners qualify for

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and have a longstanding expectation to receive the benefits of the program. If the government offers a program it must fund it.

* * *

FREE TRADE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Brian Mulroney negotiated the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement he said "don't worry, Canadian culture is exempt from free trade". When the Liberal government signed on to NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, it said "don't worry, Canadian culture is exempt from free trade".

The World Trade Organization has ruled that culture is not exempt from free trade, a conclusion not surprising to anyone who ever honestly analysed these agreements and the agenda they serve. But the Minister for International Trade, about this stunning defeat of decades of effective public policy, gives the usual Liberal answer: don't worry.

This defeatist answer has led to much speculation about who is in charge of Canadian cultural policy, Canadians or American business interests. But when we look at the surrender on trade policy, at the decimation of the CBC, at the sale of the RCMP's image to Disney and the appearance of Disneyland on Canadian postage stamps, it is clear why we have such a Mickey Mouse cultural policy: Mickey Mouse is actually in charge.

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York-Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to salute over 2,000 athletes from over 80 countries who are taking part in the sixth Special Olympics World Winter Games.

The World Winter Games is the largest multi-sport event that will be held this year and Toronto and Collingwood have the honour of hosting the athletes and the games. These games are about the triumph of the human spirit. Everyone who competes in these games is a winner because winning is not just about medals, breaking records or beating your opponent. In these games winning is about having the chance to compete, feeling the joy of the sport and overcoming challenges.

To the athletes, their coaches, their families and all the volunteers I extend my best wishes for a fun and memorable six days of friendly competition.

* * *

SAUGEEN RIVER

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 10 the Saugeen River flooded, affecting the people of Durham, Ontario in my riding of Bruce—Grey. Thankfully no injuries have been reported but over 200 people from some 100 residences had to be displaced during the worst of the flooding.

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There are still 12 people who cannot return to their homes and 10 seniors who have had to vacate their seniors' housing complex.

Despite the adversity, the people of Durham showed great courage during that flood. I want to pay special tribute to the volunteers and the relief workers who offered the victims both the good work of their hands and the comfort of their spirits. Durham Mayor Kris Kennedy is also to be commended for taking swift and decisive action to protect public safety. I also want to thank the soldiers from the Militia Training and Support Centre at Meaford for their work and assistance.

This tradition of neighbour helping neighbour is not new in my riding; in Bruce-Grey lending a hand in times of difficulty is the rule and not the exception.

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UNICEF/KAWANIS

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the honour to attend a very special meeting featuring Roger Moore, otherwise known as 007, James Bond. Roger Moore is honorary chairman of the UNICEF/Kawanis campaign to combat health problems caused by a lack of iodine in one's diet.

Iodine deficiency is for the most part a problem in developing countries. It is the source of cretinism, which impairs physical development, and can lead to serious mental disabilities. Approximately 655 million people suffer from goitre and 43 million have preventable brain damage from an iodine deficient diet.

● (1405)

Roger Moore praised Canada for the humanitarian work this country has demonstrated to date. Since 1991 CIDA has contributed \$28 million in order combat iodine deficiency disorders, making this country one of the largest international donors for this very important cause.

But governments cannot do it alone. That is why we all wish UNICEF/Kiwanis much success on meeting its objective of eliminating IDD by the year 2000.

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[Translation]

THE LATE ANDRÉ CARON

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Jonquière, André Caron, is with us no more. On January 10, after a hard fought battle with cancer, he found peace. We will remember this unassuming man for his courage, of course, but also for his profound sense of justice and respect for others. We will remember him for the outstanding

rigour and professionalism with which he handled the various dossiers assigned him.

Always ready to be of service, always there when required, he enriched our socio-political thinking through his particularly perceptive reading of the Quebec people.

A man of principle and determination, he spared no time or effort in serving his fellow Quebecers.

Today, the Bloc Québécois caucus pays a final tribute to André Caron: "André, you were a great Quebecer and we thank you. Your example and your memory will guide us on the road to our own country".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Dear colleague, other members will speak in tribute at the end of question period.

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[English]

DOUBLE VISION

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you have had the chance yet to read a very interesting new book called *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*. I wish there were time to read the whole book into the record, but I will give an example from page 133 which tells the story of the department negotiations with the finance minister leading up to the budget of 1994.

More than once when officials reminded the minister of promises in the red book he yelled: "Don't tell me what's in the red book. I wrote the goddamn thing and I know that it's a lot of crap. Don't be a slave to it".

Well, this book certainly blows the whistle on the government—

The Speaker: My colleague, I would remind you that we cannot say with someone else's words what we cannot say here in the House ourselves. I would judge that with those words you are coming pretty close. I will ask you to sanitize whatever is in that book if you are going to finish.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the book certainly blows the whistle on this government and in case you missed the title, it is *Double Vision*.

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BREAST CANCER

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, older Canadian women are encouraged by their doctors to get a mammogram every second year because mammography screening is the best technique we have for the early detection of breast cancer.

Good mammography requires high quality mammographic x-ray equipment, highly trained technicians and qualified radiologists to read the results.

In Canada there is a voluntary accreditation program available to those responsible for mammography units, but after five years of the voluntary program's existence only 37 per cent of these units have passed the standards.

This is not good enough. We need national standards for quality assurance in mammography. Canadian women need to know that the mammography unit they visit is accredited or certified and meets the highest possible quality assurance standards. Canadian women deserve nothing less.

* * *

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the community action program for children, CAPC, is a Health Canada program which provides funds to community organizations that deliver direct services to those families that need it most.

In my riding, Maggie's Place is a family support centre that promotes positive parenting and offers programs in budgeting, nutrition, self-esteem for parents and social development for children. These services are essential to the mental and physical well-being of many families in Cumberland—Colchester.

• (1410)

The CAPC program has been effective and efficient in delivering services to low income families and poor children across Canada. It is imperative that we as a government make a renewed funding commitment to this program which is helping thousands of deserving Canadians in the fight against child poverty.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February has been designated Black History Month. All over the country, people will be honouring the contribution of people of African origin to the development of Canada.

This month we honour the accomplishments of many African Canadians so that young Canadians realize the role that these figures play in shaping equality and in the multicultural nature of this country.

I want to pay special tribute to someone who passed away about two weeks ago, Lloyd Perry. He was a community worker, the Official Guardian of Ontario, someone who belonged to such organizations as the War Amps, who received several awards and several honours as a black Canadian who made several contributions.

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At this time, this House should be well aware of the contributions of people like Lloyd Perry and others who have given so much to this country.

* * *

HAGOOD HARDY

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were saddened on New Year's Day to learn that music legend Hagood Hardy had died after a courageous battle with cancer at the age of 59.

Canada has indeed lost not only one of our greatest talents but a respected national ambassador. With his music and passionate love for Canada, Hagood proudly and elegantly represented our country to the world.

Over the years, Hagood won the hearts of many not only with his talent but with his grace and humanity. He was a gentleman in the true sense of the word. His contributions to Canadian music earned him three Juno awards.

In 1992 Hagood was awarded the Order of Canada for both his music and for his endless charitable work. Several days before his death, Hagood displayed his uncommon grace when he treated radio listeners in Toronto to a final live performance of his signature song "The Homecoming".

Despite obvious pain, he insisted on playing, demonstrating the kindness, courage and love of music that led to his national and international acclaim.

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[*Translation*]

1997 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all this week, the Special Olympics for athletes with mental disabilities are being held in the Toronto area.

This year's Winter Games bring together more than 2,000 athletes from 73 countries in five disciplines: downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, ringette, figure skating, and speed skating. From the first Special Olympics, held in Chicago in 1968, our athletes have always brought honour to us.

I send a particular greeting to the only member of the Quebec delegation, Josée Bournival of Saint-Étienne-des-Grès in Mauricie. I encourage everyone in Canada to follow the progress of our athletes in Toronto.

We wish the best of luck to each and every one of these athletes. They certainly deserve our full admiration and encouragement for their participation in these special Games.

Oral Questions

[English]

THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to the attention of the House the greatest failing of the government.

When the Prime Minister came to power in 1993, he promised Canadians accountability, integrity and responsibility. Since then, the government has broken its GST promise, mocked the unemployed, botched the Airbus investigation, gagged the Somalia inquiry and stonewalled the tainted blood investigation.

If Canadians, through their House of Commons, are to hold this government accountable for such abuses, they need the tools to do the job. These tools include free votes in this Chamber, unfettered committees, citizens' initiatives, referenda and the power to recall elected officials.

This is the way to fix the system to restore accountability, integrity and trust to our parliamentary institutions.

* * *

[Translation]

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF QUEBEC

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, Lise Thibault was sworn in as the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec.

Mrs. Thibault is a great Canadian, and a great Quebecker. Her unswerving devotion to her fellow citizens has made her a lady whom everyone respects.

● (1415)

I am sure that all of the members of this House join with us in sending our most sincere congratulations to the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, along with our best wishes as she assumes these new duties.

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TEAM CANADA

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to draw your attention to the outstanding performance of the latest Team Canada mission. This two-week visit to three Asian countries made it possible for the Canadian delegation, led by our Prime Minister, to conclude nearly 180 different agreements worth more than \$2.13 billion.

This fourth mission by Team Canada included, in addition to the Prime Minister and nine provincial premiers, more than 400 business people, education professionals, municipal authorities and young entrepreneurs.

Team Canada missions are a very effective way to help develop new markets for Canadian companies, in addition to stimulating job creation at home in Canada.

Once again, our congratulations to the Prime Minister of Canada and his provincial counterparts on their excellent co-operation on this latest mission.

[English]

The Speaker: Colleagues, welcome back to the House of Commons.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see you and my colleagues once again. I am happy to see the government members too, because we have a lot of questions for them.

This government's behaviour has been odd for the past three years. The matter of contaminated blood is one example. The Prime Minister says he wants the entire situation brought to light, but he refuses to initiate the process giving Mr. Justice Krever access to the documents that would allow him to get to the truth. In the matter of the GST, despite what the Prime Minister's cronies say about not keeping the promise, the Prime Minister keeps saying he has met his commitments. In the matter of Somalia, the Prime Minister, on the one hand, agrees to get at the truth and, on the other, denies the Somalia inquiry the time accorded it.

Mr. Discepola: Do not forget that this is question period.

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): They are nervous.

Mr. Gauthier: They are already nervous. The session is not over, I guarantee.

My question is this: By cutting off testimony in the Somalia inquiry on March 31 and by denying Mr. Justice Létourneau the time he must have to complete his inquiry, is the Prime Minister not telling the army its days in the hot water it got itself into are almost over and telling the rest of Canada, Canadians, that they will never get to the bottom of the Somalia affair?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are very happy to return to the House. We adore question period. I am particularly sorry to be losing the member for Roberval as my opposite. That is very distressing. I will let him ask questions until he has a replacement.

I think the Minister of National Defence has clearly explained why he did not consider it appropriate to give the commission any more time so that what must be done at national defence may be done as soon as possible.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister need not delight in the fact that he will be losing me as his opposite. I will counsel my successor well on how to get him to put his foot in it regularly.

More seriously, we have learned that senior officers of Canada's military—and this is very serious—blackmailed the former minister of defence, who was in the race to become Prime Minister at the time.

• (1420)

It is extremely serious when members of the command staff can put pressure of all sorts on the minister of defence in order to cover up certain information they do not want make public.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that, in the light of the seriousness of the events that have occurred in the relationship between the army and the minister of defence and the army and the government, his government is making a terrible mistake in cutting off the testimony that may be heard before the Somalia inquiry as of March 31, which is approaching very quickly?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, and as the hon. member knows very well, we have never commented on whom should called by the Somalia commission. We have never commented on the testimony given before this commission.

The commission's mandate was extended to the end of June, which means it will have worked for over two years. If, for its own reasons, the commission wants to hear testimony reflecting the concerns of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it may do so.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how does the government reconcile the statements of the Prime Minister that they absolutely want light to be shed on the Somalia affair, and the statements by the minister of defence, who said on his appointment that everyone could be heard—he was full of good intentions—with the attitude of the government today, where it is limiting the time available to the commission, despite the opinion of Mr. Justice Létourneau?

Essentially, how can they reconcile their words of a few months ago with their hurry today to put the lid on the pot as quickly as possible?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly what counts for the government is getting on with things rather than spending years studying a situation that occurred in 1992-93.

A historical document can have a certain value at a given point. For us, and for most Canadians I think, it is time to act. We have to take steps to try to avoid repetitions in the future.

We could have waited. A number of people think it might have been interesting for the government to leave the thing under cover until the end of the year, or some time next year or even two or three years from now. What counts for us is to make sure that the Canadian forces, which receive a lot of support from the public, may continue to do the fine work its members have been doing for 100 years and are still doing around the world.

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, observers are unanimous in saying that, since the government decided to impose a deadline on the Somalia commission of inquiry, witnesses from the armed forces seem much more at ease before the commission, knowing that, come March 31, everything will be over, and that they only have to hang on until then. Yet, we now know that the military blackmailed the former defence minister. And now, the Prime Minister is gagging the inquiry.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, by refusing to give the commission enough time to shed light on this scandal, he is condoning the actions of senior army officers regarding this whole issue, including the blackmail to which the former defence minister was subjected?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that people involved in this issue have an opportunity to express their point of view.

As I said earlier, it is absolutely not our intention to suggest to the commission that it should call one witness instead of another.

However, it seems rather farfetched to refer, as the hon. member did, to someone who not only was the Minister of National Defence but who went on to become the Prime Minister of Canada. It does not help much to suggest that people of that stature can easily be gagged or forced into situations they do not accept.

• (1425)

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Létourneau commission was set up, we had questions to ask and the new defence minister told us: "We want to find out exactly what happened in Somalia. The commission's mandate is very clear: it must look into every aspect".

My question is for the Prime Minister of Canada. If the Prime Minister wants to show in a concrete manner that he does not condone what occurred, will he agree today to extend the commission's mandate, as asked by Mr. Justice Létourneau, and as needed

Oral Questions

by the commission to shed light on what happened before, during and after the events in Somalia?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to our friends opposite who sometimes tell us, quite correctly, that a lot of money was spent on commissions. I will not name them all, but we sometimes hear opposition members tell us that the government has spent enormous amounts of money on such commissions.

But the hon. member must realize that the government has already granted three extensions to the Somalia commission. When the commission was first set up, its deadline was the end of December 1995.

Perhaps the hon. member is more interested in a historical document that could be produced in two or three years. As for us, we felt it was very important to take action and to start implementing policies and procedures that, hopefully, will prevent a repeat of such things in the future.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when this Prime Minister came to power in 1993 he promised he would establish a higher standard than the Mulroney administration with respect to accountability, integrity and responsibility.

Since that time he has broken the GST promise, denied that he broke it, has botched the Airbus investigation, has gagged the Somalia inquiry and has stonewalled the tainted blood inquiry on which human lives depend. The trust of the Canadian people in their government has been abused in each of these instances.

Given this record of abuse, why should Canadians trust either him or his government any longer?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last three years and three months this government has offered the Canadian people a good government, a competent government and in all circumstances we have done our best.

That is why while I was travelling with the premiers in the Pacific and later on in France, people were asking me how we managed to turn things around in Canada in a way that all these countries envy Canada today.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, good government includes keeping your word.

The Prime Minister promised to scrap the GST, then he denied making that promise. He promised Canadians jobs, jobs, jobs and

there are 1.5 million unemployed. He promised the Somalia inquiry would be allowed to get to the truth. He stood in this House and said that was the case and yet last month the government decided to shut it down. The litany of broken promises, denial of responsibility and abuse of trust goes on and on.

How can Canadians believe what the Prime Minister says in the future when they cannot believe what he has said in the past?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most of the matters to which the hon. member referred, for example the inquiry, we gave some very good answers. You may not be satisfied but the people of Canada believe that the time has come on the Somalia inquiry for the Minister of National Defence to restore the confidence in the armed forces and to make sure that they can do their job properly. That is exactly what the Minister of National Defence is doing at this time.

• (1430)

The hon. member can talk about all these things, but I remember his party talking about the standards it wanted to use in the House of Commons. I hope the leader of the third party will read the memo about disturbances in the House of Commons and not ask questions which require answers which may make the government look bad. With the recipes that they have put forward today, if there is a group that has gone down in the last three years and three months, it is the Reform Party.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we do not have to make the government look bad. It is doing an excellent job on its own.

On June 12, 1991 in this House, when he was in opposition, the Prime Minister promised that every minister in his cabinet would assume full responsibility for any bungling in their departments. When we question the conduct of his ministers, the Prime Minister has said again and again that the buck stops with him.

Will the Prime Minister now assume responsibility and hold these ministers accountable today in this House—the defence minister, the health minister, the justice minister—for the serious blunders they have made in the last two months?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I watched the debates. The ministers answered all the questions very well. When the press asked them questions they took full responsibility for their departments. When there was something that needed to be remedied, they moved very quickly.

The leader of the third party accused the government a few months ago of wanting to postpone the inquiry on Somalia until after the election. Now he is complaining because we are assuming responsibility right away. He should make up his mind.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AIRBUS AFFAIR

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The more we know about the Airbus affair, the less we understand.

What do we have here? A justice minister who claims not to be involved, but apologizes anyway; a solicitor general who admits having known for eight months, but takes no responsibility and did not inform any of his colleagues; the Clerk of the Privy Council, Jocelyne Bourgon, who denies knowing anything in spite of information to the contrary; a commissioner of the RCMP who denies any responsibility because he did not see the letter until January 1997, when the letter was written two years earlier; and a Prime Minister skirting the whole issue by saying it is none of his concern.

How will the people of Canada know who is responsible for the mistake that will cost them millions of dollars?

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is very clear in all of this are the first principles. There was no political interference in the police investigation in the Airbus matter. That is a principle of real importance to this government and to Canadians.

[Translation]

The hon. member talked of responsibility. According to parliamentary tradition, ministers have a responsibility to address weaknesses in the system openly and directly. That is exactly what we have done. The justice department has already changed its procedures so as to address the weaknesses and improve both the system and the procedures. To act responsibly is to make the changes required to improve the system, and that is what we did.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if there is one principle this House recognizes, it is that of government accountability.

In this case, the Prime Minister has denied any responsibility. So have his ministers and the commissioner of the RCMP. But the decision to write the Swiss authorities and denounce a former Prime Minister was nonetheless made by someone somewhere in this government.

• (1435)

My question is for the Prime Minister, and I would like him to answer it. Who in his government is responsible for this blunder that will cost Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have acted responsibly. We have changed the procedures. We have been accountable to the public and to Parliament. We have addressed the weaknesses in the procedures. That is what being accountable is all about, under parliamentary tradition. We have been and continue to be accountable.

I have hired a former justice of the Ontario Court of Appeal to review all the changes made to date and recommend more changes, as required. We have acted responsibly.

* * *

[English]

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I quote: "The time has come to let the commission do its work". That is from April 1996. Second: "The Somalia inquiry has a job to do. Let them do their jobs". That was September 1996.

This was our Prime Minister in his finest hour, but now he is shutting down the investigation of a murder and a cover-up. How can he defend his zigzag integrity? What page of the red book is that on?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have to be very clear about who is zigzagging.

I quote from the House of Commons *Debates* on Tuesday, September 17, 1996, page 4,308 during oral questions: "Mr. Manning: The question—"

The Speaker: Although it is a direct quote, I would ask the hon. minister to use the term "the leader of the Reform Party".

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, I suspect Canadians will know who we are talking about.

This is the quote from the hon. leader of the third party in this House from September 17, 1996: "Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there is no ultimate cover-up in the Somalia inquiry, will the Prime Minister guarantee to this House that the results of the inquiry will be made fully public before the next federal election?"

I am not Eaton's but I am trying to deliver.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Eaton's would have had those documents delivered in a catalogue.

Allegations of cover-up have occurred under this Liberal government, not just under Kim Campbell and the Conservatives. It is no coincidence that the inquiry will not have enough time to question friends of the government like Bob Fowler.

Another quote: "We have to respect the rights of each individual to be heard and we must wait for the commission to render its

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judgment". That was October. That was not Eaton's. That was the Prime Minister of this country.

How in the world are we supposed to be able to trust this government to run the country when it cannot even keep its promise of getting to the bottom of a murder, a cover-up and blackmail?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if this is an example of the ethics and integrity that one finds in Hawaii, I do not think this will take you very far.

• (1440)

When we look at what was said in terms of the Reform Party strategy to try to operate in this House during this session, the first question that has to be asked of the hon. member is: Does she agree, yes or no, with the hon. leader of the third party who in September said he wanted it shut down before the next election? Which is it going to be?

* * *

[Translation]

AIRBUS AFFAIR

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Brian Mulroney's former chief of staff, Norman Spector, stated that he had informed the present Clerk of the Privy Council, Jocelyne Bourgon, about an RCMP investigation of former Prime Minister Mulroney, one month before *The Financial Post* made this information public. Yet Mrs. Bourgon continues to deny that she obtained this information and passed it on to the Prime Minister or his advisers.

How does the Prime Minister explain the contradictions between the version given by Mr. Spector and that of Mrs. Bourgon?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Bourgon briefed me fully on this file, as was stated in a document released on November 20, when I was in Asia with the Commonwealth and at the APEC meeting.

Mrs. Bourgon's statement to the press was very clear. And I am completely satisfied with the answer she gave when questioned.

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in a somewhat special situation. Mr. Spector apparently passed this information on to Mrs. Bourgon in September 1995. Mr. Spector and Mrs. Bourgon have one thing in common: they both enjoy the confidence of the Prime Minister. The latter appointed Mrs. Bourgon Clerk of the Privy Council and Mr. Spector head of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

In light of the circumstances and in light of the mess, what is the Prime Minister waiting for to set up an independent commission of inquiry in order to shed light on the Airbus affair?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, debate on this topic was closed when we offered our apologies to Mr. Mulroney and the two other people. In Canada, no one is guilty until so declared by a court of law. Apologies were made.

Mr. Mulroney's own lawyers said clearly in their statement that there had been no political interference in this matter.

* * *

[English]

AIRBUS

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always pretended to have high standards for his cabinet. He has always promised that every one of his ministers will have to take full responsibility for bungling in their departments. Well this has turned into a national joke.

Who is taking responsibility for the botched investigation into Airbus? The justice minister says he is not responsible, even though the letter to the Swiss authorities was written by his department and signed on his behalf. The solicitor general says he is not responsible; it is all the fault of an RCMP sergeant.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is blaming RCMP sergeants his interpretation and understanding of ministerial responsibility?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a very well known practice that when there are criminal investigations the political part of the government is not informed. It has always been that way.

Yesterday it was confirmed in a debate on TV between two of the most respected public servants who have served this country for a long time, Gordon Robertson and Arthur Kroeger. They said that everything was conducted according to tradition. When there is a criminal investigation it is for the police to conduct the investigation and the prime minister and the ministers are not involved in the investigation. This has been a very clear practice for a long time.

I do not believe it is the business of a minister or a prime minister to give instruction to the police to investigate one guy and not investigate another.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the evidence shows very clearly that the justice minister knew what was going on and what the content of the letter was back in November 1996 and he chose to do nothing about it.

When I look across at the Liberal cabinet, all they seem able to do is botch up, cover up and make the taxpayer cough up. The

backroom Airbus deal soaked taxpayers for over \$2 million which kept the abuse of the justice system from coming out during a public trial.

Despite all of the Prime Minister's promises, his cabinet refuse to be accountable themselves and refuse to demand accountability from senior officials. I ask the Prime Minister: When will he stop making speeches about accountability, integrity and responsibility and start acting on it?

• (1445)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is part of the parliamentary tradition, for which I have great respect, that ministers show responsibility in cases such as this one by acting responsibly to address the problems in the system squarely, quickly and effectively. That is exactly what I have done. To be sure, there were problems in this system. To be sure, there were weaknesses to be overcome. We have done just that.

The very month this letter became public, I directed that there be changes made in the system for sending letters of request from the Department of Justice. In the past year we have made a variety of changes to minimize the risk of such a thing ever happening again. Two weeks ago I engaged the services of a former justice of the court of appeal for Ontario, a person of impeccable reputation, to look at the changes we have made, to examine the entire system and to recommend any other changes that he thinks should be made to improve the system.

That is how a minister acts responsibly in these circumstances, and that is exactly what we have done.

* * *

[Translation]

TAINTED BLOOD

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

This Liberal government was elected on a platform of transparency and good government. Nearly three and a half years after they came to the power, their record is a disgrace. Not long ago, the information commissioner severely criticized Health Canada officials who destroyed documents vital to the inquiry into the tainted blood scandal. This is outrageous.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the apologies of the Minister of Health are not enough? Does he realize that taxpayers do not want empty excuses but assurances that never again will an official be able to conceal or destroy government documents with impunity?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member opposite in her comments with regard

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to destroying of documents, but let us be very clear so that all members of the House fully understand, this was an incident which occurred in 1989.

The commissioner's report is comprehensive. We in Health Canada have followed and accepted all of his recommendations as they relate to that particular incident. We will adhere to the recommendations of the commissioner to ensure that it does not happen again in the future.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even today, nothing prevents similar incidents from occurring. Nothing prevents other officials from concealing or destroying documents to avoid disclosure.

Will the Prime Minister promise to amend the Access to Information Act so as to prevent any recurrences?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must realize that the contents of the commissioner's report have been forwarded to Justice Krever. He will then have an opportunity, if he so desires, to comment on the substance of the commissioner's report and make recommendations thereto.

The hon. member is fully aware that the commissioner has also made recommendations to Parliament, of which the hon. member is a member, in terms of recommendations and sanctions which may or may not take place as they relate to officials in the future if in fact actions of that nature do take place.

* * *

[Translation]

MICROCREDIT

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Cooperation and Francophonie.

Last weekend, a microcredit summit was held in Washington. Could the minister explain what Canada is doing in this respect and how microcredit can help developing countries?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of microcredit is of great interest to Canada.

Since this week is International Cooperation Week, I would like to point out that, through the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada supports microcredit projects in several countries, including Vietnam and Haiti.

• (1450)

Last week, in Montreal, I had the opportunity to announce a microcredit project to take place in the Czech Republic, in partnership with Développement international Desjardins. We are

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pleased to support this kind of project and we intend to increase our efforts in this area.

* * *

[English]

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, restoring integrity to government went out the window in the first 60 days of this government.

On the basis of a 30-day partisan review, the Pearson airport contract was cancelled and the Canadians involved would be denied access to our courts. They would have no chance to defend their reputations or their contract.

My question is for the Prime Minister. In view of the shameful attempt to deny justice, why should Canadians trust the government or this Prime Minister?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Pearson contract was cancelled after it was determined it was not in the best interests of the Canadian taxpayers.

We prefer to have airports in the hands of not for profit corporations similar to those in Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. It is an approach that has proven its worth. We now have that type of organization in Toronto, and I look forward in co-operation with it to making the airport in Toronto the best airport east of the Mississippi.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the courts have proven that that deal was a good deal for the taxpayers and that it was cancelled strictly for partisan reasons. The only question remaining about Pearson is how much it is going to cost the taxpayers for nothing. Thirteen million dollars have already been spent and hundreds of millions more are at stake. Who is going to be held accountable for this waste of taxpayers' dollars? Who in this government?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we want at Pearson is to have an airport which will serve as the funnel for the eastern seaboard of North America for Europe, just as Vancouver now is beginning to serve as the point of transfer for all Asian, North American and indeed South American flights.

I would like to say to the hon. member that certainly this government would be happy to have this settled for substantially less than the sums he is talking about and fully expects it to be settled for substantially less, if in fact the people who have concerns on the other side wish to settle.

I should say that it is quite, quite unacceptable to the Canadian taxpayer and it should be quite unacceptable to members of the

third party and their Tory senator friends to settle it for anything more than the taxpayer should pay. In other words, that is for reasonable expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid submitted and nothing, nothing, nothing for unearned profit or for lobbyists fees.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA INFORMATION OFFICE

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after *The Price is Right* and *La Poule aux oeufs d'or*, we now have *Attractions Canada*, a quiz where people can fly to any Canadian Airlines destination if they get the right answer to a question put by the Canada Information Office, the office of federalist and federal propaganda.

Are the Deputy Prime Minister and all of her cabinet colleagues the only ones not to realize how ridiculous and sad it is to try to sell a country to its own people by using techniques such as a quiz, a free flag program and info-commercials?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the promises our government made during the last election campaign was to work at the national level to promote tourism. We know that, this week, with the help of *Attractions Canada*, we will be able to promote the Quebec City Carnival to Canadians throughout the country.

Through *Attractions Canada*, we will be able to promote the Grands Ballets Canadiens, which are very important to the city of Montreal. We will also be able to promote Cap-Saint-Jacques, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Montreal Botanical Garden, Mont-Saint-Bruno, the Plains of Abraham, the Royal 22nd Regiment Museum, the old port.

● (1455)

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage likes quizzes, I am going to ask her a question; she should listen carefully to the choice of answers I will give her.

How much will the overall propaganda campaign she has set up since her appointment to Canadian Heritage cost us: (a) \$50 million, (b) \$75 million, (c) never too much, or (d) submit a request pursuant to the Access to Information Act and never get an answer?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Bloc Quebecois and the Quebec government, its allies in Quebec, have a hard time promoting tourism throughout the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada.

I know however that the Montreal Biosphere, the Sir George-Étienne Cartier national historic site and the Montreal Botanical Garden are some of Canada's jewels. I hope that, through TV ads and a small investment from the government, who will work in partnership with the private sector, we can revive Canadian tourism in Quebec, a jewel among our tourist attractions in Canada.

* * *

[English]

WAR CRIMES

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, like millions of Canadians, I was both appalled and embarrassed when Irving Abella of the Canadian Jewish Congress told the television program "60 Minutes" former Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau would not prosecute war criminals living in Canada.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does this reprehensible abdication of responsibility continue to be the Liberal government policy as evidenced by recent botched deportation proceedings and foot dragging?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the record of this government is clear. Unlike the last government, from the beginning we have committed ourselves to acting decisively and effectively where there are people in respect of whom there is evidence of complicity in war crimes or crimes against humanity to have them removed from the country.

In January 1995 a few months after the Supreme Court of Canada had decided the Finta case, that it is very difficult to proceed through the criminal law, this government committed itself to starting by April 1997, 12 deportation and denaturalization cases where there was evidence of complicity in war crimes. We have now started 10 of those cases. The other two will be started by our target date of April of this year. That is evidence of this government's commitment.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canada should never again be a haven for any war criminal.

My question again is for the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister doing anything to ensure that no other war criminal will ever find a safe haven in Canada?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government fully agrees with the sentiment expressed by the hon. member.

Canada cannot be a safe haven for war criminals, for those who commit crimes against humanity. Every effort is made to ensure that does not happen. Indeed in recent months we have succeeded

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in having just such a person sent back out of the country where the evidence justified it.

The hon. member should also know that Canada very proudly contributed one of its best judges, the hon. Madam Justice Louise Arbour, to serve as chief prosecutor for the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, and that notwithstanding the opposition in various quarters.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after three budgets, the finance minister's record is dismal: unprecedented attacks on the poor, radical cuts in social programs such as health care and welfare, the shameless dumping of the deficit problems onto the provinces, the promise of a tax reform that never came true, privileges still in place for the rich. After three and a half years under the Liberals, it is a disgrace.

• (1500)

My question is for the Minister of Finance. When will he clean up this mess, in other words, when will he table his next budget?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as is customary in this House, where the date of the presentation of the budget is announced in response to a question from the finance critic for the official opposition—usually it is a question, not a speech—I am pleased to announce that the budget will be tabled on Tuesday, February 18, at 4.30 p.m.

[English]

There is a custom in this House that the date of the budget is announced in response to a question from the finance critic of the opposition. I am therefore delighted to announce that the budget will be tabled in this House on Tuesday, February 18 at 4.30 in the afternoon.

* * *

KREVER COMMISSION

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government says that its record is clear when it comes to integrity. What about the Krever commission? The contempt for the Krever commission is palpable.

The government has blocked Krever in court. It has shredded documents and will not deliver important documents from cabinet. If we cannot trust the Prime Minister on the Krever commission into tainted blood, what can we trust him with?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tone and the accusations of the hon. member are absolutely false. Just like the record of the Reform Party, when it comes to health related measures it is all over the map.

*Points of Order***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Jure Radic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development and Reconstruction of the Republic of Croatia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Also I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Stockwell Day, Minister of Family and Social Services of the Government of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

The Speaker: Before we proceed to tributes for one of our members who died over the holidays, I am going to entertain two points of order, which I hope will be brief. One is from the hon. member for St. Albert and the other is from the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona.

• (1505)

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is rather unfortunate on this first day that we return that I have to invoke Beauchesne's 481(e) which states talks about imputing bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a member.

I am referring to the remarks by the minister of defence during question period. He quoted *Hansard* regarding the leader of the Reform Party. To give the picture, I will also repeat what the leader of the Reform Party said from *Hansard* September 17, 1996:

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there is no ultimate cover-up in the Somalia inquiry will the Prime Minister guarantee to this House that the results of the inquiry will be made fully public before the next federal election?

That is a direct quote from *Hansard* from the leader of the Reform Party. However, in the next breath after quoting these words the minister of defence went on to put words in the leader's mouth, saying that he demanded the Somalia inquiry be shut down. That is not in any way, shape or form the proper interpretation of the quote.

The Speaker: I thank the member for bringing this up but in my view this would be a matter of debate, how one member sees it and how the other member sees it.

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my point of order has to do with the way question period proceeded today and the fact that it was completely dominated by the three

official parties in this House and there was no place for the New Democratic Party, the Progressive Conservative Party or independents.

I had a question on medicare I would like to have asked which I think a lot of people would like to have had asked. I did not get to ask it because three official parties were allowed to dominate question period by going on and on and on.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona for bringing up this point of order. It gives me the opportunity to appeal to all hon. members. During question period we do have 45 minutes and I would appeal to both the questioners and those who are to give the answers to please be as brief as they can.

It is of course the intention of the Chair to accommodate as many members as possible. It was pointed out to me earlier that only one member of the government posed a question today.

I would hope that the questions tomorrow and in the days ahead will be a little shorter as well as the answers. In that way we should be able to accommodate the independent members of the House as well as the members from the government. It is a point well taken and I do thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona for bringing it up.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. I do want to support my colleague from the NDP in his point of order.

May I just add a comment that the Chair may wish to take into consideration in the way question period is conducted. Mr. Speaker, with regard to members on the government side, since you have expressed some concern about the fact that only one member from the government side was allowed to rise, one of the things we know about this place is that the members on the government side have full access to members of the cabinet and their colleagues through caucus, which is not the case for members on the opposition benches. Question period is clearly designed, as far as we know from its practice and traditions, to enable the government to be questioned and to allow the opposition to make the government accountable. I submit that maybe one question for the government side would be enough.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his suggestion. On the same point of order, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me it is more than a point of order. It in fact ought to be considered a question of privilege.

Government members, NDP members of Parliament and Conservative members of Parliament are treated differently in terms of question period than Bloc members of Parliament and Reform members of Parliament.

Tribute

• (1510)

They are treated differently in the sense that government members, independent members, Conservative members and NDP members are permitted only a single question, normally at the end of question period. The other registered parties are entitled to a question and a supplementary.

It seems the Chair has to give some plausible and reasonable explanation for why there is that distinction, for why I as a member of Parliament am discriminated against in terms of question period—

The Speaker: Colleagues, we could get more members of Parliament posing questions if both the questions and the answers were shorter. The Chair has taken note of this. I will proceed to the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you reminded the House at the opening of today's session of the wooden Mace in front of you. I would remind all of us that you have the authority under that Mace, and if any question is too long or if any answer is too long, you have the authority to cut it short.

The Speaker: I thank you for reminding me of my authority. I am not sure but I think I heard the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona say something. Were you addressing your remarks to me?

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I was saying unofficially what the member across the way was saying, that you have authority and—

The Speaker: Of course I thank hon. members for their support in this regard. I would like to close down this part of the points of order. I think they are messages you are giving to your Speaker and they will be taken as such.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that when I was an independent member, these people who just spoke were less inclined to give us more time for Oral Question Period.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Speaker: Colleagues, having put that point of order aside, I will now proceed to tributes.

[*Translation*]

One of our members died during the adjournment. I am referring to our colleague and friend, André Caron. I now give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ANDRÉ CARON

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 10, André Caron, member of Parliament for Jonquière, died after a long battle with cancer. He was our friend, and we were profoundly saddened by this loss.

Mr. Caron was deeply religious and looked forward to a full recovery, in spite of his condition. He fought with all his might to the very end. His courage in facing his illness was an example to us all.

• (1515)

Mr. Caron was born in Jonquière in 1944. After studying educational counselling and teaching at Laval University and theology at the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi, he worked for the greater part of his life for the Jonquière school board as a guidance counsellor.

His political career started in 1990 when he became president of the Parti Québécois riding association in Jonquière. Then, in 1993, he was elected to the House of Commons as a member of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Caron was ordained a deacon in 1988 before becoming responsible for all deacons in the diocese of Chicoutimi and serving on the provincial executive of the diaconate. A member of Amnesty International and the Civil Liberties Union, Mr. Caron was involved in a number of organizations throughout his life and was unstinting in his desire to help others.

André Caron was a sensitive man, a good listener, a man with great tact, a man who was very human, modest and generous. He strongly believed wealth should be shared, and he felt it was his mission to speak for the most vulnerable, the poor and those who are not always able to defend themselves. He was a citizen with a cause.

Mr. Caron is an example to all members of this House. He wanted to represent the people of his riding as well as he could, and his views show he was a man of ideas. His convictions were more important to him than his personal interests. Quebec and Canada have lost a parliamentarian of integrity.

André Caron was a staunch sovereignist. He never doubted the ability of Quebecers to build their own future. The people of Jonquière trusted him. He was respected by everyone because of his commitment to his constituents, and many people mourned his passing. Our thoughts go out today to those who loved him and supported him in his long battle against illness.

On behalf of all members of the Bloc Québécois, I wish to offer his wife Marie Lévesque and his sons, Jean-François and Louis-Philippe, our sincere condolences. With them we mourn the loss of our friend André Caron.

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we

Tribute

are gathered here today to honour the memory of one of our colleagues, Mr. André Caron. On behalf of the Government of Canada, I speak for all of the members of the government in offering our most sincere condolences to Mrs. Marie Lévesque-Caron and her two sons, Jean-François and Louis-Philippe.

The House will remember André Caron, elected to this House by a region of Quebec that is proud of its roots and origins as a building force in this country. There have been Bouchards and there have been Tremblays, but there has been only one André Caron, a man of the people, a man close to his people, as all elected members must be when representing a riding.

Unfortunately, I did not have the pleasure of seeing André often in settings other than the House of Commons. Divergent political leanings make those of us who are parliamentarians often philosophically distant from each other because of our political choices, but we share a common goal: the interests of our constituents, our fellow citizens, the population as a whole. His straightforwardness and courage earned him the respect of all us parliamentarians engaged in the federal political arena.

On the personal level, all those coming in contact with him will attest to his profound moral values. He acknowledged only God as his master. This candid and frank man will leave a great gap in all the lives of all those around him.

André's political career was too short to do more than hint at his profound and intense dedication to the causes he espoused throughout his career.

He was particularly committed to our young people and to his faith.

• (1520)

Many young people came to know André as one of those devoted souls who gives without reserve, but others will unfortunately not come to know him, for his Father has called him away.

I would like to repeat, in closing, the words used by Mgr. Jean-Guy Couture in André Caron's funeral eulogy: "Even if he is called away before his time, the just man will find his rest—Wisdom surpasses grey hairs—A spotless life is the equal of a long one".

All of us will mourn the passing of the parliamentarian but, most of all, we will mourn the passing of a man with a mission, part of it accomplished and part of it yet to be accomplished, the ambassador and diplomat from Jonquière.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Reform Party of Canada, I wish to offer my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the hon. member for Jonquière, André Caron.

As a teacher and a vocational counsellor, André spent many years helping young people choose a career that would be both successful and fulfilling.

Elected to the House of Commons in 1993, André was transport critic for his party. To his colleagues, he was a good worker, a man of conviction, dedication and integrity who always showed courage and determination.

[English]

I would like to recite a little poem for his family:

I am standing upon the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her sails
to the morning breeze and starts for
the blue ocean. She is an object
of beauty and strength and I watch
her until at length she hangs like
a speck of white cloud just where
the sea and the sky come down to mingle
with each other. Then someone at my
side says, "there, she's gone".
"Gone where?" Gone from my sight—
that is all. She is as large in
mast and hull and spar as she was
when she left my side, and just as
able to bear her load of living
freight to the place of destination.
Her diminished size is in me, not in
her: and just at that moment when
someone at my side says, "there she's
gone," there are other eyes watching
her coming, and other voices ready
to take up the glad shout, "here
she comes!"
And this is dying.

[Translation]

To Mr. Caron's family I will say that André was taken from us much too soon. But he was carried in caring arms to a place of peace and happiness.

God be with you, André. We will miss you greatly.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues from the New Democratic Party, I also wish to offer my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of André Caron.

I did not have the opportunity to know Mr. Caron personally, but I know he served the people of Jonquière very well as a member of Parliament and, before being elected to this House, as a worker in the field of education.

The death of a member of Parliament is always a very sad occasion, but it is particularly tragic when death occurs at an early age.

[English]

On behalf of all of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, I send my condolences to my colleagues in the Bloc and to the family of Mr. Caron. We will miss his service and his constituents will remember him well.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, and the Progressive Conservative Party to pay tribute today to André Caron.

I wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to Mr. Caron's wife Marie, his parents and his children Jean-François and Louis-Phi-

lippe. It is always very tragic when someone leaves us so young. André gave 21 years of his life working with young people to make a better life for them and their future. All of us as members of the House know full well the sacrifices that families must make to allow a loved one to become a member of Parliament.

• (1525)

What I observed of Mr. Caron was that he was a hard working MP, a person of conviction, a person of integrity. We will all remember him as a devoted man who always showed courage and determination, as much in his work as an MP as in his fight against his illness. I am sure he will be missed by his colleagues in the House and by his constituents in Jonquière.

The Progressive Conservative Party extends its prayers and best wishes to the family and friends of André Caron.

[Translation]

The Speaker: My colleagues, I wish to say a few words also about our parliamentary colleague who was here with us for more than three years.

As you know, he is the second member of this House to be taken from us, the first one being Mr. Péloquin who died in an accident a few years ago.

On behalf of all my colleagues here, I repeat what we have already said, and it comes from the bottom of our hearts. We offer our condolences to Mr. Caron's family. We know it is always sad to lose a member of the family. Mr. Caron was a member of our parliamentary family. He will be missed dearly.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments which were made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1), these are deemed referred to the standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

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 26 petitions.

Routine Proceedings

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Prime Minister I am honoured and pleased to table the Fourth Annual Report to The Prime Minister on The Public Service of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about international development week but before, I wish to offer my condolences to the family and friends of Father Guy Pinard, who was assassinated yesterday while celebrating mass in Rwanda.

A native of Shawinigan, Father Pinard spent several years of his life helping the poorest of the poor in Rwanda. I had the opportunity today to speak with the Rwandan minister, Dr. Charles Murin-gande, who indicated his government's intention of ensuring better safety in the area of the country where this crime was committed and to make sure that such reprehensible acts can be avoided in the future.

Be that as it may, Father Pinard's death is a great tragedy. With him we have lost a courageous man. He will be greatly missed in Rwanda as well as here in Canada.

I will now talk to you about international development week. In the next few days, Canadian men and women will have the opportunity to learn a little more about the outstanding efforts made by our fellow countrymen and countrywomen and their partners in developing countries.

• (1530)

Every first week of February, we have an opportunity to thank the international development workers for the future they are preparing for our children and all the children of the world. Until February 8, throughout the country, community and educational activities will highlight the challenges facing developing countries and the opportunities development represents for Canada.

[English]

This year's theme, "The World Ahead", is about our shared future. It is about a world where better health, education and economic opportunities in developing countries mean increased peace and increased prosperity for all, for the world. It is about seeing today's development partners not only as tomorrow's trading partners, but also as today's neighbours in the global village. It is about the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children worldwide who are creating that shared future right now.

[Translation]

An increasing number of Canadians, particularly young men and women, are getting involved in international development. During

Routine Proceedings

recent visits, I met with people and discussed with them the work they do in developing countries.

By setting up medical clinics, building water supply systems, cleaning up the environment or enacting human rights legislation, they create links that bring nations of the world closer to one another. Their action has an immediate impact but also contributes to ensure a better future.

[English]

Every day Canadians are making a contribution to development: innovating, adapting and learning from their partners. Throughout international development week we will see and hear about the exciting work that they are doing. It is work worth recognizing and worth celebrating. I invite all hon. members of the House to join me this week to reflect on the challenges of international development and to salute the Canadians who are helping to build the world ahead. As I said previously, that is the theme of this year's development week.

[Translation]

During international development week, I invite my colleagues in the House and all Canadians to "Think of the World".

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, International Development Week gives me an opportunity, as the Bloc Québécois critic for international co-operation, to recognize the outstanding contribution of non-governmental organizations in this area. Efforts made here and abroad, in the north as well as in the south, to promote sustainable development deserve to be recognized and encouraged.

Over the years, Canada has established a very good reputation in development thanks mainly to the excellent work of our nameless ambassadors who sometimes put their life on the line like Father Pinard did.

Unfortunately, the official development assistance budget has been cut by 28 percent over four years, including the cuts that will be made during the present fiscal year. We have to confess that the present Canadian foreign policy emphasizes trade and not co-operation. Moreover it is ironic that the minister should talk about public education activities during this week, when CIDA has cut by 100 percent the subsidies to NGOs whose mandate it was in the public participation program.

Since the international cooperation minister urges us to think about international development issues, I am taking this opportunity to emphasize that the level of poverty throughout the world is rising, as mentioned in the report of the UN development program made public last October. Sustainable development is the very

basis of a lasting solution for millions of people. Let us keep that in mind, especially during this week.

• (1535)

[English]

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to address the death of Father Pinard and extend condolences on behalf of the Reform Party to his family and friends.

Father Pinard was tragically murdered while delivering communion in Rwanda. This senseless and shameful act has shocked Canadians and has reminded us all of the dangers faced by many Canadian men and women who work abroad under very difficult and uncertain circumstances to relieve human suffering.

Father Pinard fought for decades to bring hope and love of God to the people of Rwanda. Even in the face of other recent shootings he did not abandon his parishioners. He served them to the very end and this will not be forgotten by Canadians.

On behalf of the Reform Party it is a pleasure to respond to the minister's statement on International Development Week 1997. For decades Canadians have made a great contribution in the area of international development. Thousands have volunteered their time and millions have donated money to aid the cause.

Given this commitment by Canadians, it is also important that the federal government do its part and support the priorities of grassroots Canadians by matching the contributions raised privately by non-governmental organizations and church groups. I believe that Canadians prefer this approach rather than spending large amounts of aid dollars on government to government handouts. By working with grassroots organizations our aid dollars will more effectively help the world's poorest people by providing for basic human needs such as primary education, basic health care and sanitation. Canada will help to bring an end to the cycle of poverty and dependency that is common in many parts of the developing world. This is a worthy goal.

In addition since the minister mentioned human rights, I would argue that his government should act, not just simply talk. When Reformers consulted our grassroots membership on this topic at Assembly 96, they voted overwhelmingly to oppose giving foreign aid to governments that abuse basic human rights. This is a good idea and I am sure that most Canadians would agree with it.

Canadians have already done a great deal to foster international development but we can do better. We can make sure that our shrinking aid budget is spent more effectively and we can expect greater accountability for that spending from CIDA which should be given a true legislative mandate. If we do all this, then our development program will be on track for the 21st century.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

HEALTH CARE

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

BILL C-70

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table the committee's report on Bill C-70, which harmonizes the GST with the provincial sales taxes in the three Atlantic provinces and contains about one hundred amendments.

[English]

I would like very much at this time to thank members of the committee from all parties who worked so diligently and very intensely over the holidays before the House came back. I would also like to thank our staff who were splendid as always.

I would ask that this bill harmonizing the tax in the three Atlantic provinces with the GST be tabled at this moment.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the 49th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the 49th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

● (1540)

PETITIONS

HIGHWAYS

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and honour to present a petition on behalf of dozens of Manitobans, some of whom are my constituents.

The petitioners want to bring to the attention of the House the substandard condition of our national highway system. They urge the Government of Canada to join the provincial governments to upgrade the highway system which would bring on, among other things, the following benefits: job creation, economic development, saving lives and avoiding injuries, lower vehicle operating costs and greater international competitiveness.

I am happy to give my support to this petition.

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to table on behalf of 25 of my constituents a petition with regard to breast milk substitution.

The petitioners feel that a child has the best opportunity for life when breast fed and that breast milk substitutes should be discouraged. Indeed, we have endorsed that at the United Nations. The petitioners feel very strongly about this.

Since children are our best products and the best attributes that our country would have, we have much better health situations when they are breast fed. We try to pursue that policy. I agree with the petitioners and will table the petition on their behalf.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the people of Peterborough riding who want a nuclear weapons free future for their children.

The petitioners urge the nuclear weapons states to commit themselves to a binding timetable leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020. They urge that Canada participate with other non-nuclear weapons nations in Abolition 2000, which is the international campaign leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons worldwide by the year 2020.

These petitioners ask Parliament to support an international convention with a binding timetable to be signed by the year 2000 for the abolition of all nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

NATIONAL AIDS STRATEGY

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present under Standing Order 36.

The first one calls on Parliament to renew and ensure that AIDS funding goes beyond March 1998 and to renew the national AIDS strategy now.

This is a petition from the people in Victoria—Haliburton.

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is presented under Standing Order 36 also calls on the Parliament of Canada assembled to enact legislation to ensure that Canada remains one country, undivided, from coast to coast to coast.

HIGHWAYS

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the residents of Niagara Falls and the Niagara peninsula.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call on Parliament to urge the federal government to join the provincial governments to make the national highway system upgrading possible.

BILL C-205

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 172 constituents of the riding of Halton—Peel who pray that Parliament enact Bill C-205 introduced by the hon. member for Scarborough West at the earliest opportunity in order to provide, in Canadian law, that no criminal profits from committing a crime.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I would like to remind you once again that I put four questions on the Order Paper last September and that, according to our Standing Orders, the government has 45 days to answer this type of questions. We are now at the beginning of February and I am still awaiting answers to my questions, which concern family trusts.

I can assure you that during the holiday season, I met many people from my riding and from other ridings as well and that, generally speaking, taxpayers from Canada and Quebec are very much interested in these questions.

• (1545)

I find it deplorable that the hon. parliamentary secretary has already told me here in the House that the government was preparing to respond to this type of question on the number of family trusts, a ranking of categories of family trusts by size, the impact on the Canadian taxation system of the creation of family trusts in 1972, and the number of trusts transferring their assets out of the country, about which we have learned recently after revelations by the auditor general.

Mr. Speaker, I am counting on you to ensure that the government answers these questions, which are of major public interest. Judging by the reaction of the parliamentary secretary, there is something to hide.

[English]

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 52, 58, 60 and 94.

[Text]

Question No. 52—**Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville):**

—For each of the last 10 years, how many seized firearms have been destroyed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and (a) how many of these firearms could be described as firearms commonly used for hunting and sporting purposes, including how many prohibited weapons, restricted weapons, rifles and shotguns, and (b) what is the fair market value of these firearms with collectors, hunters and sport shooters, and (c) why did the RCMP Forensic Laboratories, Firearms Section, destroy approximately 2,617 firearms in 1994 rather than offer these firearms for sale to individual firearm owners who are authorized by the RCMP to own these types of firearms?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): In so far as the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada and its agency are concerned, the answer is as follows:

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE (RCMP)

Part a:

The requested data are being provided for 1994 and 1995. The data are held in electronic form and were relatively easy to assemble from all the regional sources. The data for previous years would have to be compiled manually and would require significant time and effort. The requested data are set out below in table form.

Firearms Received by RCMP Forensic Laboratories for Destruction

Year	Rifles	Shotguns	Handguns	Submachine Guns	Machine Guns	Total
1994	654	232	1,634	13	5	2,538
1995	557	262	1,648	11	5	2,483

Comments with respect to part a) vis-à-vis the above data: The rifles and shotguns, almost without exception, were firearms commonly used for hunting and sporting purposes; the handguns are restricted weapons; the submachine guns and machine guns for the most part would have fallen into the prohibited category, although some may have been only restricted; and firearms, such as sawed off shotguns and rifles, are prohibited weapons, however, for RCMP Forensic Laboratory purposes they are recorded according to the actual make, model, etc. Barrel and overall lengths are key factors in determining if a particular firearm is a prohibited weapon, however, these are recorded only if the firearm is an exhibit in a laboratory case. If it is simply received for destruction, neither is recorded for inventory purposes and consequently there is no way of determining how many of the rifles and shotguns listed above actually fell within the “prohibited weapons” category.

Part b:

Fair Market Value

Rifle: \$175.00 ea

Shotguns: \$200.00 ea

Handguns: \$250.00 ea

For inventory and destruction purposes the actual condition of the firearms as received is not recorded and therefore the values

given are an average based on the overall general condition for the various categories of firearms received for destruction.

Part c:

The "approximately 2,617 firearms" stated as destroyed in 1994 by the RCMP Forensic Laboratories, Firearms Sections, would have come from three sources:

1) The vast majority of these firearms were received from Canada Customs. These were disposed of in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Canada Customs and the Firearms Section at Central Forensic Laboratory, Ottawa. Available options are listed in Laboratory Services Manual, chapter 21, paragraph G.7.c.10. Specifically the options are: retain in a Forensic Laboratory Services Directorate (FLSD), return to the contributor (Canada Customs), dispose of according to written instruction from Canada Customs, or destroy. There are no other options with respect to the firearms received from Canada Customs;

2) Of the total, a number were destroyed in accordance with a Court Order. This category forms the next largest portion, and usually are representative of the firearms seized during investigation of criminal matters. Their disposition is nearly always at the direction of the courts who direct that either they be destroyed or forfeited to the Crown. Those forfeited to the Crown are then disposed of (destroyed) according to the wishes of the various provincial Crowns and/or their representatives. This group would also include firearms turned in during the various amnesty periods which have been proclaimed over the past few years; and

3) A smaller portion were destroyed as an assistance to the general public. Firearms are turned into local detachments by either the owners, or in many cases, by executors of estates, who wish to have them destroyed. Others, such as firearms used in suicides, are destroyed in accordance with family wishes. Selling any of these firearms may undermine public confidence in the RCMP, other police services, and the justice system as a whole.

With respect to the first portion of Q-52, information provided pertains only to firearms destroyed by the Forensic Laboratory Services Directorate of the RCMP and not by any other unit of the RCMP that may have destroyed seized firearms during the years in question. The vast majority of firearms seized by the operation units of the RCMP are disposed of through being ordered forfeited by the applicable court for the provincial Crowns. These firearms are then disposed of, generally by destruction, by the provincial Chief Provincial Firearms Officers (CPFO'S) or other provincial authority.

Question No. 58—Mr. Hoeppepner:

Regarding the Canadian Wheat Board's long-term debts and forgiven debts to foreign borrowers, could the Minister give the following figures for the past three crop years: (a) how much in long-term debts or liabilities is owed to the Canadian Wheat Board and from what countries (please give the amount for each country); (b) how much interest is being paid on these long-term debts or liabilities (please give details for

Routine Proceedings

each country); and (c) how many loans have been forgiven in the past three crop years and for each of them, what dollar amount do they represent?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): a) The long term debts or liabilities owed to the Canadian Wheat Board, CWB, by individual countries is commercially sensitive information and public disclosure would be considered a breach of customer confidentiality. However, the volume of CWB's credit sales by country is regularly disclosed in the CWB's annual report.

b) The total value of outstanding debt owed to the CWB from sales made under credit arrangements is approximately \$6.7 billion. The interest accumulated for the period between August 1, 1994 and July 31, 1995 was approximately \$444.5 million, which is included in the total value of the outstanding debt and hence in the government guarantee. Non-payment of principle or interest, if it occurs, does not represent a cost to farmers.

c) The Paris Club is the institution through which major creditor governments reschedule or refinance credits they have extended to public or private sector borrowers in developing countries and which enjoy the sovereign guarantee of the borrowing country.

During the last three years, three countries have received some limited debt reduction through Canada's participation in the Paris Club process. The Government of Canada has agreed to forgive a portion of the debt of these countries as follows (in millions of Canadian dollars):

Countries	Principle	Interest*	Forgiven Debt**
Ethiopia	0.3	0.3	0.6
Haiti	4.9	0.2	5.1
Zambia	7.4	1.4	8.8
Total	12.6	1.9	14.5

* Interest calculated to March 31, 1996.

** The forgiven debt relates to sales made by the CWB under the credit grains sales program, CGSP. The CGSP includes a Government of Canada guarantee of repayment. Therefore any cost associated with rescheduling of these or other outstanding loans, is borne by the Canadian government, and not the CWB or prairie farmers.

Zambia and Haiti do not appear in the attached table, Canadian Grain Exports Under Credit Agreements, because the credit sales made to these countries occurred before 1985/86. The debt forgiven for Zambia and Haiti relates to wheat sales made as follows:

	Year	Wheat Exports Under Credit Agreement
Haiti	1984/85	25,000 tonnes
Zambia	1972/73	16,000 tonnes
	1973/74	45,000 tonnes

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Canadian Grain Exports under Credit Agreements 1985-86 to 1994-95 (thousand tonnes)

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	10-Year Average
Wheat/Durum ¹											
Algeria	-	145	764	326	605	852	363	545	745	-	435
Bangladesh	-	-	104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Brazil	981	775	445	-	200	304	660	286	590	357	460
Colombia	21	22	-	163	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
Cuba	-	-	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	8
Egypt	464	208	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	67
Ethiopia	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Germany, Democratic Republic	48	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Iran	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	830	1,181	201
Iraq	347	691	880	724	783	-	-	-	-	-	343
Israel	25	95	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Jamaica	39	38	39	39	59	54	73	53	31	20	45
Mexico	-	152	153	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	94	-	208	30
Russia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,314	-	-	n/a
Former U.S.S.R.	-	-	-	-	3,447	7,223	4,915	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	-	97	n/a
Yemen	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	-	2
Total:	1,925	2,126	2,503	1,252	5,174	8,456	6,011	2,292	2,196	1,863	3,380
Barley ¹											
Germany, Democratic Republic	149	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Iraq	-	-	111	115	224	-	-	-	-	-	45
Israel	145	198	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
Russia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	148	-	-	n/a
Former U.S.S.R.	-	-	-	-	914	1,194	372	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total:	294	198	111	115	1,138	1,194	372	148	-	-	357
Grand total:	2,219	2,324	2,614	1,367	6,312	9,650	6,383	2,440	2,196	1,863	3,737

n/a - not applicable

¹ Changes in country status:
EU-12 from 1985-86; unified Germany from 1990-91; EU-15 from 1994-95, includes Austria, Finland and Sweden.
Former U.S.S.R. - 15 countries gained independence during 1991-92.
Political unification took place in Yemen during 1989-90.

Source: CWB

*Routine Proceedings*Question No. 60—**Mr. Hermanson:**

For the fiscal years 1993/1994 and 1994/1995 which departments, agencies or crown corporations contributed funding to the following organizations: (a) Planned Parenthood of Canada and Planned Parenthood International; (b) Legal Education and Action Fund; (c) National Action Committee on the Status of Women; (d) Campaign Life Coalition; and (e) Realistic Equal Active for Life (R.E.A.L.) Women and what were the amounts contributed?

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

	1993/1994	1994/1995
a) Planned Parenthood of Canada		
Canadian International Development Agency	\$97,594	\$43,096
Health Canada	\$146,000	\$166,000
Planned Parenthood International		
Canadian International Development Agency	\$9,949,735	\$7,332,265
b) Legal Education and Action Fund		
Status of Women Canada	\$209,023 ¹ \$50,300 ²	\$209,024
c) National Action Committee on the Status of Women		
Status of Women Canada	\$270,000	\$270,000
d) Campaign Life Coalition		
None		
e) Realistic Equal Active for Life (R.E.A.L.) Women		
Canadian Heritage	None	\$3,000
Status of Women Canada	\$13,193	\$11,832

¹Program funding
²Project funding

Other departments, agencies and crown corporations have no information on this subject.

Question No. 94—**Mr. Caccia:**

What are the reasons the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Act, passed by both Houses of Parliament in the early 1980's, was not proclaimed into law?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): In 1982, during the time when the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act, MVFCSA, was being considered by Parliament, the motor vehicle industry agreed to meet the provisions of the proposed act voluntarily under the existing joint government-industry voluntary fuel consumption program, including the company average fuel consumption, CAFC, requirements. The

government felt that all the benefits of a mandated program could be realised at a lower cost to government, industry and consumers through the voluntary approach. This option was therefore chosen and the MVFCSA was retained as contingency legislation should the voluntary program fail.

The Canadian company average fuel consumption for new passenger cars has been consistently better than the annual CAFC goal and overall program effectiveness has paralleled that of the legislated U.S. program.

[English]

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 71 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 71—**Mr. Morrison:**

With respect to the consultants working at the headquarters of the Canadian International Development Agency, will the government provide a list of all consultants, including the following information: (a) branch and division, (b) remuneration, (c) terms of reference, (d) resume (or employment background), (e) past positions at CIDA (contract or otherwise) and (f) whether the contract went through a competitive allocation process?

Return tabled.

[English]

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

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet perhaps I could be permitted to reply to my hon. colleague. While I understand he is losing some patience on this issue, he has asked a comprehensive question. It is a very detailed question and is a question that requires a good bit of information to come from one of the government departments that is very consumed with getting his information.

I assure him that we are working on the question and I can assure the hon. member we are doing everything we can to have the answer as soon as possible.

The Speaker: It is rather a strange twist but you have answered the question and you have presented Questions on the Order Paper which is all right.

Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 10 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-60, an act to establish the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and to repeal and amend other acts as a consequence, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 31, 32 and 33.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I was about to indicate that, if no one else speaks, debate on Group No. 10 is completed and we can move on immediately to Group No. 11.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Thursday, December 12 1996, all questions on the motions in Group No. 10 are deemed to have been put and the recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred.

The House will now proceed to consideration of motions in Group No. 11.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since Group No. 11 contains but a single motion and that motion comes from the government party, I wonder if it might not be appropriate to ask my colleague to speak first. I would then speak after him.

The Speaker: The parliamentary secretary is not on his feet.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government does support Group No. 11, the technical amendment to Bill C-60. The amendment ensures that any money authority appropriated to existing departments, food inspection, health or other departments will be transferred to the agency early in 1997.

This is a technical amendment which is necessary for the parliamentary budget to be put in place. There is absolutely no question that when an agency is being set up it needs funding. It will be receiving its funding from the Departments of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Health and from other moneys which have already been put into the budget.

Some questions brought forth by the opposition suggest that new money is being placed within the system. That is totally not accurate. We have reassured everyone that the funding in this case is a technical amendment which will allow the moneys which have already been allocated in government departments to go into the

agency so it will have funds to operate. As a result, we need to have the amendment passed.

I would again reassure everyone here that we are not talking about new money coming into the system. We are talking about transferring already approved funding into the new agency.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Secretary of State, I think the motion in Group No. 11, Motion No. 34, is just window dressing.

The minister is trying to recover sums of money and use them again, as he sees fit, in the agency's operations. I keep coming back to the setup we have with the president and the vice-president of the advisory board appointed by the party in power. You will agree that since the past offers no guarantees for the future, we cannot support this motion.

I am reminded of the lieutenant-governor your party appointed, yes, your party, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: My dear colleague, I am the Speaker, and as such, I have no party.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should say that our friends recently appointed a lieutenant-governor in the person of Jean-Louis Roux and soon found this was a mistake. To err being human and to recognize the fact divine, the lieutenant-governor managed to step down from this prestigious position at the right time, but that will not always be the case.

Here, the chief executive of the food inspection agency will have a very sizeable budget. For two years regular hiring practices will be suspended. The president will be able to hire and fire at will. This is a very serious matter.

He will be given a sizeable sum of money. If surpluses are a problem, less money should be given to ensure there will be no surplus, if that is what the Secretary of State is saying. Give them a very small operating budget so they will have to come and ask for their monthly allowance to operate the agency, at least during the first year.

• (1555)

Since the government's aim is to recover costs sooner or later, we will then be able to better manage this new parapublic agency.

Since it is always the end users, that is to say the consumers, who end us paying for this government's famous promises, I would ask my colleagues to be very vigilant. By creating this agency, we are really opening the door to abuse, to the risk of shameless public spending by the government.

In the hope of saving \$40 million, we are running the risk of spending much more if my fears are confirmed. I hope the government will allay my fears by improving the appointment process, by appointing to the posts of president and vice-president or as one of the 12 members of the advisory committee not the best

Liberals in Canada but the rare gems, those who have the skills, the experience needed.

The past is not always an indication of what the future will be like. The Airbus affair, for example, will probably cost in the end, as we will eventually find out through the information access commission, God knows how many millions of dollars as a result of mistakes, of ignorance, or even because they tried to pull a fast one on the Conservative Party. How much will Canadian taxpayers pay in the end? We will never know how much money was paid to the 29 legal experts who worked to defend the Minister of Justice.

On the other hand, we know how much the Mulroney group must have spent because there will be an agreement, soon I believe, to pay the people who worked on the former Prime Minister's defence team. It was, of course, the first time a government went before a court of law with false, hastily prepared charges in order to obtain information from the Swiss government, charges which came from the General Solicitor and the Minister of Justice and which tarnished one man's reputation. I hope the present Prime Minister will not be treated the same way. You will not remain in power for the rest of your life. When you cross over to the opposition side, I hope the party that will take your place will not treat this Prime Minister the same way—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member that he must always address the Chair, and not other members. If he has something to add, he can say it.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely right. I was wrong in addressing directly the whip of the official opposition. I must address the Chair, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, we are debating the last group of motions aimed at improving Bill C-60 and we, in the Bloc, do not think Motion No. 34 put forward by the government side is an improvement. Consequently, we will vote against it.

[English]

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Thursday, December 12, 1996, all questions on the motions in Group No. 11 are deemed to have been put and the recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions on the motions at the report stage of the bill.

Call in the members.

• (1600)

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The votes stand deferred until tomorrow.

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BELL CANADA ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-57, an act to amend the Bell Canada Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Ron Irwin (for Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Irwin (for the Minister of Industry) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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, Bill C-57, an act to amend the Bell Canada Act, is an important part of the government's efforts to stimulate investment and innovation in advanced technology and to promote new services on the information highway.

By repealing section 7 of the Bell Canada Act, the amendment takes us another step closer toward the realization of a truly Canadian information highway. Those of us who want to see Canadian industry compete and grow in the information economy will be the first to assent to the progress of this bill. I am pleased that members of the House share this view, as was reflected by the speedy passage of this bill at second reading stage and by the Standing Committee on Industry.

Let me quickly review exactly what the legislation will do. The amendment will permit Bell Canada to hold a broadcasting licence, enabling it to compete with cable television companies. The government's convergence policy allows for a balanced approach to competition in telecommunications and broadcasting services. That is why the government has established a no head starts approach.

Once the rules for competition in local telephone services have been implemented, Bell and its Stentor partners will be able to provide broadcasting distribution services. Competition could begin as early as the end of 1997.

I should note that broadcasting distribution and programming services will continue to be regulated by the CRTC under the Broadcasting Act no matter how or by whom they are delivered. The key result of this bill will be to open the developing informa-

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tion highway to competition. This will benefit consumers who will be able to choose who provides their services.

Why this bill now? First, the rationale for keeping Bell Canada out of the broadcasting business is no longer valid. The prohibition against Bell Canada holding such a licence dates back to 1968. At that time, Bell was kept out of broadcasting and especially cable television, in order to give the young cable industry a chance to grow. As we know, the cable television industry in Canada is now very well established.

Second, the convergence of previously distinct technology means that telephone and cable television distributors will be able to compete with each other in offering a full range of services. Soon we may not only be getting cable service from the telephone company but also telephone services from the cable company. This convergence will bring businesses and consumers a host of new products and services and it will change the way we work, communicate with each other, do business and entertain ourselves.

• (1605)

Finally, because both telephone and cable companies are seeking to offer integrated services over their networks, consumers will be the beneficiaries in this competitive environment.

If you will permit, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to provide a brief chronology of the initiatives taken that have brought us to this point.

In 1994 the government formulated a vision for the Canadian information highway, one that saw it as an integral part of the jobs and growth agenda. At that time the Information Highway Advisory Council was set up to examine key public policy issues related to Canada's transition to an information society and knowledge economy.

Following this, the government released an order in council outlining its policy on convergence. This policy focused on network facilities, Canadian content and competition in facilities, products and services. The order in council requested the CRTC to hold public consultations and report on issues related to the implementation of this policy.

In response, the CRTC held public proceedings in 1995. Over 1,000 public submissions were received and 78 parties participated in the public hearings which were broadcast live on cable TV channels across Canada.

On the issue of convergence, both the CRTC and the Information Highway Advisory Council supported the move toward greater competition. They also supported policies and regulations that will allow cable companies to compete in the local switched telephone market and telephone companies to compete in the broadcasting distribution market.

The CRTC's report "Competition and Culture on Canada's Information Highway: Managing the Realities of Transition" came out in May 1995. In this report, the CRTC said: "Given the commission's view that Canadian telephone companies have the potential to contribute to the objectives of the Broadcasting Act, and that they should be allowed to do so, the commission recommends that the government amend the Bell Canada Act to permit Bell Canada to hold broadcasting licences".

The Information Highway Advisory Council concluded its comments on the CRTC's report in its own final report "Connection, Community, Content, the Challenge of the Information Highway" released in September 1995. The council said that in liberalizing its regulatory framework for telecommunications, "the government should act to remove outdated and unnecessary barriers to competition and implement safeguards against anti-competitive practices".

These two reports provided insight and precision to the government's policy objectives.

Last May the government released its report "Building the Information Society: Moving Canada into the 21st Century". Part of the action plan in that report was a commitment to finalize the policy on convergence.

In August the government issued the final text of its convergence policy in which it confirmed the policy objectives announced in the 1994 order in council and set out the principles for implementing these policies.

The policy statement and implementation principles cover three major areas: facilities, content and competition. Obviously an essential element in the implementation of this policy is to allow Bell Canada to hold a broadcasting licence.

The policy statement included a commitment to amend the Bell Canada Act to remove the prohibition on Bell Canada and its subsidiaries from holding broadcasting licences. The bill before us today will implement that policy by repealing section 7 of the Bell Canada Act.

Technology is changing our world daily, eliminating barriers and bringing people together, offering new services and other benefits. We can help this process by expediting the passage of Bill C-57.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill, which seeks to amend the Bell Canada Act, repeals section 7 of that act. The purpose of this change is to allow Bell Canada to hold a broadcasting licence and to compete directly with cable distributors. Let us not forget that section 7 dates back to 1968.

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The government announced its intention to amend the Bell Canada Act last August with the release of the Minister of Industry's policy on convergence. This policy allows cable distributors and telephone companies to compete with each other in their basic operations.

Bell and its partners at Stentor will be able to provide broadcasting services, as soon as the government has regulated competition with respect to local telephone services, including rates, so that cable distributors and other companies will be able to set up competitive local telephone services. This convergence of technologies prompted the Minister of Industry to state, and I quote: "The real winners are consumers, who will ultimately have a choice in who provides their services".

This government policy on convergence is an integral part of the federal plans respecting the development of Canada's information highway, as described in the report tabled by the Minister of Industry last May, entitled "Building the Information Society: Moving Canada into the 21st Century".

Has the federal government kept or will it keep its promise to protect Quebec's and Canada's interests in developing the information highway? These are important issues, on which I will try to shed some light and find some answers. It should be remembered that the first reading of this bill goes back to October 29, 1996.

To start with, I will talk about convergence. As I said earlier, this bill is the result of the report entitled "Building the Information Society: Moving Canada into the 21st Century", which was made public on May 23 of last year. The Minister of Industry informed us in this regard that a convergence policy would soon be developed. On August 6, 1996, the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Canadian Heritage unveiled their so-called convergence policy.

This policy set the stage for competition between telephone companies and cable distributors in their respective areas. This policy prompted the Minister of Industry to announce in a September 19 press release that, and I quote: "The real winners are consumers, who will ultimately have a choice in who provides their services". If I take the liberty of quoting this press release, it is precisely because we are still waiting to see the benefits for consumers.

On the other hand, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said on August 6, in a news release, that they had "decided, concerning Quebec Telephone and BC Tel, to change the foreign ownership rule so that these two big companies serving British Columbia and Eastern Quebec can take part in the competitive market of communications systems just like any other telephone company". Hence, the Minister of Canadian Heritage agreed with the Bloc Quebecois, that wanted the government to safeguard the vested rights of these two companies.

In fact, strictly speaking, Quebec Telephone and BC Tel are foreign owned companies. GTE, a U.S. company, has a 51 per cent stake in Quebec Telephone. We know, however, that Quebec Telephone is deemed to be a Quebec company because its headquarters are in Quebec, it is managed by Quebecers and French is the only working language of employees. It was becoming imperative, considering convergence, to adapt the rule to give more freedom to Quebec Telephone.

• (1615)

It has been six months since the heritage minister made this statement on the changes to the orders regulating Quebec Telephone and BC Tel. During the first reading debate on this bill, my colleague, the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata said, and I quote: "We are concerned that this bill was tabled without any order being made regarding Quebec Telephone and BC Tel".

My colleague from Rimouski—Témiscouata went on to say: "Madam Speaker, I ask you to remind the government that it would be greatly appreciated if the order was made before the final vote on this bill, so as to give equal treatment to all telephone companies."

Today, as the House is dealing with this bill to amend the Bell Canada Act, have the orders been made? No, they have not. So I took upon myself to check with a few people in the know at Industry and at Canadian Heritage and I was assured that the drafting of these orders would be completed in the very near future.

We can only thank my colleague, the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata, for her hard work in favour of the rights of Quebec Telephone and indeed of the people in Quebec who are serviced by this excellent company.

I will now go back to the claims made by the industry minister, this unabashed advocate of unfettered competition. As I mentioned before, he said, and I will repeat it to show how wrong he is, that the real winners of convergence, or competition, will be the consumers.

Let us look at the real consequences we have been seeing for some time now. The deregulation of telecommunications started about ten years ago, but the CRTC authorized competition in long distance services only in 1992. This measure put an end to a long standing tradition of monopoly in telecommunications. That decision was supposed to generate significant savings for the consumers. But what happened in fact?

As shown in the report on long distance savings by the coalition for affordable telephone services, filed in February 1996, most residential subscribers of companies that are members of Stentor have enjoyed no substantial reduction in their long distance bills since the CRTC opened up the area to competition in 1992.

Let us look at page 2 of the coalition's report; it reads as follows: "Last December, the members of the Stentor group convinced the

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federal government that they should be allowed to keep the increases and not have to reduce basic rates. If residential subscribers remain customers of Stentor for long distance services, they will pay no less than \$700 million in 1996 and 1997, and over a ten-year period up to \$4.5 billion", an amount that would go to the telephone companies without giving the subscribers our honourable industry minister referred to the benefit of discounts on long distance calls they should have received according to all the promises we have heard. The Coalition concludes that this is unfair.

The coalition goes on to say that long distance rates have gone down, but significantly so only in the case of wholesale users, mainly large corporations.

Now about local telephone rates. In ruling 94-19, the CRTC announced that it would, among other things, authorize a rebalancing of rates between long distance and local services and would therefore allow three increases of \$2 each in the monthly basic service rate over the next three years. In exchange, the telecommunications companies would commit to reducing the long distance bills of residential subscribers and small and medium size businesses by the same amount.

However, Bell Canada and the seven other telecommunications companies that are members of the Stentor group objected to this restriction and filed a petition with the government asking that the restriction be withdrawn.

• (1620)

Obviously, and unfortunately, the Minister of Industry responded favourably to the expectations of the Stentor Group by maintaining a portion of the increase in local service charges, i.e. \$2 in 1996, \$2 in 1997, with a \$2 reassessment in 1998, while allowing long distance charges to continue to be dictated by so-called competition in the marketplace.

Yet, public notice 95-49, tabled by the CRTC on November 22, 1995, that is before the government's rejection of rulings 94-19 and 95-21, states, among other things, that "the CRTC feels local rate increases, over and above the ones that would result from the rate rebalancing referred to in ruling 95-21, raise concerns about the maintaining and affordability of local services". The Minister of Industry does not seem to share these concerns, since his only policy is a belief in uncontrolled competition.

Paradoxically, while consumers could look forward to an increase in local rates and no decrease in long distance rates, the president of Bell Canada told *Le Devoir* on December 21, 1995 that this government decision would not result in a reduction in costs or maintaining the same rates for consumers but in a 1 per cent increase in the yield on shareholders' assets for 1996.

The Fédération nationale des associations de consommateurs du Québec, also known as FNACQ, said in the same article that Canadian households would have to pay more than one billion dollars over the next three years in increases in local rates so the telephone companies could make the desired profits.

An analyst with FNACQ, Marie Vallée, added that the CRTC's original decision would have led to the first substantial decrease in low and medium volume long distance rates for residential users and small businesses. We now know that the exact opposite is happening.

On September 6 last year, Bell made a new submission to the CRTC regarding residential services. This submission was in two parts. The first part concerned updating the telephone network for about 490,000 customers in Quebec and Ontario. The second part proposed compressing the rate scale from 19 levels to 11, which would result in an average increase of \$1.11 for 850,000 Quebec households.

This request by Bell Canada has just been approved by the CRTC. As regards the \$2 increases already announced for 1996 and 1997, it seems to me the government could be more attuned to customers' need for affordability, but it did nothing.

Not only are Mr. and Mrs. ordinary consumer affected, business rates are affected as well. In the spring of 1996, Bell Canada submitted a proposal to the CRTC to harmonize the rates paid by business customers, in other words, another rate increase. According to Bell, business customers in small communities, that is customers in rural communities, will have to pay between \$44 and \$54 for their lines, whereas businesses in major centres will pay between \$39 and \$44 only. The increase would take effect in July 1997.

If we are trying to tell small business to move out of the rural community to the city, we could not put it better. What a poor message to be sending to an economy that wants nothing more than to get back on track.

• (1625)

In its press release of September 11, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicated that the Bell Canada telephone company had justified its application by alleging that small businesses outside Montreal and Toronto were subsidized and, therefore, not paying their fair share of the real costs of such lines.

However, Catherine Swift, president of that organization, responded that only a minority of businesses were getting such subsidies and that last August's rate increases had in fact eliminated these subsidies.

As for the vice-president of the federation from Quebec, Pierre Cléroux, he said that small businesses are the biggest job creators,

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that several of them had a precarious status, and that such an increase in telephone rates would affect not only their performance, but could even threaten them in some cases.

I would now like to tell the House and the public which costs will affect some ridings. I hope that the constituents who are watching us today will draw the obvious conclusion regarding the government's concern about protecting the rights of consumers as opposed to its eagerness to meet the endless, insatiable needs of large businesses.

Let us talk about the riding of Sherbrooke. Bell Canada's application in the riding of the leader of the Conservative Party represents a 50.8 per cent increase for the city of Sherbrooke alone.

In Laval West, the monthly fee for a business line will rise from \$42.20 to \$54.75, or a 21.1 per cent increase.

In Brome-Missisquoi, rates will go up by 32.8 per cent in Clarenceville and 50 per cent in Magog. The people of Bedford, Bromont, Cowansville, Dunham, Farnham, Frelighsburg, Henryville and Sutton are looking at increases of between 60 and 62.5 per cent.

In Gatineau—La Lièvre, the increases will amount to 41.8 per cent in Thurso, 52.2 per cent in St-Pierre-de-Wakefield, and 50.3 per cent in Buckingham; and in Gatineau, each line will cost \$63.20 per month instead of \$38.75, a 63 per cent increase.

In Hull—Aylmer, a riding represented by the minister responsible for the Outaouais, rates will increase by 41.3 per cent in Hull and 63.1 per cent in Aylmer.

In Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, the municipality of Luskville will see the cost of business lines rise by 41.9 per cent, while Maniwaki and other municipalities in the area will be facing a 60.1 per cent increase. Chelsea will be one of the hardest hit in Quebec, with business line rates rising from \$38.75 to \$68.80, or a 77.5 per cent increase.

In Saint-Maurice, the venerable riding of Saint-Maurice, the people of Grand-Mère and Shawinigan are facing a 50 per cent increase.

As you can see, small businesses outside the greater Montreal and Toronto areas will suffer losses amounting to \$115 million per year if the CRTC approves Bell Canada's proposed rate increases for 1997.

I regret to say that this government fails to realize that unhampered, unrestricted competition is not in the interest of consumers.

We are anxiously waiting to see what the government will do once the CRTC renders its decision regarding Bell Canada's application to raise tariffs for business lines.

As I pointed out earlier, the government claims that consumers and businesses will benefit from this competition. Unfortunately, the facts prove just the opposite.

Instead of using their own money to invest in modernization, telecommunications companies pass most of the cost on to the consumers, this with the blessing of the industry minister, who seems to wash his hands of it. Worse yet, the poorest consumers and those living outside large urban centres are the hardest hit. The Minister of Industry can no longer afford not to be involved.

• (1630)

While the re-balancing of tariffs is necessary in a competitive environment, the government should show leadership in order to alleviate the negative impact of these actions by proposing stopgap measures for low income people and for small and medium size businesses in rural or semi-rural areas.

There are elements of solutions. The Bloc Québécois has already mentioned them to the government and it will do it again now. The Bloc Québécois is very interested in solutions proposed by the federation of consumers' associations and by the National Anti-Poverty Organization.

These groups propose to first set a monthly rate ceiling of \$15 for the basic service provided to households that have confirmed, through a self-certification process, as is done in California for example, that their income is below the poverty line. The whole process would be based on a universal telecommunications access fund. These moneys would come from a supplement charged to the ultimate user of telecommunications services. The providers of telecommunications services would be responsible for collecting these moneys and transferring them to the fund. In return, the fund would compensate companies providing the service to the poor.

In the case of small and medium size businesses located in the regions, the purpose of the fund would be to ensure a sharing of access and maintenance costs, which are higher in the regions than in urban areas. The fund would be financed through a contribution paid by companies providing telecommunications services.

Again, the government has yet to act upon the proposals made by these organizations. Convergence is here to stay, it is a technological fact we can no longer avoid. It is part of the government strategy concerning the information highway.

As we indicated before, in the telecommunications area, the government's commitment to defend the interest of the consumers is too often swiftly dismissed in favour of the interest of telecommunication companies, and the government's record as regards the information highway is no exception to that rule.

You have to understand that the federal strategy concerning the information highway seems to promote measures supporting telecommunications, such as personal communications services, local

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multipoint communications systems, multimedia services via satellites, direct broadcast satellites and broadcaster digitizing.

On the other hand, the protection of personal information, copyright and privacy, and measures relating to offensive content, child pornography, production of francophone content, affordability, accessibility and universality of these services seem to be low on the priority list.

The federal strategy with respect to the information highway is incomplete. It is being doled out bit by bit by the Minister of Industry, despite extensive, in-depth studies by various levels of government.

Despite the CRTC report on competition and culture on Canada's information highway tabled a good year and a half ago, despite the final report by the information highway advisory council tabled over a year ago, despite the many departmental committees on which public servants toil away and without the benefit of a pre-study by a standing committee of the House of Commons—other than the Committee on Canadian Heritage that received evidence on more general issues—and despite the Minister of Industry's constant reminders of the need for urgent action, the minister has shown himself quite unable to define concrete and viable orientations for the more sensitive areas of the information highway.

To get a hint of the minister's lack of insight, you only have to review the document he has just released. Everyone was expecting the federal government's action plan on the information highway. Instead, we got a report recapping the progress made on the information highway. The Minister of Industry told us this was a progress report on Canada's transition toward the information society and the government's response to the recommendations made by the Information Highway Advisory Council in September 1995.

• (1635)

The Bloc Québécois reacted strongly to the tabling of this so-called strategy. Here are the main points that we condemned the report for at the time.

While the report is a good analysis of the problem, it has nothing to do with the political intention of a thoughtful government that is saying it is urgent to move forward. The report denies the existence of the Quebec culture by making it an element of the multicultural diversity of Canada. The report covers all the technological aspects of the information highway, but leaves out the social aspects entirely.

The report sanctions the hopes of the advisory committee on the information highway, which reflect a federal intrusion in provincial jurisdictions and which ultimately sanction new duplications of provincial programs. Finally, the report describes the majority of

problems related to the information highway, but totally postpones dealing with the solutions to these problems.

You will have understood that Bill C-57 in itself is a modernization of an act that had now to be modernized. But the government could not examine where this bill will lead the Quebec people and the Canadian people without checking at the same time the guidelines that are established to ensure that everything is in the best interests of the people. And the people are also the consumers. They work, for the most part, for small and medium size businesses.

This is why I stressed the inconveniences currently experienced by individuals and by small corporations in the context of this convergence, this implementation of the information highway.

We too support progress. Therefore, the Bloc Québécois must support this bill. However, as I said, and I will say it again, the Bloc Québécois does not support progress at any cost, progress at the expense of the most vulnerable ones, progress at the risk of killing our small and medium size businesses, particularly in rural areas.

I would like to conclude by making three recommendations. We ask the Liberal government to exercise diligence to make sure that Québec-Téléphone and BC Tel get a satisfactory agreement so that they, like other telecommunications companies, have an opportunity to offer their services in the context of the convergence of telecommunications.

Second, we ask the Liberal government to fulfil the commitment made in its red book, in the chapter on small and medium size businesses, to the effect that the federal government must contribute to the creation of a climate that promotes economic development. Once the CRTC renders its decision on rate increases for business lines, this government will show us whether it intends to fulfil its promise or to forget it like so many other ones.

Third, we ask this government to stop the mad dash for the information highway, something that is less and less affordable to consumers, small and medium size businesses, and those who live in rural areas.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to enter the debate on Bill C-57. I want to register immediately that the Reform Party is in favour of this bill.

At the time of rendering that support, however, I think it is essential for us to register that not only will we support the bill but at the same time we encourage the government to recognize that we are not deluded into thinking that somehow a suitable telecommunications policy has been developed for Canada. In fact, as I progress through the remarks that I wish to address to the House this afternoon it will become abundantly clear that the repeal of

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section 7 of the Bell Canada Act is really nothing more than teeny weenie, itsy bitsy little bit of a step moving forward but covering all the important parts that really should have been addressed but which are not being addressed by the telecommunications policy of the government.

I hold in my hand a copy of the bill. It is probably the shortest bill I have ever seen. In fact the notes that explain what the bill does are many time longer than the actual words in the bill itself. I commend the government for its efficiency in writing this so succinctly. I wish all legislation was this succinct.

However, we need to move on. The big argument that has been presented with regard to the repealing of section 7 in the Bell Canada Act is to give consumers a choice. While it is true that it will give them choice, it will for once bring about competition between the cable companies and the telephone companies in a common field so that they can now enter into each other's field. That is a good move.

Let us now move into the broader field of communication technology of which this is but a part. I wish here to borrow rather extensively from Don Tapscott who wrote a book on the digital economy. That is probably closer to where we ought to be moving than anything we have heard in the paper supporting the converging technology or other aspects of telecommunications industry in Canada.

The author writes that a decade ago cable and phone companies were seen as totally different businesses, but technology has now brought them into direct competition. This is because all information: audio, tech and video images can now be converted into digits or it can be digitized. It is the same commodity. That is little bytes of data that computers use. Depending on to whom you speak this is enabling the phone companies to encroach on the cable business and is enabling cable companies to poach on the phone business. In fact, in some locales the fight has already begun. The Videotron Cable Company in Britain is successfully offering local services. In Canada, BC Tel snared an exclusive contract with a developer in Vancouver's Concordia Pacific complex to provide all communication services, including cable, to a proposed housing development for 13,000 people.

No matter who builds the highway, the backbone of the system will likely be fibre optic cable running underground from coast to coast. Some of that is already in place. These thin strands of glass use light pulses to convey 5,000 video channels or 500,000 phone conversations per fibre.

That is just one small part. As we go on we will notice that while the fibre optic cables are important, there is something which is far more significant, probably far more dynamic and the change is revolutionary and that is the wireless communication system which exists with the direct broadcast satellites.

To give a little precision to this highway analogy, the band width on which this information is transmitted, the road is shifting from a three foot garden patch which we have had until now to a highway 16 miles wide. However, because that analogy is imperfect we need to move in a little different way. The issue is not just the width of the highway but also how highly and how tightly the traffic can be concentrated or screened on that road. The number of moving vehicles is the significant issue. Using compression technologies that squeeze more bytes through the pipeline, the capacity of the fibre is going up.

• (1645)

Nicholas Negroponte points out that recent research results show we are close to being able to deliver gigabits per second. That means a fibre the size of a human hair can deliver every issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. I notice that the parliamentary secretary is grasping his hair because he notices that he cannot carry quite as much information as some of the rest of us. This means that a fibre the size of a human hair can deliver every issue of the *Wall Street Journal* in less than one second. It still means that the parliamentary secretary can carry quite a lot of information.

Transmitting data at that speed, a fibre can deliver a million channels of television simultaneously; roughly 200,000 times faster than a twisted pair. I am talking of a single fibre so if you want more, you make more fibres. After all it is just sand.

Telephone and cable are certainly not the only players in this game. There are also direct broadcast satellites as I mentioned earlier, cellular telephones as we witnessed just a moment ago, low orbit interactive satellites and even high altitude balloons to name but a few. Some electrical companies are assessing their possible role because they have extensive fibre optic systems in place to monitor their electrical grids. Technology is evolving so quickly that it would be rash today for any country to commit itself exclusively to just one or two of the systems. It is from that point of view that I call this an itsy bitsy little step. It is far from clear which technologies and strategies will ultimately be most effective in delivering content at the best possible price.

In the end the total prize for suppliers will be in content, not carriage. At the moment all our long distance tolls are essentially measured in terms of the time you are on the line. As we move into a digital economy, and as the compression technologies advance, the issue will no longer become how much time you were on the line but how much information did you transmit. I suspect that could be another development.

If that says anything about the way the CRTC operates one thing becomes abundantly clear: it is probably the greatest impediment of technological application that this country has witnessed. I think the sooner the CRTC gets out of the business of maintaining monopolies the better off we are all going to be.

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I want to use a special illustration. Let us examine for a moment that the CEO of Alcoa wakes up one morning to find that Russia is now dumping aluminium on world markets at half the current price. The first major survey of Chinese people shows that the top priority for two-thirds of the country is to get rich through hard work, whereas only 4 per cent want to continue the revolution. Economist Lester Thurow asked his audience in a recent speech to U.S. business leaders: Who do you think has more high school graduates, the United States or China? If you guessed China—and in fact he has done this study—you are right by a couple of hundred million.

Why should I hire a graduate from a U.S. high school at \$30,000 per year when I can get a person with equivalent education in China for \$100 per month? Many U.S. businesses have already answered that question with a resounding: “We don’t”. Millions of so-called virtual aliens are clicking away on keyboards in Shanghai, New Delhi and Hong Kong fully networked and employed as members of the U.S. economy, except that they do not pay U.S. taxes or live in the United States. How are they doing it? Through the Internet.

The bipolar world has become a multi-polar economy. In the 1960s east Asia accounted for only 4 per cent of the world’s economic output. Today that region accounts for 25 per cent. At the same time the GNP of the United States has been growing at a not bad 3 per cent annual rate, but the Pacific rim has seen rates that have been more than twice that high. Not so long ago Taiwan and South Korea were low cost countries. Now they find they have to ship to lower cost places like China. The economy for the age of network intelligence is a digital economy. In the old economy, information flow was physical: cash, cheques, invoices, bills of lading, reports, face to face meetings, analog telephone calls, radio and television transmissions, blueprints, maps, photographs, musical scores and direct mail advertisements. In the new economy information in all its forms becomes digital, reduced to bytes stored on computers and racing at the speed of light across networks. Using this binary code of computers, information and communications become digital ones and zeros. The new world of possibilities thereby created is as significant as the invention of language itself, the old paradigm on which all the physically based interactions occurred.

• (1650)

To put this into the context of a child, ask this question: What is technology to a kid? One of the Apple people, Alan Kay, once said that technology is technology only for people who are born after it is invented. Twelve-year-old Niki Tapscott would agree. She is the daughter of Don Tapscott. When asked if she would participate in a consumer of the future panel at a technology conference she lectured her father: “Okay, Dad. I will do it if you want me to, but I

do not understand why you adults make such a big deal about technology. Kids use computers to do stuff. We do not think of them as technology. Like a fridge does stuff. It is not technology. When I go to the fridge I want food that is cold. I do not want to think about the technology that makes the food cold”.

Lest we get the impression that this is only happening in Canada, a debate is raging and we are concerned about it. British television giants have joined forces in a digital revolution that was announced on February 1. The *Financial Post* reports the story on the BSkyB. If it is successful in winning the licences for the digitized communication, the shareholders have agreed to meet among them a peak funding requirement of up to 300 million and the company is expected to be profitable within five years.

What will it do? It will offer an initial 15 channels, including subscription channels, from the British Broadcasting Corporation. This is the most exciting development in broadcasting, according to them, since the introduction of colour. We are on the brink of a revolution in entertainment, information and communications. We are not given the details, but we are told very clearly that the digital economy is upon us and we would do well to observe it.

Shaw Cable, which is one of the companies involved in this convergence and is making some telephone offerings, received a licence last Friday. The licence is to provide direct to home satellite service for customers in Canada. This program would be allowed to launch using U.S. satellite space only on an emergency basis. Notice that none of the companies which has applied for direct to home television—and there are four of them now—has delivered any direct to home television programs because they have not been able to secure transponders on space satellites. They will have to migrate back to a Canadian satellite if space becomes available when another satellite is launched. However, they have been granted emergency access to a transponder on an American satellite.

I want to speak on that area in a little more detail. There are examples of this happening in Britain. It is happening in Canada. It is happening all around the world. Let us go into the DTH business a bit.

It is an alternative service to traditional cable. It is off air and large satellite dish television reception. It is an alternative. It differs in that the size of the dish is small. It is approximately 18 inches in diameter. The signal is digital and the number of channels is much higher than on conventional cable. These small dishes and the accompanying satellites that transmit the signals were commonly referred to as death stars a couple of years ago. Today they are being recognized as a way to provide an alternative service that is less expensive than the other way around. The satellites are known as direct broadcast satellites or DBS.

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The Americans have a healthy DTH market, but in Canada there is as yet no operating service. We have licence providers, but none is currently delivering signals. This has created a service vacuum since Canadians want the service but have no legal means of obtaining it. The so-called grey market is the result. It contains approximately 250,000 Canadians and some estimate it at 300,000 Canadians.

• (1655)

Canadians are obtaining the hardware, setting up a U.S. postal address either by themselves or through an intermediary and subscribing to service from a U.S. company. The equipment is generally legal. Receiving the U.S. signal is not. Equipment capable of receiving the U.S. signal today may not be able to receive a Canadian signal when one becomes available.

We can see how important the whole telecommunications industry is. We need to recognize other areas that are not being dealt with. Canadian DTH providers would like to be broadcasting but there is currently no available satellite space.

We have four licensed DTH providers in Canada. They are ExpressVu of Mississauga, the Star Choice network of Lindsay and Power DirecTv of Toronto. Shaw Communications of Calgary is a fourth company and was just granted a licence, as I indicated a moment ago.

The government continues to erect protectionist walls on culture and issues rather than letting Canadian programming compete on its own merits. I really want to underline this. The Americans refused to play ball vis-à-vis American joint ventures in our orbital slots unless they get concessions on culture, which in turn leaves our DTH providers out in the cold.

The Canadian market is so small it brings into question the economic viability, if you will, of any company trying to launch a satellite service to serve this market alone without then being able to sell excess capacity to U.S. firms for use and service to the U.S. market.

There are other examples. The local multi-point communications system which the hon. member from the Bloc referred to just a moment ago is an excellent service that is available. We can talk about the personal communications system. These are all virtual fibre systems. They are wireless. They use the digitization of information into these compact little bytes of information.

We would do well to listen very carefully to what is happening and we need to be sure that we are ready to take advantage of these developments in technology.

Canada is ahead of the Americans in the technology itself. The chief proponent and developer of the multi-communications system is WIC, Western International Communications. It is the main

licencee for the technology in Canada and has pushed R and D to the point where we are to see its introduction on a wide scale.

Direct competition between LMCS licencees and resellers will take place in markets across the country and we will see that developing very soon.

As these various ways of communicating come into existence and as they are appropriately licensed and may compete with one another, that will be a far more significant competition than the sort of competition that is being talked about by this amendment to Bill C-51, the Bell Canada bill.

As far as the remaining spectrum goes, of the local multiple communications systems that have been allocated already, two of the remaining four frequency blocks are scheduled to go to auction in two years or so. The remainder will be disposed of by auction after that.

I should note here that the first of the licences that were granted were granted on the basis of a licence fee and not auction. One would really question whether the best possible arrangement was made and whether the government realized the kind of revenue it could have realized had it gone to an auction system.

We would have preferred something much more forward thinking where the competitive attitude being used in most aspects of this technology would be extended to all areas of the licensing process.

I want to refer now to the Internet. The Internet is one of these very significant applications of the telecommunications system. The Internet enters into all of these discussions in one form or another. All of these take knowledge, from the direct broadcast satellite, the DTH, the LMCS, the local multiple communications or the personal communications all the way to Ma Bell, to which this bill refers, are capable of delivering Internet service. All of them are in varying capacities.

Add the cable companies now and emerging services into the mix and it becomes clear that the Internet or more important, data transmission, is the one key driving factor in today's telecommunications marketplace. Currently the Internet is basically a glorified E-mail network. The worldwide web portion is in its infancy compared to what it has the potential to become. However, in order to reach that potential it must be free from government interference.

• (1700)

The threat of regulation periodically raises its ugly head. Most recently the chair of the CRTC has threatened to regulate Internet in order to promote Canadian content. She has made comments with respect to requiring Internet service providers to obtain licences in order to operate their services. Licence fees would be applied toward a multimedia production fund according to her. Other threatened forms of regulation include stringent anti-crime

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and intellectual property provisions, encryption technologies and others.

Let me make it abundantly clear that it is absolutely essential we have privacy provisions so that individuals can have the assurance that information they put on the Internet if it is confidential and personal it indeed can remain that way. There have to be very stringent areas there. Something like that would be far more significant than bringing a bill forward that would release Ma Bell to be able to develop certain broadcast programs.

The net has become accessible to the public and has become a medium for free speech. It has been entirely self-regulating in its policing. No one who has any reasonable knowledge of the net foresees any serious regulatory regime imposed by governments of any form as being either viable or successful. This is the danger of where we are running. The physical structure of the network as a method in which information is transmitted is essentially borderless. One would have to cut off a country's telephone system from the rest of the world in order to shut the Internet out and even that might not work.

Therefore, we are on the brink of a very major concern, not only of individual Canadians and their privacy but rather that of government itself.

In terms of policing the Internet, the most successful methods today have been a voluntary adoption of a code of conduct by providers themselves as well as blocking software for individuals and families. Ratings systems similar to those used in the movie industry are beginning to emerge. Microsoft and Netscape are among the biggest proponents of these initiatives. This gives parents in particular the power to block access to questionable material their children might be curious about.

This becomes a very significant issue because this now puts the onus on the individual. It raises the question of what kind of orientation we would have toward life, what kind of orientation we would have to the values we hold and what are the kinds of things we would like to have influence our lives and particularly our children's lives so that they develop the kinds of attitudes and commitments to freedoms, to freedom of speech and to what is good and just in the way we think they should develop.

The heritage department and its minister are major roadblocks to competition.

In conclusion, I think we should underline this particular issue. It is not the individual or the government that are the intruders here but it is a commission of the government that is acting in an absolute position where it becomes the guardian and has been the guardian for years of a monopoly position in telecommunications.

Industry Canada is wisely adopting an open standards approach to the introduction of new technology like LMCS and PCS.

Unfortunately the providers of these new services will require licences in order to start broadcasting and the CRTC will undoubtedly stick its nose in and disturb the competitive process.

I would like to now refer to a recent conclusion that was drawn by one of our columnists in a national newspaper. It was Terence Corcoran who said on November 8, 1995: "The Canadian Roadblock to Telecommunications Competition, CRTC, continues to stand athwart the Canadian information highway, causing much concern and mounting anxiety among its potential builders". He goes on to explain exactly what has happened here. That is where the impediment lies. It is not in repealing sections like section 7 in the Bell Canada Act. Important as that is, it is only a very small beginning.

In the final analysis, the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act as they are now constituted represent the biggest competitive barriers of all. The CRTC simply applies these acts in its deliberations on licences. That is not the only thing; it goes a little beyond that. Amalgamation of these two statutes is desperately needed in order to provide for a more expansive and competitive telecommunications market in Canada.

To get to that point we must conclude that Canadian cultural protectionist arguments of the past no longer work. Witness the current battle pitting the international trade minister and the industry minister against the Deputy Prime Minister. We know that battle is an open one and the conflict is very vicious.

• (1705)

Our current market problems originate to a large degree with those people who consider themselves as cultural engineers at the heritage department and in the CRTC. Canadians can compete with anyone in the world. Our neighbour to the south may be large but it is no further ahead technically, so there is no reason for us to fear it on that score.

The nationality of capital is irrelevant as long as we control how that capital is applied and what it does when it is applied. It is only the behaviour of capital that should be of concern to us and that is the concern we should address. The Canadian government retains the right to determine that behaviour and we must jealously guard that it is in the best interests of consumers where the application of that capital should go. We should be as businesslike, as efficient and as profitable as possible as we enter into each of these areas, not only into the convergence of telephone and cable companies, but into the wireless technologies which could get us all the way into direct to home television and so on.

It has been a teeny-weeny, itsy-bitsy little movement here now. It is a good one but we need to go much farther. I encourage the government to move quickly and with dispatch into those areas that will bring us the control we need so we can become true

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competitors not only in the communications field but in all of the manufacturing and other services Canadians can provide.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly could never be as eloquent and as knowledgeable as the previous speaker, my colleague from the Okanagan, who has gone on at great length about the technicalities and the intricacies of this new technological world we live in.

I caught his point that technology is only applied to the new stuff that arrives. This is not new technology to young kids; this is how the world works. They have never seen a different world than the one we are in today. It is truly amazing to see how they have embraced the new technology as we call it, this electronic world, this wired world we are in.

We of the older generation have a hard time catching up and keeping up with the young folks. At the same time this government has a hard time keeping up with the changing world we live in. The changing world is a competitive world which is the thing this government still has not come to terms with.

Competition provides the best check and balance to any service. Competition in the private sector ensures that it does not matter what product or service you are selling, it ensures that you have the best quality and the best service at the best price. If you cannot do that, somebody else will come along, steal your market and you are gone.

However, the government is hanging on to the CRTC, the regulatory body that looks back to the rules that were created back in the seventies and says that the market has to be apportioned to this player, that player and the next player. It is not just the CRTC; we have seen it in so many other industries.

The opportunities of competition must be allowed. Bill C-57 is a small first step, and I emphasize small. What does Bill C-57 say in its entirety? It says that section 7 of the Bell Canada Act is repealed. That is it. That is the entire bill. One short simple sentence is the entire bill. Therefore, allow me to say that this a very very small step forward. However, we have to congratulate the government in that it is allowing a little bit of competition for Bell to enter into the competitive world. Surely it could have done a lot more thinking and had a lot more initiative to allow the electronic industry to get into the competitive world.

• (1710)

An example is telephone company in the province of Alberta, AGT, Alberta Government Telephones. It was owned by the Government of Alberta, regulated by the Government of Alberta. It had a monopoly. It was told how much it was allowed to charge. Of course, because it was a monopoly it was strictly on a cost-plus basis: this is how much it cost to operate the service, this is how much profit it made; divide that by the amount of subscribers

which equalled the charges it would collect. That was the regulated system.

A few years ago Alberta Government Telephones when it was a department of the government had over 12,000 employees. Today we have competition in Alberta and AGT is providing better service today with half the number of employees. I wonder what happened to the other 6,000 whose jobs are no longer relevant because AGT now has to live in a competitive world.

Prices have come down dramatically. I mentioned service. Several years ago AGT sent a bill every month. If it was not paid, the service was cut off. That is simple. It was regulated and had a legal right to do that.

Last week I got a telephone call from AGT's successor, Telus. They phoned me not to say that my bill was overdue but to say: "Let me tell you about our latest offering on how we can save you money on your telephone bill. If you subscribe to this particular package of services, we feel that we can reduce your bill by about 35 per cent every month. The cost of overseas calls is going to drop dramatically. It does not matter what time of the day or night or what day of the week you call because the prices are coming down". Whereas before when it was regulated if someone wanted to call during business hours, nine to five Monday to Friday, they charged an arm and a leg. No sales, no discounts, nothing for high volume, nothing for customer service, nothing to respect the consumer, nothing to respect the person who is paying their salaries. The government allowed them to squeeze it out of the consumer.

Now when there is competition, they are phoning me to offer me a better deal because they know the competition may contact me and do something even better, so they have to be on their toes. I now have a choice. Choice is what ensures that we get value for our money.

Think of the airline industry some years ago when the airline industry was deregulated in the United States. It was said that the planes were going to fall out of the sky, prices were going to go sky high, and the airlines were going to gouge the consumer because with deregulation they could charge what they wanted. But prices dropped like a stone. And I am glad to say that last night I was reading the *Economist* on the airplane. There was an article on airline safety which said that safety has not been jeopardized in any way, shape or form because airlines have been deregulated.

We have the best of both worlds. Safety has not been compromised. Prices have come down dramatically. Service has been improved. The consumer gets a better deal because the government gets out of his hair.

That again is repeated all through many industries. We just saw the softwood lumber deal the Minister for International Trade struck with the United States. Now we are into the regulation of softwood lumber. Now every mill has its quota and can ship according to last year's shipments. They cannot go out there and say: "Boy, I can reduce my prices. I can do this more efficiently. I

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can do a better job than my competitor. I can get some market share". No. Government regulations say they can ship what they shipped last year but they cannot ship any more. There is no incentive for competitive efficiencies.

• (1715)

As we enter into the technological world where competition worldwide is beating down our door, we must be able to respond with high tech research development and be the leader in the world. That is why I find that the responsibility of this government in the last few years we have been here is absolutely appalling.

A few weeks ago we had the mini series on television about the Avro Arrow and how in 1957 Canada was at the forefront of aeronautical technology.

We were at the forefront and the Prime Minister of the day said enough of that, we do not want to lead the world, and we scrapped the Avro Arrow.

The previous government had signed a \$5 billion program to buy helicopters. Yes, I know it was expensive, but it was going to put Canada at the front of research and development, at the front of the technology frontier on helicopters in the world. Through that \$5 billion investment we were going to be competitive in the high tech industries in the world. Then along came the Liberal government which said "enough of that, we would not want to have that". So we scrapped the \$5 billion program at a cost of \$700 million. We are going to get nothing for our \$700 million other than some cancelled contracts; no research and development, no leading edge technology. Now we are buying some helicopters from abroad so that we lag behind rather than lead the rest of the world. This is a shameful record indeed.

The point I am trying to make is that government has to be accountable. Government has to set the playing field. A government must allow competitive forces to play the game otherwise we will never, ever be able to compete in this world. I can assure members that if we are to maintain our prosperity in this country, if we are to maintain our standard of living in this country we have to be at the leading of technological innovation.

When we look at the developing world it is learning very fast how to build products on production lines and to send imports into this country that are cheaper and better in many cases than what we can produce. However, we have the advantage of education and if we use that advantage of education to develop our technology, to develop our research, to ensure we are at the forefront, we will have something to sell around the world. We will have something which will provide high paying jobs. We will have something which will give people exciting and challenging careers for the rest of their lives.

Those are the types of opportunities that we should be out there selling rather than an infrastructure program of jobs, jobs, jobs that

failed miserably the last time around. These types of opportunities should be grasped, not just with a simple one line bill that states that Bell Canada can now compete in the television industry as well as the telephone industry.

I urge the government to take note that time is rapidly passing it by. The door of opportunity is closing fast. If we are to stay ahead of the world, to lead the world and maintain our standard of living, the high tech industry is something that we must embrace and we can embrace it only through competitive advantage. If we think that some bureaucratic regulator has the key and the knowledge in order to keep Canada at the forefront, this government is wrong. That is why we need to open the doors to more and more competition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

* * *

[*English*]

ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNALS (REMEDIAL AND DISCIPLINARY MEASURES) ACT

The House resumed from November 5, 1996 consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, an act to authorize remedial and disciplinary measures in relation to members of certain administrative tribunals, to reorganize and dissolve certain federal agencies and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to welcome everyone back to the House in the new year. I would also like to mention the fact that this month is a holy month for Canadians of the Muslim faith. It is called Ramadan.

This is also my first intervention as a Liberal candidate for the new riding of Brampton Centre. I wish people in Brampton Centre,

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my new riding, all the best. I hope I will be given the chance to represent them after the next election, which I hope will be held sometime this year or next. Whenever it comes, we will be ready.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-49, the administrative tribunals act. The bill will result in the elimination of some 271 governor in council positions and annual savings to the taxpayers of some \$2.5 million.

This is the second bill to introduce changes resulting from the agency review. The agency review, as a whole, will result in the elimination of over 800 governor in council appointments.

The changes that Bill C-49 proposes continue the efforts of the government to reduce the deficit by eliminating duplication and by ensuring standardization of service and accountability to Canadians. These are the hallmarks of this government.

By approaching the business of governing with a business like approach the government is ensuring that Canadian taxpayers are getting the best use of their tax dollars. The savings outlined in this bill reflect the commitment of the government to provide services in a manageable and affordable manner.

Bill C-49 should receive the support of all parties in the House. The Bloc Québécois should support the bill because it will reduce duplication. The Reform Party should support the bill not only because it will reduce duplication but because it will lead to a reduction in government expenditures which will result in a saving to the taxpayers in every region of the country. All other parties should support the bill because in the end it will mean savings to all taxpayers and a more efficient system for the delivery of government services.

I urge my fellow members in the House to support the passage of Bill C-49. I hope Reform members will stop interpreting the speeches of members of Parliament, discuss the issues sincerely and support the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this bill on the remedial measures in relation to administrative tribunals. It makes us realize that the government missed a great opportunity to transform the administrative tribunals and ensure their impartiality.

For several years now, whenever decisions have been made, we have realized that maybe people were appointed members of administrative tribunals without having the required qualifications, that maybe they were appointed because of their political affiliation, because of their party background during the years preceding their appointment. With this bill, the government had the opportunity to rectify some important aspects of the administrative tribunals, to clarify the situation and to ensure the independence of members of these tribunals.

• (1725)

At first, one might think that administrative tribunals is a rather uninteresting subject, but when one considers which tribunals are involved and what they deal with, one realizes how important these tribunals are. For example, let us take the agricultural products review board, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, the Competition Tribunal, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission.

Speaking of the CRTC, let us not forget the controversial decisions taken last year, which raised questions about the connections between the government and the companies who were presenting projects, about how they were able to influence the government, to lobby. This example alone should suffice to show that with this bill the government has missed an opportunity to get rid of patronage appointments and restore the independence of these tribunals.

The measures provided for by the President of the Treasury Board are of two kinds. First, they increase political influence on the removal for cause of members of these tribunals, the so called disciplinary measures. It will work this way: The chairperson of a tribunal will request an investigation and make a recommendation to the minister, who will study it at leisure. Nothing in the act compels the minister to go along with the recommendation if certain criteria are met.

There is no such condition, even if there were a recommendation by the chairperson of a tribunal saying that an individual is in a difficult situation because he or she has become incapacitated or has acted dishonourably or irresponsibly, or because his or her responsibilities and other activities were incompatible. Even if such a recommendation were made by the chairperson of a tribunal to the minister, the minister is free to decide whether to act on it or not.

In that sense, the government did not live up to its responsibilities because it did not specify what criteria the minister must use in approving recommendations made by the committees.

So, there seems to be some illusion in this, a little smoke screen to hide the facts, which are that the government still has, and has even increased its political control over the appointment and career path of members of administrative tribunals. In that sense, the government goes directly against the recommendations made by senior officials in the administrative process.

For example, on July 8, 1995, the president of the Quebec Bar Association was very clear in that regard when she stated that "the lack of job security may have an unexpected psychological impact on the decisions of a person who may be more concerned about pleasing the government than about rendering a fair judgment". This quote is taken from *Le Soleil* of July 8, 1995. It is very easy to read between the lines how the government will continue to use disciplinary measures against members of administrative tribunals

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or how it will appoint the presidents of these administrative tribunals. The government has included in the legislation an important subtlety: from now on, tribunal presidents will be designated rather than appointed. Therefore, under political pressure, they could be removed at any time by the government. This clearly is an attack on the independence and impartiality of these tribunals.

In our system, it is also important that decisions be fair and appear to be fair so that it can be demonstrated that they were made in a climate and in conditions that are both desirable and acceptable.

When we look at the list, we see that there are all kinds of administrative tribunals. Some, such as the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, will make decisions affecting individuals who are in difficult situations and who do not always have the ability to defend themselves easily. If those having to make these kinds of decisions cannot act independently of the political power and of the people who appointed them, their decisions may be influenced by policies and political pressures.

I think we have seen in the Canadian federation that the more our judicial system is independent of the political power, the better it can play its role and lead to satisfactory results and decisions.

• (1730)

This decision will also have an impact on the future. When we speak of the Competition Tribunal or of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, it will be crucial to appoint people with unquestionable qualifications, and to avoid all political interference through the appointment of people who get these positions as a reward for their involvement in party politics and not because of their qualifications.

We have seen the consequences of this in the past. Decisions of bodies such as the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and the Competition Tribunal will have a great impact on the future.

Let us take example of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal. Let us say that a person is appointed to the tribunal and that, after two or three decisions, it is realized that the person has the tendency to make decisions that are protectionist in favour of Canada, while the government is a proponent of free trade. A recommendation could be made to the president of the tribunal to the effect that the person has failed in his or her duty, that he or she did not seem to be completely independent.

A recommendation could be made to the minister who would be able to decide according to his government's policy and not only to the relevance of having someone who is competent, who can make

honest and impartial decisions and who will prove to be competent in the future. A minister may well be tempted for short term considerations to choose someone who think just like him, who will interpret the laws just like he does.

The role of members of administrative tribunals is not to please the government, but to make decisions according to the spirit of the law and giving satisfaction to the parties involved. Whether they win or lose, they must be told that the decision was based on the legislation and is not the result of some secret negotiations or political pressure, which would be unacceptable.

The Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board is another example of affected organizations. Transportation is an area where people need clear, apparent and impartial justice. The proposed changes will not allow that. These changes will rather have the effect of increasing political interference in these appointments and in the disciplinary measures that can be taken against members of administrative tribunals.

This is particularly true of the second aspect where the government is proposing to designate the chairpersons instead of appointing them. The chairperson of an administrative tribunal is somewhat like the director general of a tribunal. He or she is the person who can most influence the actions of these tribunals. If the chairperson is always worried that his or her decisions could irritate the government, he or she will be in a situation where he or she will tend to make decisions that will please the government, but which, in the long run, will tarnish the reputation of the administrative tribunal.

For all these reasons, I move, seconded by the member for Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"Bill C-49, An Act to authorize remedial and disciplinary measures in relation to members of certain administrative tribunals, to reorganize and dissolve certain federal agencies and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

This will give the parliamentary committee a chance to do its homework so that the government can give us a bill that will be more in line with what is needed to ensure the effectiveness of our administrative tribunals.

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this whole aspect of tribunals, administrative tribunals or quasi-judicial bodies, has been the subject of much debate in this House. If one looks to the very near past, one such debate centred around the Immigration and Refugee Board.

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A fundamental question has to be asked about the existence of these boards. What they really seem to do is take accountability away from the minister and the department that have these particular types of board.

I know, Mr. Speaker, you were sitting on the other side of the House here and often this debate would rage around the Immigration and Refugee Board and the abuses that took place. Many of the people who were appointed were, to put it mildly, Liberal supporters of the party. They were dumped in there because somebody owed them a favour. That was and still is, I might point out, the whole essence of the Immigration and Refugee Board. It is an entity that should not even exist as far as I am concerned.

However, a fundamental question must be asked regarding the establishment of these administrative tribunals. What is the real purpose of each board and why does it exist?

I have spoken often in the House and asked several questions of ministers. In particular I will reflect on the former immigration minister since I was a critic at that time, and put questions on accountability to him. What would his reply be? His reply was consistently the same. "I am sorry but that quasi-judicial body out there was put into place for a good reason," he said. That good reason, according to the minister, was that he did not have to make the decisions any more. It was just an entity in which he had no say or could make no statement on how an outcome or decision was to be made.

We have seen the decisions that the board has made. Who are the board members? For the most part they are Liberal and Conservative friends. They are owed a favour and are stuffed into this highly paid job. The job pays \$86,400 a year. That is \$20,000 more than parliamentarians make on their basic salary. There is something wrong with the system when that form of patronage exists.

The decisions and results of the board impact not only on the taxpayer who has to pay the bill but on the whole immigration process. It brings the whole matter into disrepute. In fact, the decisions of the Immigration and Refugee Board bring the immigration policy and process into disrepute.

I will digress from the Immigration and Refugee Board, and address something in this bill. This bill is supposed to be a wonderful, cost saving effort on the part of the government to deal with the patronage issue. However, I do not see it that way at all, not when we look at the availability of the number of appointments that can be made. There are 2,225 available positions to put friends into. Both past Liberal and Conservative governments and again today the present Liberal government have been packing that particular board again with a bunch of friends.

Mr. Reed: What are friends for?

Mr. Hanger: What are friends for, one of my colleagues across the way asks. I guess that is the attitude over there. It shows itself to be that, given the fact that they are all Liberals. Most of them do not really seem to have any other qualifications.

• (1740)

Eighteen hundred appointments have been made into these quasi-judicial bodies by the present government. That is out of 2,225. The bill states that 271 jobs will be eliminated. Wow. Out of 2,225 appointments 271 jobs will be eliminated.

Let us look at the facts. Those 271 jobs were not there anyway. They were vacant positions for the most part. In some cases some of these boards will no longer exist. The fact still remains that too many of these appointments take away accountability from the minister.

Let us get back to the former minister of immigration. The new minister does not say anything really different. I have heard that minister say very similar things when asked about a decision the board has made. "It is out of my hands" the minister will say. Whose hands is it in? Is some non-elected entity making decisions that impact on the taxpayers and in some cases their safety, if we want to reflect to the National Parole Board? That is happening.

Decisions are being made by quasi-judicial bodies because ministers no longer are accountable for those decisions, they say. Let us look behind the scenes now of both the Immigration and Refugee Board and the parole board.

A whole industry feeds off these two boards. The parole board costs \$25,163,000 to run. That is just the surface cost. The National Parole Board is not quite as expensive but certainly comes close. It is in the neighbourhood of \$70 to \$80 million to run each year.

There is the decision process that is impacting on people. Look at the uproar. When Reform first came into the House in 1994 we attacked the parole board because of the decisions that were being made. People were dying as a result of that quasi-judicial body, an unelected group of people who had no concern really for what was happening in the community.

It is only due to the pressure of the Reform Party that anything was changed. Even then the changes were superficial. The Immigration and Refugee Board has been ripped right out of the hands of the public. They have no say on how decisions are being made and no one to really go to and say to the minister: "You made a bad decision there". He says he is not accountable any more.

As a result, there is a great rage that sort of turns around and around in the public's mind about both the parole board and the refugee board operate. They are not doing their job. The refugee board is taking good positions away from individuals who would rather immigrate here and try to go through the process in a legal way as opposed to ones that the refugee board allows. For the most

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part, those positions are being filled in an illegal way: people coming here and claiming status knowing full well that they are not legitimate claimants.

In conclusion, if we are to gain any respect or consideration back in Parliament regarding both the parole board and the Immigration and Refugee Board, we could well look at scrapping both of those boards. Their duties should be put closer to the people, the immigration department for the Immigration and Refugee Board and in merit release committees that will deal with parole issues because they would be a lot closer to the community.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my voice to that of my colleague, the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, in vigorously condemning the intentions of the Liberal Party now ruling Canada in the spirit of Bill C-49. The act to authorize remedial and disciplinary measures in relation to members of certain administrative tribunals, as written, is very worrisome.

Now that Parliament has reconvened, the constructive criticism of the official opposition will again, I hope, bring home to the public the lack of originality that has characterized the Liberal government since its election in October 1993.

Bill C-49, like most of the bills put forward by the government, shows once again the lack of rigour and transparency that are becoming the trademark of the Liberal Party of Canada. Not only is the government once again getting ready to back the most flagrant cases of patronage, but it will also be giving itself the means to override the application of justice in administrative tribunals.

What we see in Bill C-49 is simply scandalous. The government, through the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, will be supporting the contravention of the most sacred of the principles underlying our political system by interfering with the notion of the independence of the judiciary with respect to other organs of government.

We have already seen the Liberals' arrogance and their lack of regard for the precepts of our parliamentary system, but the tabling of Bill C-49 is beyond all understanding and shows the government's unbelievable contempt for the public it is supposed to be serving.

During the holidays, we did a lot of visiting back and forth between friends and family. As my uncle said: "We are going to take advantage of the fact that the member for Frontenac is here". One of my nephews, a student at Laval University, told me how he

had read in a magazine last month about a survey of the public's level of confidence in 28 liberal and professional or semi-professional occupations.

They were physicians, lawyers, engineers, teachers, new car salesmen, used car salesmen, architects, businessmen, retailers, farmers, and of course politicians. Do you know that in the poll on how much our fellow citizens trust us, we came second last? We got 4 per cent, just ahead of used car salesmen.

When we look at what the government has been doing for the past three years, I believe that the Prime Minister himself and his cabinet have greatly contributed to the lack of trust in politicians.

We only have to think about the Airbus fiasco. The government tried to sue the former Prime Minister and had to apologize 14 or 15 months later. A first for a government. On top of it all, we are paying the court fees. If you add up Mr. Mulroney's legal fees and the government's expenses, the total bill will be well in excess of \$5 million.

• (1750)

Was this a case of political vindictiveness? The question was asked today. Who in the cabinet is responsible for this nasty piece of work which is further discrediting this country's politicians?

We only have to think about the appointment of Quebec's lieutenant governor who had to resign a few months later. Another ill conceived appointment by this government. Every time the government makes a new Senate appointment, my office receives hundreds of letters and telephone calls in protest.

Since the Senate cannot be abolished without their unanimous consent, people would like no new senators to be appointed and, in time, as the population is aging, there would no be no senator left and the government would not be any worse off for it.

And then, there is the Prime Minister's fumbling over the past few years on the issue of the GST and his infamous red book. He said: "I never said that. You did not understand. You read it wrong". They showed him the video tape, they played it back, but he said: "This is not what I meant. You are thick, you never understand anything I say".

And yet, his deputy prime minister had the courage to resign last spring because she had promised she would if the GST was not scrapped within one year. It took some prodding, of course, but she eventually resigned, and getting her re-elected after her mock resignation has cost the Canadian treasury \$500,000.

With her quizzes, her famous CIO, the Canada Information Office, and her flag program, the Deputy Prime Minister has done much that explains MPs' drop in popularity in the polls.

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Luckily, Mr. Speaker, that is not your kind of politics and you have always acted in such a way as to maintain the public's respect for political figures. I wish this government would mend its ways.

Bill C-49 before us this afternoon is a disgrace. It is outrageous for the government to be allowed to remove people designated to sit on a decision-making board or tribunal. They will appoint yes-men and women and tell them what to do and what to say, like puppets. "Yes, that is right. Yes, 5 per cent. No, say 4.9 per cent instead".

This borders on indecency. When a democratic government has reached this point, there is cause for serious concern and one might wish it would disappear from the political scene.

On two occasions, Canadian voters elected a party that brought disgrace upon this country. Only two members of this party were re-elected. There is no doubt that the Liberal Party should pay for misleading the public with false promises about the GST. And then there was the infamous Airbus affair, an unprecedented occurrence in the annals of politics.

• (1755)

According to historians, never before in Canadian history had the federal government brought biased, unfounded action against a former Prime Minister and so soon after the fact. Proceedings were instituted at the beginning of 1996 while the alleged wrongdoing took place in 1992. That was a first.

I think we must join with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup in wishing that this bill be hoisted for at least six months. In the meantime, let us hope that the government will call an election or review Bill C-49.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-49. It is the administrative tribunals act but it should be known as the bill which attempts to deal with patronage appointments to administrative tribunals.

It is important that we set the stage for this debate by looking at the Liberal government's red book promise on how it intended to deal with this area. On page 92 of the red book it is stated:

A Liberal government will take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in the institutions of government—and make competence and diversity the criteria for federal appointments. Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program.

If Bill C-49 is one step in a series of initiatives designed to address the patronage problem, I suggest it is very much a baby step. If this is the best the government can do to address the policy expressed in the red book, it should be withdrawn and the government should start over again. This legislation is simply

another type of window dressing which we see so often in this Parliament. It tends to mislead Canadians into thinking that something is being done when in fact very little is happening.

Let us examine the bill for a moment. It still leaves over 2,000 patronage appointments which can be dealt with by order in council. In fact the government has a special patronage appointment office in the PMO which deals with these appointments. It does not deal with the accountability factor. It reminds me very much of the old administration to which my colleague referred a moment ago, which was the Conservative government of the last Parliament. It was in office for nine years and patronage became very much a way of life, much as it has been for a century in this country.

It reminds me of the story of an MP who represented a riding in western Canada. He was a Conservative member in opposition for four years and then in 1984 he became a government member. One of the local companies in his riding suggested that maybe they could get some of the government's legal work through farm credit and that type of organization. This fellow said: "Oh, no, we would never do that. We are going to be squeaky clean". About two weeks after the government took power he took one of the law firm partners out for lunch and said: "Boy, was I naive. What do you want?" That was it and the gates were open to patronage appointments. We heard what Brian Mulroney said about that in the last Parliament and we are hearing it all over again this time around.

What happened to the process? What happened to the ideal in this country that jobs are awarded on the basis of competence and ability? What is wrong with that kind of process? Nothing at all. It happens in business all the time. It is a very admirable quality that we should try to achieve in the House of Commons.

What happened to the openness of process that was promised on page 92 of the red book? "Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program". We have not seen much of that happening. What about competition for these jobs? What about fairness of process? It simply is not happening.

During the three years that I have been here I have certainly had my eyes opened as to how the system really works. Let us examine what has happened in the last three years.

A very competent minister of the government, the former Minister for International Trade, Roy MacLaren, was talked out of running again. They asked him to step aside so a byelection could be held. It is my understanding Mr. MacLaren was not very happy about that, but then he learned there was a little reward at the end of the line for him. He could become the British high commissioner. Of course we already had a British high commissioner whose term was not up until July, and this was in January. Poor Roy needed some interim job to tide him over and he was able to get a tidy

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little contract with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade just to get him by.

• (1800)

It seemed that it was the foreign affairs area which really got rewarded that time around. André Ouellet, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of our colleagues in this House the last time around, was talked out of running again to allow one of those bright stars to come in from Quebec. We are not sure how brightly shining they are right now but that was the idea at least. Mr. Ouellet was talked into stepping aside. Of course there was a little reward for him at the end of the tunnel too: chairman of Canada Post Corporation, which happens to pay \$308,000 a year. That seemed like a fairly good amount. There was more.

Some of our other colleagues on that side of the House also got their rewards. They were asked to step aside and take appointments to the Senate, the great Senate, the heaven of patronage—haven, heaven. Jean-Robert Gauthier and former Acting Speaker Shirley Maheu got their rewards. I often tell my constituents that being appointed to the Senate is the only time someone can get to heaven without actually dying. That is what happens here. That is the kind of reward we see in this country.

With that kind of example being set, it is common knowledge that candidates from the Liberals and Tories when they are in power, candidates who may not make it into the House of Commons are also rewarded. They get appointed to the Canadian Grain Commission and every other job we can possibly think of.

It is no wonder Canadians are cynical about the process. We simply must get back to a process of accountability with people who actually have the competence to take these jobs based on past performance in other areas of life. They should not automatically go to people who were former members of Parliament, or people in power, or political candidates. There are a lot of competent people out there who would like a shot at being involved with these judicial boards.

There should be a fair and open process that addresses this issue. We simply do not have it now. This bill should be defeated. It should be scrapped. If the government cannot come up with anything better than this, I suggest it should face the Canadian public at election time. Quit tinkering. Bring something substantive forward or do not bring forward anything at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the parallel between Bill C-65, which was previously before the House, and Bill C-49.

As the official opposition critic for the Treasury Board and Public Service Renewal, I would like to remind the House that Bill C-65, which was an Act to reorganize and dissolve certain federal agencies, was first introduced on December 14, 1995, and that Bill C-49, debated in the House of Commons in October 1996, deals with administrative tribunals and aims at reorganizing and dissolving certain federal agencies.

Members will remember that Bill C-65 was supposed to change and reorganize 15 federal agencies and dissolve 7 others. The expected changes were to lead to the abolition of 150 governor in council appointments and savings of \$1 million, but the federal debt keeps increasing by more than \$100 million every day. Bill C-65 was expected to reduce patronage and the waste of public funds; however, as reports published in the *Globe and Mail* on July 8 and December 21, 1994 indicated, under the Liberal government, political appointments were as rampant as ever.

• (1805)

The savings resulting from the minister's bill, Bill C-65, represented only one-eighteenth of one per cent of the savings associated with the 45,000 public service positions that were abolished.

Why would the minister be interested in reorganizing and dissolving certain federal agencies to realize savings of \$1 million a year which have a minor impact on the federal budget compared to the savings associated with cutting 45,000 jobs?

In some cases, eliminating any legal reference to advisory boards in order to reduce the number of political appointments and giving lower levels of authority the liberty to decide if such advisory boards are necessary leave some doubt as to the Liberal government's commitment to administrative transparency.

In the case of Bill C-65, which was aimed at eliminating any reference, for example, to the National Library Advisory Board, it seemed that the director of the National Library had every intention of keeping a similar board with more or less the same members. This is just an example. In the case of Bill C-65, there were no savings and a little more power to the director of the Library. Will the House of Commons have the right to examine appointments to such advisory boards, which in fact will no longer be legally constituted? How about administrative transparency in a case like this?

That was Bill C-65, an omnibus bill that created the illusion of transparency and deprived the government of the right to examine appointments to advisory boards which will no longer have legal status. Under the cover of administrative rationalization, this bill reduced the power of Parliament and opened the door to an even greater number of patronage appointments, something the Liberals are very good at.

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Coming back to the bill before us today, we can draw a parallel with Bill C-65 which dates back to 1994. Bill C-49, regarding which an amendment has been proposed today, brings major changes to the way administrative tribunals operate.

We are told its purpose is to standardize the disciplinary process in administrative tribunals as well as the procedure for appointing the heads of these tribunals, to dissolve seven federal agencies and restructure or decrease the size of thirteen others, and to standardize pay terminology and make a number of other amendments.

Bill C-49 could have resolved the fundamental problem of partisan appointments to administrative tribunals. Instead, the federal government chose to return to a not-so-glorious past in this regard, rather than modernize the entire appointment process, as the Government of Quebec is getting ready to do.

At a time when the public is so cynical about politicians, the President of the Treasury Board of Canada has introduced even more partisan procedures that will give political authorities increased control over administrative tribunals.

The bill establishes a new mechanism to remove from office people appointed to administrative tribunals by the governor in council. This is in clause 3 of the bill. Also, after certain procedures, the governor in council will have the power to remove these people from office for cause, as specified in the bill.

Only after receiving an inquiry report will the minister have the power to make a recommendation to "suspend the member without pay, remove the member from office or impose any other disciplinary measure or any remedial measure". This is in clause 14 of the bill. The minister's recommendations are entirely at his discretion, regardless of the content of the inquiry report.

• (1810)

All chairpersons of administrative tribunals will henceforth be designated instead of appointed. Such an amendment leaves the chairperson very vulnerable to political pressure from the government, which can simply designate a new chairperson as it sees fit. There is a danger that these new measures will further undermine the credibility of administrative tribunals and in particular leave them even more dependent on the political arm.

It is unacceptable to introduce measures that are such a serious attack on the independence and impartiality of administrative tribunals. It truly runs counter to the transparency the public wants from a modern and progressive government.

The two bills I have compared today, Bill C-65 and Bill C-49, dealt successively with the reorganization of certain federal agencies and of administrative tribunals, but the anticipated annual savings of one million dollars in the first case and a reduced right of review by Parliament and an increase in partisan appointments

in the second leave us with the impression of another promise not kept by this government.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to support the amendment put forward today by the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, and seconded by the member for Frontenac, which reads as follows:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following: "Bill C-49, an act to authorize remedial and disciplinary measures in relation to members of certain administrative tribunals, to reorganize and dissolve certain federal agencies and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be not now read a second time, but that it be read a second time six months hence".

[English]

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-49, a bill which purports to do something about patronage appointments to various tribunals and boards.

My colleague who spoke before me said this bill is typical of the sort of tinkering around the edges that we have seen in most of the Liberal legislation that has come before this House. It just tinkers around the edges of a problem without really getting to the grips of it, without really solving the problem that is there and that is inherent in the whole system. It is typical of the Liberals in government in that regard. Even behind the scenes they cannot make up their minds what to do next.

I mentioned earlier in the day the book *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*. Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether you have had the chance to read the book but it is extremely interesting and revealing. It tells what has happened behind the scenes over the last three years. It points to the exact problem we see in Bill C-49 today, the tinkering around the edges and the inability to come to grips with the problems.

An example in *Double Vision* was when the previous minister of immigration had to make some decisions about cutting costs in the immigration department. He could not bring himself to cut anything but the fact was he had to for fiscal restraint. Eventually he bought the idea of the landing fee for the immigrants even though he was under attack from some of his colleagues and advisers as being racist for introducing such a fee.

The fee started off for good fiscal purposes to be around \$1,500 or \$1,800. It ended up that the previous minister insisted it had to be under \$1,000 in order for him to accept it. Here is this tinkering around the edges again and not truly coming to grips with the cost saving and accepting something less than ideal.

I could go on all day about examples from *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power* because it really does relate to this bill and how it is just tinkering around the edges. I personally think an excellent motion sometime for this House to debate would be that this House recognize the valuable service to Canadian voters performed by the writers Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith in their writing of the book *Double Vision: The*

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Inside Story of the Liberals in Power, and furthermore, that this House should encourage all Canadians to read the book prior to the next federal election.

• (1815)

I wonder if I could ask the unanimous consent of the House to begin debating this motion immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Is there consent for the hon. member to move his motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): There is no such consent. The hon. member may continue his remarks.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, it was worth a try. We could have gone on to some very interesting stuff coming out of that motion but we will save it for another day.

The hon. member who spoke before me from the Reform Party mentioned the Senate as being one of the great places of patronage. I was actually going to bring up the Senate as a good example of a place where we could begin addressing this problem of patronage. Bill C-49 actually claims to eliminate 271 positions from the patronage appointment list. However, none of those positions are filled. They are all vacant. Therefore, we are eliminating nothing.

A lot of Canadians would feel a lot happier if we could eliminate 271 seats in the Senate, if they existed. I know that perhaps, Mr. Speaker, in a previous time, prior to being a deputy speaker, you may have even hoped that there would be a total elimination of the parole boards. I know that personally you were quite against getting too tough on crime, but that is a story for another day.

As for the Senate, even that is getting to the point where perhaps it cannot be trusted as a place of patronage because I know that Senator Anne Cools—Mr. Speaker, can we use a senator's name in the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The hon. member will want to be careful that he does not speak disrespectfully of the Senate. I believe that is a rule that he must follow.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Senator Anne Cools is reported in a newspaper article in the *Vancouver Sun* as departing frequently from the Liberal Party line. I am sure that some of those who were involved in perhaps a patronage appointment in that regard maybe are regretting their past decision.

The article goes on to explain how she has great doubts about the Liberal Party's gun control legislation. According to the report she took part in a shooting exhibition in Edmonton and has the target with suitable bullet holes in it pinned on the wall of her office. Right now she is apparently in opposition to the child support legislation presently before that House. "Life is not so simple as

women are angels and men are devils," says Cools, who, somewhat to her surprise, has become a darling of the right for her assaults on the feminist agenda.

Virtue is hers and vice is his. Who could have believed we would have reached that stage in society where public policy making would be made on this basis. She took aim at the Divorce Act which is a bill we have already dealt with and is looking at perhaps derailing that. That is a patronage appointment perhaps that went wrong, depending on which side of the House one is on, so to speak. However, the Senate is a good example of a place of patronage.

Another problem with Bill C-49 is that one does not even need to be a Canadian citizen in order to take advantage of this new bill. It is going to open things up for appointments or arrangements to be made for non-citizens. All one has to be is a landed immigrant. One wonders what sort of situation we are going to end up in with that sort of vague and open policy.

Another area of patronage that is well recognized is the patronage that tends to follow from Liberal nomination tactics during the run up to elections. There is another article which coincidentally happens to be on the opposite side of the page of the *Vancouver Sun*. It is headed: "Liberal nomination tactics under scrutiny". It is almost a full page.

It is about the natural patronage that tends to flow from nomination meetings run by the Liberals. For example, it deals with Mobina Jaffer, who ran against me in the previous election in North Vancouver. I know that the Liberals felt they had a pretty good shot at it the last time, their best shot perhaps in 20 years, but they did not make it I am afraid. Now Mobina has been rewarded with an automatic appointment to the riding of Burnaby—Douglas which she agreed to take with no competition in return for allowing another party president, Celso Boscarior to go into the riding she had chosen. The rumour in the newspaper is that Mobina will get her reward even if she loses the seat.

• (1820)

The entire article concentrates on the aspect of patronage. I really do not see how Bill C-49 is going to fix that problem because all it does is eliminate positions that did not exist. It is a bunch of window dressing, typical of all of the legislation we are seeing here. We are just not seeing any serious legislation at the moment.

Canadians would prefer us to deal with the Young Offenders Act. They would rather see their taxes lowered. When I go out on to the streets and ask them: "Are your taxes any lower than they were in 1993? Are your streets any safer than they were in 1993? Is the country more unified than it was in 1993?" We can go on and on with a list like that. "Have members of Parliament fixed their gold plated pension plan? Is the GST gone? Is the jobless rate down?". Canadians would much rather see us address those problems than

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some sort of half measure on patronage that really does not even address the problem.

I plead with members to vote against this legislation. It is bad legislation. It is inadequate legislation. Let us go back, do the job properly and clean up the whole thing. That was promised in the red book. The Minister of Finance does not believe we should take any notice of the red book. He said he had a hand in writing it but we should not take any notice of it because he knows what c-r-a-p it is. I am sorry to use that word, but it was a quote from him.

Just as a final reminder in closing, if members have not already read the book *Double Vision*, the truth about the Liberals in power, please read it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. I know that he knows it is improper to use props in the House. I know he would not want to break the rules in that regard.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this appears to be my day for speaking.

We must be getting through reams of legislation. Let us talk about Bill C-49 which is the government's reorganization of the political patronage industry in this country.

As members know I publish a waste report. I brought one out a few weeks ago which dealt to some degree with patronage appointments and the illegal tax evasion scams of some of them.

Having been an accountant in a former life I know that the government has gone to great lengths to ensure that every dollar a person earns is a dollar taxable. These things are quite important because the government needs every dollar it can squeeze out of Canadians. However, it seems that when it comes to political patronage appointments it has forgotten to squeeze hard because there is an illegal tax evasion scam going on. It goes something like this.

Dr. Victor Goldbloom, the Commissioner of Official Languages, was asked by the Clerk of the Privy Council to accept the appointment of official languages commissioner. The job of course is here in Ottawa.

I have it on the record of the official languages committee when I asked the commissioner exactly what was going on. He said that he had no intention of moving from Montreal, where he lives, to Ottawa. The Clerk of the Privy Council then said: "You will therefore be entitled to a second residence allowance". Since that date we as taxpayers have been providing him with an apartment

here in town. I understand the rent is somewhere around \$15,000 or \$16,000 a year.

In addition to that, he said: "I prefer to live in Montreal". Since his position carries a chauffeured limousine along with it, the chauffeur goes to Montreal every Monday morning and brings him to Ottawa and on Friday night takes him back home, all tax free of course. For every other Canadian commuting to and from work is not a tax deductible expense. They have to pay taxes on it if their employer provides that transportation. But not so for the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Every time an employer provides extra accommodation, the value of that accommodation is taxable except under very limited circumstances. The Clerk of the Privy Council gave Dr. Victor Goldbloom a tax free apartment in Ottawa courtesy of the Canadian taxpayer and that is illegal.

● (1825)

I have it on record at the official languages committee that that is exactly what has transpired. The government was asked through a question on the Order Paper a couple of years ago if this was an isolated experience or does it exist elsewhere. It took me two years to get the information. I had to rise on a point of privilege two or three times. I had to badger the government to get an answer to my question on the Order Paper. You know that yourself, Mr. Speaker. While the government has a responsibility to answer that question within 45 days it took two years before it was able to answer the question.

The reason is that not only is the Commissioner of Official Languages participating in an illegal tax evasion scam but others are doing it too. They may have received a patronage appointment in Ottawa and live somewhere else. They want a housing allowance tax free. They may be within reasonable commuting distance of the position but they have to drive a certain distance. They are getting up to \$2,000 a month for travel allowance because they decided that they were not going to move to where the job they accepted actually is. This is all on a tax free basis.

Every other employer in the country cannot provide that type of service and that type of benefit on a tax free basis. Yet we have found numerous agencies that are paid by the taxpayer that are participating in this scam. These people with patronage appointments are in many cases making more than \$100,000 a year and in some cases as much as \$150,000 a year and are getting an additional \$10,000 to \$25,000 a year tax free.

I reported these people to the Minister of National Revenue. I have had her verbal assurance today that she will follow through and ensure that she fulfils her duty to apply the Income Tax Act fairly and without bias right across the country and also to these patronage appointments.

Government Orders

It is a disgrace that the people who are appointed by a government, not because of what they know but because of who they know and what they may have been, such as a minister or an MP in a government of a previous day, should be able to latch on to the taxpayers' purse and then on top of that start some illegal tax evasion scheme to make it even more generous. It is despicable that we allow it to continue.

I hope the message goes out loud and clear to every board and to every person with a political patronage appointment in this country that there are laws and they apply equally to them as they do to every other Canadian citizen. That is the type of attitude that brings disgrace on the political process. That is the type of thing that destroys Canadians' confidence in government.

That is why this government, like the previous government, has a serious integrity problem. It has destroyed the trust that people have in government. People now believe that those who are in power are in power to help themselves. Unfortunately the facts seem to prove that to be so.

Government and being a politician used to be an honourable profession where people wanted to serve their country, serve their constituents and serve the people of Canada. It is a noble calling that has been thrown in a trash can by the people who have used the opportunity to help themselves.

I hope that in a small way this will show a new beginning, that trust can be won. However, it has to be won through earning the respect of Canadians by living responsibly, by working responsibly, by living within the rules, by ensuring that the laws that we write in this House apply not just to all Canadians out there but apply to us in here. Surely that is the fair test.

• (1830)

If we are prepared to apply a law to Canadians that says this is how much tax you have to pay, this is how much tax you have to forfeit to the Government of Canada, then surely that same law should be applied to us without fear, without favour and without bias and without writing a special, more lenient rule for ourselves and for patronage appointments.

That is a small way that we could start to reintroduce integrity that has been lost and damaged and trashed by succeeding governments, especially this one right here. How can we have accountability when we have seen cabinet ministers whose positions of trust have been compromised by expense reports that cannot be fully justified by the travel on government business?

It goes a long way to telling the poor people in this country, who are being taxed to death to subsidize people's grand style of living. We hear government members say bring out another tax and spend program, another child poverty program so that they can throw a few crumbs back to these people, while at the same time feathering their own nest.

They are the tax and spend programs where people feel they only qualify for the tax side and seldom qualify for receiving the cheques side. When they open the paper and find out that here in Ottawa it is very easy to get on the receiving side that is when the trust is destroyed.

I hope that Bill C-49, which we do not agree with, will be the final step and that from here on we start to build integrity into the system.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us, Bill C-49, makes some administrative changes to boards, agencies and tribunals according to the summary.

Our position is that this bill should be scrapped and done away with immediately. It does little, if anything, to reduce patronage. It makes surface changes to administration of boards and agencies but no real changes to improve accountability.

We need competence and quality in appointments to government boards and tribunals as well as improved accountability. This bill, in itself, in our view is simply a blueprint for patronage.

The bill does not affect the cabinet's power to make appointments. It can still appoint whomever it wants whenever it wants. In fact, the number of pleasure appointments have increased, which may open the door to increased political interference.

The bill says it will eliminate 271 jobs. Currently all 271 jobs are vacant and we know full well, and acting on common sense, when someone does not have something they cannot very well take it away.

There are still approximately 2,225 appointments available to cabinet. The person in charge of patronage appointments is Penny Collette, a patronage appointment in and of herself.

In the red book the Liberals made a promise with regard to patronage. They said that a Liberal government will take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in the institutions of government and make competence and diversity the criteria for federal appointments. Open government will be the watchword of the Liberal program. That was on page 92. This bill flies in the face of that commitment.

Our commitment in our blue book was that the Reform Party supports restrictions and limitations on the number and types of orders in council permitted by a government during its term in office. That is the way these appointments should be made.

Let us take a look at what the Ottawa *Citizen* has to say and part of the list that it provided us on Friday, January 3 on government appointments. It notes that Deborah Coyne, a constitutional lawyer who worked as an advisor to former Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells during the Meech Lake accord negotiations and who is a special friend of former Prime Minister Trudeau, will kick off the

new year as a member of the department of citizenship's immigration and refugee board.

● (1835)

It says that Stephen Goudge, a former chairman of the legal aid committee of the Law Society of Upper Canada and a friend of the current justice minister, was appointed a judge of the court of appeal for Ontario. When contacted at his Toronto home, Mr. Goudge stated that he did not have any comment on his appointment. He said: "It would be inappropriate for me to comment on anything. I am honoured by the appointment. I will do the best I can". I am sure he will and he will be well rewarded for it.

Cabinet order in council documents show that the Liberal government made 53 such public service appointments on December 19. They were tremendous Christmas gifts. They included 27 appointments to quasi-judicial boards administered by the Department of Human Resources Development, 11 appointments to the immigration and refugee board and the appointment of five senior judges. Some of the jobs are high paying. For example, the immigration and refugee board jobs come with salaries of \$86,400 a year.

These patronage appointments prompted an editorial in the Ottawa *Citizen*, a paper which customarily is friendly to the government. I would like to read into the record some of the editorial. The title is: "Hypocrisy of Patronage". The subtitle is: "Having failed to uphold red book promises to control patronage, the Liberals are guilty of the sin of hypocrisy". The editorial states:

What do hundreds of defeated Liberal candidates, campaign managers, fundraisers, and friends of Jean Chrétien have in common? They've been rewarded with patronage posts for their loyal service to the Liberal party.

Make no mistake, patronage is alive and well in the Chrétien government. It is most obvious with Gov. Gen. Roméo LeBlanc (former MP, senator, and election strategist). It is just as pervasive with the unknown Liberals who sit on countless agencies and boards.

Granted, the Liberals are not abusing the time-(dis)honored practice as much as Brian Mulroney did. He shamelessly spread the spoils of power and turned Canada into a nation of cynics.

Chrétien's political sin isn't that he's acted as cavalierly as Mulroney, but that he hasn't met the high standards he promised. His is a sin of political hypocrisy. Among the Liberals' Red Book promises:

The budget for consulting contracts would be cut by 15 per cent. So-called communications consultants with political ties can reap lucrative contracts by providing "strategic" advice. The Liberals say general spending cuts have saved enough money, so they have not chopped consulting budgets as promised.

Government Orders

Parliamentarians would be given "mechanisms" to review some senior cabinet appointments. No such mechanisms are yet created, and no excuse given.

All appointments would be "made on the basis of competence". So far, more than 1,800 have been appointed. Some, such as LeBlanc, have been highly successful, but overall quality suffers if the candidates' prime qualification is that they are Liberals.

Chrétien promised this week "he won't take Canadians for granted" in the next election. If so, he should remember it's their loyalty—not that of party members—that should come first.

Patronage is a problem. That is pointed out in this editorial. They are not my words, they are the words of a newspaper which tends to be friendly with the current government. Patronage spoils the feelings which people have for politicians and their government, especially when they see candidates who were unsuccessful in general elections being appointed to government boards and other bodies which pay well. They look at that with great alarm. It is taxpayers' money and they wonder how well their money is being spent. Why should their hard earned tax dollars be used to support failed candidates in a manner to which the taxpayers would like to become accustomed?

The bill makes very few changes, for example, to travel and per diem perks. In section 32(3), this bill will not affect such high flyers, as my colleague pointed out earlier, as Victor Goodbloom, the Commissioner of Official Languages, who commutes between Montreal and Ottawa. But it will eliminate local commuting claims for people who used to claim the drive from home to work even if was just around the corner.

The bill will deal with remedial and disciplinary measures which will be standardized for administrative tribunals. However, the power of the minister to interfere with disciplinary measures has increased. The minister can now decide whether any member of a committee should be subject to remedial or disciplinary measures, section 5, or whether they should continue on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but it being 6.40 p.m., it is time to adjourn. When the debate resumes, the hon. member will have about one minute remaining in his remarks, which is why I am so reluctant to cut him off, but we have filled the time.

It being 6.40 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to the standing orders.

(The House adjourned at 6.40 p.m.)

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