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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 9, 1998

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately conduct a review, with the participation of all stakeholders, to develop a solution to grain transportation inefficiencies.

• (1105)

He said: Mr. Speaker, what a better way to start a Monday morning than to speak in this wonderful Chamber. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, having rested over this past weekend, will no doubt appreciate the comments that I as well as members of other opposition parties will make.

Unfortunately the motion was deemed non-votable. I would have preferred it votable, but when I appeared before committee there were only so many motions that could be put forward as votable. This was not chosen as one of them.

This motion is what I believe to be one of the major agricultural issues that will be facing Canadian producers and certainly Canadian trade in not only 1998 but years to follow.

I put forward Motion 225:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately conduct a review, with the participation of all stakeholders, to develop a solution to grain transportation inefficiencies.

As part of my presentation to the committee, I quoted that the delayed 1997 shipments to contracted international customers, primarily in wheat, have resulted in demurrage charges of \$65 million paid for primarily by producers. It has been estimated that an additional \$35 million was lost in potential sales because of

Canada's inability to deliver product. This does not only reflect poorly on westerners but on Canada as a whole in the international marketplace.

I would also like to inform the House that this motion does not put forward any partisan interests. I am not suggesting any changes in policy. I am suggesting that we, as parliamentarians, listen to stakeholders involved, draft a report and table that report to the House for consideration.

On December 18, 1997 the transport minister sent out a news release announcing the appointment of the hon. Justice Estey to conduct a review of Canada's grain handling transportation system. The timing is very important. In October I put forward this motion to committee. In December of that same year the government did announce Mr. Estey as being the individual who would take the review forward. There are still some issues and some problems with that. I would like to consider that the transportation committee and the agricultural committee have a joint committee struck so we can, as parliamentarians, listen to stakeholders and put forward their views to this House in a separate report.

I welcome the appointment. It has been a long time coming. A preliminary report will be available by May 31, 1998. The final report of the review is to be completed by December 31, 1998.

A grain review advisory council comprising of representatives from grain handling and transportation will be appointed by the Minister of Transport to support Mr. Estey throughout the review process. Hopefully the advisory council will not end in the same fate that the western grain marketing panel suffered after most of its key recommendations were shelved after they were given to the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

I welcome the government's decision to finally begin the process of the review. The unfortunate part of this is it is about two years too late. With this review scheduled to end by December 1998, it will not be until 1999 when there can be something actually done about the recommendations.

That being said, I would now like to elaborate on my motion today which unfortunately was deemed not votable.

On July 25, 1997 the federal ministers of transport and agriculture and the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board

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convened a grain summit in Winnipeg. A key objective was to gauge the interest among those who handled and transported grain and the value of embarking on a comprehensive review system. It was a productive exercise but it did not answer the problems that thousands of farmers have out west with our current system. However, there was a consensus that the review should be conducted in 1999. With all due respect, Canadian farmers cannot wait for two years.

We as parliamentarians have a role and a duty in committee to begin immediately to listen to the concerns of all stakeholders so that we may be able to have a better understanding as to how we might tackle this problem.

• (1110)

I also understand how we might tackle the problem. I also believe that the most appropriate way of conducting an immediate comprehensive review is to form a joint standing committee of agriculture and agri-food and transport, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a). The committee would hear witnesses from farming communities across western Canada, railways, the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian Wheat Board and those who operate and regulate the industry.

I would also like to dispel any thoughts that this is an issue that affects only western Canada. It is an issue that has widespread ramifications across Canada even though it has directly affected those west of the Ontario border. It is Canada's international reputation that is at stake as supplier of some of the world's best grain and best product.

The review is necessary because of the new market realities for Canadian grain. With the end of the Crow rate two years ago, farmers have to be more competitive. Also, it should be noted that the federal government's 13,000 hopper fleet is yet to be sold, leaving farmers wondering the government's reasoning for not doing anything with it. This is not helping the situation.

The review should assess the effectiveness of the process, the adequacy of shipper protection, lack of railway competition and alternatives and potential improvements and efficiencies, bearing in mind the costs to all stakeholders.

Canada exports approximately \$18 billion to \$20 billion worth of food products every year. About half of those exports are grains, oilseeds and related products. Inefficiencies in the management of the Canadian grain transportation system have caused serious damage to the Canadian grain export industry and prairie economy.

Delayed 1997 shipments to contracted international consumers, primarily in wheat, have resulted in demurrage costs of approximately \$65 million, paid for by producers. It has been estimated

that \$35 million was lost in potential sales because of Canada's inability to deliver. These are conservative estimates.

Prairie pools, for example, have suggested estimates of hundreds of millions of dollars in lost sales of prairie products. This does not only reflect poorly on westerners but Canada as a whole and the international global marketplace.

Instead of dealing with the situation rationally, the Canadian Wheat Board's knee-jerk reaction to the problem was to file a complaint against CN rail before the CTA, which is only costing taxpayers and producers more money, in a battle of egos instead of sitting down rationally in committee and solving the problem.

I have asked the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board to drop the complaint so that we can get on with the constructive review. He has declined to do so. Unlike what the Canadian Wheat Board and CN have done, the committee review will not be an exercise in finger pointing.

The CTA hearing has literally handcuffed the government's ability to conduct this review on grain transportation. Legislation governing the Canada Transportation Act allows 120 days to lapse between the time a complaint is filed and when the public hearing must take place.

Unfortunately the CTA has delayed public hearings three times since the complaint began and now is not scheduled to hear until March 1998.

Once again I would like to inform this House that this motion does not put forward any partisan interests. I am not suggesting any changes in policy. I am only suggesting that we, as parliamentarians, listen to stakeholders, draft a report and table the report for consideration in the House of Commons.

Every provincial government in western Canada wants the review conducted as soon as possible. Even Saskatchewan's transport minister has said, referring to Ottawa's response to the issue, it is a process that is taking much too long. There is not a stakeholder involved who does not want an immediate inquiry into the issue.

The committee process is vital to our role as parliamentarians. Since the time of Confederation, the House of Commons has created committees to study matters of national importance. It is just one of many issues that are important to western Canadians and Canada's reputation. If anything, I hope this exercise is not a waste of time. At the very least those on the government side can consider this an information session so that the next time they might actually try to listen to the concerns of farmers across western Canada and be proactive instead of reactive.

• (1115)

I have a number of concerns. As I said earlier, Mr. Justice Estey has been identified as the individual to take this banner across

western Canada to try to find out exactly what the inefficiencies are in the transportation system. And there are many.

One of the concerns I have right now is the changes that are going on constantly in the rail transportation system. One is that of rail abandonment. Our concerns and certainly my position would be, rather than rail abandonment because of the change in the transportation system in the inland terminals that we have more short lines. The short lines should be available to those entrepreneurs who wish to develop the process within their own market-places. I believe that is one very major issue that has to be studied not only by the committee but certainly by Mr. Justice Estey and his individual groups.

Another very serious concern I have, and I talked about it briefly, is that of political will. We recognize there is a very major problem with the system of grain transportation now in western Canada. There is no finger pointing. A number of stakeholders and organizations are equally at fault by operating a system that is unimpeded by progress in the last number of years. They are steeped in tradition only but have not developed the same way that farming has developed in western Canada.

It is going to take political will to make the system change. Right now the Canadian Wheat Board controls the allocation of cars. The question should be asked, should in fact they be controlling that particular aspect of transportation, or should it be controlled either by the producers or for that matter by the railroads themselves.

I find it very strange that a producer when he sells his product is responsible for that product until it gets on a ship. However he has no control of that product. This is the political will that is required to make the necessary changes in order to make the system work better. I believe that a joint committee of agriculture and agri-food and transportation would at least allow the nurturing of that political will, non-partisan, to do what is best for the producer and certainly what is best for western Canadian trade abroad.

I also have a concern about the delay in Justice Estey's report. We have some serious concerns right now about the fact that we are being affected in the international market because of just in time delivery. If Justice Estey wishes to bring his report forward in two years, we may have lost a wonderful window of opportunity to have additional sales in the world market where we could not access them because of the lack of ability to deliver on time.

There is another issue too with respect to transportation which has not been dealt with but which the committee should be studying. That is the effect on municipal roads that rail transportation is going to have in the not too distant future. We have seen a number of the private sector corporations developing huge inland terminals where producers are required to ship their product by rubber tire many kilometres further now than what they did previously with other rail lines.

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The problem with that is that road infrastructure is being impacted by the grain trucks and municipalities are responsible for the repair, the construction and the maintenance of those roads. I believe it is important that this government and the committee design and help to put in place a policy which will assist that road infrastructure.

There is one other issue that I have a real serious concern with. It is the CTA hearing itself. How can Justice Estey expect to have open, honest, transparent dialogue when the Canadian Wheat Board is taking the same people to a quasi-judicial court and asking for millions of millions of dollars? It cannot be expected to be honest and open unless we get rid of the CTA hearing. That too should be debated and discussed openly at the committee level so that parliamentarians can make an honest decision and judgment and bring it back to the House.

• (1120)

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I hope your Monday morning has gone well. I hope the rest of the week goes equally as well for you and the rest of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member's views are shared by all hon. members.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had truly expected that a deliriously happy member for Brandon—Souris would stand in his place today to withdraw Motion No. 225 because for all intents and purposes it has been nullified by the transport minister's wise decision to undertake a comprehensive review of the grain handling and transportation system. Unfortunately such is not the case. The hon. member wants to play politics while this government is committed to finding solutions with the co-operation of all the stakeholders concerned.

I would like to go back a bit. The Canada Transportation Act enacted on July 1, 1996 is intended to modernize and streamline rail regulation, promote the formation of short line railways and ensure that shippers continue to have access to competitive transportation services. The act provides for a review of the provisions of the act during 1999 as they relate to grain transportation. However, given the difficulties incurred by the system, which the hon. member mentioned, during the 1996-97 crop year and the calls from stakeholders, the Minister of Transport decided to accelerate this review.

On December 18, 1997 the Minister of Transport appointed Mr. Justice Willard Estey to conduct this review. Justice Estey is one of Canada's leading jurists and he has been given broad terms of reference which allow him to conduct a comprehensive review of the system. Justice Estey's appointment has been exceedingly well

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received by the entire stakeholder community, including provincial ministers of agriculture and transportation.

For instance, Manitoba's minister of highways and transportation said "The western provinces are pleased that the federal government has appointed the honourable Mr. Justice Willard Z. Estey—. Justice Estey's pre-eminent background makes him a highly qualified individual to examine potential changes in the grain handling and transportation system".

Leroy Larsen of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool said "This is exactly the broad mandate we were looking for—. Let us get all the issues on the table".

Ted Allen, the president of the United Grain Growers, said "You have to see it as a positive".

Justice Estey will be conducting the review in two phases. During the first phase he will consult stakeholders in order to identify the key issues and problems. Work in this phase of the review is already under way. Justice Estey will report to the minister on his phase one findings by May 31, 1998.

I want to stress to the hon. member that this is an important part of the review. The second phase will commence after the resolution of the complaint currently before the Canadian Transportation Agency. Phase two will involve the development of a package of recommendations on issues and problems identified during phase one. It is expected that Justice Estey will submit his report on phase two findings to the minister by the end of this year.

Justice Estey has eagerly begun to perform his duties. He has already taken two trips to western Canada where he has met with over 50 stakeholders and he has met with provincial transport ministers from the western provinces. Several more trips to the western provinces by Justice Estey and the review secretariat are planned. This will ensure that the consultation process for the review will be broad and that all interested stakeholders will have the opportunity to make their views known to the review.

I agree with the hon. member that consultation is crucial to the success of this process. If stakeholders are not consulted, then the resulting product simply will not be good enough to serve the needs of the industry.

Producers are the experts, shippers are the experts, railways are the experts, grain companies are the experts and so on throughout the entire system. These are the people who matter in this review and these are the people Justice Estey is eager to hear from. Without their input the review would be a sterile exercise because it would not be able to serve the needs of all elements of industry.

Taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by modern technology, the Estey grain review will have a dedicated Internet

web site which will allow all individuals to make representations directly to Justice Estey for his consideration. This will allow all, and I stress the word all, interested parties to have their say on this important topic and it will ensure that everyone is heard.

• (1125)

Even before the announcement of this review, the Minister of Transport had taken steps to ensure that the difficulties incurred during the 1996-97 crop year were not repeated. In July the Minister of Transport along with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board met with industry representatives to discuss plans for the upcoming crop year.

The Minister of Transport challenged the industry to take steps to ensure that grain movement would proceed without incident. As a result of that meeting an industry led contingency plan was developed. This plan would allow the industry to respond to emerging logistic problems before they became serious enough to materially affect grain flows.

By identifying and dealing with the issues before they get out of hand, the contingency provisions would ensure that the system would not repeat its 1996-97 difficulties.

The system has responded well to the challenge by the minister. We are currently about halfway through the crop year and already the system has exported more than two million tonnes of grain than it did at this point last year. That is good news for everyone and it ensures that Canada can maintain its leading role in world grain markets.

In addition to the contingency plan however, the more important achievement of the minister was that he help initiate a dialogue within the industry so that everyone's efforts were focused on moving grain this year instead of pointing fingers of blame for last year.

Finding solutions to the difficulties in Canada's grain handling and transportation system will require the co-operation of all parties. This review is only the start of that process. We need to focus on solutions to improve the efficiency of the entire system from the time the grain leaves the farm gate to the time the vessels leave the port loaded with Canadian grain for its export destination.

The Minister of Transport took great care in the selection of Justice Willard Estey. Many candidates were considered for this position but few could match Justice Estey's impressive credentials. As a former supreme court justice, Justice Estey is skilled in absorbing and processing vast amounts of technical material and then making sense out of it all in a rational manner.

As a former judge, Justice Estey is also skilled in the important quality of giving equal consideration to all the material that is

relevant to a question before passing judgment. Justice Estey is new to the grain industry but his actions to date indicate that he has thrown his energies into this process with great enthusiasm. Stakeholders have been impressed with his vigour and candour and they are pleased that the minister has made such a fine choice for such an important matter.

There can be no doubt that this is a matter that is of the utmost importance to the Canadian economy. The Minister of Transport is confident that the work that will result from Justice Estey's review will help us achieve the most cost effective, customer friendly grain handling and transportation system possible. Canadian producers deserve no less and they will get no less from this review.

I appreciate that the hon. member brought forward his particular motion. At the time he brought it forward, yes, he had concerns and believed that we as an all-party committee could sit down and discuss these issues. However, we now have a review process that is independent of the political process.

This is the hon. member's first term here so I can understand where he might be coming from, that we could do a heck of a job in committee, bring two committees together and discuss the issue at committee stage. However, the member will discover as he lives on through politics and attends many of these committee meetings over the next short term of his political career, that the walls start to go up, the divisions start to happen and sometimes not everyone can be heard because of limitations of time, limitations to what the committee can do and limitations on how much money the committee can use to travel.

As a result, by putting it into independent hands and out of the political process, we are confident that Justice Estey will be able to take into consideration all the views from all the stakeholders and all the individuals through the web site in order to come up with a solution that is satisfactory to everyone in this system.

• (1130)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise in debate on this private member's motion. Indeed I wish it were votable as well.

I would like to assure the hon. member who just spoke that I am not here to criticize the appointment of Mr. Justice Willard Estey. The point I want to make is that this has come far too late.

We have had a disease hit western Canada which obviously this government is not aware of. It is a disease called terminalization. This terminalization has us in a situation that is changing the western grain transportation movement so quickly that the appointment of the hon. Mr. Justice Estey may be redundant.

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In the motion by the hon. member for Souris—Brandon there is one word that is key in the debate, that in the opinion of this House the government should immediately conduct a review with the participation of all stakeholders.

Up to this time, I want to assure this House, that the most important stakeholders, the most numerous stakeholders, the stakeholders whose livelihoods depend on it have not been consulted by the railways. They have not been consulted by this government and they have not been consulted by the grain companies.

The farmers in western Canada today feel they have been betrayed wholesale. In May, during the campaign, we had the three members of this government move a public inquiry as to what was happening.

At that time I said that the inquiry would never take place. It did not. It moved on until July. A joint statement by three members, as the member alluded to, said that things were going to go well.

I want people in this House to think for one moment. I have a constituency right now where there is an oil boom. Still the majority of people are dependent on agriculture for a living.

In light of what my colleague from Souris—Brandon had to say, if something is not done very drastically within the next two years, and I will be coming to this a little later, I will have farmers attempting to get the grain to market not 100 kilometres but 100 miles.

Those people are out of business. Mr. Justice Estey will find that it has gone too far, too fast and we have people who can no longer live in the land. I have examined several of my constituents' grain bills. Now almost half the total cost of grain is in transportation alone. It is a dreadful thing. Nowhere else in Canada does agriculture face this type of transportation cost.

I want to inform the minister and members of this House what has happened. I have a formula from a paper in western Canada: deregulation minus competition equals a monopoly. Let me take a moment to explain how that monopoly has taken place.

In Saskatchewan all the CN lines were traded to CP and CN went to northern Saskatchewan. The CP branch lines to northern Saskatchewan came to southern Saskatchewan and created a mammoth monopoly. That is what is existing at the present time.

I do not really think the transport minister, the agriculture minister and the sole government member in charge of the wheat board are even aware this monopoly has been created on the prairies. It is a zero plus for any western farmer today. That is what has happened.

I want to talk a little about the situation that the chief justice finds himself in.

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• (1135)

I know the railways are not happy with me but the producers are, and they are the ones who count. For the last five years they have been meeting behind closed doors and they themselves are establishing a monopoly. We have CN to the north, no competition, and CP to the south, no competition. The grain companies have decided where they are going to put the various terminals. Even the producer will not have an option as to who buys the grain.

Talk about living under a regime. They do not have an option to where they haul their grain and they do not have an option under the Canadian Wheat Board as to how the grain is to be sold. They have developed a very serious thing in the prairies.

I would like to provide information which I think is very important. The Reform Party proposes that a moratorium be legislated on the abandonment branch lines west of the city of Winnipeg. What is the hurry? The branch lines are there. They are in top shape. The elevator houses are there. Let us slow down for a moment until we get some sense of the disease which I have referred to as terminalization.

Under section 43 of the Canada Transportation Act, they should be protected from dismantlement for not less than three years to allow time to investigate and develop the short line proposals. We have moved too far, too fast and if we continue to move at the current rate we can forget about any short line proposals. It is reaching the point where it is case closed. We will have to live with the results of not the shareholders but the railways and the grain companies. The producer is going to suffer the consequence of the government's sitting by and allowing this monopoly to develop.

Both CN and CP are issuing notices of discontinuance of rail lines on a piecemeal basis. If this happens I will have no railways in the western half of my constituency operational by the year 2000. Not one. Everything is going to be wiped out. In doing so, most of the subdivisions are available for sale and would not be viable for stand alone short lines because of the railway abandonments. There is no place for them to haul.

There is a cartoon in the paper showing a main line going but all the branch lines coming into the main line being cut. Short lines are out. The monopoly of the railways and the monopoly of the grain companies is already taken place. Most of the branch lines are at risk in Saskatchewan.

The hon. member from Souris Brandon alluded to this, but I want to say that no place is it more evident than in Saskatchewan that the public road system is in absolute shambles. There is tactic alliance between the railways and the grain companies to eliminate the branch lines as quickly as possible and concentrate grain

facilities in high capacity main line terminals. That in itself would not be bad if the farmers, the real stakeholders, had a voice in this.

The absence of railway competition in western Canada negates the argument that controlling the abandonment process will interfere with the free market. What a joke. There is no free market. Surely the people of Canada, particularly of eastern Canada, recognize that for the farmers in western Canada there is no free market.

Large scale farming in western Canada would not have developed without the historical past, right or wrong, of money being injected into the railways.

With the time I have left I want to point out something this government should be aware of. The amount of energy that will be used to get the grain to a terminal has already been measured as between three to eight times the amount of emissions going through the air as it would by rail traffic. I believe every word of all those reports. It has to be more polluting to haul grain to terminals via roads that do not exist.

• (1140)

At least half the villages in my constituency have totally disappeared in the last 30 years. In some places there is not even the old store or an elevator or even a post office or even postal boxes to indicate where the towns had been. The remaining small towns have stabilized and are providing essential services in the west. But many of these communities will disappear as we continue the wholesale abandonment and betrayal of the western Canadian farmer.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus to speak to the motion concerning this crisis put forward by the member for Brandon—Souris. There is a crisis in western grain transportation. We must try to find workable solutions.

I heard the member who put forward the motion lament that it was non-votable, but it certainly has been actionable. The government has seen fit to take some action. As previous speakers have noted, the government has appointed retired Justice Estey to look into the grain transportation crisis. We welcome Mr. Estey's appointment in this effort. He is a distinguished Canadian citizen and was a distinguished jurist at the supreme court level. A native of Saskatchewan, he knows in his bones just how important grain transportation is to our vast and land locked province.

In a recent interview in the *Western Producer*, Justice Estey said: "You know I'm a westerner from 100 years back and I don't remember four provinces ever agreeing on what day it is, but they did today". The member for Souris—Moose Mountain noted that

the four provinces are in agreement on the need for this urgent transportation review.

The federal government in 1975 appointed a royal commission to investigate grain and rail in western Canada. The commission was led by a colleague of Mr. Estey, the late hon. Justice Emmett Hall. At that time Justice Hall was being encouraged by the railways to move toward deregulation. He was wise enough not to accept their recommendations. He insisted there had to be a degree of regulation in the grain transportation system.

We have an historic problem which has been with us since the first stages of agricultural settlement in western Canada. Farmers grow grain and they have to move it to market. To do that effectively and efficiently in the land locked west they must rely on the railroads, as previous speakers have noted.

The railroads are effectively a monopoly or at least a duopoly made up of CN and CP when it comes to moving grain hundreds and thousands of kilometres from the farm gate to the port. From Sir John A. Macdonald's day until today, the railways have always had farmers and rural communities at their mercy. Much of western Canadian history revolves around attempts by farmers to force governments to create institutions and/or regulations to protect them from this monopolistic environment.

Mr. Hall did not buy the railway's cry for deregulation two decades ago. He knew the only protection for farmers in this monopolistic situation was the continuation of some form of regulation. But the governments of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Brian Mulroney and the current government of today did buy those arguments from the railroads. First the Crow rate was abandoned and replaced by the Crow benefit. Then the Crow benefit was abandoned in the last Parliament and railways have now been given the green light to abandon rail lines at will.

We are not talking about hypothetical situations. I refer to the line that includes Eston and Elrose. The previous speaker moved around Saskatchewan when he ran for various legislatures. He will know about the Elrose area, Dinsmore, Beechy and Estonia.

• (1145)

This is an area where the farmers had to get together to move the grain in December because CN had indicated that it had no intention of coming in. I would like to quote from the minister of highways who is responsible for transportation in Saskatchewan. The hon. Judy Bradley said:

CN's refusal to negotiate in good faith with the West Central Road and Rail Committee is simply unacceptable. Communities will lose their railway system, not because rail service is not economically viable in the region, but because it does not support the bottom line of CN and the grain companies. This is not an answer Saskatchewan will accept.

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While I am on this point about West Central, I congratulate my colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar who notes that the West Central R and R has put together an excellent package, one that will ensure the future of the rail line and one which will work for farmers. There is no sound reason for CN to reject it.

The prairie provinces have suffered dramatically as a result of changes to federal regulations governing rail transportation. It is not enough that they are abandoning rail lines but they are dismantling the tracks at the same time. It is a real scorched earth policy.

I listened carefully to the exchange last week between the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands and the Minister of Transport. The member was urging the government to place a moratorium on rail line abandonment until the Estey report was concluded. The minister gave a lot of platitudes and indicated he would look into it but he was certain that the railway companies were not abusing the situation.

There is absolutely no reason at this point that the government cannot simply issue an edict that says there will not be a centimetre of rail track that is lifted during this report by Estey. That is the real problem. If we abandon the track, we can always put rail cars on at a later date, but if we tear up the track, the cost is prohibitive and it means the line is gone forever.

We see examples of that in parts of Saskatchewan and in other provinces. The railway companies are tearing up a significant portion of track to make sure that short line railways will not be viable for Omnitrax or some of the other competitors that are thinking of coming in to fill the void created by CN and CP to move grain to Hudson Bay and elsewhere to the main lines. That is a very significant concern. It is something the government could and should move on immediately.

In addition, I mentioned the abandonment of the Crow rate and the Crow benefit. We have seen in the last few years that the railways have doubled and tripled freight rates on grain. At the same time they have ripped up tracks and shifted the costs of long hauls onto the backs of farmers.

This is not the only cost to individual farmers. The roads in western Canada and the grid roads in Saskatchewan—and we have some of the largest road networks in the country on a per capita basis—were not built for these huge trucks. The roads are taking a terrible pounding as the member for Souris—Moose Mountain noted a few minutes ago. They are taking a pounding because the grain has to be carried further and further to the giant inland terminals.

Mr. Estey, we believe, is off to a good start having met quickly with governments of the four western provinces and with various stakeholders. I agree with Mr. Estey when he says that he can and must proceed with his review even while the wheat board

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complaint against the railway continues concurrently. On this point I do not accept the member for Brandon—Souris' point that the wheat board's complaint against the railway should be dropped. Clearly the two situations can go independently of one another.

• (1150)

In conclusion, we are demanding again that the federal government stop all rail line dismantling until Mr. Justice Estey's review is complete. Whatever results from the review of the grain transportation system, it must ensure that a fair share of the benefits of an improved system find their way back to the farmers and thus to their communities.

Also, we must ask ourselves what government policies and regulations may be needed in a situation where competitive services and rates are not historic in a continuing monopoly by the railroads.

Finally, there are other various ideas which are of great interest to us, including joint running rights and the organization of short line railroads. Railways have thwarted efforts by Saskatchewan producers often in frustration for the establishment of short line railways.

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address this issue. Some of my colleagues have asked what a member from the great metropolis of Mississauga might be concerned about with regard to this issue. Obviously transportation, whether it be grain transportation or the rail system, is of significance to all Canadians right across the country.

When I was in the provincial legislature in Ontario I sponsored a private member's bill to try to assist short line rail lines from disappearing and to assist the takeover and privatization by providing an exemption to short line rail operators from successor rights. This very serious problem saw private business trying to take over certain short line rail lines having to assume as many as 17 different union contracts that simply made it uneconomic and inoperable. This is a concern right across the country with regard to our railway system.

Obviously, grain production and the marketing of such is a key sector of the prairie economy. It is also important in many other communities across Canada.

Since the majority of grains and processed grain products are exported off the prairies, the grain transportation and handling system must be as efficient and reliable as possible in order to minimize costs to farmers and respond to their customers' needs. The system is very complex and involves a number of different stakeholders.

I would like to give a few statistics relating to the grain transportation and handling sector to help put things in perspective.

There are currently about 120,000 Canadian Wheat Board permit holders in western Canada. The average crop production is about 45 million tonnes, nearly 60% of which is exported. Farmers truck their grain an average of 15 miles. There are about 1,100 primary elevators located at about 900 shipping points in the country. There are over 13,000 miles of rail lines in western Canada alone, of which some 5,000 miles are grain dependent branch lines.

Prairie grain is exported through terminal elevators—and to prove my point about it being a national issue—located at Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Thunder Bay and Churchill. As well there are transfer elevators at a number of locations on the St. Lawrence River.

Grain transportation reform is one of several key transportation initiatives that have been implemented in recent years. There are four main reasons for reforming grain transportation policies.

There was a requirement to comply with the new world trade rules which impose significant dollar and volume restrictions on trade-distorting subsidies such as payments under the Western Grain Transportation Act.

Reform was necessary to create a less rigid and more responsive operating environment and encourage a faster, lower cost and more efficient system for the benefit of farmers, shippers and railways. Hardly an abandonment, I might add, of the prairie farmers.

• (1155)

There was also a need to eliminate the freight rate discrimination against value added production and processing, diversification and economic growth.

Finally, the government wanted to help reduce government spending in the battle against the deficit while re-focusing remaining expenditures on key growth oriented priorities.

There were five components to western grain transportation reform.

First, the WGTA subsidy payments to the railways were terminated effective August 1, 1995. Second, the overall legislative and regulatory framework was revised to encourage a more efficient system. Third, a one time ex gratia payment of \$1.6 billion was made to prairie farmland owners in recognition of the impact on land values that may have resulted from the elimination of the subsidy. Fourth, a \$300 million adjustment fund was established to provide assistance for improved agricultural infrastructure for farmers affected by seaway pooling and for the alfalfa dehydration industry. Fifth, new and additional export credit guarantees of up to \$1 billion were provided for sales of grain and other agri-food exports to non-government buyers.

The role of the government in car allocation as well has been terminated and turned over to an industry body called the Car Allocation Policy Group. The government encouraged industry to

include a producer representative on this group thereby introducing a private sector aspect to this policy.

Although the WGTA was repealed, the government continued to regulate maximum freight rates for former WGTA traffic.

In addition to western grain transportation reform, the government also commercialized CN and encouraged rail renewal through a new Canada Transportation Act. The CTA reduced or eliminated unnecessary regulations which impeded the railways' ability to compete. It created a more commercial environment for railways and shippers, including short line haulers.

The government implemented these extensive changes because it believed they were in the best interests of farmers, shippers and the railways.

One of the commitments when the WGTA reform was implemented was to conduct a statutory review in 1999 which will indeed assess the impact of the CTA provisions on the efficiency of the grain transportation and handling system and the sharing of efficiency gains.

The review will also examine whether or not the maximum rate provisions should be repealed.

There were widespread calls for the government to conduct an early grain review stemming in large part from the problems in moving grain which were experienced at this time last year. Some stakeholders feel that the difficulties in moving grain were symptoms of systemic problems which were not addressed by previous efforts at reform.

This government agreed that it was necessary to undertake an early grain review. The Minister of Transport in December, as we have heard, appointed the honourable Mr. Justice Willard Estey to lead this review.

Justice Estey has commenced his consultations with producer groups, grain companies, railways, the provinces and other interested and affected parties. He has received a strong and positive response and is looking forward to the ongoing co-operation of producer, industry and government representatives in identifying problems and working collectively toward constructive solutions.

In closing, I believe that the motion introduced by the member is indeed being responded to now. This government has done everything it can to support western grain producers and the transportation system. We are indeed implementing effective reforms.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned about the reluctance of this government to declare a moratorium on dismantlements pending the outcome of Mr. Estey's study. I wonder if there may not be a message for us here that the study itself is being set up as a bit of a

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smokescreen to distract us all from what is going on while the dismantlements are taking place.

• (1200)

I do not believe that we should forget the famous blue ribbon panel which was set up by the then minister of agriculture to study grain marketing and the wheat board. When the results of that hand picked panel's work came back to the minister he promptly said "I don't agree with this stuff. Let us forget it. We will go our own way".

What assurance do we have from this government that that is not the game plan for the work of the Estey commission as well?

The Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CANADIAN WHEAT
BOARD—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before I go to orders of the day, I see the member for Prince George—Peace River is with us and I would like to give my ruling.

[*Translation*]

I am now prepared to address the matter raised on Tuesday February 3, 1998 by the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River concerning anticipation of the decision of the House on the report stage motions on Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

[*English*]

I want to thank all hon. members who spoke to this issue. I also thank the hon. Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board for returning to the House on Thursday, February 5 and presenting his view of the events.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River claimed that the minister and his officials had shown contempt for the House by holding a meeting to discuss the implementation of Bill C-4, thus anticipating a decision in the House as well as showing contempt for earlier rulings of the Chair on cases of anticipation.

[*Translation*]

For his part, the Minister denied anticipating the disposition of Bill C-4 and claimed that when discussing the bill, he had tried to make it clear that the proposed legislation was still before the House and that no final decision had been taken.

[*English*]

Having heard both sides, I find myself confronted with the disagreement over facts. On the basis of the arguments presented

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and in light of the minister's response, I must therefore rule that while there may exist a matter for debate, it does not constitute a prima facie breach of privilege.

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[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

The House resumed from November 20, 1997, consideration of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 4 to 19.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When the debate on the Group No. 4 amendments to Bill C-4 adjourned on November 20 of last year there was an agreement with all parties that an order of the House deemed all amendments would be found in order, to have been read by the Chair, to have been duly moved and seconded and to further provide that when there is no further debate the amendments will be deemed to have been put and a recorded division requested. At that time there was unanimous consent from the House given and that was the process we were operating under in November.

I just wanted to be sure that was the situation as we move forward and complete debate on the amendments in Group Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is quite correct. The House order that was adopted on that occasion applied to this bill for the report stage and will apply to the proceedings that continue on the report stage today. That is the Chair's understanding and the Chair intends to operate on that basis.

Pursuant to an agreement made on Wednesday, November 19, 1997, all questions on motions in Group No. 4 are deemed put if no one else is rising to debate on Group No. 4.

• (1205)

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, before I speak to this bill I would like to rise on a point of information, privilege or whatever it is. Maybe you can guide me along on what I should be doing.

As members know, I have had the wheat board send me some nice friendly letters. I have always appreciated them. I am in a situation where the issue is that we have a whole bunch of area farmers in my constituency losing a whole pile of money on issues of freight and elevation and stuff being cleaned off their cheques.

On the class action suit these farmers said that Parliament should deal with it. Parliament has not dealt with it but now we find out

that in a court case on November 11, 12 and 13 in Manitoba, the wheat board, under oath, admitted it should not have deducted freight, elevation or cleaning charges on these farmers.

This amounts to about \$358,000 that has been deducted. As members know, this bill transfers the liability from the government to the pooling system. What do I do to get this issue resolved properly?

The courts have now found out that these farmers have had these fees deducted illegally but still nobody will deal with it. How do I handle that?

Also, during that court case, this farmer is charged with forfeitures for transporting grain illegally without an export permit to the U.S.

On February 2, 1996 one of the farmers in Saskatchewan filed an action against the minister of revenue and customs on the same issue. The government failed to file a defence.

It says very clearly in this document it is required to file in the registry of the Federal Court of Canada in the city of Ottawa at the local office or court its defence against this. It was never filed. It admitted it had no case.

The government is still prosecuting farmers under this same rule. How can we pass a bill in the House when the liability is transferred from the government to the farmer pool itself?

I do not know how to debate this bill, whether I should first of all make a citizen's arrest of the Speaker or the government or whether I should lay criminal charges. How do we deal with a bill that is actually in contempt of court? The government has not filed a defence but is still prosecuting farmers.

I would like Mr. Speaker's learned wisdom on how to deal with this.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not to be involved in a legal dispute. I am sure the hon. member and his constituents are getting sound legal advice from a very capable source and will maintain obtaining that legal advice.

I assure him that Parliament will not be acting in contempt of court in dealing with legislation. If he would like to debate the merits of the bill, I am sure I would be happy to give him the floor for that purpose.

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your advice. I am just wondering whether this is recorded and will be taken into account when the bill is dealt with later.

It does deal with the liability of the bill and transfers it from government to farmer pools. You are really being liable yourself with illegal procedures whether civil or criminal.

That is what I wanted to bring forward in this House to make sure you were aware of it. I knew you could give me some learned

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experience on that. With that I will turn to my debate on Bill C-4 when this is recorded and you will take note of it.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wish to seek unanimous consent for the two following motions. The first one is as follows:

That, until otherwise ordered, on allotted days pursuant to Standing Order 81, members shall speak in the manner provided for in the special order respecting allotted days made on September 26, 1997.

• (1210)

This is a motion required for the sequence of speakers on the opposition day tomorrow.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been a consultation and I wish to propose the next motion to the House for unanimous consent to be passed without debate:

That on Monday, February 9, 1998 at the ordinary time of adjournment, proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 shall not be taken up, but at that time a motion to adjourn shall be deemed to have been proposed and the said motion shall be debated under the following conditions:

(1) Members wishing to speak shall address the question of the invitation to Canada by the United States of America to participate in possible military action in the Middle East;

(2) No member shall speak for more than 20 minutes with no period being allotted for questions and comments, and two members may share one 20 minute period;

(3) No dilatory motions or quorum calls shall be received;

(4) When no member rises to speak, the motion shall be deemed to have been adopted.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps a bit of further clarification. The hon. member said consultation had been undertaken. Are we to believe that there is all party agreement on this process and the way in which the debate will be conducted this evening?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that we have that, and that is why I am seeking it, but members can react individually. A meeting of House leaders was held approximately an hour ago.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to put the motion to the House at this time?

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no agreement. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act and to make consequential amend-

ments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 4 to 19.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Group No. 4 amendments to Bill C-4 dealing with the election of directors, the number of directors and the duty of the directors.

Why do farmers not trust the partially elected board? I think that is the number one question in western Canada. I would say it is mainly due to one simple reason, that the minister and this government have not listened to western Canadian farmers. They have prepared a bill they feel should be put on the backs of western farmers so they can control the destiny of western Canadians farmers for another half century probably, and that is something farmers violently object to.

The minister does not listen. Why? That is one question I have not been able to answer. We know this minister spent at least a year and a half establishing the western grain marketing panel which was supposed to do a job of listening and then give the minister recommendations on how to deal with this bill.

As I have watched this thing unfold in the House and in the public, none of those recommendations was really ever accepted or implemented into Bill C-4, and that has what has caused farmers to react bitterly to this bill.

We wonder why the minister is not listening. It does not make sense. I was listening to his presentation the other day to counteract the point of privilege the member for Prince George—Peace River put forward.

The straightforward meeting with farm leaders which I held on January 21, which is Reform's sole source of complaint in the alleged question of privilege, was part of that open, inclusive and transparent effort to gain the benefit of producer input.

• (1215)

According to reports on that meeting, the minister told these producer groups what was in the bill and what they would have to accept. That is more or less why those people from the producer groups walked out on that meeting. I do not think too many people stayed at that meeting to listen to the minister or to have their concerns brought forward.

To me that is not listening, it is dictating. It would be wise for this government to accept the premise that we are here to represent our constituents and not to represent Ottawa to the grassroots people in our home constituencies.

The minister went on to say: "In his intervention last Tuesday, the member for Yorkton—Melville admitted that he had done just that the very next day and after my meeting. The member for Portage—Lisgar has had meetings about the details of Bill C-4 and many other Reformers have done the same. The extraparliamentary meetings to discuss Bill C-4 while that bill is pending before the House are not a breach of privilege, they are not in contempt and neither am I".

The Speaker has just ruled that is the case, but I want to talk about the meetings I attended in Saskatchewan and Alberta. There were 600 people at the meeting in Weyburn. The minister was

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invited to participate and to bring forward his concerns or his ideas but he did not show up.

When the question was asked of how many in the audience wanted a single desk selling system, not one hand went up. Eighty to ninety per cent of the farmers said that they wanted a dual marketing system or a voluntary wheat board. Nothing in this bill promotes a voluntary wheat board. That is why this minister has a tremendous number of problems with listening to farmers and getting this bill through the House.

After the meeting in Yorkton—Melville a producer wrote to the minister to explain that it was one of the best and most informative farm meetings he had ever seen held in that area. He said that he supported that type of meeting.

Because the minister did not attend and did not want to listen, they held a vote to see how many people at that meeting thought the minister should resign for not listening to the producers. Over 80% lifted their hands to say that the minister should resign for not representing the interests of western farmers. They used to call this area the red square. This gives us an idea of how much attention he is paying to this issue.

I do not know why the minister does not want to listen, why he would rather prosecute farmers.

In 1994 a group of farmers made a presentation to the minister on the frozen wheat issue. They wanted him to look into why Sask Pool or the wheat board dumped grain into Montana at half price. He did not respond after the meeting. He never did anything about it. This is what the minister did.

The minister threw a huge forfeiture against a farmer who during a protest here two years ago had loaded 50 pounds of wheat in a pick-up truck, took it across the border and donated it to a 4-H club in Montana. The farmer did not know what was going on and he used the pick-up truck to transport his kids to hockey games in Montana. He also has some interest in some land there. They kept jacking up the forfeitures. He has \$132,000 worth of forfeitures against this half ton pick-up truck.

This is how the minister is treating these western farmers. It is causing a lot of animosity toward the minister and this government. It is a sign that democracy in Ottawa just is not working. When I see farmers fined for taking 50 pounds of barley across the line in protest, then I see people smuggling marijuana and cocaine on the streets without fines or imprisonment, something is wrong.

• (1220)

All that these farmers have been doing is trying to get a better price to bring more bucks into the economy and to be able to have a better standard of living on the farm than before, and they are getting fines for it. That is what this bill is about. It is a bill which

is supposed to change the wheat board to give farmers more democracy and more choices. It is exactly the opposite.

One of the former wheat board commissioners was interviewed and he said that it is becoming more secretive. On the old wheat board the commissioners at least had the authority to refuse certain recommendations made by the minister or parliament. Today he will have the power to fire and hire on the will of his desires. That is democratic? That is the way this whole government is going.

It is very important that the government not just listen to western farmers. If this is the type of a marketing system that we can be controlled by, where the government states "You have to turn your grain over, you have to take the price that we dictate to you", why will it not do it to our RRSPs? It is the same thing.

Any marketing system is at risk if this type of a bill is allowed to pass this House. It is of utmost importance that this bill gets defeated, but with the Liberal backbenchers being controlled by the front benches or the cabinet, I do not see much hope of that happening. It means one thing, that in the next federal election western farmers have to make sure that they do not have a Liberal government or else they will be indebted to this type of bill for the next half century.

That is why there is such a big protest to this bill in western Canada. It is not just a bill about marketing grain, but it is a bill about freedom and property rights. It surprises me when I look at some of the western provinces. They are prepared to go to court on gun legislation to protect the right whether you should register your gun or not, but they have not had the guts to stand up and say to the federal government "This is property, this is grain that the farmers grew. This is something they have the right to enjoy. This is something they have the right to sell for the best price that they can get".

Democracy works in this fashion. Democracy works from the bottom up. Democracy works when the elected parliamentarians listen to the people. Dictatorship is the reverse. Dictatorship works when government dictates to the constituents what they have to do and how they will do it.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you have listened and I hope you have taken it to heart. I hope you can vote against your government and do what is right.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member would not want to urge the Speaker to indicate a preference one way or the other.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker and hon. members of the House of Commons, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this group of motions with respect to Bill C-4.

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Even though I am not a western producer or a member of Parliament from western Canada, I am a producer from Ontario. I did have the privilege of travelling with the committee when we had hearings out west regarding the Canadian Wheat Board.

The motion in this group proposes a number of alternatives with respect to the governance of the Canadian Wheat Board. Under Bill C-4, a 15 member board of directors would be created with 10 directors elected by the producers, four directors appointed by the governor in council and the president and CEO appointed by the governor in council. The governor in council would appoint the president based on the minister's recommendation after the minister consulted with the rest of the board of directors.

The intention of this legislation is to put the decision making power into the hands of the producers and I certainly attest to that. However, the federal government does have substantial interests at stake.

It will continue to provide the Canadian Wheat Board with substantial financial guarantees. That is taxpayers' money. It will guarantee the initial payments. It will guarantee sales made under the credit grain sales program. It will continue to guarantee the Canadian Wheat Board's \$5 billion to \$6 billion in day to day borrowings.

• (1225)

The Canadian Wheat Board will also continue to perform public policy functions such as issuing export licences. For this reason the government must maintain a direct role by appointing the president as well as a minority of members of the board of directors.

Let me emphasize that the government realizes the importance of a CWB which is accountable to the producers.

Bill C-4 already specifies that the board of directors with a two-thirds majority elected by farmers would set the remuneration of the president. The legislation also makes it clear that the minister cannot appoint a president without first consulting with the board. The board will be able to review the president's performance and recommend his or her dismissal if board members feel that performance is inadequate.

Bill C-4 reserves the final decision concerning dismissal of the president for the governor in council. However it is clear that the board of directors would have several means for making its displeasure known and it is difficult to see how a president could continue in office without the support of the board.

In short, the government's power to appoint and dismiss does not take away the board's influence over the CEO.

There is another reason for having the government make some appointments to the board. It is in keeping with good corporate

practice that some outside directors should have corporate experience in areas such as management, finance and marketing. This can be accomplished by having the governor in council appoint a minority of the directors. It is important to realize that all directors whether elected or appointed have equal status and the same responsibilities and duties.

One can understand the desire to have candidate expenditure limits on elections for the board of directors and to set out more specifics in regard to the voting rules. However these are items which would more properly be handled through the regulations, not legislation. Enshrining these points in legislation would mean that the issue would come back to Parliament each time a modification was required, such as increasing candidate expenditure limits. Regulations can be updated and changed to meet current circumstances with much greater ease.

At this time I would like to bring to the attention of the House a few questions which have been brought constantly to the attention of the committee, whether when the committee was sitting in Ottawa or whether when the committee was travelling out west.

One of the questions that was most frequently asked was: Will the Canadian Wheat Board become more accountable to farmers? The answer is yes. For the first time in history the Canadian Wheat Board will be run by a board of directors. There will be 15 directors in total.

The farmers will take control over their marketing agency by directly electing 10 of their directors, a two-thirds majority. The elected directors will reflect the views of farmers and Canadian Wheat Board decision making will be where it should be. They will be expected to demonstrate accountability to producers. Ultimately if the producers are not satisfied with what the Canadian Wheat Board is doing, they can change the directors in subsequent elections.

Another question which was frequently posed was: Will the directors have complete access to all Canadian Wheat Board information? Here again the answer is yes. All directors will be entitled to complete disclosure of all Canadian Wheat Board facts and figures, including but not limited to fully audited financial statements. They will be able to examine the prices at which grain is sold, the price premiums achieved, all operating costs and whether the Canadian Wheat Board is running efficiently.

With their full knowledge of the Canadian Wheat Board and its global competition, the directors would be in the best position to assess information that should be made public or that for commercial reasons should remain confidential.

Bill C-4 would empower farmers with more say in future decisions over their marketing system and provide a mechanism through which producers can implement many different marketing innovations. That is important to note. I repeat that it would empower farmers with more say in future decisions over their

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marketing system and provide the farmers, not bureaucrats, with a mechanism through which producers can implement many different marketing innovations.

Unfortunately, the amendments in this group will not contribute to this objective and therefore cannot receive the government's support.

• (1230)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to enter this debate as we deal with this group of amendments to Bill C-4.

While I was home during the Christmas break, I deliberately went to groups that were previously very much in favour of the Canadian Wheat Board both in the past and to some extent up to the present. I was amazed at the differences even among those who had been most loyal to the concept of the wheat board and what is growing on the prairies, and the reason they would like to see the very amendments the Reform Party is moving to Bill C-4.

There is one fundamental thing wrong at the present time when we call this the Canadian Wheat Board. If you take a *C* and complete the arc, you have an *O*. To many of the people in western Canada it is not the Canadian Wheat Board, it is the Ottawa wheat board. They look on this wheat board now as being something not within the prairies, not within the area of where they are growing grain, but rather something in far off Ottawa which is controlling the livelihood of the producers on the prairies. Maybe they have a point.

First of all, the legislation to the wheat board is made right here in Ottawa.

During the debate on the two school questions, the one in Quebec and the one in Newfoundland, one of the hon. members opposite asked me what right I had in even speaking on the school bill as it relates to the province of Newfoundland. I would take that question and reverse it as to the decision of this bill.

A former member speaking to the bill said it was likely that this bill would pass. Look at the representation from the areas that produce this bill. Look at the membership in the House of Commons from the people who represent these producers. I come from a totally agricultural area, as does my hon. colleague who has already spoken, as does my hon. colleague who will likely follow me.

These are the people who should be listened to. Instead of that, the Ottawa wheat board was made in Ottawa, was legislated in Ottawa, but any necessary changes should come from the west where the producers are situated.

If this government were listening, which it has not been so far, it would listen to what the members on this side of the House had to say.

The court decisions that have arisen in the last two years have all come down to a final statement, which is extremely dangerous. Not only is the statement dangerous but it has brought a great deal of hatred on the part of the producer. In every court case of a farmer versus the wheat board, the legal representation for the wheat board had always concluded the debate this way. I want members to listen very carefully, because this is pretty well a quote. The wheat board is entirely responsible to the Government of Canada and not the producer. That is what the decision has been.

If they would listen to what we are saying, if they would listen to the other agencies, they would be taking steps in constructing the wheat board bill so that it in fact does listen to the producer and the necessary steps will be taken.

It is the Ottawa wheat board. It is legislated here. The court decisions have said that it is responsible only to the government.

Then we have the board appointments. Again, it is the Ottawa wheat board. The board makes the appointments from here. If the minister in charge of the wheat board is not totally satisfied with them, or even a little dissatisfied, out that minister goes.

Who makes that decision? Again, it is made in Ottawa. It has nothing to do with the producer in any way.

I am saying here that board appointments can be an area that is only increasing the suspicion in western Canada that there is something wrong with this Ottawa controlled wheat board.

• (1235)

Let me give an example. We have a multimillion dollar project being studied in my constituency. It probably takes in 150 producers in an area where a circle can be drawn around in the best growing durum in the world. No place else grows better durum than right there. The better the durum, the better the pasta.

These people want to go in and set up a pasta plant in the same way that there would be a closed co-operative. The producer-owner wants to grow his durum, take it to his plant and put it on to the North American market. The only way that will be viable is if the wheat board gets in gear, gets its thoughts together and says we are coming into a new century. The people in western Canada are not going to be considered to be hewers of wood and drawers of water anymore. The previous wheat board says get everything out of the west. Let us reap the advantages.

That is why in Saskatchewan the canola growers, the rape seed growers and all the other products being produced off-board have an industry right in western Canada to accompany that. They do

not like one bit the idea of the inclusion clause which may draw them back into the wheat board and shut down their industry.

I believe this government should take this antiquated bill back to the drawing board. Pull the bill altogether. Take it right off because even those who four months ago supported the wheat board in its entirety no longer support that. It is dead. It is a dead issue.

As long as this wheat board and all its operation does not fall under the long arm of the auditor general, that suspicion is going to continue. It will continue to the point that there is going to be so much disruption, if the government does not pull the bill now, take it back to the drawing board, it will self-destruct by the time we turn the century.

We do not want to destroy grain marketing. This is 1998, not 1943. The west wants to be a producer of some of its own products but cannot be as long as the long arm of the Ottawa wheat board sits in the way.

It is interesting to note that the provincial Government of Saskatchewan, a traditional supporter of this monopoly buying, decided it wanted to get into hog production and then said the barley is under the control of the wheat board. In order to make its hog operations productive, it would have to take that portion off the wheat board. Permission granted. There it is. It would not be a viable operation.

All these things I have referred to are in the entrepreneurial spirit of the young farmers in Saskatchewan and in the other prairie provinces. They hate the thought of going out and doing anything on their own because the wheat board would step in.

There is a court case going on now in Saskatchewan. I want to illustrate this. Here is a group of farmers growing organic grain. All the people of Canada should listen to this. They grow the grain and they want to mill that grain because it has a demand across North America. No, sir. The long arm of the Ottawa wheat board says they can mill it but they will have to pay the penalty at so much money before shipping it out.

This whole thing is antiquated. It is completely out of date. For the sake of a \$6 billion plus business, let us pull the bill. Let us go back and ask the producers to take it back to the drawing board and all of Canada will prosper.

If they proceed with this bill, we will have nothing but hardship, court cases and farmers leaving the land, which they most certainly will do.

• (1240)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have had much contact with the farming community or if you know much about agriculture and grain

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growing, but that is the subject of our debate. If you were to come to Saskatchewan and observe the harvesting of grain you would observe a very large machine called a combine that goes through the fields and does what it says, combines several operations in the harvesting process.

I am going to tell members a little story about this combine and see if members agree that we should have this kind of machine. The combine used for the harvesting of grain has a pick-up on the front of it which gathers in the grain and elevates it to a cylinder that threshes out the grain, and wheat and barley is what we are talking about here. This grain then goes from the cylinder over to the straw walkers and those straw walkers vibrate the little kernels of grain out through the sieves at the bottom and then the grain is elevated up.

If one had one of these combines and in this last stage, instead of taking all these nice kernels of grain and putting them up in a hopper where one could collect them and simply distribute them back on to the field where they came from, would one still keep this combine? Would anyone keep a combine that goes out, gathers the grain and then simply destroys it, in effect, by spreading it all out on the field again? Of course not. One would get rid of this combine immediately because it would not be harvesting the grain.

This is an analogy that relates directly to what the wheat board minister is doing with this issue of the Canadian Wheat Board. I describe this so that all the people of Canada can get an understanding of how ridiculous our situation is here.

This government and this minister for the last four years have gone out into the prairie provinces and gathered wisdom and information on the wheat board just like a combine gathers in the grain. The minister has threshed through it and sifted it. Then, instead of putting it into a good bill, he simply destroys it all and puts a bill before the House that is not acceptable.

This is an example of how useless the process has been of trying to find out what we should do with the Canadian Wheat Board for the last four years.

There have been many good ideas picked up from farmers and these ideas would have really improved the marketing of grain in this country. But they have been destroyed by the government just like that illustration of the combine that simply does all this and destroys the grain by simply spreading it out on the ground where it is no longer available and irretrievable.

I want to tell members this morning something that has happened in the last month in the province of Saskatchewan where I come from. By accident, Bill C-4 which we are debating today has not been rammed through the House. It was intended to be finished and be law before Christmas. However, because there were so many other pressing matters before the House it was delayed.

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That gave us the opportunity as members of Parliament to go back to our constituents in January and ask them about Bill C-4 and about amendments that we had been proposing. These amendments come from the farmers. As a member of Parliament I have gone out there and sifted through all the suggestions and put forth amendments to Bill C-4, amendments I was hoping the government would listen to.

The farming community has become very divided on the issue in the last four years because of government inaction. This debate has been before the country for a long time. Many people in the rest of Canada may not realize how important this issue is and how long it has been dragged out.

The weakness of the government has become evident in this issue more than probably most that I have any involvement with. There has been ample opportunity for the government to resolve this but it has done nothing about it. Now that Bill C-4 has been introduced I would like the minister to answer a question. I hope he will show up at some time to do so. Whom is he representing when he introduces this legislation? I hope the minister will come to the House some time and answer whom is he representing when he introduces this legislation.

• (1245)

The Canadian Wheat Board should be there to carry out the wishes of as many grain producers as it possibly can. It is not there to carry out the wishes of the minister or the prime minister, or the bureaucrats at the Canadian Wheat Board office. That is not the purpose of the Canadian Wheat Board. I submit that is not the case. I have very strong reasons for saying that because of the experience of the last month.

What is the point in introducing changes to the Canadian Wheat Board that farmers do not want? That is why I want the minister to come to the House some time and answer. Whom is he representing? What is the point of making changes to the Canadian Wheat Board that most farmers do not support?

What level of dissatisfaction would we need before the minister would withdraw Bill C-4? Would we need 51% of the farmers opposed to it before he would withdraw it, or would the level have to be a little higher? Let us say 66% or two-thirds of farmers. Maybe it would have to be 75% opposed to Bill C-4 before the minister would withdraw it. What level of dissatisfaction would we need? Would it be 80% or does it have to be 100% before the minister would withdraw it?

I am making a major point in the whole issue. I have gone back to the farmers of Saskatchewan. I have asked them what they think about Bill C-4. They have told me in no uncertain terms about it. I went beyond that. I asked them about some amendments that have been proposed. I put forth amendments that can be put into three simple categories. I asked farmers about those amendments, what they thought.

I am telling the minister publicly what the people of Saskatchewan are saying. I have put forth an amendment to change the Canadian Wheat Board from orderly marketing to securing the best financial return for producers. The present aim of the wheat board is out of date. Farmers do not want that. They want the purpose of the wheat board to be that it gets the best financial return for the people it represents. Does that not seem reasonable?

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, the percentage of farmers who support that amendment? It is between 96% and 97%. Let us ponder that for a moment. For the minister to disregard 96% to 97% of producers is a travesty of democracy, of justice or whatever we can think of. I cannot fathom why the minister ploughs ahead when the dissatisfaction level with Bill C-4 is so great.

Does it have to be 51%? Does it have to be 75%? What if it is 96% to 97%? All the people of Canada are listening. Let us do something about an undemocratic institution.

I have a lot more to describe about the meeting I held in Yorkton. It was a non-partisan crowd, a group of 300 farmers who gave direct input as to what I should say in the House. I need the time and will take every available opportunity today to speak to what they have told me.

I challenge the minister at some point to come to the House to say who he is representing. Why is he pushing the bill through the House when there is so little support for it out there? Why does he not listen to the amendments that have been put forward?

It is essential for people to have faith in their government, to see democracy effective and working, and to have a wheat board that is strong for everyone.

• (1250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We are now debating Group No. 4 at report stage, which has to do with the directors and the president. It would not be a bad idea for members who are speaking to be a little more relevant.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take up your challenge and talk about the election of directors to the new Canadian Wheat Board that is being proposed by the minister.

The essence of this whole question is about control. It is about control in that the government wants to retain the ability to appoint five directors, one-third of the directors of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is about control in that the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board wants to appoint the chief executive officer.

What this debate is about in my constituency, and I believe all of western Canada, is a matter of choice. The debate is about choice but the minister is not listening.

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We just heard my colleague from Yorkton—Melville talk about how little support there is for the changes proposed by Bill C-4. This is not the first time the bill has been before parliament. It died as Bill C-72 in the last parliament when the election was called. There was no support for it at that time. The minister has brought it back and has made it even worse. He wants to put new crops under the Canadian Wheat Board.

How will five directors appointed by government have any impact in making changes when we will still have a corporation that is a state enterprise and a monopoly? If that is the best the government can do, it is a total failure. It is a disservice to those people who want to use the Canadian Wheat Board to pool their product and accept an average price.

A percentage of farmers in western Canada want to do exactly that. However a lot of farmers in western Canada do not want to use the Canadian Wheat Board. They want a choice in how they market their grain. That choice is not available. In fact the section of the act which talks about to whom the Canadian Wheat Board is responsible is not dealt with. It says that it is responsible to government, not to producers.

My colleague from Yorkton—Melville asked that a preamble be included which indicates that the objective of the Canadian Wheat Board should be to achieve the maximum benefits for producers, but the government is not listening to that.

At the very time the bill is before parliament the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board knows that these amendments have not been dealt with. We were in the process of debating some 40 motions when we were interrupted during the Christmas break. At this very time the minister is in Saskatchewan having meetings with producers, asking who should be appointed to the new board of directors. If that is not contempt for parliament I am not sure what is. It takes away my ability to do my job.

At the same time we have one of the biggest past supporters of the Canadian Wheat Board changing horses. The Sask Pool seems to be bailing out. It is jumping ship, realizing that things are changing.

One of the major newspapers farmers get in western Canada is the *Western Producer*. Its headline on January 29 was “Canadian Wheat Board Supporters March Against Proposed Changes”. A group of demonstrators was outside when the minister was having his clandestine meeting about who should be appointed to the new Canadian Wheat Board. They were chanting “Goodale must go”. These people support orderly marketing. They see changes that are not acceptable. Nothing will destroy the Canadian Wheat Board faster than a minister of agriculture who has the arrogance not to listen to producers.

Who asked for the legislation? The Reform Party suggested some time ago that there should be a choice in how farmers market

their grain, that we should keep the Canadian Wheat Board for those people who want to use it but allow choice for those who do not. We also suggested that if we are to have that choice and if the Canadian Wheat Board continues to operate a board of directors consisting of producers and farmers it is a good idea, but it should be elected from producers so there is accountability. It should not be one in which the government of the day decides to appoint one-third of the directors, to have a CEO appointed by government, and continues to have effective control. The board of directors would be controlled by the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and that is simply not good enough in these times.

• (1255)

This is all about accountability. Russia used to have state trading enterprises. We have seen what planned economies did over there. They destroyed the ability to produce enough food to feed even their own countrymen. It is going that way here too. Canada is moving out of step with the entire world.

The other day in the House a question was asked of the Minister for International Trade about his support for the financial services package. Why was that done? The Minister for International Trade is a seatmate of the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. While he was up explaining why the Canadian government was supporting the financial services package signed in Geneva, the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board was looking at him and applauding until it got to a part that he did not like.

In response to that question the Minister for International Trade said that the recent crisis in southeast Asia and the APEC meetings in Vancouver pointed out the need for more transparency in how these institutions work. Indeed that is what is needed. The IMF has asked southeast Asian countries, if they are to receive packages to transform their economies, to have more transparency in industries like banking.

At the same time the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board was looking up at the Minister for International Trade. People had puzzled looks on their faces. This is the minister who will not allow transparency in the Canadian Wheat Board. He does not want the auditor general to audit the books of the Canadian Wheat Board. He does not want them to come under the Access to Information Act or the Secrecy Act. What kind of a responsible minister is that? I suggest the minister will be the death knell for the Canadian Wheat Board. There are people who would not feel badly if that were to happen, but they are very few and far between.

Western Canadian farmers respect each other's abilities and responsibilities. There are those who want to market their own grain, which I support 100%. I also respect the wish of those who want to use the Canadian Wheat Board as a pooled account to

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accept average returns. We could have it both ways, but we cannot if the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board introduces such idiotic changes to the board that he antagonizes the entire agricultural community in western Canada.

I join with those protesters in Regina that said the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board must go to bring about some kind of half decent reform to our entire grain handling system.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the Group No. 4 amendments to Bill C-4 at report stage. I will first deal with the amendment concerning a fully elected board. That is what farmers are almost unanimously requesting on the prairies. There is only a halfway elected board being proposed by the minister.

The whole idea of having five appointed members, political hacks sitting on a board which is there ostensibly to serve the interests of Canadian farmers, is absolutely repugnant. With that set up, as long as the minister has his five captive appointees they only have to win the support of three out of ten of elected producer board members and they can do anything they like in, of or for the Canadian Wheat Board. I do not know of any other organization that operates under those parameters.

• (1300)

Why should the board not be fully elected and empowered to elect its own officers? Has the minister's legal training destroyed his faith in the capacity of farmers to manage their own affairs? Does he look upon them as a bunch simple serfs who should bow and tug their earth stained forelocks whenever they approach his eminence or any of his bureaucrats? Farmers are not made that way.

This is a little personal anecdote. On January 20 I attended a grain day meeting with about 200 farmers in Swift Current. It was organized by the Canadian Wheat Board. Most of the 200 farmers present were staunch supporters of the Canadian Wheat Board. I might even say most of them were rabid supporters of the Canadian Wheat Board. The key speaker was Lorne Hehn, the chief commissioner of the board.

When a motion was proposed from the floor that the meeting go on record as favouring the withdrawal of Bill C-4 from consideration, a huge majority voted in favour of that motion. They are wheat board supporters and almost to a man or a woman, they do not want this bill. So much for the results of the minister's vaunted consultation with producers. I would like to know which producers he consulted with and what precisely they produce because he sure was not consulting with the farmers who produce the grain.

I conduct polls on a regular basis because, unlike the people over there, I do like to know the views of my constituents on the issues of the day. In my most recent mail-in poll I asked a very specific question: Would you like me to support or oppose Bill C-4?

Replies are still trickling in. Of the responses I have already received only 23% say they would like me to support this legislation. I know the minister is very well aware that support for the board is stronger in my riding than anywhere else in western Canada but that support clearly does not extend to him or to his ill-conceived legislation which he is trying to ram down the throats of farmers.

Another amendment which is very important, and it also applies to this question of whether or not the board is going to be democratic, is that the fully elected board, not the minister, must control the selection of the president if farmers are going to have any real say in how the board is going to operate. After all it is the guy who has his hands on the levers on a day to day basis who is really going to make the important decisions.

A president cannot act as directed by the farmer elected board of directors if the minister at his own discretion can call for the termination of that man or woman's position. It just does not make any sense. A president who answers in this way to the minister cannot act in the best interests of the corporation or the producers. He can only be a captive of ministerial discretion.

I would like to jump to No. 18 on this list of proposed amendments. The directors and officers must be placed in a position where the duty and care of farmers, the interests of farmers, is their primary purpose, not serving the interests of the corporation.

• (1305)

There was a court case in Manitoba not too long ago wherein it was determined that the board does not have a fiduciary responsibility to farmers. Their responsibility, and this is a clear court decision, is to the board. If we are going to work within those parameters, surely to heaven the board must be responsible to farmers, must be chosen by farmers and must choose its own officers from among farmers. Otherwise we simply continue the same situation where the board and the board alone is at the end of the responsibility road and it has a fiduciary responsibility only to the government.

The board's job under those conditions is not to get the best available price for the farmer's grain. It is to sell the grain in the largest possible volumes as quickly as possible and get it out of its hair. That is a rather absurd way to operate a business enterprise.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak again on C-4. The farmers of Dauphin—Swan River believe in the wheat board but want more accountability.

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They also believe that options must be made available to the producer.

Farmers in Dauphin—Swan River want the wheat board to be not only accountable but more flexible and more transparent. This would mean that the Canadian Wheat Board should change the current system of government appointments to a fully elected board of directors, not just 10 out of 15.

The Canadian Wheat Board must be made more accountable to the Access to Information Act. In other words if people want information, they should have the right to get it by asking.

The wheat board should be audited by the auditor general. Former speakers have alluded to that aspect.

There is no doubt that the current act maintains the minister's excessive power and influence over the wheat board. That needs to be changed.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy in Dauphin—Swan River. All economic activity in Dauphin—Swan River is dependent on the economic welfare of the farmer and the agricultural community. If the farmer has a dollar in his pocket, it is probably quite likely he will spend it and through this expenditure life will certainly be enhanced. This will improve life generally for all rural Manitobans in Dauphin—Swan River.

The lesson here is that governments must learn that they need to leave more money in the pockets of the producers and citizens of this country. The governance of the Canadian Wheat Board must do all it can to put money into the pockets of the producers whom they are supposed to represent.

On February 2 I was absent from this House to attend a meeting in Strathclair, Manitoba. The meeting concerned the Canadian Wheat Board and grain transportation. Present at the meeting were representatives from the Canadian Wheat Board as well as exporters of other grain products, and the Hudson Bay rail line company.

The most significant change that has occurred in this past year is the privatization of both the Hudson Bay rail line and the port of Churchill. It was interesting that back in 1930, as I have indicated to this House previously, the government of the day had vision for this country concerning the movement of grain the shortest distance to markets and not just east and west as has been occurring over the last 60 years.

That is the reason the port of Churchill was built back in 1930, which is a long time ago. The mileage distance has not changed. Today the port of Churchill is still 1,600 kilometres closer to European markets than to Thunder Bay. The port of Churchill is still the catchment area for 25% of the grain growing region of Canada.

• (1310)

Despite this knowledge, obviously it has not had an impact in the decisions that have been made by this House and by the Canadian Wheat Board over the last 60 years in which way the transportation of grain should occur.

It is hard to believe that even today that facility is like new probably because of underutilization. It still has a storage capacity of five million bushels. It has harbours for oceangoing ships, much larger ships than they can handle in the Thunder Bay ports.

At the Strathclair February 2 meeting the Canadian Wheat Board representatives were ecstatic in telling people how much grain they shipped from the port this past year, 400,000 tonnes. There are over 30 million tonnes of grain grown in western Canada so 400,000 tonnes is really a drop in the bucket.

There is no argument that it is cheaper to ship agriculture products through the port of Churchill. Farmers should no longer be forced to transport their grain, their agricultural product, to a port that increases their transportation costs and does not maximize their returns. They must have the right to ship to other ports of choice. They do not at this time because they are under the influence and authority of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The transfer of the Hudson Bay rail line to a short line operator should be viewed as good news. Likewise the transfer of the port of Churchill to the private sector should be viewed as good news to the government.

All the communities along the short line depend on activity for sustainability not only on the line but also the port. The town of Churchill depends on the port for economic survival. This past summer I had the opportunity to talk to the mayor and council of Churchill. They told me about the impact of the port. If the port was not there, their community probably would disappear off the edge of the map.

The rail line brings tourism. It brings people who want to come up to Churchill. Look at the picture of the famous Canadian polar bear on the toonie. This can only happen if the shipment of agricultural products continues to be headed in the northward direction.

I would like to close by saying that the fate of the Hudson Bay rail line and the port of Churchill is in the hands of the Canadian Wheat Board at this time because of the rules that are utilized in terms of the transportation of the grain produced on the prairies. The future of the short line and the port are dependent on the grain moving to the northern port.

At the February 2 meeting at Strathclair, I challenged the Canadian Wheat Board representatives that if it is in the best interests of farmers to move grain north to Churchill and if that proposal and that direction will put money in the hands of farmers, then what seems to be the problem with the Canadian Wheat Board

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moving grain north through the port of Churchill? As well I challenged them to double or triple their record for 1997 which was set at 400,000 tonnes.

The bottom line is that the Canadian Wheat Board must be more accountable to the farmers of Canada. This bill needs a lot of change before it will make that happen.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to join my colleagues in addressing Bill C-4, particularly Group No. 4 of the amendments.

The Canadian Wheat Board is of great significance in my constituency. In and around Lethbridge and indeed right across the prairies people deal with the wheat board on a daily basis.

The wheat board and this government somewhere along the line have lost touch. The board seems to have forgotten to whom it is accountable and whose interests it was originally destined to serve.

• (1315)

A true producer mandate and true accountability can be returned to the Canadian Wheat Board, if it can be returned, and a great deal of division among producers can be alleviated. They can resume their primary responsibilities to supply Canadians and many other citizens of the world with food to feed their families while making a decent living for their own families.

There are grain farmers who want to see the Canadian Wheat Board dismantled completely because they are so fed up with the lack of accountability to producers and a lack of options. We are almost at an impasse. Either this minister continues to ignore the demands of producers while many grain farmers are inappropriately fined and jailed or he takes this sorry excuse of a bill back to the drawing board, start agreeing to the important amendments presented by my colleagues and start listening to the full scope of recommendations by producers and their western grain marketing panel.

Producers want a fully elected board. Why does the government continue to ignore the wishes of the majority of farmers? The Liberal government wants to continue to interfere with democracy by opting for a voting system that includes five government appointed directors. Why is the government afraid to give in to a completely democratic and fully elected wheat board? The time has come for the government to relinquish its monopoly on grain marketing. A fully effective board of directors is a fully elected board of directors, if the voice of farmers is truly to be heard. With 5 appointed members and 10 elected members, only 30% of those elected can sway the majority on a board set up like this.

The government has chosen to cherry pick through the recommendations of the western grain marketing panel, continuing to focus on the recommendations which fit its agenda and ignoring the recommendations which fit producer needs. This Liberal government refuses to relinquish its strong arm tactics in grain marketing. The time is long overdue for government to remove its political interference in the marketing of grain and start giving producers the options they have long requested.

In Bill C-4 the government has once again failed to prove to producers that it is in the grain marketing business for the benefit of producers. The time is long overdue for grain marketing to be treated with common sense, using sound marketing principles, in order to bring maximum returns to producers for their products. Monopolies in other industries are rarely tolerated, so why are western grain producers the exception to the rule? This proves the government and this minister are out of touch with western Canada and its grain producers.

The majority of producer groups opposed to Bill C-4 have been working hard and steadily since the House last debated this legislation. We have all attended meetings over the December-January break and overwhelmingly people want this bill taken back and reworked. They have continued to pressure the minister to take opposition amendments seriously. There are many of these producer groups, Canadian canola growers, Manitoba canola growers, flax growers, oat producers, Alberta winter wheat, western barley growers, and the list goes on and on.

According to a group called the committee to end secrecy at the Canadian Wheat Board, and this should be an interest to all taxpayers of Canada, not just farmers and producers, Canadian taxpayers hold a \$7 billion liability through the Canadian Wheat Board and have paid millions of dollars on behalf of foreign grain purchases in order to hold this liability to its current level. Although the Canadian Wheat Board does produce an annual report which provides a limited amount of information, its exemption from the federal Access to Information Act means taxpayers and farmers are unable to independently evaluate its operations and performance. When questioned by producers to validate these claims, we cannot because the information is kept secret.

A detailed synopsis of the \$7 billion liability and the transactions that led to this debt is also being requested. The outstanding amount owed is equal to \$1000 for every average family in Canada.

The government has not shown producers that it will be responsible to them through a completely producer elected board. Instead it insists on appointing the key members of the board. Speaking to Group No. 4, Motion No. 7, the act should be amended so as to render the board fully elected in order to comply with the wishes of the majority of farmers. Subsequently, if the aforementioned

amendment were adopted, section 3.024 would be deleted since it would not be necessary to specify equal powers between elected and non-elected directors.

On Motion No. 8 it is imperative that if the government refuses to support a fully elected board that quorum for board of directors meetings require two elected directors for every one government appointed director.

• (1320)

The necessity of such a motion is self-evident. However, if the government could simply accept the democratic principle behind a fully elected board, we could find a resolution that would better serve the interests of our producers.

In addressing Group No. 4 amendments, Motions Nos. 9, 14, 15 and 17, the importance of the hiring, firing and control of a president must be left in the hands of an elected board. Once again, the issue of democracy should supersede sweeping ministerial powers.

If the government could look at the logistics of such an amendment, its sense of fairness and justice would inevitably lead it to conclude that the wheat board president would be more accountable to producers if he or she were directed by the farmer elected board of directors instead of being held to the whim of a minister who cannot possibly be more in tune with the best interests of producers than producers themselves. To reach any other conclusion is insulting to producers.

Logically speaking, who is the closest in touch with what producers need, an elected board of directors subject to the approval of their peers or a far removed minister in Ottawa who in all honesty has a scope of responsibility that exceeds and often conflicts with the interests of producers? Leave the daily workings of a grain marketing board to those in the business.

Motion No. 10 of today's amendments necessitates support because multi-generation farming operations are the cornerstone of farming communities across this great country. This is an issue of respect and fairness. The votes of producers who rely exclusively on farming for their livelihood and whose livelihood depends on how the Canadian Wheat Board markets its grain must have more weight than producers who do not.

Getting back to the issue of ministerial involvement versus democratic participation, I now refer to Motions Nos. 11 and 12. In the process of electing directors to the wheat board, any possibility of ministerial heavy handedness should be avoided at all costs.

On January 21, 1998 the minister showed his contempt for democracy in this House of Commons by holding a meeting in Regina to discuss the rules for the election of directors to the Canadian Wheat Board board of directors as proposed in Bill C-4.

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This shows a disregard for Parliament, as the bill is still being debated, which includes amendments that would determine the number of directors to be elected.

A number of the groups invited to the Regina meeting walked out on the minister when he refused to discuss amendments to Bill C-4, and there were farmers outside protesting.

The importance of Motion No. 16 cannot be ignored. Motion No. 16 is the guiding principle of responsibility in business dealings. The Liberal government will be hard pressed to deny the ethical importance of Motions Nos. 16 and 19. Making the wheat board a signatory to the international code of ethics for Canadian businesses and requiring the directors and officers of the CWB to be guided by the duty of care should be applauded by all members of this House.

I am confident that all my colleagues, regardless of political affiliation, will support amendments that call for ethical, social and environmentally responsible business practices. Any member who votes against such righteous amendments will have a lot of explaining to do to their constituents.

To conclude, the Liberal government took the time and went through considerable effort in setting up a panel to make recommendations in producing Bill C-4. Why does it not put to rest the suspicions of producers and the divisive aspects of the Canadian Wheat Board?

Rural families of Canada, families on both sides of this issue, deserve more. They deserve more than this incomplete effort known as Bill C-4. In order to safeguard the interests of Canadian producers, I recommend that all amendments that put democracy ahead of sweeping ministerial powers and hold the wheat board to a code of ethical, social and environmentally responsible business practices be supported.

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak on the proposed amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act, Bill C-4. We are addressing today the Group No. 4 amendments intended to give farmers, the owners of the means of production, their land and machinery, and who would like to be the owners of the produce, an opportunity to control the only marketing organization available to them, the Canadian Wheat Board.

The government would have us believe that every farmer in western Canada is clamouring to get into the monopolistic Canadian Wheat Board organization and that farmers are all pleading for the Canadian Wheat Board to maintain total marketing control. It would also have this House believe that farmers want the federal government to maintain control of the wheat board through the appointment of the president and four of the directors. Farmers have not been heard on the issue of farmer control.

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• (1325)

I would like to recount one farmer's story in this House so that members will know how some farmers view this legislation. Mr. Russ Torkelson from the Weyburn area has opted out in the only way he can opt out. He no longer grows any Canadian Wheat Board crops on his approximately 4,000 acre farm.

Why did Mr. Torkelson opt out of the Canadian Wheat Board system? He is unable to manage his risk and his risk is significant. Nothing is known when a farmer puts a crop in the ground about the price they are going to get under the wheat board system, but they know all about the input costs. They range from \$65 an acre to \$100 or \$105 an acre. It averages out at about \$80 an acre. We can see what this means to a man who has 4,000 acres of farmland. The cash cost of his input is \$80 an acre. That does not include the cost of machinery, buildings, taxes or maintenance. What it does cover are simple things like seed, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and fuel.

When the wheat board was operating as it should 30 or 40 years ago farmers did not need all the fertilizers they need now. The nutrients in the land have been depleted and farmers have to put it back in. It is an added input cost. It does not seem to have its way to the Canadian Wheat Board that these things need to be paid for, but the farmers are paying every time they put a crop in the ground.

What does a farmer yield? About 20 to 25 bushels an acre. They need a significant return on their investment. They cannot afford to have uncertainties beyond the things they cannot control, which ought not to include the price farmers get for wheat. The uncertainties should be the weather and infestations of pests and things of that nature. They certainly should not have the unknown of the price they can expect to get. What other business in Canada operates under those circumstances where a person provides a good or a service and has no idea what he will get in return? Farmers have precious little control over it in that the government says who is going to be on the board.

What does Mr. Torkelson do when he grows his non-Canadian Wheat Board crops, which include oats, canola, flax, lentils, canary seed and things of that nature? By the way, those crops are subject to be taken under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board which will give him even less control over his costs.

How does he market his crops when the Canadian Wheat Board is not involved? He spends his entire winter getting into the markets in Chicago and Winnipeg. He is fully wired in. He is on line. He spent the time from last fall when he took the crops off until now locking in next year's crops. That is the way he manages his risks.

Who knows what a wheat board which takes no risk is doing? If the risk belongs to the farmer, he must be able to manage it through

an open and fully accountable board of directors. It should not be a board of directors which is set up by the government for the government.

When a farmer grows wheat he has no control over basis costs. These are set by the grain commission and frequently they have no basis in reality. What is a basis cost? It is the transportation cost after delivery. The crops may not ever have left the farm if the farmer is working with a buyback system, but basis costs apply. That does not make sense to Mr. Torkelson.

Working outside the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Torkelson is able to negotiate his own basis costs, which have been lower than Canadian Wheat Board crop basis costs. This year on flax alone his costs were one-tenth of those set by the Canadian Wheat Board. The rest goes into his pocket until the government taxes it back.

What else can he do outside the Canadian Wheat Board? He can lock a price in with a broker from Winnipeg or Chicago independently. There is a risk involved, but it is the owner's risk. He takes the chance. He already took a risk putting the crop in the ground. He is taking a risk selling it. It is his land, his machinery, his crop, his choice, his risk. He feels that if producers had control of the Canadian Wheat Board, as proposed by the Reform Party, it could be an effective selling agent for western farmers. However, as it is, he opts out.

• (1330)

Mr. Torkelson competes successfully in the North American grain market, in a global marketplace really, because he is on line. As it is, he and many other farmers feel that the Canadian Wheat Board and the proposed amendments fit the government and not the farmers whom the board is supposed to serve and benefit by getting the best price, not orderly marketing, whatever that is. These words are without much meaning, orderly marketing as opposed to getting a good price. The board does not care how it is sold but it is concerned about how much it can take to the bank.

I call on the government to adopt these Group No. 4 amendments under consideration here. Only then will farmers support the board and willingly participate in Canadian Wheat Board controlled crops.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, being a new member of Parliament, I have not had a whole lot of opportunity to speak to the House to this point. In doing so on these amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act, the particular clauses dealing with the election and duty of directors, I would like to mention that I have a vested interest in this bill and a vested interest from a personal point of view, along with the views of my constituents.

I am a cattle rancher from an area where there is a lot of grain production. We are just north of Winnipeg. As a result, what I talk about here today is very close to my heart as well as my

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pocketbook, something which is really not the case for a lot of other members in this House, particularly on the other side.

The farmers in our area definitely want to retain a wheat board. However, they do not want to be forced to sell their products solely to the Canadian Wheat Board. I have some suggestions that I will come to in a moment as to how they should be treated and the kind of board that we should be dealing with for western Canadian farmers.

It is a little bit hard to debate the Canadian Wheat Board bill today because the wheat board is currently being challenged in the Winnipeg courts on constitutional grounds by, I believe, a farmer named Mr. Dave Bryan, so the debate we are having here today may well be pointless. If that court finds that it is against the constitutional rights of farmers to be forced to sell their grain there then, as I say, we will be talking about nothing.

The crown attorney in charge of that case is a more junior crown attorney whom I have known for some years. It is not a case where they are putting in the top federal prosecutor.

Getting back to the election and duty of directors, I would like to say that the purpose of the Canadian Wheat Board and its directors is to ensure that this commercial entity maximizes returns to producers. Here again we are talking dollars in the pocketbook.

The minister for the Canadian Wheat Board and the backbenchers on the other side of the House, a lot of whom are from Ontario, certainly represent their farmers. I would like to point out to the House that the roughly 1.3 million tonnes of wheat that they produced last year did not go overseas. It went to the United States and the Canadian milling industry. Why does anyone suppose that is where it went?

I can show members Ontario farm magazines which will clearly show that the reason the wheat does not go offshore is because they get the best price in the United States and the best price milling here in Canada. They do not want to be part of the Canadian Wheat Board. They do not want to be a director. They do not want to have any duty to make sure the wheat board works well. Why do we have the wheat board that we have today? That is the problem dealing with these elections and duties of directors when in fact the wheat board is not even serving western Canadians by maximizing their profits.

• (1335)

Farmers out our way, as I said, want to have a wheat board. But what they really want is a wheat board along the line of these new generation co-ops where the people and the farmers who are in the organization, the wheat board, the co-ops or whatever we want to call it, want to be there. Everybody in an organization who wants to be there will make sure that organization works well and maximizes profits.

The problem with the wheat board and the amendments being brought forward today is we have a significant number of farmers who do not want to be in the wheat board. We end up with these massive legal arguments. I heard today about the half tonne truck which has up to \$135,000 or \$150,000 worth of assessments against it by Revenue Canada. This kind of wheat board and the opposition to it is sapping the very strength out of and killing the profits that the farmers are supposed to be making. That is what should be dealt with here today. It is that very profit making incentive.

Once again, the duty of the directors who are elected should be strictly to maximize profits. I think western Canadians quite clearly do not trust the federal government and Ontario, Quebec and the other provinces telling us in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and a small portion of B.C. how we should run our commercial operations, our farms and our ranches.

The directors that we would like to see elected from our constituencies would be purely decided by western Canadians. There would be no appointments from Ottawa, no dictates from on high. We would end up with the provinces that I mentioned previously deciding how to run the elections. They have a very clear vested interest in the operation of a future wheat board. That is the kind of elections we would like to see.

The duties of these directors would be dictated by the provinces in the west that are producing the grain, not by Ottawa which has other interests. I am sure that every bushel of grain in every negotiation overseas is not based solely on "Oh, boy, I hope I can get that farmer up in Selkirk the best dollar for this".

There is no doubt that foreign interests come in. We have all seen the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the weight he throws around in Manitoba and in this government. That is one of the big concerns of the farmers in western Canada. Decisions are not made purely on a commercial basis.

I will not get into the secrecy of this because that is a debate for another day, but I would like to mention oats. Oats used to come under the Canadian Wheat Board. Many people have said "Is there a disaster now that oats are no longer under the wheat board?" I spoke to this very issue when I was travelling around my constituency. When oats no longer came under the wheat board, there was a short time frame when the marketing of oats was not clear cut and profits maximized, but within a very few months the marketing of oats was great and profits were maximized.

• (1340)

They will not find anybody now growing oats begging to get back into the Canadian Wheat Board. This is the very thing I am talking about, the wheat board for the future. The wheat board has to be run, controlled, directed by western Canadian farmers.

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A lot of them want to have this marketing board. I assure members of that. They want to maximize their profits.

The net income for farmers in Ontario and Quebec is much higher than it is in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta. It shows that a marketing board for the dairy industry, I guess that accounts for the majority of the profits here, can be a very strong influence on the net profits that farmers make and that is what we want in western Canada.

The prairie provinces want to run the Canadian Wheat Board and that is not happening with these amendments here today.

The elections will go ahead. We will end up with new directors of the wheat board, but the duties that they will end up being given will come from Ottawa. That is why this new wheat board, with the amendments to it, will not work. It will not survive more than a few years if they go through.

My earlier suggestions regarding the Canadian Wheat Board being run by westerners and the sapping of strength by having it run from Ottawa is that this membership composed of western farmers will maximize profits.

Under this set-up, I would imagine that a wheat cartel would arise where the rest of the world, Canadian millers and everybody else, would have to pay the maximum price. There would be no in-fighting.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk on this topic today. It has a lot to do with the profits we will make in the west. Please, give us a break.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to make a brief intervention into this debate on the Canadian Wheat Board.

I listened carefully to the member from the Reform Party, a member from my province. I want to ask what it is about the Reform Party, what is the source of this great self-loathing that they have with respect to Canada, that time and time again we see them as an instrument of American and multinational corporate power when it comes to so many different policy areas.

We saw the other week and we see it again with respect to the wheat board. We saw it just last week with respect to the whole question of bank mergers. What was the Reform Party solution to the prospect of the Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal merging—

The Deputy Speaker: Order please.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to know what the relevance of the Bank Act is to what we are debating today.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the Chair has been fairly lenient in respect to the relevancy rules. We are discussing Group No. 4 which I understand deals with governance and the appointment of directors and so on of the Canadian Wheat Board.

I am sure the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona in his remarks about the Bank Act was moving toward discussion of the appointment of the directors of the Canada Wheat Board. I am looking forward to his remarks in that regard.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I did not know that using analogies and drawing parallels between one position and another was out of order. I am glad that you have ruled it is not.

Going back to what I was saying, we see this consistency in the position of the Reform Party with respect to any policy area that has to do with the pre-eminence of Canadian public interest against the rule that American corporate interests would like to play in the Canadian economy, whether that is the role of American banks that would like a larger foothold in the Canadian economy or whether it is the role of American or other multinational agribusiness corporations that would like a greater foothold in the Canadian economy.

What is the response of the Reform Party in both cases? Fine with us. We would just like to be able to sell them a little wheat off-board for ostensibly a higher price forgetting the lesson of many, many years, forgetting the fact that that is what used to be the case. That is precisely because that did not work that we came to establish the Canadian Wheat Board pools. That is a history lesson. Oh, no, the Reform Party is bothered again. One of its members is up on another point of order.

• (1345)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I beg that the Chair rule on the relevance of this. We have just explained that 97% of farmers are in favour of the amendment I put forward.

The member is not relevant. He is saying things that are totally inappropriate and off topic.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members may disagree with what the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona is saying, but if the Chair were to insist that the remarks of every member who is speaking to Bill C-4—and this appears to be a fairly general debate on Bill C-4, to the Chair—be relevant to the amendments now before the House, I am afraid I would have been asking hon. members to resume their seats for some time now.

I stress that we are debating Bill C-4. I think the hon. member is discussing Bill C-4. While it may not be particularly relevant to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, there is a string of amendments in Group No. 4 and I assume we will hear in due course how the hon. member ties into those.

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Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a saying of a former prime minister of the House, John Diefenbaker. He said that you can always tell when you throw a stone whether you have hit anything or not because they start to yelp. We have heard some yelping on the part of the Reform Party. It is because perhaps at some deep psychic level Reformers are uncomfortable with the way in which they continually re-emerge in the Chamber as the defender of American corporate interests.

Speaking more specifically to the amendment which presumably will make my colleagues in the Reform Party happier, I notice with respect to the nature of the voting for the Canadian Wheat Board that the Reform Party wants big farmers to have more votes than smaller farmers.

This is interesting from a party that consistently makes the argument with respect to Senate reform that all provinces should be equal in the Senate. Whether it is Prince Edward Island or Ontario, there should be an equality of say in the Senate.

What happens to this principle when it comes to farmers? What happens to the sanctity of the view of small farmers when it comes to the governance that the Reform Party would like to see with respect to the wheat board? This principle seems to have gone out the window altogether. Perhaps somebody could explain that when they get up next.

Is this another way of telegraphing the way in which Reform Party policy eventually merges with or coincides with the long term interests of members of American agribusiness that no doubt foresee the day or long for the day when there will not be any small farmers and they will be able to buy up more and more of our agriculture and more and more of our farms? If the Reform Party had its way, not only would they have the power that comes from ownership. They would have the power that comes from more votes being allocated to larger enterprises with respect to how the wheat board is governed.

Finally, just one more thing occurred to me as I have listened to Reform Party members over the last little while talking about rail line abandonment. We have to be careful what we ask for. The railways are now operating according to profit. The railways are now operating according to maximizing their profit in every way, putting aside entirely the whole notion of service and what is good for the community.

This is exactly the kind of commercial paradigm the Reform Party and others have been asking the railways to operate on for the last 20 years. Now they have it and they cannot stand it. Now they have it and they are starting to sound like New Democrats saying "Why don't they keep that line open? It is important to the community. Why don't they keep this line open? It is important to farmers".

Why do they not do this or that? They are not doing it because we have precisely the kind of railway transportation system in the

country Reformers pushed for and finally succeeded in getting. It is their own fault.

• (1350)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-4 today. It is interesting to hear my friend from Winnipeg speak. It is 1998 and the member is still engaging in 1960s rhetoric, calling Reform Party members tools of the capitalist pigs or imperialist dogs. He is engaging in conspiracy theories about some collusion with multinationals and transnationals. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

I will discuss some specific items in the bill. I will also address some of the issues my friend has raised.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: You had better stick to the amendment.

Mr. Monte Solberg: My friend says that I had better stick to the amendment. I certainly will, unlike him.

My friend raised one issue that is addressed in the amendment. He said, again in his conspiracy theory, that the Reform Party is somehow engaged in an attack on small farmers. He said that one of our amendments would somehow disenfranchise small farmers.

All it does is stand up for multigenerational farms. There are situations where farmers and perhaps a son or a couple of sons are on the farm. We want to ensure they all have a vote. Why does the NDP insist on attacking family farms? What do NDPers have against family farms?

All we are doing is ensuring that a hobby farmer, a lawyer in the big city or maybe even an imperialist dog who may have a little land in the country is unable to wipe out with one vote the vote of a multigenerational family farm. That is what we are standing up for. That is speaking to the amendments.

We wish to address a number of other items. We want to talk about the amendment of the member for Prince George—Peace River in northern B.C. The member proposes that we have a fully elected membership on the Canadian Wheat Board. That makes tremendous sense to me. I am surprised my NDP friends who are allegedly great populists did not stand in support of the idea of democracy in the Canadian Wheat Board. Do they not believe in allowing farmers to control their very own institutions? It makes tremendous sense to me. Not only does the NDP not want that but the government does not want that.

Because of tremendous pressure the government is at the point where it will consider allowing some directors to be elected, but it will certainly not engender the possibility of the majority of board members voting to open the board in any way. The government will not only ensure that enough of those members are appointed in the

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old standard way. It will also insist that the president be appointed by the agriculture minister.

I come from a part of the country where we embrace free enterprise principles. People there believe in the free market. In every other area they say we should have the choice to market our product the way we choose. We want the choice. Many people say they want to retain the Canadian Wheat Board as a voluntary organization.

A few minutes ago somebody spoke of the wheat board as a co-operative. It is not a co-operative as it stands now. It is a coercive. You have to belong to it. If you do not and you try to market your grain without going through the board, you will end up in shackles and leg irons like many Canadian farmers already have. To me that is absolutely ridiculous. If we are great believers in co-operatives, let us make the Canadian Wheat Board truly a co-operative. Let us allow people to be a part of it if they so choose.

We have a violation of the traditional natural rights to life, liberty and property. When it comes to liberty and property in this case, those fundamental natural rights are being abridged by the government and the Canadian Wheat Board. People in the west are upset about it.

• (1355)

We have seen numerous court cases. We have seen all kinds of protests. We have seen people breaking the law, committing acts of civil disobedience because they have had it with a government that is not permitting them to feed their families.

We have people who are looking across the border or considering the price they could get for their grain if they were allowed to market it themselves so they can feed their families. The government is saying “No, you cannot do that” and is sending those people to jail.

I cannot believe it. I am someone who comes from the west. I do not have an interest in a farm but I have sat and watched from the outside for a number of years. When I go around my riding, which is in southern Alberta, overwhelming people want the choice to belong to the board or not. Almost to a person, no matter what side of the issue they are on, they are very concerned about Bill C-4. They see it as a step backward.

I will speak to some other issues so that my friends in the NDP do not get up and accuse me of not being relevant. One issue my friend from Prince George—Peace River raised is really important. It is a motion to require the president to take steps to make the Canadian Wheat Board a signatory to the international code of ethics for Canadian business.

By way of background, the government has initiated a code of ethics. It has insisted that Canadian businesses that want to deal abroad follow the code of ethics.

Does it insist that government agencies be signatories to the code of ethics? No. Does it suggest that the Canadian Wheat Board that markets billions of dollars worth of grain around the world every year should be a signatory to the code of ethics? No.

We have the same old double standard. We have the government on one side saying “do as I say and not as I do”. Farmers and everybody else are expected to live up to a different standard. If experience tells us anything, we know that Canadian business people have higher ethical standards than the government. We have seen that over and over again.

The government displays unusual effrontery this time. It is the one that raises the issue. It is actually encouraging Canadian business to do it but will not live up to it. I find that unbelievable. I urge members to support Motion No. 16 in Group No. 4.

I summarize by saying that Bill C-4 is a rear guard action. Canadian farmers have made it very clear they will not tolerate the current Canadian Wheat Board. They will not tolerate any half measures. They want to see sweeping change. They want to see a voluntary Canadian Wheat Board. They want to have their natural rights restored, the rights to liberty and the rights to property. Those natural rights precede laws that come from government. We want to see them re-established.

I urge my friends in the House to consider very carefully the arguments of the Reform Party and certainly those of Canadian farmers who are willing in many cases to go to jail for them. I encourage my friends to vote with the Reform Party in support of the Reform amendments in Group No. 4.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

1998 OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—Assiniboine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is seeing gold, Olympic gold.

I am proud to rise in the House today to congratulate the 153 Canadian athletes who make up our country's team to the 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games. I know all hon. members and Canadians wish our athletes the very best.

It is of particular pleasure to rise in this place to congratulate Canada's first medal recipient, Ross Rebagliati. Rebagliati has not only won gold for Canada. He made Olympic history and did so in a new sport, the snowboard slalom.

My sincerest congratulations to all the athletes who are representing Canada with such grace and style and who epitomize the

values of excellence, dedication, discipline and fair play. They are indeed great ambassadors of a great nation.

Good luck Team Canada, your country is behind you.

* * *

• (1400)

ROSS REBAGLIATI

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend at the Olympics in Nagano, 26 year old Ross Rebagliati of Whistler, B.C. brought Canada's first gold medal at the Olympics. Ross became the first ever winner of the gold medal in snowboarding.

Ross' gold medal is more than a personal achievement and a number in Canada's quest for gold. The gold medal victory signifies the bond between Ross and his long time friend Geoff "Lumpy" Leidel, who died last month in an avalanche in Kootenay national park, and to whom Ross dedicated the medal.

This is more than a gold medal for Canada. It is a statement to the indomitable spirit of Ross Rebagliati, the bond of a friendship and should serve as an inspiration and reminder of what the Olympics signify.

Ross, you are the personification of the Olympic spirit. Congratulations.

* * *

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago on January 30, 1948 the world lost a noble man, the great souled or pre-eminent leader of Indian nationalism, Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi was a political leader who clearly demonstrated, through action, the concept of civil disobedience or passive resistance. But Gandhi left a legacy in addition to the lessons of civil disobedience through his articulation of seven social sins: politics without principle, wealth without work, commerce without morality, education without character, pleasure without conscience, science without humanity, and worship without sacrifice.

If we listen to the message Gandhi gave us, we in this House are better prepared to serve this country and build a good society.

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[Translation]

TOKAMAK PROJECT

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, several months ago already, the Liberal government announced the projected end of its contribution of \$7.2 million to the Tokamak project in Varennes.

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Quebec is still recovering from the ice storm, which forced many Quebecers to use other much more polluting forms of energy, such as wood and coal and gasoline for generators. The Government of Ontario is being forced to shut down the Candu reactors, which are considered unreliable after only 15 years in service. The Government of Ontario is contemplating sending the province back to the bygone days of coal fired generating stations, a step in the other direction from the commitment Canada made at the Rio and Kyoto conferences.

Nuclear fusion, the focus of the Tokamak project, is a clean and safe alternative to such polluting sources of energy, which continue to be funded to the tune of billions of dollars of public money from the federal government. It is therefore difficult to understand why the Liberal government insists on threatening the future of the project. Its false economies reveal its shortsightedness.

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[English]

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our nation's sovereignty is again being compromised by individual negotiators, acting on the whim and direction of ministers, who do not reflect the will and expectations of the people of this nation.

Liberal government representatives state that the multilateral agreement on investment, the MAI, will not affect sub-nationals, which is bureaucratic talk for provinces, territories and their jurisdictions.

The Minister for International Trade says this is true. In fact, he disputes international consensus which says the MAI will apply to Canadian provinces.

The minister supports a carve-out for financial institutions such as the banks from the MAI but not for the environment. Is foreign profit more important to this government than the protection of Canada's environment?

Canada's environment will be at risk if the MAI opens the doors for resource exploitation and it will be Canadians paying the piper, not the minister.

We challenge the Liberal government to a full public debate on the MAI to let Canadians decide how bad the MAI really is.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a particularly important issue to both the agricultural industry and international trade. The World Trade Organization negotiations begin in 1999 and other countries have already begun to chart their course with respect to their agricultural sectors. Our current minister of agriculture has a tendency to simply let lawyers

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defend the industry rather than have his own ministry set policy for the future.

It is time for the government to start defending this multibillion dollar industry. Is our government going to begin a substantive plan on how our industry will fit internationally and compete in the global agriculture and agri-food market? Unlike the government's environmental initiative in Kyoto, we cannot wait until the last minute.

Now is the time to begin a comprehensive consultative process with both industry and consumers on how we should compete in both the international and domestic markets. I urge the government to start looking for such a plan.

* * *

• (1405)

THE LATE MARK MACGUIGAN

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mark MacGuigan, who died last month, was a professional philosopher as well as a lawyer. His career moved quickly through the different domains: university law teaching, university administration, politics as a backbench MP for 12 years, then in the space of four more years, foreign minister and justice minister, and finally judge of the appeals division of the Federal Court of Canada.

He continued, through his long illness, his scholarly interests, with a treatise on law and morality in 1994 and leaving two other manuscripts, on foreign policy and the administration of justice, partly completed upon his death.

His life represents the continuing attempt to reconcile a natural law based set of ethical values with the practical necessities of a rapidly evolving Canadian society.

* * *

HEART AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February is heart awareness month. Cardiovascular disease remains Canada's leading cause of death and one of the major causes of disability. More than 79,000 Canadians die every year from heart disease and stroke.

Besides the human toll of the disease, the cost to the economy is considerable, about \$20 billion per year and more than 6.5 million days of hospitalization.

[*Translation*]

We are making great progress in fighting cardiovascular disease. Strokes and heart disease are caused by our lifestyle.

[*English*]

By eradicating smoking, promoting a healthy diet of physical activity, we can help Canadians in preventing and/or postponing the onset of this disease.

By investing in heart health, we can reduce significantly this disease. By mobilizing society as a whole, we can enhance—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

* * *

THE SENATE

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, our absentee senator from Mexico will stroll into Ottawa tomorrow to make an appearance in the Senate so that he can continue to collect his pay for another two years.

This particular senator has taken advantage of the Canadian taxpayer for 31 years and now the government and the Senate have made his life easier. He has been freed from his party obligations and was recently relieved of his Ottawa office. Now he does not even have a phone should his constituents try to get a hold of him.

What kind of representation are Canadians receiving when senators can live on the beaches of Mexico and show up once a year or so only to qualify to collect their pay?

Now is the time to end this senator's siesta. The Prime Minister must take responsibility and ask the senator from Mexico to withdraw from the Senate so that Canadians can have legitimate representation in the upper chamber.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA TRAIN PROJECT

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to give its support for the Canada Train national unity project.

In August 1998, 250 young Canadians will begin a cross-country tour to explore Canada. Delegates' responsibilities will include taking part in public debates and forums, and performing community services. Enriched by this experience, they will meet 25 days later to discuss their vision of the country's future.

I would like to congratulate corporate and individual sponsors, particularly the Students' Union of the University of Alberta, on their vision and enthusiasm. I urge young Canadians to take part in the Canada Train project.

[English]

I urge all members to support this project now, in its preparatory stages, and in August when the Canada train passes through their ridings. The initiatives of these young people are a reminder to all of us—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval East.

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[Translation]

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the statistics on child poverty are increasingly conclusive.

Since 1989, the number of children living in poverty has increased by 58%; the number of children living in families on welfare has increased by 68%; the number of children living in unaffordable housing has increased by 48%; and the number of children whose family's net income is under \$20,000 has increased by 45%.

We are a long way from the House's unanimous resolution in 1989 to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. These children are suffering and cannot even aspire to the strict minimum needed to get off to a good start in life. They are feeling the effects of the cuts made by the Liberal government since it took office.

The Bloc Québécois urges the federal government to give back to the provinces the money it owes them, the money it used to improve its accounting image and achieve a budget surplus.

Only the provinces are in a position to use this money—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The member for Ottawa West—Nepean has the floor.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

CENTRALEXPERIMENTAL FARM

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Secretary of State for Parks and the minister of agriculture designated the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa as a national historical site.

This does not mean that the farm will be frozen in time. It will continue to evolve as it has for 111 years but it will evolve in a way that is consistent with the important contribution it has made to agriculture in Canada and internationally.

It will be a permanent visible reminder in the nation's capital to all Canadians of the importance of agriculture to our economic and social development.

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The people of this region are proud of the nation's capital and its national institutions. I know they will want to contribute to and be part of planning the future of the Central Experimental Farm, our newest national historical site.

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MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, left-wing groups like the NDP and the Council of Canadians have been having a field day out west with a misinformation campaign about the MAI. They lost the battle on free trade, so now they want to make a bogeyman about liberalized investment.

I know where they are coming from but I wonder why this government has allowed their fearmongering to go unchecked. I challenge the Minister for International Trade to go out to B.C. and deal with these many allegations surrounding the MAI.

If the government is going to be out there negotiating this agreement, it needs to explain it to the people.

Investment is the lifeblood of economic development. Investment leads to trade and trade leads to jobs for Canadians.

Canadian firms investing abroad need the protection that a rules based investment agreement provides through national treatment.

Canadians deserve to know that a good agreement will be good for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SIXTY MINUTES

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the weekend we were subjected to an attack by an American network, CBS, in its report on Quebec's language policies on *Sixty Minutes*

It is one thing to agree or disagree with Quebec's decisions which are aimed at protecting and promoting the French language, but it is quite another to show so much subjectivity in denouncing bodies and regulations, the underlying principle of which is to reaffirm the position of francophones within the vast expanse of North America.

Contrary to what was said throughout that report, we do not believe that Quebec wishes to be a francophone enclave within North America, for the simple reason that it has, for decades, been working in every possible way to promote the French language and culture.

In a desire for objectivity, the people responsible for the program should have shown the other side of the coin, giving a complete picture of the collective efforts focussed on promoting the French culture in America.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC**

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak out vigorously against the partisan remarks made by Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard this past weekend concerning the Canadian government's assistance to disaster victims.

The Government of Quebec is going too far with its barefaced statement that the federal government is attempting to stop it from attaining its objective of eliminating the Quebec deficit, by refusing to comply with Quebec's request that it assume the costs incurred in getting the hydro-electric system up and running.

Once again, the federal government is being blamed for Quebec's administrative shortcomings.

We must make it clear. Right from the start we have insisted that assistance to the victims of this catastrophe go to families, small businesses and communities, not to viable major public and private corporations.

The Premier of Quebec even wants to make this into an issue in the next election. Well, we are ready and waiting for him. Let him go ahead, and we will not even have to say a word.

Go right ahead, Mr. Bouchard. The people in the affected areas are ready and waiting for you. But take care, because sometimes shots like that backfire.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all too often there is a most important but ignored element of the criminal justice system, the victim. All too often we hear the plights of those individuals forgotten by the system that seeks to obtain justice on their behalf. Strange but true.

While the Criminal Code contains provisions dealing with victims, it is simply not enough.

While all provinces and both territories have provisions for victim rights, it is still not enough. It is time for a comprehensive study and action.

The federal government will soon conduct a wide ranging consultation with Canadians in all parts of the country on the issue of the victims in the criminal justice system.

I welcome the participation of all Canadians and especially those residents from my riding of Erie—Lincoln at a series of spring town hall meetings on this very important subject.

The final results of this consultation will be a report containing committee findings and recommendations, after which I will

continue to press for the introduction of a comprehensive victim bill of rights.

Canada and its victims of crimes are crying out for fair, compassionate and sensitive redress. It is long overdue.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[English]

IRAQ

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, throughout our history Canadians have shown that we are willing to do whatever is necessary to protect ourselves and the world from tyrants and terrorism. If Canadians were asked whether we trust Saddam Hussein or whether we trust the U.S. and the U.K., we will stand by our allies. But we still have some serious questions for our Prime Minister.

When President Clinton called, did he make it clear exactly what the objective of any military strike against Saddam Hussein would be? Is it to take out Saddam Hussein's weapons factories, or is it something bigger and broader?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I talked with President Clinton and earlier today I talked with the Prime Minister of Great Britain. The goal that we all have is to make sure that Saddam Hussein respects the resolutions of the UN and stops the production of armaments like biological weapons and so on that are extremely dangerous.

We have proof that they were producing and are still producing them and we want to terminate this production. It is extremely dangerous for countries around the world if we do not stop Saddam Hussein with this production.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are possibly on the eve of a war. The leaders of the nations of the world are taking positions. It seems to me that it is time Canada's Prime Minister stood up to be counted and got off the fence.

Will the Prime Minister go beyond vague comments and clearly tell Canadians whether he is convinced that military action to stop terrorism by Saddam Hussein is required?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like everybody else, I am hoping that there will be a diplomatic solution to the problem. As everybody knows, there are a lot of people who are trying to persuade Saddam Hussein to change his

Oral Questions

position. In order to have him change his position we have to show with determination that if he does not change his position we will be there to make sure that he stops the production of this absolutely unacceptable armament he is building at this time.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1991 when Canada decided to support military action to halt aggression by Iraq against Kuwait, the House debated the issue for three days, not just a few hours. It debated a motion on a position put forward by the government reaffirming our support of action by the United Nations followed by a vote.

Is tonight's debate merely window dressing, or will the government put forward a real motion on a real position followed by a vote?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we intend to have a debate, to have the views of the House of Commons expressed on this subject.

The Leader of the Opposition has asked me to stand very firm on a position at this time. At the same time I said to the House that I want to have the views of the House of Commons before I make my views known publicly.

To have a definitive resolution as the member is proposing at this time would be giving a final opinion of the government before listening to the opposition. If that is what you want, it is not what you were asking for a few hours ago or last week.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still has not given us an answer to the question. We have been asking it now for two weeks.

We know the position of the President of the United States. We know the position of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. We know the position of Germany. We know all of these positions.

The Canadian people want to know what the Prime Minister's position is. Why will the Prime Minister not tell us? Is he for military action or is he against it?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to me a minute ago, I said that I hope that there will be a diplomatic solution. If there is no diplomatic solution, we want to be ready to make sure that Saddam Hussein respects the resolutions of the UN. That is a very good position.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we all hope that there could be a diplomatic solution and we wonder why Canada was not involved in helping to get that diplomatic solution. But now the position is it has gone beyond that and we now need to know where the Prime Minister stands on military action and that he take some leadership. That is what we are asking for. Leadership.

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just stated a very clear position. We want to find a diplomatic solution but this is already over for the hon. member.

When I talked yesterday with President Clinton and when I talked this morning with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, they told me that they still believe there is a possibility of a diplomatic solution and that in order to achieve it, we must be ready to act if Iraq does not accept that solution. That is exactly this government's position which is the same as the position of the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, historically, Canada has always taken a diplomatic approach to resolving international crises. We need only recall Lester B. Pearson's interventions during the Suez crisis, and the Canadian army's numerous peace missions.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he intends to urge his principle allies to seek a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is what I hope. I spoke with Mr. Blair, Mr. Clinton and Mr. Howard, the Prime Minister of Australia. Everyone is hoping for a diplomatic solution.

What we do not know, however, is whether or not Saddam Hussein will agree to such a solution. We have reached the point where we have to begin preparing a response to Saddam Hussein in the event he rejects the diplomatic proposals now being put forward by Russia and France.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1991, Canada took part in the Gulf war, under the control of the United Nations.

If, unfortunately, all diplomatic efforts were to fail, does the Prime Minister think that the ideal solution would be for any military intervention to take place under the control of the United Nations?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is desirable and it is what we are hoping for, except that the situation is now as follows: Saddam Hussein is not observing the commitments he made at the time of the ceasefire, and the military intervention in 1991 was authorized by the United Nations.

Saddam Hussein signed a ceasefire agreement and now he is not complying with it. We therefore have the authority to proceed, under the 1991 resolution, which Saddam Hussein is not complying with.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Oral Questions

Russian president Boris Yeltsin believes that a military strike in Iraq at this point could lead to a global conflict. His remarks are troubling, especially because they come from a member of the UN security council. Again this morning, upon arriving in Rome for an official visit, the president of Russia reiterated his support for a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis.

Before establishing its position in the matter, did the Canadian government try to find out the position of the Russian government, which continues to promote a negotiated solution to the conflict?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I had discussions with Mr. Primakov, the foreign minister of Russia, in which we discussed the issue of Iraq extensively. At that time he expressed the need for a diplomatic solution. The Prime Minister has said exactly the same thing. It is the hope of all of us that we can find a peaceful resolution to a very difficult situation. We will continue to support those efforts and take our own initiatives to try to promote the development of a means of reconciliation.

As the Prime Minister has said, the fact of the matter is that for the past seven years Saddam Hussein has been refusing to abide by the UN obligations he agreed to on the ceasefire in 1991. At some point you have to be able to say that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that a number of Canada's allies do not support a military intervention.

France, Italy and Belgium continue to oppose a military solution to the conflict with Iraq. Did Canada, a member of the OSCE, have discussions with these three countries, which all continue to believe in a negotiated solution to the conflict?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in constant contact with all the countries involved. As we have made very clear, perhaps the most important contact is to gain the views of members of Parliament from all across Canada. That is the most important consultation. We would like to have the co-operation of the opposition in doing that.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were alarmed this morning to hear the U.S. Secretary of State announce Canadian support for use of substantial military force against Iraq.

My question for the Prime Minister is, is that true? If so, why this contempt of Parliament which has not yet debated this serious matter? And if it is not true, will the Prime Minister lodge an official protest with the U.S. government for its misrepresentation of Canada's position?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position is clear. I said to the President of the United States yesterday as I said to the Prime Minister of Great Britain this morning, that I do not want to give Canada's commitment until I have sought the view of the House of Commons. If Ms. Albright indicated that I said yes, it is misinformation. I said that I had to consult the House and I want to do it today.

I hope you will not use procedures to prevent me from consulting you. I want your views.

In passing, I informed the leader of the Labour Party in England of the position of the NDP on this matter.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, most countries are calling for more aggressive diplomacy, not unilateral military aggression. Even General Norman Schwarzkopf says bombing will not work. A better way to gain Iraqi compliance with UN weapons inspections is to ease trade sanctions which have already killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

Why does Canada not lead the way as we did with land mines? Why not intensify our efforts to work through the United Nations for a multilateral diplomatic solution?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have spent weeks and months with Saddam Hussein trying to achieve that solution. That is why the Secretary-General of the United Nations is calling for respect of the resolutions of the security council. We are doing everything we can. However, there comes a time when we must say to Saddam Hussein "Respect the obligation that you took in 1991 or else". We are getting ready to do the "or else". When the times comes we must be ready to do that.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, for more than a week now my party has been calling for a proper debate to be held in the House of Commons on the Iraq question, not a group therapy session but a debate based on the known position of the government and the information it is prepared to give to the House.

I want to know why the government has waited a whole week and why the President of the United States is the one behind a debate in the House and not the members of the Canadian Parliament, who are entitled to the respect of this House and to an opportunity to hear the government's position, not group therapy.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last Parliament, we developed the habit of consulting the House of Commons before making final decisions.

We know the leader of the Conservative Party was often away from the House at that time, but we did develop that habit of consulting the House of Commons' opinion before adopting a position.

If you want me to adopt a position and to commit the government before consulting Parliament, fine, that will make things easy for me. With all due respect, I am offering to consult the opposition, yet it does not want to be consulted. Fine, just say so and I will turn up with a position and then, when the government has decided, you will vote for or against it. But I thought you could contribute to the debate before a decision is reached.

[English]

The Speaker: Once again, my colleagues, I would ask you to please make your remarks to the Chair. Also, we should not make any references to who is or who is not here.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister speaks about respect for the opposition and the other parties. Basic respect would start by informing the House of Commons and its members of what is happening and offering briefings on what is happening.

The Americans are ready to offer briefings to members of this House on what is happening. Our own government has not even done that yet. Respect starts by explaining to this House what the Canadian position is, not group therapy in the House of Commons.

• (1430)

Would the prime minister have the decency of informing the House today whether or not he told President Clinton that he prefers actions under the auspices of the United Nations rather than seeing the Americans act alone? Will he at least inform us of that today?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say that the United Nations authorized action in 1991 against Saddam Hussein. After the attack, a ceasefire agreement was drawn up which Saddam Hussein is not respecting. If he does not respect the ceasefire agreement, it means we have the authority to move.

What is the hon. member complaining about? We want to have a debate but he does not want it. Last week he asked for a debate. I asked for a debate tonight and he does not want one. He should make up his mind. He is as confused as ever.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, twice last week the finance minister avoided answering a pretty simple question so we will try again.

Oral Questions

The finance minister knows that the 3% and 5% surtaxes were introduced as temporary measures until the budget was balanced. The budget is now balanced. When will the finance minister eliminate the 3% and 5% surtaxes?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has made very clear on a number of occasions its intention to reduce taxes. In fact, in previous budgets we have reduced taxes and we will continue to do so over subsequent budgets.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are asking him specifically about the 3% and 5% surtaxes. The government has a contract with the people of Canada. The people of Canada have fulfilled their end of the deal. They have balanced the budget. They pay extraordinarily high taxes to balance the budget.

My question is when will the finance minister fulfil his end of the contract? When will he eliminate the 3% and 5% surtax?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government certainly does have a contract with the Canadian people. It is called the social contract. It is there to protect the social fabric of this nation.

The fact is that the NDP, in seeking to gut health care, in not wanting to put enough money into research and development, in not wanting to put enough money into education, is seeking to gut equalization. What the Reform Party seeks to do is to break the social contract.

* * *

[Translation]

ICE STORM

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the recent ice storm, which seriously damaged Quebec's hydroelectric system, an essential public service as everyone knows, the Prime Minister always left the door open to possible compensation. Last Friday, the President of the Treasury Board categorically refused to pay such compensation.

My question is for the Prime Minister: How can the federal government justify its refusal to compensate Quebec, when it compensated Newfoundland and Manitoba in almost identical situations under the same compensation clauses?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that Newfoundland received \$1,750,000 in compensation in 1984, but in a situation that was completely different from the one we are now talking about.

In 1988, the directives indicated very clearly that there would not be compensation for public utilities, and it is clear that Hydro-Québec is a large company. It is a company that clearly has

Oral Questions

the ability to raise money itself. It is a company that may borrow, on international markets if need be, and it is a company that will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Témiscamingue has the floor.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is telling us that Hydro-Québec will be penalized for being well run. This does not make sense.

The President of the Treasury Board said on Friday that Ottawa was not an automated teller machine you could withdraw money from whenever you wanted.

Does the minister realize that Quebecers are depositing \$31 billion annually in his automated teller machine and that they are entitled to expect to be treated properly and, above all, fairly?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are reasons that are often given, but they do not stand up. Large corporations such as Alcan and Bell Canada were not compensated, nor will they be.

Since the 1988 directive, electric companies in Newfoundland and Manitoba have not been compensated. Speaking of \$29 billion, the Bloc Québécois and the Parti Québécois always forget to mention that, while Quebec paid \$29 billion in taxes in 1993-94, transfer payments to that province in the same year were \$41.9 billion. That is where we really come up \$12 billion short.

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• (1435)

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week we asked the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development how a confidential letter written to her by Bruce Starlight could have got into the hands of Chief Roy Whitney. She said she did not know.

It turns out that Chief Roy Whitney is so connected to the Liberals that the finance minister was a fund-raiser when he ran as a candidate and the Prime Minister was a keynote speaker at Whitney's nomination meeting in 1993.

My question is, do all well-connected Liberal insiders have access to confidential and privileged information?

The Speaker: I am having a little trouble with the question. I will rule the question in order, but it is quite borderline. I will permit the hon. minister to answer.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when Chief Roy Whitney ran as a Liberal candidate, the finance minister hosted a fund-raiser for him, two Liberal senators were in attendance, the Prime Minister was the keynote speaker at Whitney's nomination meeting and spoke at length and in glowing terms about his friend, Chief Roy Whitney.

Just last month Whitney accompanied the Prime Minister on a Team Canada trade mission.

Is this why the Indian affairs minister does not want an RCMP investigation? Is she afraid that it might lead to the door of the Prime Minister's office?

The Speaker: I rule that question out of order. If the minister wants to answer it, she may.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-28

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government ethics commissioner last week said, with respect to Bill C-28: "Canada Steamship Lines has indicated clearly to me that it has no intention of utilizing this provision".

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does the minister realize that this statement by the ethics commissioner clearly confirms that Canada Steamship Lines, fully owned by the Minister of Finance, could benefit from Bill C-28 if it so wished?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I will answer this question, because they are trying to put the Minister of Finance in a position of conflict of interest.

The minister has a large company, as everyone knows, which he owns and founded. Its management is in the hands of a trustee as the rules of Parliament require. The Minister of Finance has assured this House, and I have assured myself, that the company could at no time benefit from the decision made to attract investment in Canada.

So, to ask the question as the member is doing is a bit malicious, since the Minister of Finance has done nothing wrong.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, any malice there may be comes from having buried a page and a half of amendments to legislation governing international shipping in a bill 464 pages long. This is a malicious act on the part of the Minister of Finance.

I have a supplementary. Would the minister not agree that, to date, he has been unable to prove once and for all that there is no conflict or at least the appearance of a conflict of interest between the legislation he introduced in this House and his own interests as a shipowner?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance did what was required of him when he became the Minister of Finance. Everyone knew he owned Canada Steamship Lines.

We discussed the matter at length with ethics commissioners to be sure that he could be Minister of Finance and serve Canada well and ensure that the very successful family firm he founded could operate in the interest of other shareholders without affecting his role as Minister of Finance of Canada. As such he has acted with dignity and integrity.

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Indian affairs minister has given excuse after excuse to justify the scandal in her department. She has left the grassroots Indian people feeling betrayed while she leaks their letters, ignoring the cause for the letters in the first place.

• (1440)

What steps has the minister taken to investigate the charges of fraud and corruption against Chief Whitney as outlined in the letter she received from Bruce Starlight?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an ongoing RCMP investigation.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Deputy Prime Minister said that he would look into the possibility of paying for Bruce Starlight's legal fees, seeing as how the leaked letter was the basis upon which the civil suit was launched.

Will the government pay for Bruce Starlight's legal fees?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not usual that the department would intervene in a circumstance like this.

As I mentioned before in this House, which the Deputy Prime Minister has made clear, the facts are that we have an investigation in the department under way to follow the path which that letter took in my department. We have reviewed the process with the privacy commissioner, who has said that our approach is reasonable. Until the investigation is complete, there is no point in making a decision on this question.

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[Translation]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS TO PROVINCES

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

Quebeckers have been hit hard by the unilateral cuts in transfers to the provinces resulting from the continual deficits of the federal government in recent years. Social and health services have been affected everywhere because the federal government balanced its budget on the backs of the provinces.

Does the Minister of Finance intend to act on the request of the Bloc Québécois and pass anti-deficit legislation so that in the future the provinces are no longer faced with the consequences of federal deficits?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is similar to proposals made by the Reform Party and the Conservative Party a few years ago. My answer is the same.

All formulae contain an exemption for economic downturns and catastrophes. These exemptions seen from a different angle always represent a gigantic hole that essentially voids these sorts of formulae. This is not our intention. We think it much more important to be more transparent and have very clear objectives.

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[English]

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

A report prepared for Human Resources Development Canada on an 18 month study into underground economic activity in the construction industry was recently leaked to the media. When will the minister officially release the report and what does he plan to do to crack the abuse and the undermining of our social programs as a result of the underground economy?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We indeed developed a joint industry-government working group to examine the issue of underground economic activity in the construction industry. The report is the result of the working group study. It contains a detailed description of where and how underground activity takes place. It will be used by the working group to create an action plan to reduce underground employment activity in the construction industry.

Copies have been released to people interested, but I must say that we do not want it to go beyond—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Delta—South Richmond.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES**

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in granting me an absolute discharge for participating in a protest fishery, B.C. provincial court judge Howie Thomas has served notice that the courts will not enforce the minister's program of racially based commercial fisheries.

Judge Thomas was not making it up as he went along. He was guided by recent decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada.

In the face of last Friday's decision, will the government abandon its policy of racially based commercial fisheries?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after an examination of the judge's remarks when he convicted the hon. member and also the comments surrounding the sentencing, the government has decided to proceed with the aboriginal fishing strategy because it believes that the regulations under which the strategy is based are entirely legal and above board.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not understand that if the courts refuse to prosecute fishermen for participating in these fisheries, and for defying his illegal fishery, that it is all over for him? Does he not understand that without the support of the courts chaos will reign?

How can the minister continue racially based commercial fisheries in defiance of the courts?

• (1445)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is based on a very curious premise.

He states that the courts prosecute. The courts do not prosecute. They determine guilt or innocence, and in the case of the hon. member they convicted him.

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MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. It has to do with the words the minister used on Friday, words like "overwhelming endorsement and consensus", to describe attitudes toward the government's position on the MAI.

Does the minister not know that this is not true? Does he not know that a growing and significant number of Canadians are very concerned about the uncritical way in which the government is approaching globalization?

Will the minister listen to those Canadians, withdraw from the MAI negotiations and seek a global economy that works for people and the environment instead of multinational corporations?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I said on Friday that there was an overwhelming endorsement on the part of the parliamentary committee, that is absolutely correct.

The general tenor of the committee was to continue our negotiations at the table to obviously push, protect and promote Canadian values and interests, which we are about to do.

I said many times we would sign the right deal at the right time and not any deal any time. The Reform Party was on side. The Conservative Party was on side. The Bloc Party was on side. The only party that said cut and run was the NDP. That is not how we build countries.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of cutting and running. It is a question of how we are to shape globalization to serve communities, to serve the environment, to protect workers and not just to protect the rights of investors, which is what the MAI does.

The minister referred to the WTO on Friday. Why does he not try to do this at the WTO where developing countries will be at the table and where people who have some idea of how investments ought to be regulated in the public interest will be at the table, instead of just industrialized countries which unfortunately now seem to speak only for multinational corporations?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have been advocating.

The hon. member's party is against the bilateral route. It was against the FTA. It was against NAFTA. It said that we had to negotiate multilaterally. Now we have a multilateral deal on investment and the hon. member says that is not good enough either.

What is left for the NDP except building walls and barriers? Clearly that is not in the interests of Canada.

We also said that it properly belongs eventually at the WTO where we have rich and poor, north and south, black and white. We have said that and we continue to say that.

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[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council are often mentioned in connection with the Iraq crisis. I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Oral Questions

Could the minister tell this House whether his government is of the opinion that the resolutions adopted in the past concerning the Iraq crisis legitimize military intervention in Iraq now?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of resolutions since 1991 have called into account Iraq for a breach of the agreements made under the ceasefire.

In particular cases the latest one was November last year when security council again registered a breach or a violation of the agreement, which could lead to a threat to our national security. I believe that demonstrates there is an ongoing set of developments and decisions by the United Nations that support the need for strong action.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the United Nations Security Council still has in hand the resolutions for military intervention. Any major countries, therefore, that do not dare to speak up today are indirectly supporting military intervention in Iraq.

Are the minister and his government going to ask the United Nations Security Council to again make a decision on the Iraq question, or is this government going to settle for the old resolutions?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the present moment there are quite active discussions about a proposed resolution that might be considered.

The whole point of having a resolution is to have one that will be passed and agreed to, not one that provides further splits or divisions. The initiation at the security council requires the kind of active diplomacy the prime minister was talking about that we support.

* * *

• (1450)

BANKING

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding is only one of many where Canadians are concerned about access to basic bank services. Many Canadians share this concern whether they live in rural Canada or downtown Toronto.

Could the Secretary of State for Financial Institutions ensure all Canadians that they will continue to have access to basic bank services?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Essex for the leadership she showed in maintaining and keeping open the only bank in Comber, Ontario.

Access to basic bank services in rural Newfoundland or downtown Victoria is a priority of the government. To get better access for low income Canadians I have written to the Canadian Bankers' Association, insisting that only two pieces of ID will be necessary to open a basic bank account regardless of past credit history.

If any Canadians are denied basic bank services, we want to know.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the leaks in the department of Indian affairs are becoming so bad that it is starting to resemble the *Titanic*.

The issue remains how is it that confidential letters to the minister, letters that alleged corruption by Indian chiefs, were leaked to the very chiefs in question. Today we are told that apparently the minister has finally decided to act and has called in the RCMP.

When did she call in members of the RCMP? What exactly are they investigating? Are they investigating the leaks of the department or Bruce Starlight's original allegation?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the opposition prefers to deal in innuendo and allegations. Let me just get the facts on the table again for the House.

First, it is absolutely inappropriate that Mr. Starlight's letter found its way into the hands of Chief Whitney.

Second, that letter was not conveyed by me or by any officials in my department.

Third, I am concerned that it may have come from my department and therefore I have demanded an investigation to be done. I reviewed the process with the privacy commissioner and he said that this is a reasonable approach.

I think it is they who are like the *Titanic* and going down.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the number of government appointments to the Immigration and Refugee Board is rising considerably.

Between 1994 and 1996, the percentage of replacements had soared to 75% under the Liberal government. According to the auditor general's figures, it costs \$92,000 to train a new board member.

How can the minister justify that the average term of office served by board members has dropped, under the Liberals, to only

Oral Questions

two and a half years, at a cost to the public of approximately \$15 million for the sole purpose of satisfying the government's desire to appoint its friends to the board?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Longueuil does not have accurate information. The government itself has appointed an advisory committee independent of the minister and the government, whose mandate it is to evaluate the competence of individuals applying to become board members.

Since the committee was formed, the government has made no appointments without the explicit recommendation of this committee. As for the length of time served by new board members, it is well known that the chairperson of the board herself requires new board members—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

* * *

[English]

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Ms. Judy Wasylcyia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade talks about a consensus on the MAI.

He should know that there certainly was no consensus at the health committee about the ability of government to protect medicare from the commercial forces of the MAI. In fact he should know there is a growing consensus in Canada that the government should kill the MAI before the MAI kills medicare.

For the sake of medicare alone, would the international trade minister reconsider his attachment to the MAI?

• (1455)

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously there are concerns about any deal any government thinks of getting into, but licence should not be given irresponsibly to manipulate those concerns, to manipulate those anxieties and somehow to say that the MAI will result in the sale of Canada. That is exactly the kinds of things that have been coming from the member's party.

The replication of the investment chapter in NAFTA is essentially the guiding principles. Since we have signed NAFTA the health care system has not—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

IRAQ

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of National Defence said it was premature to discuss Canada's state of readiness.

Suddenly, less than a week later, the minister felt confident enough, and before checking with parliament, to tell the prime minister to commit Canadian troops and equipment to a U.S. led military strike on Iraq.

What information does the minister have today on our state of readiness that was not available just last week?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1994 the defence white paper said we should have multipurpose combat capable forces and we do.

Whether or not they are to be deployed in this case is a decision the government has to make. As the prime minister has clearly indicated, before we make that decision we would welcome the input of members of the opposition, if they would only allow an opportunity for debate in the House.

* * *

DAY CARE

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

At the business women's trade mission to Washington last fall Canadian women stated that one of the largest impediments to women entrepreneurs is child care costs.

Is the minister prepared at least to consider making child care expenses deductible as costs incurred for the purpose of providing income?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that the child care expense deduction recognizes the cost of child care for all families where both parents are working regardless of the circumstances of their employment. This is a very important issue of equity.

That being said, I have had occasion both in Vancouver and Toronto to meet with a number of the women who were on this trade mission, women entrepreneurs. They raised a series of very important points and we will give them every consideration.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans refused to turn over foreign observer reports. He claims he does not want to break the law when there is absolutely no law that prevents him from turning over those reports.

Why is he covering up for foreign vessels, for nations, while they are decimating our stocks? We are demanding the minister release these reports now. When do we get them?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that I offered these reports to members of the committee last week. In addition we have provided all the information they contain in its aggregated form to the committee and to the House. The information he is requesting has been made available.

The actual observers reports, which section 20 of the Freedom of Information act prevents me by law from releasing, are available to them in camera, so they have whatever they need.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANS-QUEBEC AND MARITIMES GAS PIPELINE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a \$50 million contract has been awarded to the Texan firm Saw Pipes USA and the Japanese firm Kawasaki to supply the steel required for construction of a 225-kilometre long underwater natural gas pipeline in Canada. The bulk of Canadian spinoffs from this project were related to this contract.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources admit that the federal government decision to authorize the Mobil Oil project without allowing an assessment of the Canadian backed trans-Quebec and maritimes project will have disastrous economic consequences on job creation?

[English]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contract to which the hon. gentleman refers is one that was discussed amply with potential Canadian suppliers. It turned out, following those discussions, that there was not a supplier in Canada that was in a position to provide the material up to the necessary specifications.

On the general point about whether or not the Sable offshore projects will be an advantage to Canada, that was reviewed by an independent panel which concluded undoubtedly that the project would carry major benefits for the Atlantic region and for the entire country.

* * *

• (1500)

INVESTMENT

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what promises can this government offer to aboriginal people that the

Tributes

multilateral agreement on investment will not give huge multinational corporations like Daishowa and others a very big say in determining aboriginal people's access to natural resources such as fish and forestry?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this act keeps getting worse on the far end. Whether or not we sign the MAI in April and whether or not it goes to the WTO does not mean the Government of Canada or any other participant will stop regulating and legislating on behalf of their interests and the values that gives rise to and define Canada.

We have given every assurance that we will only sign an MAI that is right for Canada and the global community. Nothing less is good enough.

The Speaker: Colleagues, that would bring to a close our question period for today.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during question period you called our member for Skeena out of order on a particular question. I reviewed the question a number of times during question period. I refer to the annotated Standing Orders which state:

When a decision on a question of order is reached, however, the Speaker must justify it through a statement in which he or she explains which Standing Order or authority is being applied to the case. Once the Speaker has done this, the matter is no longer open to debate or discussion and—

The Speaker: I refer the member to 409(7).

We will now proceed to tributes to a former Clerk of this House, the Hon. Bev Koester.

* * *

THE LATE CHARLES BEVERLEY KOESTER

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we learned last week of the sudden passing of Dr. C. Beverley Koester, the former Clerk of the House of Commons. I wish to say a few words of tribute to him.

Dr. Koester was born in Regina in 1926 and was educated at Royal Roads Military College, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta. He served in the Royal Canadian Navy and the RCN Reserve and retired with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

After a period of teaching history, he joined the staff of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan where he served as Clerk from 1960 to 1969 when he joined the faculty of the University of Regina.

Tributes

[Translation]

He was the head of the university's history department when the government of the day invited him to become Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons. He was promoted in 1979 to Clerk of the House, thus becoming my boss. He held that position until 1986, and I must say that I, and all of the House of Commons staff, I believe, found him to be an excellent boss.

- (1505)

[English]

Dr. Koester brought to the table the knowledge and wisdom of a scholar while at the same time providing the House his own determined leadership in modernizing our administration.

I had the good fortune both to serve as part of that administration when he was here and later to be a member of the House of Commons during the latter part of his tenure as Clerk. In both capacities I was able to appreciate his sagacity and his foresightedness. It was a mark of his accomplishment that when he retired he was succeeded for the first time by a career House of Commons servant.

On behalf of the members of the government, and dare I say as a former staffer, the employees of the House of Commons, I wish to express my sincere sympathies to Dr. Koester's wife and children on the passing of a truly fine man.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to pay tribute to Charles Beverley Koester.

For more than four decades Charles Beverley Koester served Canadians in many different capacities. He began his career in the Royal Canadian Navy and served overseas during World War II. Bev then moved on to become Clerk in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. After obtaining his doctorate in history he spent several years teaching in his hometown at the University of Regina. In 1980, Dr. Koester moved to Ottawa to become Clerk of the House of Commons.

Although I did not have the privilege of knowing him personally, I understand from many people his skills and abilities were most remarkable. He served the Speakers and members of this House with dedication and wisdom.

Today my colleagues in the Reform Party join with our colleagues in all parties to salute a remarkable Canadian who served his country so well. We also pass along our sincere regrets to his wife, Carolyn, and his children, Elizabeth, Charles, Christopher, James and Kate, his grandchildren and his many friends across Canada.

I am sure Bev Koester will be sorrowfully missed.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to give tribute to Charles Beverley Koester, a former Clerk of the House of Commons, who passed away recently at the age of 72.

Born in Regina in 1926, Mr. Koester graduated from the Royal Canadian Naval College in Victoria in 1944. He then took up duties in Scotland, and in 1945 was involved in the liberation of Oslo and Copenhagen. He was to remain in naval service until 1960.

In 1960, he began his career in the service of parliamentary institutions. After serving as the Clerk of the Saskatchewan legislature from 1960 to 1969, he retired to teach history at the University of Regina until 1975. In 1980 he became Clerk of the House of Commons, a position he held until 1987. Over that period, he was to serve under seven Speakers of the House of Commons.

A number of colleagues here in this House had the opportunity and privilege of knowing Mr. Koester and working with him. I believe I speak for them in saying that this institution has just lost a great man. On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, therefore, I would like to express our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

[English]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of an obituary for the late Bev Koester, there is a quote from Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and it goes like this "and may there be no moaning of the bar when I put out to sea."

I want to say to the family of Mr. Koester that we are not here to violate this instruction, to moan at the bar. We are here to pay tribute to someone who served this House of Commons very well in the time that he was here.

I certainly remember the days when Mr. Koester sat at the table as Clerk. He swore me in a couple of times. He served this House well. He had a distinguished career in the navy, in academia, in this House and in the Saskatchewan legislature.

I note that he was the Clerk of the House of Commons and a Clerk of the Saskatchewan legislature at very interesting times, having been the Clerk of the Saskatchewan legislature during the great debate about medicare and the Clerk in this House during the bell ringings and various other goings on that occurred around the patriation of the constitution in the early 1980s.

- (1510)

He will be missed. My NDP colleagues and I extend our sincere condolences to his family.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, as the House notes the death of Dr. Charles Beverley Koester, the former Clerk of the House of Commons, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party caucus would like to join in offering our sympathy to Mrs. Koester, her children and grandchildren as well.

Dr. Koester's service to this House is well known. In addition to his parliamentary career he was also a scholar and biographer. He wrote a biography of the Conservative MP Nicholas Flood Davin. In that biography Dr. Koester summed up the life of Mr. Davin and, in doing so, offered these eloquent words which apply equally to him:

—he contributed his talents to the issues of the day; —he lent his energy, his eloquence, his wisdom, and his experience to the noble task of government; —and he sought, through parliament, to build —[knowing that] parliamentary government depends as much upon the institution as the individual.

The House of Commons gained much from Dr. Koester's tenure here. Parliament has lost a friend and the country a great man.

The Speaker: My colleagues, in your name I would permit myself a few words about Dr. Koester, the Clerk of the House of Commons of Canada.

I was a member of Parliament during a few of the years when he sat here at this table. On more than one occasion I had reason to approach the Table to get information. I found that Bev Koester was unfailingly a professional. He took time to listen to the ordinary backbencher, if you will, and to guide us along in the ways of the House.

That he was a scholar goes without saying. I would not want to compare him to all of the clerks, but I would say that of the clerks who I had the pleasure of serving with in the House of Commons, he was one of the best read that I have ever known.

He was highly respected in the Commonwealth. As recently as a month ago, when I met with the Speakers of the Commonwealth, I was asked about Dr. Koester and his spouse. At the time, of course, my answer was that he seemed to be doing quite well.

He served this House and he served us, as parliamentarians, very well. He will be missed by this community of Parliament, by his fellow brother and sister clerks, not only here in this House but across Canada because he made himself available to the other clerks in the other houses, he himself having come out of the Saskatchewan House.

In your name, to his family, to his grandchildren, and to all of those who have so much to be proud of because of the way he served us, he will be missed. He was and he is appreciated by those of us who had the great honour of serving with him in this House of Commons.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership and associate membership of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 21st report later this day.

* * *

• (1515)

MIDDLE EAST

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 56(1), I move:

That on Monday, February 9, 1998 at the ordinary time of adjournment, proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 shall not be taken up, but at that time, a motion to adjourn shall be deemed to have been proposed and the said motion shall be debated under the following conditions:

1. Members wishing to speak shall address the question of the invitation to Canada by the United States of America to participate in possible military actions in the Middle East;
2. No member shall speak for more than 20 minutes, with no period being allotted for questions and comments, and two members may share one 20-minute period;
3. No dilatory motions or quorum calls shall be received.
4. When no member rises to speak, the motion shall be deemed to have been adopted.

The Speaker: Will those members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

And fewer than 25 members having risen:

The Speaker: Fewer than 25 members having risen, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification first before I introduce a request for unanimous consent to move a motion.

I wonder if the government House leader would clarify to the House whether or not during this discussion tonight there will be a motion put forward on action as far as where the government is going, and whether or not we will be able to vote on that at some point.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the only motion before the House is the one that I have just proposed. If the hon. member

Routine Proceedings

wants to have private discussions later with me, I am sure we can meet later this afternoon. That is the only motion before the House at this time.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to consider the emergency debate tonight as a normal proceeding on a government order and that the motion under consideration at that time be as follows:

That this House support diplomatic, and if necessary, military action by our allies to stop terrorism and the production of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present a petition to the House of Commons regarding the abolition of nuclear weapons. I was specifically requested by my constituent, Mr. Mark Frank, to table this petition. It asks that Parliament support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of an international convention that will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the family of Reena Virk who was brutally murdered in my riding, I would like to present a petition with over 1,500 names of people from Victoria and elsewhere in British

Columbia. They demand that the government put forth drastic changes to the Young Offenders Act. They believe youth violence is an increasing problem in our society and that crimes such as murder should be taken to adult court. I can certainly commend the family of Reena that wants to make some good of the senseless tragedy of her death.

LAND MINES

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by the staff and students of Strawberry Vale Elementary School in Victoria. Students Chantelle Johnston, Xana Antonissen and Jenna Galegor have shown leadership in asking that the production and use of land mines be banned. The petitioners request that Parliament enact legislation to ban the production and use of land mines from this date and forever. I am sure they are very happy that Parliament has chosen to do just that.

EQUAL PAY

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—Assiniboine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition on behalf of several dozen residents of Winnipeg, some of whom are in my riding.

The petitioners would like to remind this House that legislation for equal pay for work of equal value was passed in Canada 12 years ago and that the Canadian Human Rights Commission agreed that the findings of an independent inquiry were reasonable and correct.

The petitioners request that this legislation take effect immediately and that the appropriate government workers be reimbursed at the rates recommended.

PUBLIC NUDITY

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present to the House a petition from 60,000 petitioners with respect to the toplessness issue in the province of Ontario.

The Ontario court of appeal in December 1996 ruled that the nudity provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada were contrary to the charter of rights and freedoms. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of people in Ontario and across the country do not agree with the court of appeal's decision. It is the role of this Parliament to enact laws with respect to the Criminal Code. It is not within the domain of the court of appeal of the province of Ontario or any other court of appeal.

These petitions were gathered by an organization based in my riding called Keep Tops On, KTO. Those responsible for the petition, Carol Faraone, Cathy Francavilla, Roxanne James and Erica Kubassek, are present in the gallery today. The names of these 60,000 petitioners are in addition to the names of 40,000 petitioners submitted to the House a number of weeks ago and the petition drive is continuing.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enact legislation to amend the Criminal Code, specifically sections 173 and 174, the indecent act and public nudity provisions, to clearly state that a woman exposing her breasts in a public place is an indecent act.

• (1525)

CRTC

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to table three petitions today.

One is from the riding of Windsor—St. Clair and asks the Government of Canada to review the mandate of the CRTC with respect to the licensing of religious broadcasters.

MANICKAVASAGAM SURESH

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is primarily from the riding of Windsor West and asks Parliament to ensure that a gentleman by the name of Mr. Suresh not be deported and requests his immediate release.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third is also from the riding of Windsor West and requests that Parliament adopt an official pledge of allegiance to the Canadian flag after consulting with Canadians on its wording.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am privileged to rise today to present a petition on behalf of the electors of Erie—Lincoln.

Noting that there is an increasing number of Canadians who can no longer tolerate the degrading effects of obscenity, and noting further that pornography is not acceptable in our communities, the petitioners request that Parliament legislate stricter guidelines concerning the rating, distribution and display of pornographic materials.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including some from my own riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they discharge their duties, and that the employment benefits of police officers and firefighters often provide insufficient compensation to families of those killed while on duty. The public also mourns the loss of police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty and wish to support in a tangible way the surviving families in their time of need.

The petitioners therefore pray and call upon Parliament to establish a fund known as the public safety officers compensation fund for the benefit of families of public safety officers killed in the line of duty.

PUBLIC NUDITY

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by approximately 100 constituents. They draw to the attention of Parliament that incidents of explicit nudity harm the public, specifically children. They call upon Parliament to enact legislation to amend the Criminal Code, specifically sections 173 and 174, to clarify that a woman exposing her breasts in public is an indecent act.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 45 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 45—**Mr. Mark Assad:**

With respect to the Canadian International Development Agency's immunization program. (a) did CIDA terminate the program in September 1997? (b) if so, is Canada monitoring developments in rates of vaccination coverage in countries no longer served by the program? (c) how many children is it estimated will not receive vaccination coverage next year because the program has been terminated? and (d) what statistically, is the mortality rate among children from diseases that can be prevented by vaccination?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Canada's international immunization program CIIP, administered by the Canadian Public Health Association, ended after a decade in 1997 as planned, having achieved its objectives.

This being said, CIDA has not ceased its immunization activities. In the summer of 1996 even before CIIP was phased out, CIDA began co-operating with the World Health Organization, WHO, to consolidate efforts to eradicate polio in francophone Africa.

As a result of consultations with WHO, CIDA is now working to develop an added contribution to immunization in Africa, designed to boost the effort to eradicate polio, eliminate measles and generally strengthen immunization programs.

Current immunization programs save the lives of more than three million children each year, but much more remains to be done. In Africa, for example, we could save the lives of about 500,000 children if they were immunized against measles, one of the six diseases targeted by current immunization programs.

Immunization programs are among the most cost-effective public health activities. For this reason, Canada will continue to contribute to the success of immunization programs around the world. Over 80% of the world's children have already been immunized, a rate not anticipated even 20 years ago. The eradica-

Government Orders

tion of polio and the elimination of measles are in sight. Rest assured that CIDA will maintain its effort and its support for the poorest countries.

[English]

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

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

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before we grant leave for all questions to stand, I would like to raise a point of order and ask the parliamentary secretary a question that I have asked in the past and that I am still curious about.

When will I be able to get an answer to a question that I tabled on September 23?

I had mentioned this issue on December 3, well after the 45 day allotment when we should normally expect a reply. It is now February 9, more than 100 sitting days after the time the question was tabled. I would like to get some clarification from the parliamentary secretary about this delay. The matter was very serious. It asked about the plans that the government and the Minister of Health have for expending \$50 million on education and other programs to reduce youth smoking.

I am seeking clarification on this urgent issue. We need the information.

• (1530)

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I do apologize to the member because, as she said, she did approach me before about it. I will consult with her in a moment and I will certainly look into this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motions Nos. 4 to 19.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to talk about report stage of Bill C-4, the Canadian Wheat Board bill.

I suppose members opposite may wonder why a member of Parliament from the west coast, an area not covered by the Canadian Wheat Board, would want to come forward and speak, and I hope speak very forcefully, about Bill C-4 and the amendments proposed by the Reform Party to try to fix a very flawed piece of legislation.

I guess I could categorize them in different ways but let me start by saying this. Bill C-4 ignores too many farmers in this country. I have mostly dairy and chicken farmers in my riding but they are farmers nonetheless and when they speak up and speak forcefully I hope that the members of Parliament would listen.

The sad fact is I think one of the reasons Bill C-4 is being rammed through in an unamended form is there are virtually no rural prairie farmers represented on the Liberal side of the House. If ignorance is bliss then they are the happiest people in Canada right now because they represent not the Canadian farmers but maybe the bureaucrats who sent them here.

Here are the kinds of quotes from various papers from across the country that go with this bill. This is one quote. Here is what farmers are supposed to do to market their grain: deliver grain to the board specified elevator, sell it, buy it back, turn around, truck it all the way back to his own mill for processing and then get a wheat board export permit before shipping abroad. That's enough to promote entrepreneurship. No one can do that because no one can afford to do that. This is a quote from the *Globe and Mail*. What does the *Globe* know? It is a Toronto paper so let us pretend it does not exist.

How about an Edmonton paper? It is talking about the case of Clay Desrochers who is 24 years old. I would think he is a very cynical Canadian at this point because he just spent a bunch of time in a Manitoba jail. The article reads that if he had sold a similar amount of cannabis to a school child, he would have received about the same time in jail as selling less than \$1,000 of wheat across the border.

As it states in the article, the reason this is such an affront to the government is Mr. Desrochers had the gall to commit a crime, according to the minister of the wheat board, against the Government of Canada.

The article goes on to state Desrochers is the third Manitoba farmer to be sent to jail since 1996 for what Communist countries used to call economic crimes such as butchering a hog without a permit or selling a cabbage on the black market. Shame.

Imagine a farmer who grows something. Imagine, a farmer buys a piece of land with his own money. He buys the seed, the fertilizer and the equipment with his own money. He takes the risk. He looks at the weather and all things considered. He is like the little red hen. He plants the seeds and takes all the risks. There are no risks associated with the Canadian government, Canadian taxpayers or any other Canadian farmer. The wheat grows. He fertilizes it, cares for it and sprays it. He does all the work. He harvests that wheat and what happens? The government says that is not his wheat. He

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does not have the right to do as he sees fit with that wheat. That wheat is under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Here is another article from the prairies again. Having federal agents spy on ordinary citizens using tax audits to harass opponents, predawn police raids, arbitrary arrests, property seizures, no doubt an enemies list or two. What am I describing, the Nixon White House, Brezhnev's Kremlin? No, federal Liberal agriculture policy. That is what is wrong with this bill.

• (1535)

Why does this bill not place the onus on the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board to put the interest of farmers first? It does not do that. The way this bill reads is that the wheat board's judiciary responsibility is not to the farmers, it is to the board. I have to admit I am stealing this idea from an hon. member of mine who spoke earlier. Imagine if we had changed the system a little bit and we were not talking about farmers.

Imagine if we had a board for the lawyers. I am not talking about the Canadian Bar Association. I am talking about a board that all lawyers must belong to, the lawyers board. The lawyers board is controlled by the government. It appoints the CEO of this board. It will not let the lawyers do it because, after all, who do the lawyers think they are? To sell their services, the lawyers must first come to the board and say "can I sell my services through you to this agency?"

The government may or may not, but regardless the lawyers are cannot hold the board accountable for its actions or cannot sue the board for improper actions because the board is only responsible to the minister of lawyers. It is kind of like the minister of silly walks.

If lawyers want to go outside the board to sell their services, they are charged with breaking the law and they could be thrown in jail. So lawyers have no choice about how they sell their services and no choice on how they market them. They cannot go out and market them freely in the town they live in or internationally. They cannot take on clients from around the world or from anywhere. The fortunes and existence of the lawyers depend on the goodwill and graces of the board.

How many people think that would be a good idea? Maybe I should not have used lawyers as an example because there are a lot of people who would like to do lots of unspeakable things to lawyers. That aside, how many people would put up with that kind of control by the federal government? Not many.

I would like to give a personal example from where I come from, the Fraser Valley. There are a lot of farmers but not a lot of wheat farmers. A few short years ago a farmer, a friend of mine, was growing wheat in the Fraser Valley. He was quite an innovative

farmer and risk taker. He was going into uncharted territory by growing wheat in the Fraser Valley. He did a good job. He raised a fine quality wheat. He harvested it during one of our infrequent sunny spells and he came off in good shape. He sold it to an Armstrong bakery and made a good dollar.

He could not handle the land costs in the Fraser Valley for this type of farming so he and his family picked up stakes and they moved to better farming country. Where did they go? They did not go to the prairies. They did not go to the Peace River. He would only go as far as McBride. He left my riding and he moved to McBride. He went to McBride for two reasons.

One is it has three or more frost free days than the Peace River. Second, if he went past McBride he had to sell to the Canadian Wheat Board. He could not supply at \$2 or \$3 a bushel bonus and he could not sell to the bakery in Armstrong. If he had gone a few miles further the Canadian Wheat Board would have come down and said "You have a little niche market and you are making a profit. You cannot do that. You have to sell to us and we will sell your wheat at \$3 or \$4 a bushel less than what you can do it for yourself". So he would only go to McBride. That is where he lives today making a good living, being an innovative, hardworking, risk taking farmer. But he is only willing to go that far because, like he says, to go further is to embrace government monopoly and government control of the worst kind.

They gave up on that kind of control in most of the east block countries. They gave it up when they gave up on communism.

• (1540)

In this country for some reason it is okay to have the farmers told what to do, when to do it, how much they are going to get and if anything goes wrong, the board is not accountable because it does not have any responsibility to the farmers themselves.

These amendments today would make the board more accountable. They would put the responsibility on it to be accountable to the farmers, get the best price for them and do the job for the farmers themselves. It would give them choice. That is what these amendments would do. I just hope that the government will support them when the time comes for a vote.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House today to speak on behalf of numerous farmers I have talked to in the constituency of Wanuskewin. I learn a lot from them.

I am not a farmer per se, although I have had the opportunity in younger years as a teenager to work on several farms in the Quill Lake, Saskatchewan area during seeding, harvest time and throughout the summer picking rocks and roots and all that kind of stuff.

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It is a privilege to speak on behalf of numerous farmers who I have had conversations with in the last number of weeks. I also have the privilege of having a number of colleagues who, for their livelihood, have depended directly on growing grain and harvesting their wheat, contrary to the greater percentage of those who have spoken on the opposite side of the House who do not know directly and who have not been involved directly in this very thing that we discussed before us today.

Off the top I want to mention or make public on the record the Reform Party position, economic reform, agriculture policy, where Reform is on the record in our materials as allowing producers to make their own marketing decisions and to direct, structure and to voluntarily participate in producer organizations, including marketing boards, commissions and co-operatives in a manner they believe best serves their interests.

I think that last part is very important. It has been emphasized several times already today, serving their interests, the interests of farmers, those who grow this stuff, who work hard by the sweat of their brow. They raise this, the producers of grain through western Canada particularly.

Also I note that Reform is supportive of their making their own marketing decisions, also directing, structuring and voluntarily participating, which is rather different from the government side of the House where those members think they know best.

The previous speaker, my fellow member, pointed out that almost arrogant attitude that the government knows best. It is an insult to farmers. It is an offence to them that we should think we know better than they, the ones who produce this, the ones who have so much at stake in terms of how this ought to be marketed.

I note as well in other Reform Party literature that we support a modern, democratized market oriented Canadian Wheat Board in which participation is voluntary.

The things I want to be emphasizing here today are modern and democratized, in particular this whole issue of a democratic Canadian Wheat Board.

It has been in the media in numbers of places where our minister responsible for the wheat board, Ralph Goodale, on January 21 held a meeting in Regina to discuss—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I gently remind hon. members that we do not refer to ministers by name. We refer to ministers through their office.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the reminder. On that occasion the minister held a meeting to discuss the rules for the election of directors to the Canadian Wheat Board as proposed in Bill C-4.

I offer to the members today that had the minister been there, as presumptuous as that would have been, to discuss the rules for the election of all directors of the Canadian Wheat Board, that would have gone down a lot better with Reformers.

I think there would have been less consternation, less outrage and anger at discussing elections for all directors of the wheat board. By that, they would be in a better position hereafter to change it to amend things as best for the farmers.

I am very much of the view that we need to have an entire 15 member elected Canadian Wheat Board. A 10 member board of directors elected as in Bill C-4 at present is not enough. A fully elected board of directors is mandatory if the voice of farmers is to be truly heard.

I want to refer to some of my experience in serving on a hybrid board, as I would call it, partly elected and partly appointed in the province of Saskatchewan. We had the historic, first in the country, health board elections there.

• (1545)

In my district, the Saskatoon district of health, the largest in the province, we have eight elected members on the board and six appointed members. We have this hybrid kind of board. I have been on the record before as calling it that. It is nothing new today as my position has been known for some time.

I do not believe that a hybrid board comprised of elected and appointed members will best serve the interests of producers. It will be a sterile hybrid, like a mule, the sterile offspring of a horse and a donkey. It will be non-productive.

I understand the obstinacy and the stubbornness of the minister responsible for the wheat board. It is akin to the stubbornness of a mule. It makes some sense in view of what I believe will be sterility in terms of this hybrid board which will be created as a result of Bill C-4.

With respect to the Saskatoon district health board, the intent was for board members to be accountable to the constituents of their wards. Appointed board members from time to time came up for reappointment. They were put in their positions by the provincial government. By nature of that dynamic, there simply could not be the same freedom for appointed board members to objectively critique the government.

In that case it was the provincial government. In this case it is the federal government. Appointed members cannot be as open and fully critique wheat board policy and budget decisions which pertain to the effective marketing of wheat and other grains.

In the Saskatoon district health board as well, appointed members could jeopardize their reappointment if they publicly voiced concern about inadequate funding and those types of things. These appointed members will also have those concerns. They dare not

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embarrass the federal government by taking a contrary position on the direction in wheat board policy.

Even if a certain course of action is deemed to be in the best interest of farmers and is endorsed by the general farm community, an appointed board member would feel reluctant to support the initiative if it made the appointing federal government look bad. Appointees most naturally feel accountable to the person or persons who put them in that position. As we say, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

I can recall prior to the 1993 federal election when the Liberals were in the habit, as they have been over the course of a number of years, of appointing candidates. One individual in the Saskatoon area was appointed and served in the House. That individual was elected to the House, but was defeated in the last election by the Reform member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

It was well known that the backlash that individual experienced was in part because the voters felt that the individual would kowtow to the government and to the prime minister who had appointed him.

I have grave concerns and great difficulty with an appointed board, the same as I did with the Saskatoon district health board. I believe that an individual who is a capable and potential wheat board member would have an interest in obtaining a mandate in a democratic way.

Many board members on the Saskatoon district health board are certainly capable of making considerable contributions to the board. In my view, they should step into the public arena and be chosen by the democratic process, which would give them a public mandate.

I do not believe that hybrid boards comprised of elected and appointed members will serve the public interest.

I am also concerned that directors could be denied liability protection if they were to speak and act freely on behalf of farmers. Of course, I am pushing. Reformers want a fully elected wheat board.

As well, we have a concern with the wheat board having to act in the best interests of the corporation, which is not necessarily synonymous with the best interests of the farmers.

If directors are only covered for liability, if they act in the best interests of the corporation, any instructions given to the CWB by the federal government will be defined as the best interests of the corporation. We know well that may not necessarily be synonymous with the best interests of the wheat board.

• (1550)

In conclusion, it is my belief from personal experience and as I look at Bill C-4, that the entire wheat board should be elected. They

should have as their mandate to act in the best interest of the farmers, producers, the hardworking men and women, teenagers, the individuals who grow the grain. We need a fully elected wheat board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Just before we go on to the next speaker in this debate, I want to point out to hon. members, to the gallery and people tuning in today that we are debating Bill C-4 which has to do with the wheat board.

There are 48 motions of amendment. They are grouped into six or seven different groups and they are debated in a group. Members need to be relevant to that group. So from time to time, it would not be the worst thing in the world that ever happened if members came back to relevance to discuss, in this particular group which is Group No. 4, the fact that is how the board of the wheat board happens to get their president. Resuming the debate and touching on the relevance of the debate, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly appreciate your wise intervention.

It is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-4, and in particular the Group No. 4 motions. If I may just give a bit of a preamble to Bill C-4.

This issue is one that our party has fought for for a very long time and have worked very hard to try to bring some sense and sensibility to the wheat board for the men and women who toil in the fields in our country to produce some of the best wheat in the world.

Bill C-4, and in particular the Group No. 4 motions, we find extremely egregious. It prevents our men and women who are farmers to ensure that they are producing the best crop, that the crop is going to fetch the best price and they will have in return the best profits.

The wheat board bill and the proposals therein produced by the government are in fact going to restrict and constrict the wheat board in its ability to serve the farmers of this nation. We find that extremely unfortunate, particularly since strong constructive solutions have been put for quite some time to the government, not only by our party, but also by people in the agriculture business. It is unfortunate that the government has continued to ignore those.

I would like to begin with something very important. The legislation is not bringing about voluntary participation in the Canadian Wheat Board and farmers are not given the right to choose. I will make one point here and it is an interesting analogy.

When you look at other areas in the agricultural sector, areas that have taken themselves out of the restricting and constricting rules and regulations of the wheat board, have they done worse? No. They in fact have done a lot better. Their profits have gone up. Their production has gone up. Their ability to invest within their

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industry has improved. They have hired more people, and as a result, Canadians and Canada are a lot better off.

Why the government does not take the bull by the horns and try to revamp the Canadian Wheat Board to make it nimble and effective is beyond me. Why does it not make this board keep the rules and regulations that are going to effectively represent the farmers and remove those that are not? I will just list a few of these points if I may, relating, of course, to the Group No. 4 motions, most of which have been put forth by members from the Reform Party.

Thousands of grain farmers have told the government that they are not happy with the monopoly that currently exists in the Canadian Wheat Board. They want the market and they want to be able to deal with the market products themselves. The government has not done that. The government has continued to support the rules and regulations that act as a constricting and restricting influence on wheat producers in this country. That is unfortunate.

I do not know why the government continually tries to support the production and furthering of rules and regulations when we should have the removal of them. There are more rules and regulations that restrict trade in this country east-west than north-south. Why are we restricting the ability of our private sector, and in this case our wheat producers, from being the best that they can become by producing these rules and restrictions that over-regulate them when farmers in other countries of the world do not have to labour under the same restrictions? It is grossly unfair to them and it is about time that the government listens to the farmers, many of whom have been before the agriculture committee to tell the government very clearly that this bill, Bill C-4, cannot by itself go through in its current format.

• (1555)

I would like to also mention the ability of the board of directors to be elected. The government had an opportunity to put forth amendments through Bill C-4 with the Group No. 4 motions that we have produced to ensure that the board of directors is going to be elected and that the president of the wheat board is going to be accountable to the directors. The directors are going to be accountable to the wheat board and to the farmers, not the president and not the government.

The last I checked this was supposed to be a democracy. A democracy does not run when the minister controls the wheat board. The wheat board has to be controlled by the directors who are duly elected by the members whom they are supposed to represent. Anything short of that would not be a democracy.

That is something that we in the Reform Party are fighting for and have done so for almost five years. If the government would listen for a change, perhaps we could all win, and in particular the farmers of this country could win.

It is also very important for directors who normally would hold authority over the wheat board that the minister responsible and the Minister of Finance not be the ones who are controlling this board of directors.

The board of directors could also be denied liability protection if they were to speak and act freely on behalf of farmers. Directors would only be covered for liability if they act in the best interests of the corporation. This smacks of what? The Mafia. How can we possibly have an organization which tells its directors "You can only do what pleases the corporation but not what pleases and supports the farmers of this country"? Who are these directors supposed to represent, the farmers or the minister and this government?

Mr. Wayne Easter: The farmers.

Mr. Keith Martin: I am glad that the government members are agreeing that the board of directors should speak for the farmers. It is unfortunate but the way Bill C-4 stands unamended will ensure that the board of directors is going to be responsible to the minister and not to the farmers. In fact the directors of the Canadian Wheat Board will be under the rule of the minister, not directed by the farmers, but by a stranglehold by the president and by the minister.

The Mafia operates that way. The Canadian Wheat Board should not.

I hope the government listens to and adopts wholeheartedly the Group No. 4 motions that my party, the Reform Party, has produced. They are sensible motions, they are reasonable motions, they are realistic motions and they are motions that will strengthen Bill C-4. They are motions that will help our farmers be more effective. They are motions that I think the members can be proud of and know that they have done a good deal for the farmers of our country.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in this debate on Bill C-4 and in particular the Group No. 4 amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you know very much about farming, but I do know that you have a lot of knowledge about grains and what you can do with grains. I commend you on your entrepreneurship in setting up a bakery that not only is successful but produces some of the most tasty results in which Edmontonians have an opportunity to partake.

• (1600)

I commend you, Mr. Speaker, for providing this kind of service to so many people in your community.

When I look at the bill and the Group No. 4 motions—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Would the hon. member for Malpeque be kind enough to repeat his point of order?

Mr. Wayne Easter: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Could you throw the hon. member a bun so we can taste it to see if it is worth all that praise?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I was seriously considering questioning whether or not the hon. member for Crowfoot was being relevant. I could not see that he was not so we will go back to debate.

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering how far you would allow me to stretch the limits of this debate.

Nevertheless, when I look at the bill and the amendments, I look for the balance as we do with any legislation and reform of legislation. I ask myself whether the bill relieves the pressure building up from a number of sources against the monopoly held by the wheat board. I do not see that it does that. That is unfortunate. In my riding, which is a large agricultural riding, there are good, honest, hardworking people on both sides of the debate about what we should do in terms of reforming the Canadian Wheat Board.

It is unfortunate that in democratizing the board the minister and the government are unwilling to go the full way. They are allowing a number of members on the board to be elected but are retaining the power and the authority to appoint the president. Why is that? What is there to fear about having the president of the Canadian Wheat Board elected? What is wrong with that?

I would like members on the other side to provide a rationale for only going part way. There is common ground on the whole issue of reforming the wheat board, of election of the board by those in agriculture who have a vital, vested interest. We have an indirect vested interest because they produce the food we consume. They provide the new wealth on which the government taxes so exorbitantly every year. They are the ones to whom our international brothers and sisters look to provide the food they require but cannot grow in their own countries.

Why would we not go all the way and allow for the complete democratization of the wheat board? Then those in agriculture would be accountable and responsible. They understand the trials and tribulations of farmers in attempting to keep their farming operation going.

The problem is that when it comes right down to it the wheat board does not care very much whether or not my farming neighbour has to go bankrupt. It really does not care. Farmers are always looking for ways and means of enhancing their own standard of living and ensuring that their profit margin is broad enough to face a possible bad year when there may be a crop failure. They are looking for security, as I think everyone is.

The whole business of seeking security and freedom to seek security are very much part of the freedom individuals throughout the world seek. Farmers are seeking freedom that would allow them to secure their farms for their children and grandchildren. They want to function in a system that is clear and unequivocal. They want to direct their sales and products into markets that will give them the greatest return.

• (1605)

Why would they want a greater return? It is so simple. Why are farmers seeking a greater return and the right to market in areas that grant them the greatest return? It is to provide for their families, to provide for their children, to provide for their own feelings of security. If the wheat board is the mechanism that will provide that, why is it that many with a vital vested interest do not recognize that?

I have talked to farmers on both sides of the issue. I have asked them what they are seeking. It always comes forward that they are seeking security for their families and for the continuation of their operations in spite of the fact that they might face a crop failure or the kinds of financial difficulties those in the farming community face from time to time when they have to go to the lending institutions to ask them to carry them over a certain period of time into the next fall or the next spring, depending upon the type of crops they are developing.

When I look at the motions in Group No. 4 I see a lack of democracy. This is unfortunate. We could have reached a balance everyone would have supported, certainly those in the agricultural community. I have not talked to anyone who is against the election of the board. That has formed part of the common ground that could bring the both sides together.

Transparency is another issue. Why can we not have a full and transparent audit of what the wheat board is doing on behalf of farmers? Why do we not have that? That is what they are seeking. I have not heard farmers say that they would be against the auditor general auditing the books of the wheat board as the auditor general does for every other department of government. Why not do that?

There are areas of common ground that we could be moving on. We could develop balance that would not threaten the existence of the wheat board. However, if the wheat board does not change and bring in reasonable alternatives that strike that balance, we may see the wheat board damaged in ways no one wants to see it damaged.

Questions have been raised with regard to whether or not the wheat board's monopoly is a violation of some of our international agreements such as the free trade agreement. Is there a subsidy? When ranchers can buy barley at prices below those of their competing neighbours to the south, is that a subsidy? What will the

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international tribunal have to say if there is a challenge there? Pressures are building up to challenge the wheat board monopoly.

We do not know for sure how those questions will be answered, but we should be looking ahead. If we want to maintain a marketing board called the Canadian Wheat Board, we should be addressing some of the concerns of farmers. Bill C-4 falls short of that. It is unfortunate because we have an opportunity to strike that balance. Many of the motions in Group No. 4 would lend themselves to striking that balance.

Some of my colleagues have touched on the the international code of ethics for Canadian business. What is the wheat board afraid of? Why would it not want to bind itself to the international code of ethics for Canadian businesses? Is there apprehension or fear? If so, what is it about? What is there about the international code of ethics for Canadian business that the Canadian Wheat Board finds offensive, or why is it reluctant to come under that code of ethics?

Farmers always take it in the neck. When there is a bad year, no one else suffers but them and those who rely upon a healthy agricultural society.

• (1610)

I was talking to representatives of the two railroads. When farmers put grain in a grain car and it sits more than three days, they have to pay a penalty of \$40 per day. When there is a long shore strike or anything that prevents the grain from reaching the market and the ships are sitting offshore racking up demurrage penalties, who pays for that? The farmers pay for that.

I had a farmer say to me "What is wrong with the picture? I have to pay for the transportation of my grain to the port. I have to pay for the cleaning. The cleanings are sold and I receive no benefit".

There is much wrong with that picture. We can look at Bill C-4 and ask whether it strikes the balance. It does not strike the balance. That is why I encourage all hon. members to take a close look at the amendments being offered. I feel there is a balance that we need within those amendments.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I trust I will have some latitude as this is my maiden speech.

An hon. member: Where have you been?

Mr. Gary Lunn: Where have I been? I have been in the House. I have written four maiden speeches and have been fully prepared at least three or four times, but the government brought closure and I was unable to make my speech.

Those in my riding watching would wonder why I would be speaking about the Canadian Wheat Board in the House as member

for Saanich—Gulf Islands, especially my maiden speech. I would like it to be very meaningful and will get to it in a minute.

In all sincerity I want to speak a little about my predecessor who worked very hard. He was very well respected among all political parties in my riding, Mr. Jack Frazer. I pay tribute to Jack and to his wife, June, for the hard work and his commitment to the House for the four years preceding me.

It is an honour to stand in the House—and I have spoken a few times in question period—to represent the views of the constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands who elected me with such an overwhelming majority and to ensure they are heard. I admit it has been a very frustrating experience for me because many times I have been silenced not only at this level but at committee as well. I have found it an incredibly frustrating experience not to be able to speak in the House and represent their views.

That brings me to the Group No. 4 amendments we are talking about today. I look at this issue as not so much the Canadian Wheat Board but what this is all about: democracy versus dictatorship and ethics.

These amendments could apply to all government ministries. That is what we are talking about. The government is proposing what it wants to call a mixed enterprise. I note that the western grain marketing panel in July 1996, after a year long study, suggested that the government needed to operate the Canadian Wheat Board like a business.

I am involved with the fisheries committee. Ironically, after touring both Atlantic Canada and western Canada, we heard exactly the same thing from some 15 to 20 communities, that government needed to operate the board like a business.

Here is what the Liberals are suggesting. We are to have an elected board. Lo and behold, what is their definition of democracy? They are going to allow 10 officials to be elected but they want to appoint five of their political hacks to the board.

More important, who are they appointing to this board and in what positions? This is what I find absolutely appalling. They are to appoint a president and a CEO to the wheat board.

• (1615)

With any company I know or that I have been involved with, I recognize the power and the influence these two positions have over that entire board of directors. The government is doing nothing. It is still a dictatorship. There is no democracy. That is what I find so frustrating.

I urge all members who are listening to really look at what this means. This institution, this House, represents democracy. I am here because I believe in democracy. We see troubles all over the world. They stem when a country leans toward dictatorship rather

than democracy. What the government is suggesting is an absolute dictatorship and nothing less. It is going to appoint five members and the president and CEO to this board. It is going to have control of this organization. I admit I do not know a lot about it, but the farmers will have no input in the direction of where this goes. What we have is a dictatorship.

I would like this House to recognize what is going on. The last four speakers have been from one political party. The Canadian Wheat Board is probably the most influential board and the most important board to the prairie provinces. Out of this entire democracy, this whole House, who is standing up on their behalf? I do not hear anybody from the NDP. I do not hear anybody from the Tories, the Liberals or the Bloc. If anyone spoke before the last four speakers from those parties, then I will acknowledge that. When I walked into this House, the only party speaking up for these people is the Reform Party. This is a major bill affecting Canada. The next part is about ethics.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River has put forward this motion. He is trying to incorporate what the government has been pushing for.

The government has been pushing for all Canadian businesses and corporations to be signatories to the international code of ethics for Canadian business. That is common sense. It sounds simple. The government wants all businesses and corporations to sign on to an ethics code for Canadian businesses. Guess what? Not the Canadian Wheat Board. We have our hands in that one. Imagine if we had to have those guys live by the code. We saw all about ethics in question period today. I will not go there, I would be here all afternoon.

When it comes to ethics, the government is out the window, it has no idea. It is trying to push the private sector to have a code of ethics, but when it comes to the wheat board, no sir. That would be terrible, some of our people are there. They would never be able to abide by those rules.

Although I do not have a prepared speech, like I have had in the past, this is a very important debate. It is about democracy and it is about ethics. It is about a board that is going to affect the prairie provinces. Probably the most significant piece of legislation that affects these provinces is the Canadian Wheat Board. These people are left with a dictatorship. There have been recommendations to have it run like a corporation. The government is totally ignoring that. It is consistent with what I have observed in fisheries. We need to run it like a business, but no, it has to come under the tight control of this government. By appointing the president and CEO, the government is not willing to give that up. I think it is shameful.

The big points are democracy and ethics. I would encourage all the members in this House to have a hard look at this. I will come back later and speak on the other groups and motions.

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• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great interest that I rise to speak to Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act in depth.

Naturally, the aim of the bill is to try to revitalize—and I say “try” to revitalize advisedly—the former Canadian Wheat Board, which was in my opinion a dictatorship where three, four, up to five patronage appointments could be made to the board of directors, paying fairly well it seems, since there was often someone knocking at the door of the agriculture department to take the job, which was not particularly high profile, but was well paid.

I said that they were trying to revitalize since, of the 15 directors, 10, two thirds of the positions, will be filled through a vote by the producers themselves. If there is someone interested in the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board, it is not the fellows from Prince Edward Island nor the farmers from Quebec, but western grain producers. They will have the authority, with the aid of a pencil, to appoint directors, and when the directors no longer prove satisfactory, they can put them out—the ten of them that is.

However, the government in its great wisdom has decided to keep five positions for itself. Four appointments will be made through the governor in council, but the other, the most prestigious, the lucrative one, the position of power, that of president, will be filled by appointment too.

The Bloc Québécois has a very constructive suggestion for the Liberal government, and I would like to take a few seconds here to read it to you. It is Motion No. 6.

We are proposing that the president be appointed following consultation of the committee of the House of Commons that normally considers matters relating to agriculture. What exactly does this mean?

We have, here in the House of Commons, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, chaired of course by a Liberal. There are eight Liberal MPs and six opposition members on this committee. Obviously, they control it. They could swallow us right up—eight against six, and add to that the chair who, like the supreme court, usually leans the same way, in the direction of the Liberals. Right now, they run it. I respect their right to do so.

I predict that the position of president will become a great Liberal patronage appointment. Earlier, while waiting to speak, I quickly cast about in my memory for the key appointments of

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members sitting in the House since I have been here to well paid, prestigious, unelected positions.

The names that came to mind were the former member for Ottawa—Vanier, Jean-Robert Gauthier, because I am allowed to say his name, who is now sitting as a senator in the other House, and David Berger, the former member from Montreal West, who gave up his spot, a safe Liberal riding, to one of our current good ministers. He was appointed ambassador to Israel.

This is known as a tactic to liberate ridings. Just recently, a little before the election—the promise was made before the election, but it was not made public until after, so as to keep voters happy—it was my good friend, the member for Beauce, Gilles Bernier, an independent—remember him? He sat not far from us.

• (1625)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The member for Bourassa on a point of order.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I was fine with the member for Frontenac—Mégantic, but now I think he is off topic. I would like to hear what he has to say about Bill C-4, not a litany of government appointments.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): With respect, this group of amendments has to do with appointments to the board. The hon. member for Frontenac—Mégantic is relevant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I taught for 27 years and in every class there was always one student who tried to disrupt the classroom. In this group of Liberals, we have the hon. member for Bourassa, whose behaviour is not that of a regular student but rather of an undisciplined one.

I invite you, Mr. Speaker, to draw on your authority and expel him if he continues to distract the members opposite. This House is no circus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The member for Bourassa on another point of order.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I think I am entitled to take part like everyone else and I am speaking on behalf of my constituents. I think the hon. member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Resuming debate. The member for Frontenac—Mégantic.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I hope my time will not cut short off because of this sort of nonsense. You seem to be nodding your approval, and I thank you.

I was therefore saying that the Liberal Party has discovered another ploy, which is to liberate certain relatively safe ridings for friends that could take over. Incumbents are appointed to prestigious positions that are usually paid more than an MP, and this frees up the seat.

I wanted to make a prediction. The president of the future Canadian Wheat Board will be a Liberal. This Liberal is sitting across from us now, and probably does not know the first thing about the Canadian Wheat Board. We will pay for many years so that he can find out, and just as he is starting to get the idea, he will leave to collect his gold plated pension. He will then have two hefty pensions.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, on which it is my great pleasure to sit with several of my colleagues whom I see in the House now, is a committee that I believe takes its work very seriously. It astonishes me that certain members opposite, who sit on the committee with me, do not wish to take on an additional, collective responsibility and voice their opinion on the future president of the Canadian Wheat Board.

For how many hours and weeks did the standing committee examine this problem? The entire committee trooped out west. We visited the four provinces. No one in the House, I am speaking about members, is more familiar with the problems of farmers and the Canadian Wheat Board than the 12 members now sitting on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I am offering my colleague, the member for Bourassa, an unparalleled opportunity to feel like his party, his prime minister, is giving him an additional responsibility. But he is not interested.

In closing, I wish to raise a final point. The Canadian Wheat Board has traditionally reported to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

• (1630)

I do not know what is going on. When the Prime Minister shuffled his cabinet after the election, he put the former Minister of Agriculture in Natural Resources. No problem with that. But he did not see fit to leave the responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board with our Minister of Agriculture. Why not? Too heavy a task? Incompetence? I am asking you the question, Mr. Speaker. I would like an answer from my colleagues over there, or better yet, from the Minister of Natural Resources.

Why has he grabbed on to this position, this role of directing the Canadian Wheat Board within the Department of Natural Resources? They do not seem to go together. We have a good Minister of Agriculture, who does the very best he can. Why not give him all the tools he needs? He is going to work for the Western producers, the grain producers, but when it comes time to talk about a very important tool, the Canadian Wheat Commission, he will say "For that, you need to see my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources".

I await that response, Mr. Speaker, and I would invite you to ask the party in power to support this motion on Bill C-4, which I consider a highly constructive motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was so thrilled when the hon. member for Crowfoot asked you to throw him a bun. I was hoping you would be able to do that because I wanted to catch it before it reached him. I understand they are extremely delectable.

This afternoon I want to commend you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing the significance of agriculture in Western Canada. But before I go into the details of the Group No. 4 amendments, I wish to pay a tribute to the farmers of Canada.

Farmers are among our most productive people. They are also among our most reliable people. These are the people who understand ethics probably better than anyone else. These are the people who recognize the difference between controlling your environment or having so much of what you do controlled by the environment itself.

How many farmers have you seen, Mr. Speaker, who have suffered from the ravages of nature as it cuts across their crop with a hail storm or a wind storm or whatever the case might be? These people are humble people. They recognize the difference between what they can do and what the creator can do.

It is time that we recognized that our agricultural community, that community which produces the food all of us need to eat and sustain ourselves, this community and this economy is supported to a large degree by the farmers who till the land, who bring the various plants into production and who carefully nurture what it is that needs to happen.

Farmers are imaginative people. They are innovative people. They have produced things that it was not possible for us to create many years ago. They have brought into the world a wheat production in particular that is the object of great envy from a lot of other countries which do not have the weather, do not have the land, do not have the technology to do what our farmers can do.

We have created the Canadian Wheat Board, a board which was to rationalize the marketing of the commodities wheat and barley. But we are going to talk about wheat or at least that is what I am going to do. This is a very significant part of our agricultural community.

There are four principles which must apply if we are going to have a sound board that is going to manage the affairs of something that is not only important to Canada, not only important to a major sector of the Canadian economy, but has international significance. It has a significance to other countries of the world whose

sustenance depend upon the proper production of wheat in this country of ours.

These are the four principles: Whatever management has done must be done according to the interests or in the interests of farmers. It must be based on sound governance and principles of sound governance. It must be based on principles of sound management. Finally, the decisions and operations of such a board must be clear, be auditable and be governed by the principle of prudence both in the management of the money given to the board and also in terms of the commodity it administers. Let us examine each of these principles in turn.

• (1635)

First, is the board operating in the interests of farmers? A fair return for the product they produce is what the farmers want. They do not want an exorbitant high price. They do not want a diminished price that is excessively low. They want a just price, a price that can be defended wherever they go and with whatever land is involved. They want that to be the case within Canada and internationally.

They want something else. They want a sustainable income. They want some idea as to what will be happening to the price of wheat and how they will be able to manage the planting, harvesting, storage and marketing of wheat in such a way that their income is sustained.

They want something else. They not only want to sustain their incomes, they want to be able to have some kind of predictability.

Mr. Speaker, you know in the business you operate that you prepare a business plan to start the business. Then you prepare a cash flow statement and you prepare a marketing plan which probably goes five years into the future. It outlines cash flow for the initial year. Then it is moved forward to the second year, the third year, the fourth year and the fifth year. You begin to build the cost structures, the increases, revenues and the profitability of your business into the plan.

That is what the farmers are looking for. It is a lot more difficult to do that in the farming community. Nevertheless that is in the interests of the farmers. That is the first principle which needs to be observed by this board.

The second principle is one of sound governance. The primary issue is that of democracy. In a democracy the outcome of an event, to decide who is going to do what or to rule what, is in the terms of a franchise, a vote. The person or group that gets the most votes is the group that carries the day. That is not the case with the wheat board.

For some reason or other the governing structure here is one of appointment. The determination of what happens in this board is the subject of determination by the minister of agriculture. That may at one very abstract level be considered to be a form of

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democracy but that is dictatorship within a democracy which is somewhat contradictory. It is not only somewhat contradictory but I suggest that it is contradictory.

For that reason all of the members of this House should carefully examine the amendment presented by the member for Prince George—Peace River. I believe he has a very sound statement to make.

When a bill is presented to the House, as Bill C-4 was presented, and there are 48 amendments, that should give cause to everyone in this House to ask what is wrong with this bill. Forty-eight different things that are found to be somewhat in error or to have a shortfall. If nothing else, we should think about that.

I have just covered the first two principles, the interests of the farmers and sound government. I do not think the board acts in the interests of the farmers. In terms of sound government, the board is not determined by democratic principles or by vote.

The third principle relates to the application of governance. This has to do with looking at the policies and the principles that are involved. If they are going to do this properly they will do it in terms of fairness, justice, transparency, accountability and responsibility. All those things need to be there.

Wheat board policies must guide the action very clearly. Regulations should be such that they allow farmers to recognize fairness and justice in the way permit books are issued, in the way there is access to storage, in the way there is access to transportation and so on.

We also need to recognize that there need to be clear lines of responsibility. There is no such indication in Bill C-4. There is no clear line of responsibility.

• (1640)

If a company hired a president, and if the company was not responsible and the president was not accountable, we would say “What kind of deal is this? We are not having anything to do with it”.

To whom is the CEO responsible? In this case it is to the minister.

I do not see how any self-respecting farmer would allow himself to be appointed to this particular board. In effect, they have no power. All the power rests with the minister in the final analysis.

Mr. Wayne Easter: That is wrong.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: The president is accountable not to the board; the president is accountable to the minister. He has a divided personality.

An hon. member: Read the act.

Mr. Werner Schmidt: He is supposed to listen to the board on the one hand and he is supposed to listen to the minister on the other. So he will sit on the fence and will get cut right down the middle. He will not know what he is. If he does not side with the minister, the minister will say “Sorry, we do not need you any more”. That is a critical point.

What about if disciplinary action has to be taken? Who will do it? Will the board do it or will the minister do it? These things are not clear.

What about the release of information? What kind of information will be released by the board to the farmers? What kind of information will be released by the board to the minister? What information will be released by the minister to the board? What information will be released by the board to the president, to the minister, by the minister to the president, and so on?

There are all kinds of opportunities for misinformation, not enough information and selected information in order to produce a particular result.

These are some of the things which are wrong with this bill.

Let it be known that the farmers are good people and that the Canadian Wheat Board needs to be amended in terms of the amendments which have been presented to Bill C-4.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have made one observation and I would like to offer this as a suggestion. Rather than have the Liberals shouting their answers across the floor while someone is speaking, they should simply get up and talk about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That is certainly not a point of order.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to say a few words about the motions in Group No. 4, Motions Nos. 4 to 19.

An hon. colleague in the Reform Party mentioned earlier that it is the only party which is fighting for farmers. I wish to make it very clear that is not the case. New Democrats have always been supportive of farmers. We are proud to stand and fight for farmers.

We have always strongly supported the wheat board because it works in the best interests of farmers. For 60 years the wheat board as a crown agency has done an admirable job for farmers.

The government is suggesting a 15 member board of directors, 10 of whom will be elected by producers. We recognize that the government must continue to have some influence on the wheat board if Ottawa is to continue to guarantee initial prices for grains.

However, we feel very strongly that if the wheat board is to have a board of directors, elections must be fair. They should be

elections by and for farmers. We do not want vested corporate interests interfering. We see too much of vested corporate interests nowadays. That is exactly what the MAI is attempting to do, to give free rein to the corporations so they can dictate their will upon others. We feel that with something as important as the wheat board this must not be the case.

Fair elections mean one producer, one vote. The Reform Party suggests that big farmers should have more votes than small farmers. We say that is anti-democratic and we want no part of it.

Fair elections mean a limit on the spending campaign of candidates, just as there is in federal election campaigns, so that wealthy individuals do not have an advantage. Wealth dominates too many things today. Those who are struggling cannot get ahead simply because they do not have money in their pockets. We want to see fair elections and spending limits.

Fair elections mean a strict and transparent limit to what third parties can spend. We want transparency. That is very important today.

The wheat board, as we know, is a \$6 billion industry. It is a very big industry. Certain corporate interests would just love to get their hands on it. We do not want them using their deep pockets to influence the elections of the board of directors. We are already seeing too much corporate interference in the wheat board debate. For the past several months the Canadian Wheat Board has come under sustained attack. This attack is orchestrated by certain farm groups, aided by corporate interests, including the Canadian Federation for Independent Business, the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange and Cargo.

• (1645)

The so-called coalition against Bill C-4 is trying to do through the back door what it has failed to do through the democratic process. For example, it is demanding that barley be dropped from the wheat board's jurisdiction. Farmers voted on that very question in 1997 and 63% of them voted in favour of keeping barley under the board's jurisdiction. So we talk about democracy. Again, democracy is where the majority rules.

We say to these corporate interests and to the Reform Party that debate about the wheat board is a debate for farmers, not for corporations for their greed and their self-interest.

We have also witnessed the disgraceful media campaign by the National Citizens' Coalition to discredit the wheat board. This coalition claims to be funded by ordinary Canadians, but we believe it is bank rolled by big business. The coalition is a soulmate to the Reform Party. The head of the coalition is a former Reform MP and a close confidant of the Reform Party leader.

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Again, we come back to the question of fairness. If there are going to be elections for a board of directors we want them to be fair and not bought by corporate friends of the Reform Party with their deep pockets.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say I am delighted to stand here today and speak on Bill C-4, the Canadian Wheat Board Act, but as a matter of fact I am not. I am not delighted at all. I am very upset about this legislation. I am upset about the fact that we have in this House members, the majority by far who are over there on that majority side government, who are not under the wheat board, who are making arbitrary decisions that affect western farmers. They sit over there and laugh while we are trying to bring these very serious and important issues to their mind.

What is also very annoying is that those gutless members over there are all going to vote the way they are told. They are not going to stand up and say yes to what the members from the west have said, because it affects the farmers in the west. The wheat board does not affect farmers in Ontario or in the east. It is strictly farmers in the west. They have the gall to stand there and say we will do the way our minister says and we will not even listen to this debate.

The fact is there is a lot of very serious opposition to this bill. They can stand up and say there was this vote and two-thirds of the farmers voted to stay in the wheat board. Sure, what was the question. It was a rigged question just like that question in Quebec was. It said do you want all in or all out?

That is the same as on a hot day. Do you stand on the edge of the pool or do you go four feet under? That is the choice that we were given, instead of giving the farmers the choice they really wanted and that was simply freedom.

There is no reason in the world why the wheat board cannot continue to function and still allow individual farmers, when they see a market that they can fill, to have the freedom to market their own grain outside the wheat board if they so choose.

This is a bunch of hooley when they say that the wheat board cannot function unless it has a monopoly. Monopolies basically stifle any good performance. Farmers in the west have been dumped on. They have been shafted. Dare I say it, they have been raped by central Canada over and over again and they are plumb tired of it.

I suppose this is a question of unity. Democracy only works as long as we have the consent of the governed. There are more and more farmers out west who are getting so cotton pickin' upset about this intrusion on their freedom by this central government that they are losing their consent to be governed. They are getting to a point where they want to revolt. Why will this government not

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listen to some very sensible amendments and say those amendments make sense and we will follow them?

• (1650)

I grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan. When I was a youngster I remember my dad saying "I cannot understand how come, when I buy a combine or a tractor that is manufactured in Ontario, I have to pay the freight from Ontario to Saskatchewan. Yet if I sell them my grain, I have to pay the freight from my farm all the way to Ontario". Why is that? It is because the big powerbrokers, the big majority here, not listening to the sensible needs of western farmers, just say nuts to you, we will do whatever we want. It is just like these guys are doing right now. They are sitting over there, disrespectful. Look at that potato farmer from Prince Edward Island. He has nothing to do with the wheat board and he is sitting there grinning because he is in a position where he—

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member referred to me as a potato farmer. I am not a potato farmer. I was president of the National Farmers' Union and I spent 12 years in western Canada dealing with this issue. I do not like my name being taken in vain by this member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member does make a valid point. We should keep our comments directed through the Chair and not resort to personalities.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I apologize but I still maintain that he has a disrespectful grin on his face during this very serious debate. He is sitting there and just basically saying we have the majority over here and we can do whatever we want. What is annoying is that they will. When the voting comes around on this bill in a few days those Liberals over there, one after the other when their string is pulled, are not going to listen to this argument. I dare any one of them to stand up against the recommendation of their minister and vote for what is right and vote against this bill unless it is properly amended or, better yet, to vote in favour of these amendments. They do not have the guts to do it and I do not believe they will.

What we have here is a very basic freedom. When I have an old car for sale I can sell it to whomever I want. I can ask \$500 for my old car. If a guy comes along and offers \$400 I can say No, I want \$500 or I ain't selling it. The poor farmer in the west who has wheat for sale cannot sell his wheat to the highest bidder. He is forced to sell it to the wheat board and very often it is at the lowest price.

I have a despicable story to tell. There is a farmer who owes money to, among other people, the Farm Credit Corporation, a federal government agency. The Farm Credit Corporation says money, money, money or else we are going to foreclose on you. Meanwhile he has his granaries full of grain. He could put that

grain into a truck and sell it for almost twice what the wheat board would offer him if in fact it issued a quota and said that it was going to sell it for him.

Instead, his grain is in his bin and he cannot sell it. The Farm Credit Corporation is threatening foreclosure and he cannot sell his own grain even though he has a market for it and could sell it tomorrow if he had that simple freedom. If that is not a violation of a very fundamental freedom in this country of ours then I do not know what is.

That is why I urge the members, particularly the members opposite whom I am talking to. We in the opposition here just do not have quite enough numbers to force their hand. We will but we are not there yet. Very frankly, as long as they have the majority it is in their hands. If they do what is wrong it is not going to serve this country well and it will be a great affront to the farmers.

Very often we have these farmers getting together with different associations. There is a farmer in my riding who specializes in selling seed grain. Seed grain, specifically, does not come under the wheat board. He should be able to sell his seed grain as seed because it is a different kind of market.

• (1655)

It is not for the general market. It is not for making the macaroni that you and I love so much, Mr. Speaker. He has been prevented from selling his seed grain because he did not sell it first to the wheat board. They confiscated his truck at the border.

I can see where the farmers out west can be upset. Can members believe it? There are farmers who are arrested. Their crime is they are trying to sell a product they have raised and is properly theirs. They want to sell it to the highest bidder at the highest price they can get. They are in breach of some arbitrary vicious law.

That has to change. Why can we not have a system whereby all those farmers who want to can go through the wheat board? That is certainly a very large organization and many farmers, I am sure, would choose to do that.

On those instances where they find an alternate market at a better price or, more important many times, an immediate sale as opposed to one that is two or three months down the road, why should they not have the freedom to do that?

I urge that the members opposite stand up on principle, forget about being trained seals that stand up on command, examine these amendments and vote in favour of them, support them because—

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been sitting here with some tolerance, given the source of the comments I have been listening to for the last 15 minutes. Twice now I have been accused of being gutless. I have been accused of being a trained seal and I

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think that is contrary to the order and decorum expected in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Hon. members, we do need some sensitivity as to how we reflect one upon the other.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I guess all I would say is I challenge them to prove me wrong.

This is an opportunity for this government to do what is right, to do what is good, to stand on principle, to give farmers individual freedom and control over the wheat board that they themselves should be controlling.

It should not be run by distant Ottawa on their behalf with all its arbitrary rules. They should stand on principle and support these amendments that we are putting forward and do what is right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I do not mean to make reference to anyone in particular, not the member for Elk Island who has finished.

We have to be really careful that when we are speaking one side toward the other and we are perhaps less than complimentary we make sure that we keep our comments clearly defined in the royal weave that any pejorative words or sentiments are not addressed to any one person in particular. Resuming debate.

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, to begin I would like to address Motion No. 5 of Group No. 4 with respect to the proposed board of directors for the wheat board, of which five members would be appointed.

To make my point, I would like to embark on a bit of a journey in history. In the dying days of the 1993 election campaign, the Progressive Conservative Party made more than 600 political patronage appointments.

The current Prime Minister at that time had a field day criticizing the blatant patronage of the Conservatives, vowing that he would do different, that he would not insult Canadian taxpayers in the same manner as the prime minister of the day.

He said, a direct quote from the 1993 campaign, that the people of Canada will see a big difference with the Liberals in power. Furthermore, he said that the Liberals were elected to serve the people of Canada, not to serve themselves.

• (1700)

If we look at the red book of the time, it said “the Conservatives made a practice of choosing political friends when making thousand of appointments to commissions and agencies, but a Liberal

government will review the appointment process to ensure that necessary appointments are made on the basis of competence”.

The reason I gave that bit of history is that it is not amazing that a few years later, in September 1997, the Prime Minister completely reneged on that promise, changed his tune and said that he appoints people from his party. He said “I am not going to name people who are not Liberals”. This is a complete violation of the promises he made both verbally during the campaign and in their campaign book called the red book.

To illustrate my points, I go back to the year following the 1993 election to give examples for the benefit of all the members of the House as well as all Canadians. Jean Robert Gauthier, Liberal MP, Ottawa-Vanier was appointed to the Senate; John Bryden, New Brunswick Liberal organizer and worked for the Prime Minister in the 1993 leadership race and also ran Frank McKenna’s election campaigns was appointed to the Senate; Sharon Carstairs, former Liberal leader and Prime Minister loyalist appointed to the Senate; Robert Nixon, former Ontario Liberal Leader and confidant of the current Prime Minister, appointed as chairman of Atomic Energy of Canada; Royce Frith, former Liberal Speaker of the Senate, appointed High Commissioner to Great Britain. I could go on and on but I do not think it would be fitting to occupy the next several days to list the Liberal political patronage appointments.

The proposed board is another source of potential patronage appointments for the government. That is why it does not want to empower the farmers to run their own board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board. It wants to have appointed positions so that it can continue its “patronage party” which it embarked upon in 1993. The government has shown no signs of slowing up its activity in that regard.

Not only is the minister responsible for the wheat board proposing to control the board through these appointed positions, the chief executive officer would also be appointed. The farmer-elected board of directors would not be able to choose its own chief executive officer. The minister responsible for the wheat board would have that authority. This is a real affront to farmers. It should be embarrassing for the Liberal government.

Every chance I have had, I have spoken to the Bill C-4 amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board. Again today and never in the past has the minister responsible for this bill been here to listen to the concerns of the western grain farmers as conveyed by the members of parliament who represent them.

As I speak, there are three Liberal MPs in the House of Commons.

Mr. Pat O’Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Unless I stand corrected by you, Sir, it is my

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understanding of the parliamentary rules that it is out of order to speak to the absence or presence of members.

Perhaps while the member is casting his aspersions he could rationalize for us the flip-flop of his leader and why he now lives in Stornoway.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Hon. members, first we will deal with the question of whether or not members refer to other members in the House.

• (1705)

It is a long-standing custom that we do not refer to the presence or absence of other members in the House. It is a fact of life.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, for those people watching on television, I think they should know something about what is happening in this House with regard to order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): With respect, I do not think this is a point of order. We are in debate.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be pointed out for those people watching that we have circumvented second reading. We do not have second reading on this bill. If some of the debate seems to be somewhat extraneous—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): With respect, that is not a point of order.

Mr. Jim Pankiw: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to make the point that the best attempts of the Reform Members of Parliament to represent the concerns that farmers in our constituencies have with the changes to this bill have fallen on deaf ears. Our pleas for changes to improve the bill on behalf of the people it will affect are being taken with contempt for our ability to stand here and speak on behalf of the farmers that we represent.

We are talking about members of Parliament from eastern Canada that do not represent anyone that this bill will impact upon or affect. The least they could do is not show contempt for us and hear what we have to say about the people that we represent that this bill is going to affect. I take affront with the way they are conducting themselves in the House of Commons today.

An hon. member: You are casting aspersions.

Mr. Jim Pankiw: With respect to casting aspersions, as the Liberal member of Parliament is shouting across the floor, I am merely reading from a text of political patronage appointments. It is not casting aspersions; it is a simple fact. The list I have is from 1994. It details the Liberal government patronage appointments in the first year they were in power. I think that has great relevance to the discussion today. The board that will be established if this bill

becomes law will provide them with another source of patronage appointments.

To further illustrate what I am talking about, Robert Wright was the chief fund-raiser for the prime minister in the 1984 leadership bid. He was appointed the government negotiator with the Pearson development consortium on the cancelled Toronto airport contract.

Pat Lavelle, Ontario chair of the current prime minister's 1984 and 1990 leadership campaigns, was appointed Chairman of the Federal Business Development Bank.

Ron Langstaffe, loyalist to the current prime minister, who ran Liberal MP Hedy Fry's election campaign against Kim Campbell in Vancouver Centre, was appointed Chairman of the Vancouver Port Corporation.

Raynald Guay, former Liberal MP, was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal.

Jim Kinley, twice defeated Liberal candidate, was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.

Patricia Landers, defeated 1993 candidate in Saint John, was appointed to the Veterans Appeal Board.

James Palmer, Liberal Party fund-raiser in Alberta, was appointed Director of the Bank of Canada.

Ethel Cherneski, local campaign manager in 1993 in Burnaby, was appointed Director of Canada Place Corporation.

Donna Scott, provincial Liberal candidate for Mississauga South, was appointed Chair of the Canada Council.

Morris Kaufman, former Vice-President of the Liberal Party, was appointed Director of VIA Rail. As I said, I could go on for days with the list but more important is the urgency with which I plead with the House of Commons to not set up yet another board to which the government can make political patronage appointments, in particular a board which it can be argued that the positions have to exist. We are talking about an elected board, elected by the farmers. That is the way it should be.

• (1710)

On behalf of all western Canadian grain farmers, I will close by appealing to the Liberal members of Parliament from eastern Canada to please have some degree of respect for the proposals which we are putting forward on behalf of the farmers that we represent and stop the contempt that they have displayed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tried to remain quiet through all these hours of Reform nonsense. Our viewers can see how pathetic it is to watch people elected by the public bad-mouthing democracy. Furthermore, they have just

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insulted me by saying that, because I come from Quebec, I am not entitled to speak to this important matter.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River, on a point of order.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member earlier in the debate called the member for the Bloc Québécois on relevance. Certainly what he is trying to put forward now, if he wants to talk about nonsense, is totally irrelevant to Group No. 4 amendments to Bill C-4.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member, as has been the case with every hon. member today, will draw some relationship between his or her remarks and the bill that is before the House. That seems to have been the pattern.

[*Translation*]

I am sure the hon. member for Bourassa will proceed accordingly.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I was merely pointing out what I have heard in the last four Reform speeches. One thing that is certain, I think that the former producer of—

[*English*]

The “Rocky Horror Picture Show” might have a sequel after all. We have heard about that place because it is a horror show.

[*Translation*]

Some people here have just told me that, as a Quebec MP, I have no right to talk about wheat. Some people here have just told me that, since I am from Quebec, I have no right to take a position on a bill. Some people from the Reform tell me that, since I am from Quebec, I have no right to give proper representation to my constituents, who are involved through their taxes in the Canadian Wheat Board, to the tune of \$5 or \$6 billion. Does this mean that, from now on, when fish are being discussed, the Saskatchewan Reform gang will not be allowed to speak? Really now. That’s pathetic.

Once again, this pack of dinosaurs are showing us how they try to create division, to play on division. We have just been given a definition of what the Western bloc is. That gang is no better than the Bloc Québécois. Good for nothing but creating a diversion.

Now to get down to business. The people of Bourassa understand the significance of Bill C-4. They have understood the importance of democracy. They have understood the significance of transparency. They have understood the significance of this bill because we are taking a position on behalf of the agricultural producers.

One thing that is certain, looking at this board, 10 of the 15 directors are elected by producers, which means this is good,

extraordinary. For once we had something of direct assistance to producers, but the Reform Party changes its mind once again and starts talking a lot of nonsense, that the government will control the Board.

• (1715)

Not only are there only five appointments, but the board can vote on the president’s remuneration and even recommend his removal. Is that not democracy with a capital *D*?

Now they are back whining again. And because they have no idea what to say, they have produced a list of appointments. I am glad that was the gang appointed, those people have qualifications. No one from the Reform Party was on the list because none of them has any qualification.

Transparency and democracy are essential, as is representativeness. Through this bill we have showed that for once we have taken a stand for farmers and the members opposite should be applauding us. There should not even be any talk of an amendment. Bill C-4 should receive unanimous approval.

We decided to take a stand for farmers. They decided to take a stand for certain obscure lobbies I have never heard of. One thing is certain, and that is that, when it is known how transparent this board will be, as the member for Bourassa I am extremely proud and happy to be a member of this government and I have no hesitation in rising to vote in favour of this bill. Instead of hurling insults, and constantly tarnishing the reputations of people who were duly appointed and whose qualifications will be of extraordinary benefit to the Canadian people, the members opposite should be thrilled with Bill C-4.

When they do not have much to say, they hurl insults. One thing is certain and that is that, after members have examined Bill C-4 point by point, they should unanimously rise in their places and applaud the minister and the government for the stand they have taken.

I have taken a stand on behalf of producers. They have taken a stand on behalf of the lobbies. Ladies and gentlemen listening today, it is truly pathetic. The record has been set straight. Instead of trotting out your litanies again, I hope you are going to take a stand for farmers. Enough of your constant refrain that, because we come from the east, we are unable to represent you. If I had to rise in my place every time I thought you were unable to represent us, you would not be on your feet very often.

[*English*]

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again in the debate on Bill C-4 as it has some relevance to my family and me. I am a third generation grain farmer. My family has held a Canadian Wheat Board permit since the very inception of the Canadian Wheat Board. That gives me some legitimacy and some relevancy in this debate, contrary to the

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member who just spoke. He probably does not know a bushel of wheat from a gallon of maple syrup.

It is not a matter of whether one member or another might be able to rise to speak. Any member of the House can rise to speak on any issue he likes. It is a matter of legitimacy when we speak. I do not understand these members.

The only thing the Group No. 4 amendments referred to was the election of wheat board officers.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bourassa on a point of order.

Mr. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I will never allow my legitimacy to be called into question. I was duly elected. My constituents elected me by over 9,000 votes and I will not stand for—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I listened carefully to the words of the hon. member for Athabasca and he said nothing about the hon. member's legitimacy. Resuming debate.

[*English*]

Mr. David Chatters: Mr. Speaker, the issue we are debating in Group No. 4 is election versus appointment of officers of the Canadian Wheat Board. I wish members opposite would take the debate a little more seriously, stand in their places and explain to me, to my constituents and to other western farmers why they are being denied exactly what farmers in Ontario currently have. We are asking for the same thing but we are being told it is not good for us. It is good for them but they are not breaking down the door to give the Canadian Wheat Board jurisdiction in Ontario.

• (1720)

We have a valid concern and a valid point to make on behalf of producers. While maybe some of the debate is repetitive or may wander from the election of wheat board officers, the emotions surrounding the issue increase in my riding every day.

I was home on the weekend. I just arrived back in Ottawa this afternoon. On Saturday afternoon a farmer in my riding contacted me. He is a second generation grain producer in the mid-northern part of my riding that has farmed all his life. The Farm Credit Corporation, an agency of the federal government, has given him 60 days to vacate his farm. He has not been able to put a crop in the ground for two years. It has been so wet he has not been able to get into his fields. It draws my emotions out when I hear people joking, laughing and making sport of the issue and issues surrounding farming.

On the airplane on my way back to Ottawa I was reading a story in the paper about a Manitoba farmer, a constituent of a colleague of mine, who was jailed for 60 days, given a \$2,500 fine and had

his \$50,000 grain truck seized. Almost exactly the same day this took place, two men who gang raped a woman in B.C. were given community service. The farmer for selling \$500 worth of grain was put in leg shackles, strip searched and humiliated day after day. We cannot help but get emotional and start throwing these things back and forth.

As I said, I challenge members on the other side to take the matter seriously. Let us stand and talk about why Canadian farmers cannot have an elected board in control of the wheat board and cannot have the wheat board working for farmers, elected by farmers and responsible to farmers.

There must be some transparency in the board. It certainly is not elected. The minister insists for whatever reason—and I do not know what it would be—on maintaining control over the board. Is it any wonder farmers in western Canada are suspicious and do not trust the board?

Farmers in my riding want to support the Canadian Wheat Board. They believe in the Canadian Wheat Board and what it can do for farmers. However, because of its historic injustices, they want control of the board. They want to elect the people who control the board. They do not want the minister and the government to control the board, simply because the courts said that the board was not responsible to farmers. A situation where a farmer has to sell his grain to the Canadian Wheat Board at the same time as he could get double the price for his grain by trucking it just a few miles across the border seems to be an injustice to farmers.

We have farmers in tears because they are losing the family farm after two generations. They are being deprived of up to \$3 a bushel for their grain because the Canadian Wheat Board will not let them market it. It bothers me when I see the whole issue being made into a joke and being bantered back and forth. It is an extremely serious issue in my part of the country. I do not think the demands of my constituents, the Reform Party and my colleagues are anything more than reasonable and normal under the circumstances.

I urge members opposite to take them seriously, debate the matter seriously and give us some real reason they will not accept the number of amendments we are putting forward to make the changes. They will give farmers confidence and faith in the Canadian Wheat Board and make them willing to use it as a marketing tool for their grain.

• (1725)

If we keep going in the direction we are going and if the government insists on maintaining the position it is maintaining, the Canadian Wheat Board will be destroyed.

Already in my part of the world farmers are turning to other alternatives. They are looking at non-wheat board crops. They are looking at local markets in livestock production. They are turning away from the Canadian Wheat Board because the government

refuses to budge. It refuses to change its position on the Canadian Wheat Board in any way.

The government is being unreasonable. It makes me quite sad to see that response. With that I will close my remarks.

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my Reform colleagues could take some time out and actually read the bill. It might clear up some of their inconsistencies and untruths.

I look across the floor and see the Bloc in sheep's clothing. Perhaps the leader of the Reform Party has been taking some lessons from Mr. Bouchard. Certainly he and members of his party have been suggesting regionalism. It is not a country as a whole. Members of Parliament on this side of the House should not be able to speak to a bill which they guaranteed to the tune of \$6 billion to \$7 billion a year. It is simply that they get to speak to it and we sit here and be quiet.

Today is not my House duty. I flew in a day early for no other reason than to speak to the bill because it is important to all Canadians, not just Reformers.

Canadians, particularly those from Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, see through the guise that the Reformers are showing here. They are not representing them in the true spirit of Canada.

I will go through a few points to try to clear up some of the inaccuracies and untruths the Reform has said this afternoon. Apparently, according to Reform members, there would be absolutely no representation whatsoever on the fisheries board. According to their view they have absolutely no right to speak to fisheries officials. That is something this party will not buy into.

I will touch on a couple of questions that should be answered at this point. Will the Canadian Wheat Board become more accountable to farmers? That is a simple question. The answer is yes. For the first time in history the Canadian Wheat Board will be run by the board of directors. There will be 15 directors in total, 10 of whom will be elected by producers. The government is only able to appoint five members. For the \$5 billion or \$6 billion guarantee that every man, woman and child in the country is offering they should have some input into the wheat board.

Will directors have real power? Certainly they will. They have the power to set the salary for the CEO. There will have to be consultation with the minister before the CEO is appointed. The board of directors has true authority in the matter.

Is the CWB subject to a full audit like private sector companies? I have heard Reformers ramble on and on over the past several days regarding their concern about the auditor general not being able to audit the books of the Canadian Wheat Board. On different days I heard about the concern over more government regulations and

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more government involvement and all the same topics. They continue to contravene themselves on these matters.

The wheat board will be fully audited. The wheat board has a duly appointed external auditor chosen from the private sector. It is a well respected auditing firm. It is well known throughout Canada and North America.

Another question to which members across the floor might like an answer to bring home to their constituents is whether it is necessary for the government to appoint some of the directors and the president. Of course it is and there are two reasons for this. First of all, Canadian taxpayers backed the CWB with financial guarantees totalling \$6 billion, covering not only the initial payments but credit sales as well.

• (1730)

Mr. Jay Hill: Read the bill.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Would it not be interesting for Reform members to go home and tell them that the government no longer backs their loans and therefore they will not get paid? Think of the uncertainty that would create in the marketplace.

Mr. Jay Hill: Read the bill.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: I had the luxury of sitting in on the agriculture committee to hear all the witnesses. Obviously having paid attention unlike some of my colleagues across the way, I have some points which I believe would be of interest to them, if they would quit laughing and heckling and spend a few moments learning.

Can the CWB directors effectively demonstrate their disapproval of the president? It is a simple question and farmers have the right to know the answer. Yes, they can.

The government can appoint the president, but only after consultation. Once the president is appointed, the directors have the power to review his performance and recommend dismissal. They also have the power to assess his salary. They can set his salary at \$1 if they wish to do so.

It is obvious that the board will have complete control over the wheat board as a whole, with limited intervention of the minister.

I heard comments earlier about there being four speakers from the Reform Party who had spoken in a row on this bill, yet they criticize us for affording them the opportunity to speak one after the other on this important issue. We are allowing them the opportunity to bring forward legitimate concerns regarding this wheat bill, but all they seem to be doing is driving a wedge into the country. All they want to do is talk about their little piece of the pie and suggest that we should not have any involvement—

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The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Pankiw: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that he was affording us the privilege of speaking one after the other to this bill, but in fact—

The Deputy Speaker: I do not think he said that. I think he said that members were being critical of the fact that they were being afforded this privilege, unless I misheard him. In any event, it is not a point of order.

I know the hon. member may disagree with what the hon. member has said. There seems to be some disagreement about this bill. However, that is a matter for debate, with all due respect, and not a point of order.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Mr. Speaker, this is not indifferent to some of the committee work. They only hear selective things that they want to hear.

What I would ask the grain producers in western Canada to realize is that this is a good bill. We heard from hundreds of witnesses. We heard from witnesses who represented thousands of people.

This is a good bill for Canada. At long last the wheat board will be passed back and put in the hands of the producers.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: If the Reform members will for once sit, listen and read through the information, they might get some clear information, rather than trying to split this country up by saying that members from Quebec should not be talking to it, that members from Ontario should not be talking to it and that members from the maritimes should not be talking to it. It is guaranteed in the country of Canada. We all have a right as parliamentarians to speak to this bill.

Mr. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier the member who represents part of the Peace River area said that this was a serious matter and I could not agree more. I wish that members of the Reform Party would listen to their own advice. I do not think they are treating this matter very seriously. I believe they are much more interested in listening to themselves, much more interested in grandstanding and much more interested in trying to score some cheap political points.

• (1735)

I come from one of the prairie provinces. I feel that I have to apologize to all members in this House who do not live on the prairies because what the Reform Party has said over and over again in this debate is that if you do not reside on the prairies, you

have no right to speak to this bill, that you have lost your franchise, that you do not enjoy full citizenship in this country.

I can say that the last time I checked, all 301 members of this House enjoy full citizenship when they come into this House. They can speak to any matter, regardless of where they live, regardless of which riding they represent. I say to every member—

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Let the record show that no Reform member has done what this person says. We have not said that these people cannot speak.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member knows that this is a debate and members are free to get up and make their own interpretation of what other members have said without raising a point of order in the House. I think in the circumstances perhaps we could hear the hon. member. I may say that it is getting difficult to hear what the hon. member is saying and I would appeal for a little order while the parliamentary secretary concludes his remarks.

Mr. John Harvard: Mr. Speaker, I think that Canadians who have been listening to the debate this afternoon will have heard it very, very clearly from the Reform Party, that unless you are a member of the House of Commons from the prairie provinces, you have no right to speak in this debate.

All I can say to the members of the Reform Party is shame on you. It is beneath your party to even entertain such a terrible thought as that. I say shame on you. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I will address my remarks through you.

The member for Elk Island accused members on the government side of acting as, I think he used the words trained seals. He admonished us to stand on our principles. Again, I would like the Reform Party to listen to its own advice that it has given so freely to us.

I have listened to members of the Reform Party on this issue, and all we hear is the same old ideological line that you get from the Reform Party on the wheat board bill. It is the same old right wing stuff we have been hearing for years and years. Would it not be nice if just once we could hear a refreshing thought, a new thought, something a little different from the Reform Party when it comes to C-4. But no, Reform members are the trained seals. They are the ones who stick to one particular line over and over again.

There is one more thing. Members of the Reform Party love to pretend that they are the voice of the west when it comes to the issue of C-4. I would concede that members of the Reform Party do speak for some farmers, and I emphasize the word some, but they do not speak for all prairie farmers.

It is very interesting that in all this debate about the pros and cons of C-4, the Reform Party never talks about a popular survey that was taken among farmers. They never refer to an Angus Reid poll or a Gallup poll or any other reputable poll. When it comes to

support for the wheat board, we will never hear anything from the Reform members because they know and we all know that the wheat board enjoys majority support on the prairies.

• (1740)

Mr. Lee Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This guy is supposed to be a parliamentary secretary. Surely he must have some idea of what is in the bill. I wish he would speak to that.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is debating the points that have been raised in debate during the course of the day. I know that, as in the case of every hon. member, he will ultimately turn his attention to the points in the bill and make his remarks appear relevant to the bill.

Mr. John Harvard: Mr. Speaker, members of the Reform Party would like us to believe that a majority of farmers on the prairies are against the wheat board, that they do not want anything to do with the wheat board.

If memory serves me correctly, not too long ago there was a plebiscite on the prairies having to do with barley. If there ever was an opportunity for farmers on the prairies to embarrass the government, to support the Reform Party and to show that they wanted nothing to do with the wheat board, all the farmers had to do was to vote against the board. In effect they could say "We do not want barley attached to the board any more".

What were the results? Notice that the Reform Party in all its speeches will never say anything about the plebiscite, never a word. I wonder why. Is it possibly because two-thirds of prairie farmers showed in that plebiscite that they support the wheat board? Two-thirds of farmers said "We want our barley sold through the Canadian Wheat Board". That was the fact but we will never hear that from the Reform Party.

The Reform members would never want too many facts to get in the way of their presentations because facts will kill them every time. They also say "We are not against the wheat board. All we want is the right to have dual marketing. We can have the wheat board but we would also like to sell our grain to other grain companies". Is that not nice. If we were to adopt the Reform Party proposal, imagine how long the wheat board would last. We have to remember that the wheat board is in partnership with the federal government. Over \$6 billion of its financing is underwritten by the federal government. That is something no other grain company has.

Imagine in a dual marketing situation if we had one agency, one company called the Canadian Wheat Board enjoying the support of all the taxpayers in the country, and all these other companies on the other side not having that privilege or honour of the support of the federal treasury. How long would that situation last? Two or three minutes. I suspect we would be in the courts just like that. A situation where one particular company is favoured and not the others would be untenable.

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Mr. Lee Morrison: Have you ever been on a farm?

Mr. John Harvard: Yes, I spent the first 19 years of my life on a farm. I happen to know a considerable amount about farming. The hon. member can throw that at me all he likes. I spent a good many years on a farm and I am very proud of it.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the debate is getting a bit heated on both sides, but I would appreciate it if the hon. member would at least address his comments through the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member, I notice, had started to do that having responded to an admonition from the Chair in that regard.

Mr. John Harvard: Mr. Speaker, that is the only good advice I have heard from them all afternoon.

One of the members of the Reform Party said that he wanted me to address at least one aspect of the bill. Let me do that. If you listened to the Reform Party and you did not have the facts, you would quickly believe this changed wheat board would still be in the hands of the federal government.

• (1745)

The fact is the new wheat board will have 15 directors, 10 of whom will be elected directly by farmers and only 5 will be appointed by the government. The last time I checked my arithmetic 10 constitutes a full majority. I would think that the directors elected by the farmers would enjoy majority support on that board. I do not want to hear any more of this nonsense that the farmers will still not have an opportunity to run the board. Under Bill C-4 farmers will be put in the driver's seat. They will run the board. The farmers will run the show and the federal government will be in partnership with them.

Most farmers on the prairies who are at least acquainted with Bill C-4 realize this is the opportunity for them to take over the wheat board and run it to their benefit, not to the benefit of the federal government and certainly not to the benefit of the Reform Party.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that we have gone along with the debate for a long period of time and now we hear a number of Liberals get up to comment on this bill.

It was quite interesting to listen to the parliamentary secretary. I heard from some of my colleagues on the prairies that he was booed off the stage by farmers in Saskatchewan. I can understand why. He did not talk about any amendments until the end of his speech. I am not from the prairies but I am going to talk about this bill because it has to do with the rights of people.

The member for Bourassa also made some comments. He talked about people acting disgracefully in this House. I was here when

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we had the debates on language and schools in Quebec and Newfoundland. I heard many comments from the Liberals that Reform members should not be talking about that. I thought that was very unsatisfactory. I have not heard one Reformer talk about what somebody from the other side of the House cannot say. We just want to know that what they say means something.

People should know that my colleague who proposed the amendments knows a lot about this, as do his colleagues. We are not here to separate Canada. We are here to make sure that the people of western Canada, the majority of whom we represent, will get what they deserve from this government in Ottawa.

I heard that member for Bourassa say that we were attacking him because he is from Quebec. That is the most shameful thing I have heard since I have been back in this House for the current Parliament. I wonder if the reason there are more Bloc members than Liberals in the province of Quebec is Liberals are making statements like that. If they wonder why there are more Reformers in the west than there are Liberals, it is because of conversations like that of the hon. member for Bourassa in this House. Using his words, it is disgraceful to hear that kind of talk in this House.

The Reform Party is here to speak on behalf of farmers in western Canada, which is why we have the majority of the members in western Canada. We have been speaking on behalf of farmers since this party was formed. We have also been listening to the farmers in western Canada, something that party has not done. The parliamentary secretary can get booed off stages in the west any time he wants. We will welcome him back to western Canada any time at all. He can come out this weekend if he wants to. We would like to boo him off the stage again.

The member for Simcoe—Grey also made comments. He is from Ontario and he talks about us being the Bloc in sheep's clothing. I will tell the member for Simcoe—Grey that they have all the seats in Ontario right now but they should look at what happened to their party in western Canada and in Quebec. They should look at what happened to their party in Atlantic Canada last time. The Liberal Party has only Ontario left. The Liberals should understand that if they do not want to listen to the people in western Canada or in Quebec or in Atlantic Canada, they will lose Ontario next time. The people of Canada will get the government they really want in Canada.

• (1750)

The member for Simcoe—Grey talked about appointing directors. In some of the amendments here propose a fully elected board. Is that not unusual? Which one of us would want to invest any money that the Minister of Finance would agree with this? When having a board of directors they should all be elected by the people who are using them.

When we go out and buy stock in the marketplace we are not going to buy it from a company that appoints its own directors and does not get them elected by the shareholders. That is what this party is asking for here. It makes common business sense. I am surprised the Minister of Finance has not said he agrees with our amendment and gets his colleagues to change their minds.

Who would agree that this Liberal Party appointing directors would appoint the people who would know something about wheat? The Liberals appointed Anna Terrana to the immigration appeal board last week, a defeated Liberal candidate in the last election. What does she know about that? But she is on the board. I do not have to say much more, do I? That one is good enough, but I can go down a big list. Sharon Carstairs, former Manitoba Liberal leader, was appointed to the Senate. We can go on and on about these appointments.

But I think we only have to make one for the average person who is listening tonight. I am so glad the member for Bourassa got up, the member for Simcoe—Grey and the parliamentary secretary. It really makes our point in western Canada that these Liberals do not understand what is happening in Canada. That is why they do not win any seats anymore. When the rest of Canadians see it, they are going to say the same thing.

We have all these amendments put by my colleague. Yet on the other side they get up and attack us on our right to say what we want to say and attack us on our right to free speech. But they do not want to talk about the amendments.

One amendment states that the board of directors should be responsible for the hiring and firing of the president, not the minister. The president cannot be beholden to the minister, and he is also the CEO. I do not think there is one member on the Liberal side who would agree to go on a board of directors where an outsider can appoint the president and the CEO. What are they going to direct? They are just a bunch of puppets. Anybody on that board is beholden to the minister. Nobody with any right mind would be appointed to this board and have the responsibilities that a board had when their final decisions are not made by the president and CEO but by a minister of this government.

One could go on and on, but I do not think I really have to. This party is speaking for the people in western Canada, speaking for those farmers who do not want to be told by a minister in Ottawa what their board can or cannot be doing. They want to make sure all 15 members are elected. That is the way it should be.

I am sure all those Canadians listening to this debate cannot understand why the Liberals on that side want to get up and make their comments about why we are doing certain things, trying to accuse us of being anti-Quebec in a debate like this. It is just absolutely ridiculous. I have never heard anything so—

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An hon. member: You are anti-Quebec.

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, the member is saying we are anti-Quebec. That is absolutely untrue. That member should come out and visit British Columbia once in a while. He should come out and visit western Canada. He should know that I also grew up in the province of Quebec and understand it, perhaps not as well as he does because he is still there and I grant him that, but I can tell him there is nobody in this party who is anti-Quebec. We are pro-Canadian. His cheap attacks on this party are not going to go very far. He should pay attention as to why the Bloc in Quebec has more seats than the Liberal Party. That is what he should be paying attention to and he should be listening to people in this debate.

We have put some good amendments forward and I think the Liberals should take the time to read those amendments and when they vote on them make sure that they pass.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to agreement made Wednesday, November 19, 1997, all questions on the motions in Group No. 4 are deemed put and the recorded divisions are deemed requested and deemed deferred.

The House will now proceed to the motions in Group No. 5. Pursuant to agreement made Wednesday, November 19, 1997 all motions in Group No. 5, are deemed proposed and seconded. This group contains Motions Nos. 20 to 30, 32, 33, 34, 45 and 47.

• (1755)

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétiens (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-4, in Clause 4, be amended by adding after line 37 on page 7 the following:

“(4) Notwithstanding subsection (2), a department within the meaning of the Financial Administration Act includes the Board for the purposes of the Auditor General Act.”

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC) moved:

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-4, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 38 and 39 on page 7 with the following:

“5. The heading before section 5 and section 5 of the Act are replaced with the following:

5. The Corporation is incorporated with the object of marketing grain grown in Canada in the best interests of farmers, to maximize their returns.”

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-4, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 38 and 39 on page 7 with the following:

“5. The heading before section 5 and section 5 of the Act are replaced with the following:

5. The Corporation is incorporated with the object of marketing, in the best interests of producers, grain grown within the designated area.”

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-4, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing lines 38 and 39 on page 7 with the following:

“5. Section 5 of the Act and the heading preceding it are by the following:

5. The object of the Corporation is to secure the best financial return to the producers of grain in Canada by marketing the grain in an orderly and coordinated manner in interprovincial and export trade, in accordance with this Act, on behalf of the producers of the grain and its operations shall be carried out with this as its first priority.”

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-4, in Clause 6, be amended

(a) by deleting lines 1 to 3 on page 8.

(b) by deleting lines 28 to 35 on page 8.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-4, in Clause 6, be amended by deleting lines 28 to 46 on page 8 and lines 1 to 11 on page 9.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-4, in Clause 6, be amended by deleting lines 1 to 7 on page 9.

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-4 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-4, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 17 and 18 on page 9 with the following:

“7. Section 7 of the Act is replaced by the following:”

7. (1) Subject to the regulations, the Corporation shall sell and dispose of grain acquired by it pursuant its operations under this Act for such prices as it considers reasonable in order to fulfil its object set out in section 5.

(1.1) Subsection (1) shall not be interpreted to prevent the Corporation making a contract to sell a type of grain at a price that is lower than normal in order to secure other sales of the same type of grain that will result in the best return to producers of that type over a period of time.

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Motion No. 29

That Bill C-4, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 25 to 27 on page 9 with the following:

“made elsewhere in this Act, shall be used to maximize the return on the sale of grain to producers of the wheat by such means as the Corporation may determine, including the making of additional payments to the persons who are entitled to receive payments in respect of the wheat sold in that crop year by the Corporation.”

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-4, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 28 to 39 on page 9 with the following:

“(3) Losses sustained by the Corporation

(a) from its operations under Part III in relation to any pool period fixed there-under, during that pool period, or

(b) from its operations under this Act under any crop year, for which no provision is made in any other Part, shall be paid out of moneys provided by Parliament.”

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-4 be amended by adding after line 3, on page 10, the following:

“ 8.1 Section 9 of the act is amended by adding after paragraph 9(1)(e) the following:

(f) show such particulars and furnish such information as requested for the purpose of an audit by the Auditor General of Canada.

(g) provide such records and information as requested under the Access to Information Act. The corporation shall continue to be a “government institution” within the meaning of the Access to Information Act.”

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC) moved:

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-4, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing lines 6 to 15 on page 10 with the following:

“10. Section 18 of the act is repealed.”

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-4, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing lines 6 to 15, on page 10 with the following:

“ 10. The heading before section 18 and section 18 of the Act are repealed.”

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-4 be amended by adding after line 40, on page 21, the following:

“30.1 (1) The Auditor General for Canada Shall examine the operations of the Corporation over the five year period ending December 31, 2002 and shall determine whether the Corporation has met its object as described in section 5, and report to the Minister thereon no later than September 1, 2003.

(2) The minister shall cause the report to be laid before both Houses of parliament on one of the first three days on which the House next sits.

(3) The report shall be deemed referred to such committee of the House of Commons as is established to consider matters relating to agriculture.

(4) Unless the committee has reported to the House and the House as concurred in the report or amended the report and concurred in it as amended by December 31, 2003 and the report or amended report is in a form that concludes that the Corporation has substantially met its object for the five year period, this Act is repealed on June 30, 2004.

(5) If the Governor in Council determines that the process described in subsections (1) to (4) has been delayed by emergency circumstances, the Governor in Council may, by order, defer the repeal of this Act by a period not exceeding twelve months.”

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-4, in Clause 36, be amended by deleting lines 6 to 21 on page 24.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to get up and address the group 5 amendments to Bill C-4, the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

At the outset of my remarks directed at the group 5 amendments, I would note that a lot of the comments we have just heard from the government side really indicate, as the member from Vancouver just indicated, how little the Liberals actually understand their own piece of legislation. I do not believe the comments over the past half hour indicate that they have even read the amendments we are supposed to be debating.

Indeed the parliamentary secretary, when he rose a few minutes ago, spoke for his 10 minute allotment and never once mentioned the amendments. All he did was rant and rail against Reform's trying to raise issues on behalf of Canadian farmers.

As with the other groups, there are a number of amendments in group 5, about 16 or 17. Obviously no individual speaker trying to address 16 or 17 substantive amendments to a piece of legislation can do them justice in a mere 10 minute speech. However, I will try to direct my comments at some and bring up some other issues about Bill C-4 that I feel are relevant.

One of the amendments contained in group 5 is Motion No. 22. This commits the Canadian Wheat Board to operating in the best interest of farmers. Previously the Canadian Wheat Board has simply been committed to orderly marketing. A lot of my colleagues remarked about that during their recent presentations today and the fact that it follows up on a previous amendment, I believe Motion No. 1, proposed by my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, which was to add a preamble to the bill that would kind of set the stage for the legislation itself and the fact that the Canadian Wheat

Board Act should be there to operate in the best interest of the farmers who fall under the act. That would make sense.

Motion No. 22 put forward by me on behalf of the official opposition would do exactly that. It would require that the Canadian Wheat Board operate in the best interest of the producers, not necessarily just to conduct orderly marketing of grain, which might often be in direct conflict to what would be in the best interest of producers.

Also in group 5 there are a couple of other motions, 28 and 29, put forward by my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, which are also substantive amendments that go toward ensuring that the Canadian Wheat Board operates in the best interest of farmers.

I would like to digress for a moment and talk about a question of privilege I raised a while back that was ruled on by the Speaker. I am not here tonight, especially at this late hour, to debate, nor do I even have the right to debate, that ruling. I am quite willing to acknowledge that the Speaker ruled on that question of privilege, but I would like to raise the issue because I have had no opportunity up until now to reply to the minister's statements connected to that question. The minister's argument for holding a meeting in Regina and having farm groups come to it over the Christmas break was that he was merely doing the same as I and my Reform colleagues. He was merely exercising his MP right to consult with Canadians about a piece of legislation, which is completely understandable.

However, I submit that is simply hogwash. The farm groups that went to that meeting told me that he had no intention to consult on anything concerning the bill.

• (1800)

The intention was to talk about the election of the directors, how you would go about electing the board of directors. In other words, once Bill C-4 is enacted, is passed into law, there will have to be regulations brought forward, as there is for all legislation once it is passed into law. He was merely there to try and get input into regulations.

My point, and I still believe this is relevant, is how a minister of the crown could conduct himself in a fashion that would lead one to believe the bill is already law. We are not going to talk about amendments as to how many directors should be elected versus appointed. We do not want to talk about that. We want to talk about how to actually accomplish the election.

I do not think that is right, and I believe most farmers do not think that is right. That is why the majority of the farm organizations at that meeting walked out in total disgust. Another farm

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group, I believe it was the National Farmers Union, was protesting outside the building where the meeting was being held.

There is another point I would like to make in the time I have left. In the debate today on the Group No. 4 amendments, by my calculations 19 Reform members of Parliament, four Liberals, one Bloc and a couple of NDP spoke to those amendments. The hon. member from the Progressive Conservatives says that he spoke. He did, as I did. He spoke in November when we adjourned the debate on the Group No. 4 amendments. I was referring to today. I think my numbers are fairly accurate.

What we are saying on this side is not that the government members should not be speaking, should not be standing in their place and addressing the substantive amendments. We are saying that they should be. Only four of them spoke, and as I already noted, one of them, the parliamentary secretary, did not talk about the amendments at all. All he did was rant and rave against those darn Reformers, how dare they use up time actually talking about legislation. What a concept, that we are actually here in this place to talk about legislation. How dare we. It boggles the mind.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for hours, but I believe I only have two and a half minutes left.

I will wrap up the last couple of minutes of my much too brief talk on Motion No. 32. What would Motion No. 32 accomplish were it to be passed? Were the hon. members actually to read it, to try and understand it, to try and understand where western farmers are coming from on this issue, and actually vote for an amendment based on common sense versus how they are told to vote, Motion No. 32 would have the Canadian Wheat Board come under the auditor general so that he could actually perform an audit.

Interestingly enough, on the front page of today's *Hill Times* there is a story on how the auditor general had been requesting to audit the new CPP fund that is going to be set up under Bill C-2. As well he wanted to audit the Canadian Wheat Board under Bill C-4. That is exactly what this Reform amendment would accomplish.

As well it would bring the Canadian Wheat Board under access to information so that there would be true transparency. Western Canadian farmers—quite a number of whom I might add reside right here in the Reform ranks—could see what the Canadian Wheat Board was doing. They could put forward access to information requests and find out exactly what decisions were being made by the Canadian Wheat Board. I believe that makes sense.

• (1805)

I believe that when it comes to the votes on the report stage amendments what we are going to find is that the trained seals over there—and they have already used that term tonight directed at themselves and I am merely agreeing with them—will vote down

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these substantive amendments without giving them any thought whatsoever merely because somebody over there has told them how to vote.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with some trepidation that I rise once again to speak to Bill C-4. It has been a while since this bill first came before the House in November. I say it is with trepidation because I sit on the agriculture and agri-food committee and at that time it was of the utmost urgency that this piece of legislation come forward so that it could be passed prior to the Christmas break. Then the government could look at the proposals for the election of 10 of the 15 members of the board of directors. Now it is February and I wonder why there was that urgency in committee.

We asked as a committee to once again speak to the minister who is responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. We asked that he come forward to actually hear what had been said by the numerous witnesses who shared with us their concerns and their desires with respect to changes to this legislation. Unfortunately the minister could not appear before the committee because there was an urgency to get the bill back to the House.

We also tried to make a comparison between the Ontario Wheat Board and the Canadian Wheat Board to see if there were other options available to the government, the directors with respect to the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board. Again there was not enough time and the bill had to be returned to the House.

I was concerned that we had taken too long by running it into February and perhaps a bit longer.

I have a lot of respect for government members. I also have respect for the legislative process. I know full well that legislation which is passed is not always perfect. Even legislation which is in place today is amended. Time unfortunately tires some pieces of legislation and they have to be amended to bring them up to present standards, in this case the 21st century.

As legislators and as parliamentarians it behoves all of us, particularly the government which has put the legislation forward, to ensure that it is the very best piece of legislation which can be put forward. Obviously in this case we must ensure that the customer or the producer is taken care of to the best of our ability.

There are 48 amendments which have been put forward. Some of the amendments are good. They can change this legislation to make it better than what it is right now. I will speak to some of those amendments.

I have tabled two amendments in this particular grouping. There are a number of amendments in this grouping which are very good. I hope the government will listen and that some of these amendments will be supported by all parties to make the legislation better.

I am not naive enough to believe that this legislation will not go through. It will. The government has a majority and it wishes to put through this legislation. It will go through. However it could be made better. There are two ways of making it better. I have tabled two amendments.

• (1810)

One of them is Motion No. 21. Let me clarify that amendment. It says that the corporation is incorporated with the object of marketing grain grown in Canada in the best interests of farmers to maximize their return. That is a good amendment. It does not necessarily detract from the legislation the government has put forward, but it adds to the legislation.

I cannot believe the government cannot see that the Canadian Wheat Board should be there for the producers. Not for the corporation, not for the Government of Canada, not for the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, not for some yet to be named chief executive officer who is going to be appointed by government. It is there for the producers. Why not put it in the legislation that in fact it is there to make sure that the best returns are going to be generated by that producer.

This amendment clarifies the mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board. Rather than acting in the best interests of the corporation, the corporation is incorporated with the object of marketing grain grown in Canada in the best interests of the farmers to maximize their return. Does that not make sense? It is a good amendment. I believe this is self-explanatory. After all, the Canadian Wheat Board should work on behalf of the farmers, not the corporation.

A recent historical analysis of the Canadian Wheat Board aptly summarizes the original intent of the board. Until World War II the Canadian Wheat Board was a government owned agency with a mandate to operate in the best interests of the producers.

Its primary mission was to act as a guarantor of floor prices for wheat, setting a price it was willing to pay for grain, the initial payments and letting the market determine whether or not producers sold their crop on the open market or to the wheat board. Has the Canadian Wheat Board not wandered from its original mandate? Why? The question must be asked.

There is another amendment I have tabled in this grouping. Motion No. 33 deals with section 18 of the act. It regards the repealing directives given by the minister and not the board. It is integral that this section of the act is repealed because it gives the GIC the power to give directions to the board with respect to the manner in which any of its operations, powers and duties are conducted.

I believe that if the minister responsible for the CWB is truly going to have a board that is transparent, accountable and democratic for the board, the board should have complete power over the operations. If the board does not have the complete power, then the democratic changes under Bill C-4 are merely cosmetic. I

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cannot stress that enough. The board has to have power over itself in order to be able to provide the necessary service to Canadian producers.

There are a couple of other areas within this grouping. There are a number of amendments. As a previous speaker indicated, unfortunately time is of a premium. All those items cannot be spoken to as I am sure lots of us would like to do. Again I wish, I hope and I plead that the government listen to some of these good amendments because the legislation can be made better.

I find it very interesting that a piece of legislation can be tabled and can basically alienate everyone. We have heard members from the Liberal government say that this is a good piece of legislation and everybody supports it because of the barley plebiscite, because they have heard these people and they have heard those people.

The fact of the matter is that I do listen to the people. I have heard them. Yes there are a number of those people who want the Canadian Wheat Board exactly the way it is today, no changes at all. That probably speaks to the fact that we must move into the 21st century. There have to be changes. There have to be amendments. There has to be adapting in order to get into a globalized market system that we have now as opposed to what it was in 1943.

In saying that, the minister of the Canadian Wheat Board has somehow taken a piece of legislation and alienated everyone. No one, even those who want to keep the board, likes this piece of legislation. Even those who do not want to get rid of the board do not like this piece of legislation.

The majority of the farmers who want to have some flexibility, who want to have some options do not like this legislation. That itself speaks to the need to listen to rational amendments and do so logically. Do not do it just because a minister says he wants this piece of legislation. Listen, read, look and support some of these amendments. The legislation will be better.

• (1815)

There are two other areas that are dealt with in this grouping. One is the elimination of the contingency fund. We would support the elimination of the contingency fund for the simple reason the contingency fund seems to be a way for the government to get away from one of the pillars of the Canadian Wheat Board, that is the initial payments guarantee.

It is also a tax that does not have any parameters to it. It does not allow the customer, the producer, to say how this is going to affect them. A contingency fund could be anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion collected from the same producers, for what purpose and for what reason. The contingency fund could and should be done

away with. In fact, the government wants to maintain its control over the board, like it will with the directors and with the CEO.

The last point is the subject of access to information. There is only one other organization that has the same restrictions for access for information and that is CSIS. There is absolutely no reason why, as a producer owned operation, we should not have ability to have access to the information of that organization. If there is nothing to hide then do not hide it. Access to information should be built into this piece of legislation.

Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I wish I had more time but there is Group No. 6.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to speak on this group of motions.

Group No. 5 deals with the auditor general and an information officer being involved in the Canadian Wheat Board. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have had these types of mornings when you wake up and feel that everything is going to go your way. As soon as you have had your breakfast, it does not start to happen.

About three years ago I introduced a private members' bill that would put the Canadian Wheat Board under the authority of the auditor general. It was not a votable bill but we did debate it for a while in the House. As I remember, every Liberal member in the House at that time was against that bill. They did not want to have the wheat board audited by the auditor general.

This morning when I picked up the Ottawa paper, I saw that the auditor general had said he hoped that he would be named auditor for the Canadian Wheat Board so that he could, under Bill C-4, work with the reform of the wheat board. That is exactly what I said four years ago. That is what should have happened. That would have put accountability into the wheat board and would have put some kind of trust back into this organization.

A lot of my comments on the wheat board and what I think should have happened to the wheat board have been heard. I would like to read a few quotes from somebody who is not involved in the farming industry, but is a free lance writer in Calgary, George Koch. I hope some people have picked up the article and read it. This is what he says:

Farmers have no way of knowing whether the wheat board is doing its job because it operates in secret. And they have no other recourse—such as a mediator or an ombudsman—against apparently incompetent, abusive or fraudulent actions.

Nor, unlike nearly any other participant in a modern market economy, do farmers have access to competing services-providers.

That is what farmers want. They want a choice.

Those who skirt the wheat board illegally are taken down by the armed men in black, clapped in irons and charged with offences punishable by imprisonment.

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This is what farmers object to. They want the same type of treatment as other farmers in other sections of this country, the same treatment as in Ontario where they run their own board. He then goes on to say:

This has happened to more than 100 farmers so far. Clayton Desrochers, a young farmer in Baldur, Manitoba, who exported his grain in defiance of the wheat board, recently spent his birthday in jail. Brian White, the wheat board's director of marketing, describes people like Mr. Desrochers as 'sort of those free men from Montana'.

Can you imagine the wheat board making comments like that to a farmer who is trying to save his farm? This young man wanted to earn a couple of extra dollars because he could get twice the price for that barley that he was marketing in the U.S. than what the wheat board was willing to pay him. Why would a gentleman lose his farm and go on welfare instead of getting a better price for it?

This gentleman goes on to say:

The wheat board has been called many things: secretive, unaccountable, arrogant, ruthless and incompetent. But the Manitoba case goes to the crux of the matter. If the wheat board does not, in its own mind and in any meaningful sense, represent the interests of farmers and cannot be compelled to do so, why does it exist?"

• (1820)

Why do we have a wheat board if it is not going to represent farmers? Farmers in the last while have thought that maybe the court was the direction that they should go to try to get some fair play into this system, to probably represent their interests and to make the government and the wheat board change their attitude toward farmers.

I was astounded today in the House when, during question period, I heard the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans say in front of this House that the ruling in B.C. on the native fishing industry would not pertain to this House, they would not go by the judgement of the judge or the court, that did not affect this House. How can that be? Is this House above the law of this country? It is astounding.

I just want to read to the hon. members a paragraph out of a paper by Professor Peter Hogg, Q.C.. In his paper he says "Government Liability Assimilating Crown and Subject" says "It has always been a basic assumption of Anglo-Canadian public law that the Crown, that is the government, is subject to the same laws as everyone else. This was a principal element of Dicey's Rule of Law. It reflected a political theory that government ought to be under the law and not just under any law, but the same law that applies to the ordinary citizen. A special regime of law for government can lead to tyranny.' This is exactly what we are experiencing.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member took out of context what was said by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans today. Clearly what the minister said was that there—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It is certainly not a point of order.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, if I have misinterpreted the minister, I wish the government would explain itself. When a government or an individual does not abide by the rulings of the court, I think they say they are not subject to the law. That is what is so serious about this statement in the House. I know there are about a hundred court cases right now.

If it should be ruled that these farmers are innocent, the government can just go out and say "Hey, we do not abide by that law. You will still be imprisoned. You will still not be able to market your grain." What is going on here? This is a democracy.

In the amendments to this bill made by the hon. member for Prince George, B.C., he has tried to make this bill accountable by saying that the wheat board should operate under the auspices of the auditor general and the information act and that they should be able to have an input into how this bill or this act is run. That would make farmers happy. That would make the farmers put their trust back into this wheat board. The majority of farmers want that option. They want to have the option to market their grain at the best price that is available.

• (1825)

If that is not feasible in this bill, I think it will become more divisive and there will be more farmers going against the wheat board. It will probably destroy itself. When I about four years ago did my first press conference, I said that my farmers came with the complaints that they had against the wheat board.

All they wanted was for the government or some agency to look into those allegations to see whether they were right or wrong. They did not want to get rid of the wheat board, they wanted the wheat board to be made accountable.

I asked the solicitor general to do it and members know what happened with that. The farmers laid complaints with the local RCMP. Their complaints were stopped further up the line for some reason or other.

They had evidence that they had been deducted freight and elevation and cleaning charges on their grain to Thunder Bay when it never went to Thunder Bay. It just went right across the border about 10 miles into the U.S.

Not only that, but now we find out not only were they originally charged, they were also charged on the buy-back, again freight to Thunder Bay and cleaning and elevation charges. Those farmers have actually lost \$40 a tonne on their grain which is over \$1 a bushel.

That is why we, as the Reform Party, want to make the wheat board accountable. We do not want to destroy the wheat board, but we want to make it accountable and answerable to the farmers.

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What is wrong with electing 15 directors instead of 10? What is wrong with the farmers being allowed to hire their own CEO and have that board run the way they like it? What is wrong with that? Is that not the way a democracy is supposed to run?

It scares the daylight out of me when I see one part of our industry being subjected to this type of treatment. They do not have the recourse that other industries have.

Some of the automotive dealers in my constituency said "Jake, if you don't stop this nonsense that farmers can't sell their grain for the best price, we're going to start objecting to this issue. If I could not sell my vehicles for the best price or if I could not take in a car in trade that somebody else wanted to get rid of, we would not abide by the law. We would be taking civil disobedience."

We do not want to see that. We want to have an accountable, democratic system in this country that treats everybody fairly. That is all that farmers in western Canada want. They want to be efficient. They want to be accountable. They want to pay their taxes. They want to have a livelihood that puts food on their table. They want to be treated fairly.

When we look at the efficiencies and the productivity of our agriculture industry, there are none that will come second to us in the world. They have done it under circumstances where they have not had the freedom to get the best price for their products.

What would they be able to accomplish if they had that opportunity to market their grain at the best price that was offered to them? What would they not be able to do when they had a wheat board that was accountable to them, that would look after their interests, that if there were objectionable things going on, if there were irregularities, somebody like the auditor general would look into it.

When I asked the auditor general four years ago to give me an idea how much interest was charged on the debt that taxpayers were probably servicing, he could not do that.

There was no way that he could access the books of the Canadian Wheat Board to see what the interest was. What I found unbelievable when I talked to the auditor general and wanted to know why he could not access the books as that he did not know but that he could tell me one thing, that he still had to sign the audit of the Canadian Wheat Board as being correct. Even if he could not look into the books, his signature had to go on that document that it is accurate.

I can see why the auditor general would come out this morning and say that he wished he would be named auditor of the Canadian Wheat Board. That is the direction to go. That is what the amendments in this piece of legislation say. I urge every member in this House to vote for the revamping of this wheat board with the auditor general and the information officer to be part of it.

• (1830)

The Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been moved, pursuant to the order made earlier today.

* * *

MIDDLE EAST

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that we are doing something different in Canada. We are the only country which, before taking a decision on this matter, is consulting the House of Commons. In Great Britain the house was informed of the decision without debate. The same thing happened in other countries. There was no debate in the United States. In Canada we will have a debate tonight. I will listen to the views expressed in the House of Commons. I will report to cabinet tomorrow and a decision will be made.

Tonight we have come together to debate an issue of vital national and international importance. On such occasions the elected representatives of our people must be heard. People have to know where we stand. I look forward to hearing the views of my parliamentary colleagues. They will help us to make an informed decision.

I believe the responsibility of Canada tonight is solemn and sober. It is to show the strength of purpose of the international community and to stand firm in the face of provocation.

The government is adding Canada's voice to the international chorus calling for Saddam Hussein to comply fully with UN security council resolution 687 and all other security council resolutions passed with respect to Iraq since 1991. Iraq must do so or face very serious consequences.

Tonight I want to lay out clearly before the people of Canada why we believe their government should support military action if Saddam Hussein does not comply. This gives us no pleasure.

Canada is not a nation which rushes to embrace the use of force. We do not lightly endorse military action. For us it is always the last resort. Ours is a history of working to prevent conflicts and to promote peaceful resolutions when armed conflict does break out. Indeed, a diplomatic resolution is far and away our preferred resolution to this crisis.

At the same time Canada has never been just a bystander in the world. We have been an active citizen of the world and with citizenship comes responsibility.

On fundamental issues of peace and security we have never hesitated to take sides. Thousands of Canadians have died this century to prove that point. It is why we joined NATO. It is why we helped to draft and sign the universal declaration of human rights

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50 years ago. It is why we helped to bring about an international treaty banning land mines just two months ago.

[*Translation*]

If there is one thing Canadians cannot abide, that is any flaunting of the clearly expressed wish of the United Nations Security Council. And if there is one question on which the Security Council has spoken out clearly, it is the threat Saddam Hussein represents to his neighbours, and the entire world, with his weapons of mass destruction, his nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Given his past record, this can be of no surprise to anyone. What kind of leader would engage voluntarily in a reign of terror against his own people?

• (1835)

What civilized mission can be carried out with the massacre of tens of thousands of Kurds and the total destruction of entire villages? What logic was there in an invasion of Kuwait, if it brought down on his country the most powerful military alliance forged since the second world war?

What conclusion does this lead us to about the humanity of a man who is again prepared to expose his people to this risk, merely to protect the terrible activities he is involved in to develop chemical and biological weapons?

We do not, of course, have any guarantee that a strong and decisive intervention will put an end to the threat to international security Saddam represents. We can conclude from his past actions, however, that if we do not intervene, if we do not stand up to him, our inaction will encourage him to commit other atrocities, to prolong his reign of terror over his own people, his neighbours, and the entire world. There is no doubt about it.

Saddam's determination to develop and use weapons of mass destruction, chemical warfare in particular, is well documented. Anyone doubting the serious character of the threat this man represents has only to recall how he turned these weapons against his own people. Equally well documented are his ongoing efforts to block the work of UNSCOM, the United Nations Special Commission created to ensure compliance with Security Council Resolution 687.

[*English*]

The purpose of the resolution is clear, that Saddam must unconditionally accept, under international supervision, the destruction, removal or rendering harmless of his weapons of mass destruction. Economic sanctions against Iraq will remain in place until UNSCOM declares that he has done so.

This was a condition of the ceasefire that ended the gulf war. Saddam agreed in writing that UNSCOM would be given freedom of entry and access in its inspections. From the very outset he has failed to honour this agreement. The denial of access to so-called presidential sites is just the latest example.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to the incredible job which has been done by UNSCOM in the face of continued provocation. In these brave men and women, experts in their fields, Saddam has confronted determined adversaries. Through seven years of lies and physical threats they have carried out brilliant detective work. They have uncovered the truth that his nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs were much further advanced than we feared or than Saddam will admit.

Thanks to UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency, Saddam's well funded and advanced nuclear weapons program is essentially no more. Thanks to UNSCOM all of Iraq's known chemical weapons and facilities have been destroyed. Thanks to UNSCOM all of Iraq's known facilities and equipment associated with biological weapons have been destroyed. UNSCOM has overseen the destruction of 38,000 chemical weapons and 480,000 litres of live chemical agents. Anyone who doubts the seriousness of this threat should remember UNSCOM's discovery that Iraq has produced 8,400 litres of anthrax. One hundred kilograms of anthrax released from the top of a tall building in a densely populated area could kill millions of people.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Saddam's lies and deceit and especially his obstructions prevent the special commission from verifying whether Iraq has indeed destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction. The international community must have the assurance of the special commission, but it gives no credence to Saddam's promises.

For seven years he has lied, resisted and tried to hide the truth. He has had every opportunity to comply with international agreements and his obligations, but nothing has succeeded in getting him to comply voluntarily, not even the potential lifting of the economic sanctions that are hurting the people of Iraq. This deadly game of hide-and-seek has gone on long enough.

Let me say that the government still favours a diplomatic solution and, to this end, we are remaining in contact with our allies. Military intervention is not imminent. Make no mistake, Saddam's behaviour to date indicates that he will not honour diplomatic solutions so long as they are not accompanied by a threat of intervention. The least sign of weakness or hesitation on our part will be interpreted as incitement.

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[English]

That is why, if it comes to that, we believe a military strike against Iraq would be justified to secure compliance with security council resolution 687 and all other security council resolutions concerning Iraq.

We believe that Canada cannot stand on the sidelines in such a moment. Our allies, led by the United States, have asked that we support such a mission. They have asked for military support, not for combat troops. However, it would mean a Canadian presence in the action against Saddam Hussein. It would mean our armed forces would support, in a material way, the actions of this multinational initiative. It would mean that when and if every other means fails and action is taken to enforce the will of the security council, Canada will be counted. Not on the sidelines. Not in isolation.

That is the decision we must make. I believe the choice is clear. I believe it is a choice dictated by the responsibilities of international citizenship, by the demands of international security and by an understanding of the history of the world in this century.

Tonight we will hear from members of all parties. Their views are important and will help guide the cabinet tomorrow in its decision.

Moments like this are never easy. They require deep commitment, honest evaluation and respect for all views, even those with which we do not agree. Important decisions are seldom easy. All we can hope is that we face them with the wisdom and understanding that they deserve and with the commitment to see them through.

• (1845)

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by defining the issue before the House as the official opposition sees it. The issue is whether Canada should accept or reject the invitation by the United States to participate in possible military actions in the Middle East, actions to stop terrorism and the production of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein.

The issue is not whether we support a maximum diplomatic effort to constrain Saddam Hussein. Every member of the House supports a maximum diplomatic effort. The issue is what to do if diplomatic efforts fail, whether then to participate in a military action.

I am sure we will find by the end of this evening the issue can be looked at from the political perspective. It can be looked at from the economic and military perspectives. But in all these considerations the official opposition wants to ensure that it is the human and moral dimensions that we keep uppermost in our minds.

If Saddam Hussein persists in the production of chemical and biological weapons and eventually uses them, the cost in terms of human life and suffering is incalculable.

The hon. member from Red Deer and others will dwell on this point a little later but let me mention just one chilling statistic. At the point when Saddam Hussein resumed his refusal to co-operate with the UN special commission, its inspectors were searching for 25 warheads armed with 40 gallons of toxins such as anthrax and botulinum, each of which can kill up to a million people.

If we have any doubts of Saddam Hussein's preparedness to use such weapons, as the prime minister has already said, we should remember that he used chemical and biological weapons against the Iranian forces in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. He used poison gas against his own people, the Kurds in the north, immediately after losing the gulf war.

There is no doubt about it in our mind. Leaving Saddam Hussein unchecked would exact an enormous toll in human suffering. At the same time, of course, military action to constrain Saddam Hussein will also exact a human toll.

It was observed in the House by then Prime Minister Mulroney during the 1991 debate that Saddam Hussein had demonstrated limitless tolerance for the suffering of his own people. He can be counted upon to use women and children as human shields to protect possible targets.

If military action is undertaken, the lives of military personnel themselves will be jeopardized. Canadian lives could be lost if it is the decision of parliament that Canada should participate militarily.

The human and moral side of the issue must be kept uppermost in our minds. I am personally convinced that the only moral justification for taking human life is if it can be demonstrated that the taking or sacrificing of some lives may save more lives than otherwise. I think that is the only moral justification for capital punishment. I think it is the only moral justification for taking lives through military action. That is really the moral issue with which we are dealing tonight.

Does the risk of loss of lives of innocent Iraqi civilians and the men and women of the armed forces of Canada and our allies outweigh the loss of lives on the part of innocent civilians and military people down the road if we do nothing?

I would be remiss if I did not frankly address the unsatisfactory form of the debate on the motion before us. For the debate to be meaningful and to provide real guidance to the people of Canada and the government, this is what should have happened.

First, we should have had a full briefing of all members of the House by the prime minister, by the foreign affairs minister and by the defence minister with an open question period to follow to get all the facts out on the table before conducting any debate.

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This is simply common sense. You get all the facts out through cross-examination before you debate them. Why the rules and procedures of the House continue to defy simple common sense concepts like that is frankly beyond me.

Then you commence the debate. Not debate on a vague motion like the one before us, but a debate on a real position opposed by the government but subject to amendment by members of House and subject to a vote at the end of the day.

• (1850)

The prime minister excuses this lack of leadership by saying that he wants to consult first before putting forward a position. The more statesmanlike thing would be to put forward a position which represents the very best judgment of the government and then be willing to amend it or to change it on the basis of consultation and points made by members of the House.

In the absence of strong leadership from the government it falls upon members on this side of the House to fill the vacuum. We are calling upon members of all opposition parties to make a contribution, and I mean that sincerely.

Given the historic concern of the social democrats in the House about the human and social consequences of military action, we expect members of that persuasion to make a major contribution from that perspective.

Given the fact that the Progressive Conservatives were in power at the time of the last gulf conflict, we expect Conservative members to make a significant contribution by drawing upon that experience, what went right and what went wrong, and applying it to this situation.

As far as the official opposition is concerned, our principal contribution will be this. We have insisted in committee and in debate in the House since 1993 that parliament should be developing clear criteria to assist it in deciding how Canada should respond to requests for our participation in multilateral military operations to establish and maintain peace in the world. We raised this demand in relation to our participation in Bosnia and we raise it again tonight.

In our judgment there are at least six criteria which should be satisfied before Canada commits itself to responding to requests for participation in multilateral military initiatives to prevent and remove threats to peace.

First, parliament should be satisfied that there is a serious international threat and that diplomatic efforts to resolve it have failed.

In the case before us there is no question in our mind that Saddam Hussein and his weapons production capability constitute a serious international threat and that to date diplomatic efforts are not solving the problem, so this criterion is satisfied.

Second, parliament should be satisfied that so far as possible there is multinational support for military action.

In this case there is multinational support from our key allies, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom, so this criterion is satisfied.

Third, the government should be satisfied that there is a workable plan and strategy for military action to resolve the issue. We expect the government to assure parliament that there is such a plan and strategy. The government has not yet provided evidence along that line. We trust that it will do so before this evening is over. This criterion remains to be satisfied.

Fourth, parliament must be satisfied that any plan for military action includes a well defined mission and a clear definition of Canada's role. We expect the government to provide something on this mission definition tonight. It has not yet done so. Perhaps it will do so before the end of the evening. This criterion remains to be satisfied.

Fifth, parliament must be satisfied that the role expected of Canada is within our fiscal and military capabilities. We expect the government to give evidence along that line tonight. So far this criterion remains to be satisfied.

Sixth, parliament must be assured that there is a command and control structure satisfactory to Canada. Again we expect the government to provide some information on this structure. It has not yet done so. This criterion also remains to be satisfied.

Given that the seriousness of the threat is established and the need for action is clear, this is the advice of the official opposition to the government on this matter. There are five points.

(1) Canada has an obligation to support its allies in stopping terrorism by Saddam Hussein.

(2) Our support should be military as well as moral and political.

(3) The focus of any military action should be on putting Saddam Hussein's weapons factories out of business and allowing UN inspectors to do their work.

(4) As parliamentarians we should make the political decision to support. We should then let the defence department make the recommendations concerning the form and scope of our military support.

• (1855)

(5) It is important at the outset of these types of things to be clear on why one is doing what one is doing. The reason for supporting military action is that it is our moral obligation and in our national interest in stopping terrorism and the production of weapons of mass destruction.

In closing, I return to the point that for this debate to be meaningful it should end with a vote on a motion proposing the

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course of action. In that the government has failed to present such a motion, I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to revert to Government Orders and to continue to sit beyond the daily time of adjournment to consider an amendable and votable motion to read as follows:

That this House support diplomatic and if necessary military action by our allies to stop terrorism and the production of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein.

The Speaker: The hon. member has asked for unanimous consent to put a motion. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: He does not have consent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always difficult to know what to say in a debate on the advisability of taking part in an armed conflict. We would all wish it had not come to this.

A peaceful resolution through diplomatic means must always be everyone's objective. Quebeckers and Canadians can be proud of their historic contribution in this regard. Canada's tradition has always been to try to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts. The Canadian approach has always favoured diplomatic solutions to crises.

As proof, I would point to the interventions of Lester B. Pearson in the Suez crisis, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and the numerous peacekeeping missions of the Canadian Armed Forces since 1990 in Bosnia and Haiti, as well as the Canadian presence in Egypt and Cyprus in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, the solution does not strike me as so obvious or straightforward in the case of Iraq. There could be a war on the horizon. Yesterday, the President of the United States called the Prime Minister to ask for Canada's support in its military operation against Iraq. A White House spokesman even said there was agreement that Canada and the United States should act together if force became necessary.

Here in Ottawa, a National Defence spokesman indicated that the Canadian army was getting ready for possible involvement with a view to providing logistical support to American forces.

It will be recalled that, after the Gulf War in 1991, the United Nations Security Council ordered Iraq to destroy all its chemical, bacterial and, if it had any, nuclear weapons. The international community obviously wants Iraq to comply with the UN resolutions imposed on that country, particularly resolution 687 regarding the elimination of all its weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, Iraq, with Saddam Hussein as its leader, still constitutes a potential threat to world peace, particularly if he is left with the capacity to manufacture or develop chemical or bacteriological weapons. Iraq's refusal to allow UN inspectors to do their job therefore threatens international security.

● (1900)

The international community, needless to say, is at the end of its tether with Iraq's lack of co-operation. The Americans and the British could therefore prepare to take military action against Iraq.

The issue for Quebec and Canadian parliamentarians in this House is not whether to support the UN resolutions or to condemn Iraq. It is, rather, how to apply the UN resolutions and put an end to the danger threatening the entire Middle East, if not the planet as a whole.

The Bloc continues to favour a diplomatic solution. We believe that not all diplomatic avenues have been exhausted. These diplomatic efforts are favoured by France, Belgium, Italy and Russia at the moment.

All of the players in the international community are hoping for a diplomatic solution to this crisis. Canada must intervene not only with the United Nations, but also with NATO and with the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The government of Saddam Hussein must, however, give UN inspectors responsible for Iraqi disarmament unrestricted access to the 60-odd sites considered sensitive, which Baghdad is currently denying them.

Should the diplomatic efforts currently underway with Baghdad fail, we in the Bloc feel Canada must insist that the military strike against Iraq be approved by the UN security council.

Since the UN is carrying out its inspection and monitoring missions in Iraq under Security Council resolutions, if a diplomatic solution is unattainable, it would be desirable for that same body to be the one to authorize military action.

Before there is any military intervention in Iraq, we in the Bloc Quebecois believe a UN Security Council debate ought to be held. Generally, the UN Security Council's procedure for addressing problems of peace and security is a two-phase process.

First, if there is a threat to international peace, the UN Security Council can pass economic sanctions which all members are bound to apply. That is why there is an embargo against Iraq, and the lifting of those sanctions is linked to the unconditional destruction of all those chemical weapons.

Second, if the sanctions are not enough, then the Council can decide on military action, as it has done on two occasions, the Korean War in 1950 and the Gulf War in 1991.

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All of the actions against Iraq, then, were taken in keeping with Security Council resolutions. We in the Bloc are of the opinion that we ought to do the same thing this time, because it is important that the greatest number of countries speak out in support of any intervention, any military intervention in particular. Such support carries indisputable moral weight. It is also the only way to get the Middle Eastern countries involved, the Arab countries in particular.

Let us think of the importance of Russian support. Russian President Boris Yeltsin delivered two stern warnings this past week to the effect that an American attack could set off a world war. Again this morning, President Yeltsin repeated his support for a diplomatic solution to the Iraqi crisis.

An American military offensive outside the UN framework could also result in strong Arab sympathy for Iraq. This is certainly not what we want to see happen. It is therefore important to ensure that the diplomatic process takes its course and that the Security Council debates the issue and is kept informed of any proposal for military intervention, which we do not reject out of hand.

Yesterday, US President Bill Clinton asked the Prime Minister for Canadian participation in a military operation against Iraq, such participation to be restricted to transportation and search and rescue teams. As far as we know, the United States has apparently not called for soldiers or fighter aircraft.

● (1905)

Canadian military participation of an offensive nature seems out of the question for the time being. It is nonetheless participation in an armed intervention.

Throughout discussions about the crisis, Canada did not really show the leadership that was expected. Instead it took a wait-and-see approach. The Liberals are not keeping up the historic role that Canada played internationally, as I mentioned, in the time of Lester B. Pearson, and still plays, and that it played more recently through the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs with respect to the land mines treaty.

Canada could have consulted its European allies in the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe and in NATO with a view to exploring various diplomatic solutions. Instead, the Canadian government decided to wait to hear from the Americans.

It seems to me that the Liberals must keep up the tradition that was established and maintained by Pearson and that inspired the more recent stand taken by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Today, the Prime Minister told us that he wanted to consult us before announcing Canada's position in this matter.

This was the approach and the sort of debate we had in recent years on the issue of Haiti, of Bosnia, and of allowing cruise missiles over Canadian territory. These initiatives, I think, give all parliamentarians the opportunity to take part in the debate and to contribute to a solution with suggestions to the government to enable it to take the most enlightened stand.

The Prime Minister should in this case consult us, but more importantly, we should vote once the government has taken a position. On this subject, I recall the events of November 1990 and January 1991, again in connection with Iraq, when twice in this House—and I remember that the Liberal Party insisted on having a vote at the time so all parliamentarians could have a say and the government could have the results of a vote by all parliamentarians in this House before any armed intervention took place.

I think the arguments that were valid in November 1990 and January 1991 remain valid today, have the same moral value, one that will make Canada's position clear to its allies.

The House should therefore, in our opinion, be once again consulted and hold a formal vote on the position before the start of any war, if this were unfortunately the only solution—and I think everyone agrees.

Today's consultation is, in the opinion of the Bloc, merely the first step in a process that will clearly establish a position on Canada's involvement in action against the regime of Saddam Hussein.

In conclusion, we must take the diplomatic approach, consult our allies, propose courses of action, involve the United Nations Security Council and, should military intervention be necessary, it would be eminently desirable to have it carried out under the aegis of the United Nations.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question of ongoing military and humanitarian crisis in Iraq merits very careful consideration, very careful consideration by all of us here as parliamentarians and very careful consideration by the Canadian people as a whole. Let us be clear, Canadians are a proud people with a distinguished history of providing leadership in seeking peaceful solutions to the world's penchants and the world's problems.

Let me say at the outset that the Canadian government has a duty to ensure a policy that is first consistent with our status as a sovereign, independent state. In that regard, it was a cause of concern to a lot of Canadians to hear the U.S. secretary of state today pronounce what the position of Canada was in regard to massive military intervention in Iraq.

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• (1910)

Second, the Government of Canada has a responsibility to adopt a policy that can command the broadest possible degree of support within the international community.

Third, and perhaps most important, the government has a responsibility to adopt a policy which will be truly effective in solving the problem that confronts the world community and the people of Iraq today.

The view of the New Democratic Party is that massive military aggression against Iraq as proposed by the United States is insupportable on several counts. It is not now receiving and is unlikely to engender a broad measure of support internationally. It will result in the almost certain death or maiming of large numbers of innocent civilians.

Before elaborating on the reasons why we believe Canada should refuse to participate in this massive military bombing, I want to make two things very clear. First, the New Democratic Party fully acknowledges that Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator and a human rights abuser. Let there be no doubt about that. Second, the New Democratic Party is solidly on record as supporting, unequivocally, those UN resolutions which forbid Iraq from acquiring, manufacturing or using biological or chemical weapons. That any nation should obtain or deploy such weapons of mass destruction is deplorable. It is unacceptable. It is truly morally repugnant.

In our view—and I think we would do well to keep this in mind—the manufacture, proliferation or use of nuclear weapons is equally evil and unconscionable. Let us not lose sight of the global security threat and the global challenge which we face in that regard.

I want to outline at least five reasons why the New Democratic Party opposes the massive military action proposed by the United States. Let us be clear that the U.S. secretary of state has described the intervention as being substantial, sustained and heavy. That is the plan.

First, the diplomatic efforts to bring a peaceful resolution to this crisis simply have not been fully exhausted. Depicting the Iraqi leader as a tyrant and a despot, however accurate, however soul-satisfying it may be, does nothing to move us toward a solid resolution. In fact, it can be said that it detracts from our objective and, indeed, from our obligation.

What is our obligation? Let me suggest that our obligation is finding a way to secure Iraq's compliance with UN weapons inspections and the destruction of its deadly chemical and biological weapons, while at the same time alleviating the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians who are victims of a prolonged campaign of economic sanctions.

Let us not forget that hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have already died. It is estimated by the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations that one child dies every 10 minutes today in Iraq as a result of those sanctions.

I believe that the world wants Canada to show the kind of leadership that it did on the land mines ban issue. Let us remind ourselves, and do so with considerable pride, that Canada stepped out in front. Canada seized the challenge. Canada provided the leadership, not because the United States of America was urging us to do so, but in defiance of the United States, to put in place a land mines treaty ban.

I was delighted to be able to stand in this House and congratulate the Government of Canada for providing that leadership. I believe that the world wants Canada to once again provide that kind of leadership; not sit out in the shadows or hide in the weeds, but move into this vacuum to provide that kind of leadership again. Canadians expect no less of us.

• (1915)

That requires that we be far more aggressive in pursuing a policy whereby concessions of weapons inspection and destruction by Iraq would be met with a reasonable and enforceable set of goals and timetables for easing and eventually eliminating sanctions.

Surely the proposal advanced by the Russians that would allow for inspection of presently restricted presidential sites is worthy of careful consideration.

In return for demonstrations of goodwill, for concrete measures of progress, Iraq ought to be permitted to sell more oil in order to obtain food and medical supplies necessary for the very survival of the men, women and children in that country. Let us not forget that in the years after the second world war our objective was to limit the size and capabilities of the German and Japanese armed forces, not to deliberately promote famine and disease among the citizens of those countries.

Second, I believe that Canadians favour truly multilateral solutions to such international crises.

[*Translation*]

It is wrong to claim that the United States is heading a large international coalition. France and Russia, which sit on the UN Security Council, oppose the American proposal of military intervention. All 22 members of the League of Arab States also oppose it.

The vast majority of members of the international community oppose such action. Why? Because a military operation in the region could have unexpected and undesirable consequences.

The military offensive headed by the United States shows how important it is for the United Nations to have a standing army, one that is truly multilateral and independent.

*Middle East**[English]*

Third, military aggression is unlikely to meet any of its intended strategic or political objectives. Surely it is notable that even former U.S. gulf war commander General Norman Schwarzkopf, known as Stormin' Norman, has voiced grave doubts about the wisdom of such an air attack.

U.S. led strikes may in fact merely solidify Saddam Hussein's grip on power, unite his population and only temporarily interfere with his weapons building program. Therefore we remain profoundly sceptical of the long term utility of such military intervention, particularly when we weigh the potential risks of heightened instability in the area.

Fourth, the claims of so-called pinpoint bombing and the limitation of collateral civilian damage is nonsensical military doublespeak. These euphemisms simply conceal the very real likelihood of massive loss of life and the maiming of thousands of civilians.

I want to share briefly an excerpt from a letter that arrived in my office today. It reads, "the smart bombs won't be any smarter this time". There are those who support military action over diplomatic initiatives.

If it is indeed true that Saddam Hussein is stockpiling and concealing chemical and biological weapons, as it appears is the case, it is truly terrifying to imagine the impact that targeting missiles at such sites could have. The resultant release and the spread of lethal chemical substances into the surrounding area is surely too high a price to pay in human terms for the achievement of highly questionable results.

Fifth and finally, Canada should be seeking to adopt a position on this question which contributes to the reduction of international tensions instead of inflaming them. Our goal should surely be to broker peaceful solutions in the instance of such international crises. Canada should stake out a position independent of our southern neighbour, as it did so courageously in the instance of land mines.

- (1920)

I ask the House, is it beyond our imagination to conceive of a solution to this impasse which does not involve massive loss of life and damage to vital Iraqi infrastructure? I ask members of the House to reflect on the 600,000 Iraqi children which the United Nations tells us have died since the imposition of sanctions five years ago.

We read in today's press of the American objective to knock out the electricity generating stations which provide power to the people of Iraq. I ask my colleagues to reflect on the impact such an event recently had on the lives of so many of our constituents. Is this the kind of hardship that we are determined to inflict on a civilian population that has already endured so much suffering and

pain both as a result of the policies of its own government and as a result of the regime of sanctions?

In conclusion, wise heads are right to counsel caution and careful reflection. This evening I implore the Prime Minister to intensify our efforts to achieve a diplomatic solution and to find through peaceful means a resolution to this terrible standoff. Canada should surely be on the side of those who seek to resolve this crisis through negotiation and common sense. There is nothing to be gained in the long run through a strategy of provocation and sabre rattling.

Let me finish by citing the words of another Canadian who wrote to me today: "The closing years of the millennium should not see yet another major armed conflict added to this century's baleful record. As a respected middle power, Canada should adhere to its well recognized role of peacekeeper in world affairs".

[Translation]

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, we are very keen to finally have a debate this evening in Parliament on a decision that is a very solemn one in the life of a country, a decision that weighs heavily on the shoulders of those who must directly or indirectly make decisions putting other people's lives at risk.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party are very concerned by the developments in this conflict, especially since over a week and a half or so ago the American president had a conversation with the Prime Minister of Canada. As soon as the parliamentary session resumed, I called on the government to permit this Parliament, and through it the people of Canada, to participate fully in the debate and in the decision on Canada's role in this potential conflict.

I wrote to the Prime Minister over a week ago requesting a statement in the House of Commons to the members and to the people of Canada on his government's position. I wanted him to share with us not only the information available to his government, but also the positions held by our allies and, to be very specific, the statement made by the American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who was repeating at every opportunity, and I quote: "Time is running out".

- (1925)

Those familiar with diplomatic language and the way governments work were left with no choice but to wonder what these words meant and to try to understand their impact.

I therefore took the trouble not just to write to the Prime Minister, but also to telephone him on Sunday, the day before Parliament resumed, to ask him for two things: my first request was that his government make a statement in the House of Commons, and my second request, consistent with the recommendations of a parliamentary committee, was that a joint committee of the House and Senate be created so that we could hear from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence, and the individual responsible for the military direction of Canadian troops, the

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Chief of Defence Staff, in an appropriate context. Unfortunately, we met with a blank wall, a flat no.

Today, I regret to say, we find ourselves in a situation I can only describe as ridiculous, in which the government tells us it cannot take a position until it has heard from the Parliament of Canada.

Are we to conclude from this that the Government of Canada therefore had no position on this conflict, and still has none? Have things become so absurd that the government elected by the Canadian people, which has traditionally played an important role in these matters, has no position on this particular matter so far? If that is the case, things have reached a sorry pass. We have certainly slipped in our international stature.

[*English*]

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada would much prefer a peaceful and diplomatic solution to this international crisis. It is not repetitive to say it today. It is not insignificant to say that. We should say that and repeat it as many times as we feel necessary, as a country and as citizens of this planet.

If this proves impossible because of Saddam Hussein's refusal to allow the UN to perform its duties, then we believe that Canada should fully support, under the authority of the United Nations, military action by our traditional allies to destroy Iraqi weapons capable of killing millions of people. That is the position we take.

The President of the United States spoke with the Prime Minister more than a week and a half ago. I asked the Prime Minister at the time to make a full statement to the House of Commons, to explain the position of his government, to share with us the information that he had, to go further, to actually help us interpret the position of other countries that play a major role.

For example, Madeleine Albright, the American secretary of state, has said repeatedly "Time is running out". For any sensible person familiar with diplomacy and with the means at the disposal of countries, this was a very significant statement. Yet we were left in the dark as to its significance. Even now this government has not offered any light in regard to what exactly the Americans meant.

The government has waited to this day to make its position clear. We have reached a point of total absurdity. If I understand the government correctly, the government has said it wants to hear from the House of Commons before it takes a position. If we understand it correctly, Canada in this whole conflict has had no position, no position until this day? In international affairs it is a very sad moment for Canada to discover that, given the leadership role Canada played in 1991 in influencing the American adminis-

tration to work under the authority of the UN, we have now abandoned any attempt at influence.

• (1930)

More than a week ago, I asked the Prime Minister, through a letter and a phone call, whether he would not make a statement to the House and whether he would not strike a parliamentary committee to hear from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and the chief of defence staff. We even made this recommendation because it is consistent with the committee report filed in 1994, supported by a majority of Liberals on the committee, that stated very clearly that in these circumstances there should be a standing committee to whom the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence and the chief of defence staff should report. This is nothing new. This report was in 1994. The government just thumbed its nose at this Parliament and its own majority on the committee and chose to break another promise.

There are many questions in regard to this whole debate. We have to ask what is at stake. What is the best way of dealing with this dangerous situation? What forces and facilities are needed in the event of military action? What is the objective of a military strike and how long will it take to achieve? Is parliamentary support necessary?

I would like to take the opportunity to address some of these issues, first on what is at stake. What is at stake is a moral imperative, that of peace and security for this world, peace and security not only for those who are living peacefully in countries such as Canada and are privileged by our citizenship but also, as other leaders have said in this House today, the peace and security of other human beings with whom we share this world.

What is the best way of dealing with this situation? As I have made clear, the position of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada is that diplomacy of course must be the preferred option. However, should diplomacy fail then the use of force would then become justified.

In our opinion diplomacy is not a success if Saddam Hussein agrees only to the inspection of a limited number of sites. Security council resolution 687 sets out the terms that Iraq must comply with under the gulf war ceasefire. It is clear in that resolution that the ceasefire is conditional on UN sanctioned inspection of Iraqi weapon sites.

I want to quote from paragraph eight of resolution 687 because it spells it out very clearly:

—decides that Iraq shall unconditionally accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision, of all chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and all related subsystems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities.

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The resolution goes on at length but it is very clear.

It is clear from the ceasefire agreement that should Iraq continue to violate UN security council resolutions regarding inspection of Iraqi weapon sites, the use of force against Iraq to destroy its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons is justified.

However, it is not clear, given the answers the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have offered today in the House of Commons what diplomatic efforts they have undertaken to resolve the rift that currently exists between members of the UN security council.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs made a very troubling admission today in the House of Commons when asked whether or not we should renew our efforts on the UN front. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had to admit to this House today that if we did that we ran the risk of establishing and defining a rift within the UN security council itself.

Pretending this problem does not exist is not going to make it go away. This is a very serious admission on behalf of the minister and one that this House and Canadians need to know before we make a decision with regard to the future of the men and women who will be involved in this conflict.

What would be the position should Russia and China continue to hold the view that there should be no intervention? Will we provide support for military action by our traditional allies or would we be opposed?

What forces are needed and what can Canada provide is another question. It is unclear at this point what exactly is being asked. Currently only Britain and the United States have committed to military participation while Germany has pledged full political support and the use of air bases.

Of course the world cannot be held hostage by Saddam Hussein and his arsenal of biological weapons.

• (1935)

However, it must be clear to all countries involved what the objectives of a military strike in Iraq are and what the strike will accomplish. Now is the time to be clear on this.

There are those who may not think it is significant. History is full of examples of countries that got themselves involved in conflicts they thought were temporary, regional, limited in time and space but could not get out of them. I do not have to remind members of what the Vietnam experience was for the Americans. Yet some seem already to have forgotten. Why? Because it must be clear from the outset what objective we are pursuing. We have yet to hear exactly what it is. The joint committee would help to

establish and clarify that position. I am still hoping the government will come to its senses and establish that joint committee.

What will we offer in terms of capacity? This government has reduced Canada's forces by about 25% since 1994. It is not any coincidence that the American president would not ask for more. He knows full well that Canada cannot offer more than what he is asking. What is the state of Canada's military equipment? These are all questions we have to ask.

What objective will we pursue? I see two obvious objectives. Iraq's air defences and many weapons we have identified would need to be destroyed.

We need to know what position our government will take if military bombing is taken and is extended to a vast area. These are all questions that need to be answered. We also know that time is running out.

I want to know whether or not Canada's Parliament will be involved in this debate. In 1991 there were 71 hours of debate and three debates in the House of Commons. We learned a great deal from the experience of 1991.

I hear the Minister of Foreign Affairs heckling me from the other side of the House of Commons. This is a happy coincidence. Let me quote from *Debates* of 1990. One member in the House at the time said: "If all of a sudden we are beginning to deploy troops and give them rules of engagement or a mandate that extends beyond the clear definition provided by the UN, then we may also be in danger of undermining the opportunity of the UN to show it must be the place where decisions are made". That was said by the member who is now the Minister of Foreign Affairs. That is what he thought then.

Let me quote again. A member of the House of Commons said: "Do individual nations, whether they be large or small, have the right to decide when to use force for invasionary purposes? It should not be a unilateral decision". That was the same minister recorded in *Hansard* on September 24, 1990. I can only regret that he does not seem to be as forthcoming today.

This is a very important moment in the life of our Parliament and Canadians deserve that many questions be answered. Our party will continue to push so that we have as much information as possible.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to push the government to answer these questions and put an end to this absurd situation, which I must say I have trouble understanding. I do not understand what this government has to hide.

Why not strike a committee? Why not make a statement in the House of Commons? It is not as though partisan issues were involved. We have just been through a crisis. In such times, neither the leader of the Bloc Quebecois, the leader of the Reform Party, or

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the Leader of the New Democratic Party engage in partisan politics. Yet the government is stuck in some kind of rut that is frankly difficult to explain.

[*English*]

Given the extraordinary circumstances we are in and the fact that the government has not been forthcoming on this matter, I would like to close my remarks by asking for the unanimous consent of the House of Commons to put the following motion:

That the proceedings be interrupted at this time to permit the Prime Minister to answer questions from members of all parties for the next thirty minutes.

• (1940)

The Speaker: We have another motion asking for unanimous consent to take a particular action. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of this House to put the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: He does not have unanimous consent. Debate.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first say on behalf of the government how much we appreciate the comments made by the leaders of the various parties, with the exception of the last speaker, who I think have approached this matter in a forthright way, trying to come to grips with the real issues that are at stake instead of engaging in the kind of cheap politics that we have heard for the past 20 minutes.

It is unfortunate that a once great party has now taken up wallowing in the bile of its self-defeat over the last two elections and is no longer prepared to deal with issues in a serious way.

Let me point out one simple fact that the leader of the opposition, who seems to have had a striking case of amnesia, has forgotten. When he was a member of the cabinet, the previous prime minister and his government made a decision to deploy troops and did not get around to asking Parliament for 12 weeks what its opinion was. Now all of a sudden here he stands with this great smile of indignation, with crocodile tears pouring around his ankles, saying "for goodness sake, we are having a debate tonight and, my goodness, it took you a day to get around to it".

What hypocrisy coming from a member of a government that had no interest, no commitment and no engagement to bring Parliament into it whatsoever. That is the problem.

Even during this event, where other opposition parties had the good sense to request briefings, and were so given, members of the

Conservative Party could not quite get themselves around to making the call or asking for those briefings. We called them and said "tell us what you are prepared to do". We never heard back from them.

With respect to a joint committee, I would like to tell the hon. member, because he is not around Parliament very much, that we do have standing committees on foreign affairs and defence. We meet regularly. They, too, have asked for briefings, which they will be given. It would help if the hon. member spent a little more time in this place finding out what is going on. Then he might be able to get his facts straight.

When it comes to some of the questions, I think they are legitimate and proper questions. First let us talk for a moment about the basic position of Canada in this matter. This is not a matter of simply following what the United States wants or, I should say to the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party, what the Labour leader in the United Kingdom has asked for, Canada's co-operation. This is a question of whether we as an independent country make a choice as to what our basic national interest is.

I would say our basic national interest, as properly elaborated by members of this House, is to say clearly the danger that Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government represent by their unwillingness to abide by the ceasefire resolution, continuing with the manufacture and potential development of weapons of mass destruction and carrying biological weapons presents a clear and imminent danger to Canadians as well as to everybody else around the world.

Therefore we must find ways of stopping him. We know from past history that Saddam Hussein is not limited by any sense of moral compunction. He recognizes no restraint of the normal civilized world.

I spent ten days in Iraq negotiating the release of Canadian hostages back in the late 1980s. It is a forbidding place. More important, it is an immoral place from the point of view of that government.

By his use of biological and chemical weapons against the Kurds, against his own people, against the minority of his own people, he demonstrates how dangerous a person he can be, and that continued possession of those weapons of mass destruction represents a clear and present danger to all of us. We must take action. Several members have said "Why isn't Canada being more diplomatic?" I can say we have been very busy on that diplomatic front.

• (1945)

I was in the Middle East before Christmas meeting with virtually all the major Arab countries to talk to them specifically about the

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issue of a peace process on the one side and the situation of Iraq on the other, trying to find what solutions there might be, trying to build some bridges through the Arab world into Iraq to say this is the way to go.

We have taken actions in the United Nations to support very clearly the easing of the economic embargo. We supported the secretary general in his interest of raising the limits on which the oil for peace program can be implemented, so we could bring money and support and resources to the children of Iraq and the people of Iraq.

There is one basic problem. Saddam Hussein does not want to play. He does not recognize that. We could solve this diplomatically in 10 seconds if Saddam Hussein simply lived up to his obligations. That is all. He signed a paper, he agreed to the conditions and he could tomorrow find a total solution if he simply lived up to his responsibilities, but he refuses to do so.

Over the past seven years we have found one provocation after another, a refusal to live up to those conditions, to a point finally where the report of UNSCOM, not the United States, not the United Kingdom, but the United Nations itself has clearly put in writing that they have a great apprehension about the continued capacity of Saddam Hussein to manufacture biological and chemical weapons. If something is not done, that capacity will become fully developed and he can not only use it for his own purposes, but also use it to transfer into the hands of other terrorists or other rogue states.

There does come a time when some decision has to be made. Even as I am here on the floor of this House, we are continuing our efforts at the United Nations to see if there is some way of getting a further resolution of the security council to provide a way in which both the incentive to the Iraqis to an easing of the sanctions can be developed and passed.

When the leader of the Conservatives scoffs at the idea that we do not want to emphasize or exaggerate the risk, what kind of topsy-turvy world does this gentleman live in? I do not understand what he is talking about. He wants us to go and deliberately show that there is a split. He wants Canada to take the lead to say there is no agreement. Or should we be working as hard as we can over the next period of time to try to get that agreement, to try to work with these people, to get the kind of resolution to the security council that might work. That is what I was saying today. Let us try to do what is pragmatic and useful.

I would suggest one thing that this House should consider. It goes back to what the Prime Minister said. These are difficult decisions. I think the Leader of the Opposition said the same thing. No one relishes it. One thing that might occur as part of the diplomatic initiative that may be required is to demonstrate solidarity, to show that there is total resolve among civilized countries that we are willing to stand up for basic principles and ideals. That is the way we have to do it.

Let us get a message to Saddam Hussein that we are prepared to take the action necessary to protect the lives of Canadians, the lives of the people in the Middle East and the lives of the people around the world.

It has been pointed out that we took the initiative on the land mines. That is true for one basic reason. Here was a weapon system that had a clear and present danger to lives of innocent civilians. There is no real difference in this issue. We are trying to deal with an individual or a government that is preparing and developing massive weapons of the most diabolical kind that can be unleashed upon the people of this world. Therefore we have to take a stand to make sure they are not used.

In the same way we want to eliminate land mines we want to eliminate biological and chemical weapons. We want Iraq to live up to the convention it signed and we want to find a way to ensure that there is a basic standard in this world that says you should not use these weapons against innocent people. That is the dilemma that we face.

I certainly am in full agreement with those who have spoken so far in saying that we also have to take into account what the repercussions of this must be. That is why we are here in the House today. This is not, as some member suggested, where Parliament is going to make a decision. We are consulting with the House. I would say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition he knows this well. I ask him to look at the record. He knows that on questions like Bosnia we have had full debates and briefings in the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and the defence committee. We have brought the debates to the House.

Ultimately I must say this. The final decision rests with the Government of Canada. We will use and develop the best kind of exchange of views of Parliament, but ultimately we must decide. The Prime Minister said so in question period today. We are here to, first, find out what the reflective views of constituents from across Canada are about what that decision should be, the general thrust of it.

• (1950)

We can certainly continue to work with Parliament in a variety of ways, and we have in the past, but we cannot abrogate the responsibility to make a decision which, as the Prime Minister said, the cabinet will consider tomorrow.

We can then follow through on the kinds of continuing dialogue and exchange of information to ensure that Parliament is fully involved in the ensuing developments.

We should not assume—I was a little struck by the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in question period—that we may be near war. I dearly hope not. I do not think we should be even using the language of jingoism in this case.

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What we should be saying is that we want to avoid war at all costs. At the same time, we must work to ensure that that war is not leashed upon us through biological and chemical weapons. That is why we must take a stand to prevent that happening in the most effective way possible.

Given the kind of support we have heard so far with the exception of the Conservative Party, we think we can go into cabinet with a better sense of where Canadians are coming from and the kinds of directions they would like us to follow.

Parliament is really very much the crucible in which these decisions will be looked at, will be examined. We will continue to make that commitment to do so.

I would say that whatever decision is taken tomorrow by the prime minister and the cabinet to respond to the request that is made, we will also continue to have time. Let us not get ourselves into some kind of frantic feeding frenzy that all of a sudden we have to rush to the barricades.

We are prepared to say to Saddam Hussein that we will, if forced to the very last resort, be prepared to support military action.

In the meantime, I believe that a show of solidarity, a show of unity among the western countries will help greatly to get a more peaceful solution. I may be wrong. I may have to say unfortunately it did not work because this is an imperfect world and there are imperfect people in it. No one is more imperfect than Saddam Hussein in this kind of question.

Let us devote our attention and our commitment to the kind of consensus that we hope to develop through this parliamentary debate to ensure that Canada can continue to play a role in conflict resolution, to take the leadership that we can. We would like to take more leadership if we are on the security council. We hope members of Parliament will help us get there next fall.

In the meantime, we will do everything in our power, everything in our resources to try to find that solution. It is important that in tonight's debate for those who are listening in that the message is clear to the Iraqi government and to President Saddam Hussein that we stand with the United Nations and the resolutions that were passed beginning in 1990 and 1991 right until last November when they said any sort of breach by the Iraqis of the commitments made in the ceasefire agreement of 1991 constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

We went looking for a mandate and the Leader of the Conservatives was quite happy to quote for me. I am glad he did. It saves me the trouble of doing so. That still stands. There are resolutions passed by the security council as late as November saying that any breach of the agreements made in 1991 presents a clear threat to peace and security and that therefore there is the kind of authorization through the security council and its record of decision in the past seven years to try to provide that kind of mandate.

Let us see what happens to the security council in the next week as the United Kingdom and other nations along with ourselves are trying to work toward a resolution that can strengthen that position and also provide the Iraqis with the incentive they need in terms of being able to alter the terms of the embargo or the sanctions to try to find a solution.

That is perhaps the best balance of a diplomatic approach, to provide the carrot and the stick at the same time, but we need to have both in this case because that is the only language that Saddam Hussein understands.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, this is not the time to play partisan politics, to get into the infighting that we might get into, but to do what is good for Canada. I think that is our job here in this House tonight, to get the facts on the table so that people can understand what the issues are and what the real threat is.

I believe that we have a moral, a political obligation to Canadians to let them know what this issue is all about. It would be my intention this evening to try to add the information that I have put together which certainly I have received from briefings from Foreign Affairs, from Canada, from other countries, from ambassadors and citizens of Canada who I have talked to. It would be my intention to talk about it from the moral perspective of what is right for Canada, for Canadians and for this House.

• (1955)

After listening to the statement made by the leader of our party, I think it might have been better to have a full briefing of all members of Parliament in this House. We could have had a question and answer period for however long. We could have controlled and allowed people to present their party positions. That is an approach we should look at for the future. Today it is important to get the information out concerning what is an extremely serious situation for Canadians and for the world as we face Saddam Hussein.

An often asked question is what kind of person is Saddam Hussein. I am not sure that we are not looking at another 1938 and another Hitler and having a debate like that. I think this guy is as serious and as dangerous as the man they discussed way back then. This person has a record of using biological and chemical weapons on his own people and on his enemies. He seems to have no compassion in his use of those kinds of weapons.

Look at his history. In 1975 he signed a non-interference pact with Iran, yet in 1980 he invaded Iran and the war began. Those eight years of war did not seem to cause him very much grief even with the million people who were killed, some of his own and some Iranians. He used chemical weapons on Iranian soldiers and on his own people. He accepted the UN ceasefire but it was not long until he decided to push further. He worked on enriching uranium and on biological and chemical weapons. On August 2, 1990, when he

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invaded Kuwait he again indicated the kind of person he really is, a power hungry individual.

As I go through this history I realize that we did commit back then to being involved. I think Canadians were proud of that involvement because we were fighting a person who was dangerous to society. We know how he has functioned in government. He has even killed his own relatives. He kills dissidents. He kills ministers. He kills Kurdish minorities. We know what kind of person he is. I wonder when I hear people ask if he is really dangerous. I do not think there is any doubt about the danger posed by a person like Saddam Hussein.

We have to look at the history of UNSCOM. I have spent quite some time examining what it has told us over the past seven and a half years. I have talked to 12 ambassadors about their feelings on what UNSCOM was saying. I have talked to our own people about that. I have talked to the Americans, the British, the French, the Russians.

What about UNSCOM? Is this stuff really there? I think all have heard the facts and figures. I could go through a long list but I do not think it will be necessary, except that we must let Canadians know that UNSCOM is telling us that these people have these weapons, that the history, the facts and figures are there. This is not something being imagined nor is it being created by the Americans, as we have heard. These facts and figures are there. Representatives I have talked to from at least 12 countries—the minister has probably talked to many others—agree those weapons are there.

It has been documented that 38,000 tonnes of chemical weapons have been destroyed. This guy produced those things and they have been destroyed. There are 480,000 litres of CW agents for the production of chemical weapons. This guy produced that. He organized that. That is the kind of person we are talking about.

• (2000)

UNSCOM has confirmed the existence of industrial scale VX nerve gas, the production of four tonnes of VX. One drop will kill an individual. He has produced them and we know they are there.

There is a list of other things: anthrax, 8,400 litres and 19,000 litres of botulinum. What more facts do we need? There are people on the ground in Iraq saying that stuff is there. What more proof could we have of the danger of this individual?

I could continue to talk about this matter but will add only a few notes. Britain is shocked and appalled by the amount of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. That is quoting Britain directly. It

is shocked that this level has been allowed to build up and wishes action would have been taken sooner.

I have talked to the Israelis. The Russian position is pretty straightforward. All of us are working for a peaceful solution. It would be much better to have a peaceful solution. Everybody is for that. However, if that is not possible, who are we dealing with? What is Saddam Hussein like? That is the point.

The Russians say their biggest concern is of the conflict spreading, what it will be like to see, and the suffering that the Iraqi people will experience during a war they have already gone through. We are all worried about that. All of us care. Our war is not with the Iraqi people or the Arab states. Our war is with Saddam Hussein, an insane dictator. That is whom our war is with.

Turkey has already suffered from all kinds of instability and terrorism. All kinds of refugees were forced on Turkey because of the kind of dictator Hussein is. Iran is extremely concerned. It is very sympathetic for the people of Iraq, the very people they fought against, but they have no sympathy for Saddam Hussein. They know what he is like. They will confirm, if asked, what kind of an individual we are dealing with in Saddam Hussein.

It is not a matter of establishing how dangerous the person is. We all agree how dangerous he is. We are at the point of looking at the real threats of terrorism and our real options.

Again I paraphrase our leader when he said that the moral justification for taking lives can only be justified if it is to save lives. I think that is what we have to ask. If we take option one and let this person thumb his nose at United Nations resolutions and at the allies, he will continue to produce these weapons. He will continue to develop delivery mechanisms. He will continue to plan in his own sick way how he will push his power beyond his own country.

What does that mean? It is one thing when he terrorizes his people. It is one thing when he terrorizes his neighbours. Could he affect us? Could he destabilize our civilization with his terrorism? That is possible. That is not dreaming. That is not science fiction. That is reality.

If we do not act today what kind of a threat do we have in the future? All of us only need to imagine—or we go to some of the movies in the theatres now—the destabilization that our economies and our countries can have because of terrorism.

Our second option is to demand the compliance of Saddam Hussein to the rules set out in 1991 by the United Nations which say that he must, without any exceptions, without any side deals, allow full inspection of all possible bases within Iraq. He must comply. There are no other options. Everything must be inspected.

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• (2005)

The next part of it is that the weapons of mass destruction must be destroyed. We cannot let a rogue state, a rogue person like this, have control of those kinds of weapons. Otherwise we will pay the price down the road big time.

Yes, we want diplomacy. We want it to the bitter end. We want everybody who thinks they can add something to add it to try to bring about a solution. We want to let Saddam Hussein know that he has taken us to the brink and that the only way to move back is to comply with the UN resolutions. He cannot move back and six months down the road pull us back to the brink again. It has gone too far this time. He was produced too much. He has too much there. He is now a danger to the world as we know it.

It is time we put that message to him diplomatically. If all that fails, we have no other solution but to use force, to force him into compliance. That force used now will save lives in the future. I am convinced of that. In working on this and listening to what I have listened to, I am convinced of that.

We cannot hide from the issue. We cannot pretend it is not an issue. We cannot say Saddam Hussein might be all right. We cannot say maybe he will not use these weapons. He will use these weapons. He will develop them and so it is time for action.

We cannot hide from it. It is time for us to engage in world politics, to let people know where we stand, to stand up and be counted. As difficult as this might seem, we must stop the reign of terror of Saddam Hussein. The terror must end. It is time for Canada and Canadians to stand up for what they believe in, stand with their allies, and the more multinational this is the better it is.

I think everybody in the House should agree that we must stand up and be counted. It is time for that. Our party certainly is dedicated to working to that end. It is not time for partisan politics. It is time for what is good for Canada. That is what Canadians want to hear from us in the House tonight.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs made reference to the fact that at no time had there been any request made by members of the Progressive Conservative Party of him, his office or the prime minister's office with respect to a request for a briefing.

That is a glaring inaccuracy. It can be confirmed very easily through records in the prime minister's office that in fact a request for a briefing was made not once but several times by the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and by members of the House. That is a glaring inaccuracy on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): That is not a point of order. We will resume debate with the hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we need to get over the technicalities the hon. member was just talking about and to get on with the serious issues we are dealing with tonight. The spread of chemical and biological weapons is one of the key security issues of our time.

In the past when thinking about weapons of mass destruction more likely we thought of nuclear weapons. Certainly that threat during the cold war was one that was brought to our attention constantly. While that threat has diminished it still exists. There are still a lot of those weapons in the world. Meanwhile we have seen a growing threat from biological and chemical weaponry being produced and being stored. Nowhere is that more evident than in Iraq.

• (2010)

In Iraq it has been used. It was used in the Iran-Iraq war. It was used against the Kurds. Saddam Hussein has quite clearly shown that he will use this kind of weaponry. He is indeed, as has been said here tonight, a very dangerous individual. We cannot put it past him to continue to try to produce and use this kind of weaponry.

The United Nations in its inspection commission has time and time again come up with a number of components of these kinds of chemical biological agents, components that needed to be destroyed, components that he continues to try to produce to build a stockpile of this weaponry.

Now he is refusing to allow that inspection group to check a number of very key locations. He has for some reason decided to develop over 40 new palaces, 40 palaces in addition to whatever existed prior to that, 40 palaces which have a combined area larger than many cities in the world. This is the kind of cover-up he is attempting to do so that he can continue to be able to produce weapons of mass destruction.

The evidence is overwhelming. The danger in the immediate area, the danger to security in the world, is quite evident. We talked about how a few drops of some of these agents can kill thousands and perhaps even millions of people. They do not require sophisticated delivery systems like nuclear weapons do. They can be delivered in many different ways including a briefcase, many ways this man will not overlook if he feels he needs to use this kind of weaponry. This is a very dangerous man, and he cannot be allowed to continue to develop this kind of weaponry.

The UN resolution is quite clear. He and his country need to abide by that resolution. We cannot walk away from that resolution. We want every diplomatic means to be found for him to comply with it. We cannot walk away. The credibility of the international community would be badly damaged if we did so. How would any future resolutions to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction ever work if we do not back up this one, if we do not make sure this one is complied with?

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He says he will now allow some additional inspections but not everything the resolution requires him to do. We cannot, as the British found out in 1939, appease dictators. We cannot expect that we will be to control the situation on his terms. They have to be on the terms of the international community. They have to be on the terms of the UN security council resolution. The credibility of the United Nations is important and at stake in this case.

We continue to press for diplomatic resolution of the matter. A military presence is now evident in the area through aircraft carriers, various other aircraft and ships that are amassing under the control of the United States and the United Kingdom. Together with other allied efforts hopefully we will add a particular show of solidarity which will result in there being a diplomatic resolution.

We certainly hope that will be the case. We certainly have to give every effort to try to bring about a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the matter. If that cannot be done, we have to be prepared to see the use of military force to ensure the UN resolutions are abided by.

The Leader of the Opposition in his comments quite clearly said that we do not want to be in a position where lives are lost. There have been many lives lost in this area of the world. Many lives were lost in the gulf war. The lives of his own people were constantly in danger and constant death was occurring within Iraq. A terrible situation exists with respect to the survival of the people of that country.

• (2015)

We do not want to see more lives taken but if it is necessary to ensure the saving of lives, then these very difficult decisions about military action have to be contemplated. If at the end of the day the diplomatic resolution does not work, then we have to be prepared to see military action taken.

I do not believe Canada can stand idly by and watch our allies go in and attempt to enforce the United Nations resolution. We have to be a part of that effort. That is what this discussion is about tonight, to determine whether Canada should be a part of that effort. That is something the government will make a decision on shortly. From there we will follow up with the appropriate dialogue with our allies.

Are we in a position to do that? Yes we are. As we indicated in the 1994 defence white paper, we have troops that are multipurpose and combat capable. They are ready and capable to operate in a support fashion in the Iraqi situation. That is the extent of the request made by the United States which is leading the allies in this endeavour. In a support position Canada could provide ready and capable personnel and equipment.

The Leader of the Opposition has asked for more specific details concerning the extent of our support position. More discussion is required with our allies on this topic in order to determine the precise nature of the mission and how Canada can play a supporting role in co-ordination with the efforts of other allies. If we decide as a government to participate in a military action if necessary, then more effort would be required to determine exactly in what way we should do that.

Tonight we need to resolve that this United Nations resolution will be upheld, that Saddam Hussein and his country will comply with that resolution and that we will ensure that these chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction are removed and destroyed as they should be so they will not be a threat to the people in that area of the world or to the world in general.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you first of all that I shall be splitting my time with the hon. member for Laval East.

We are here this evening for a debate on the United States' invitation for Canada to take part in military interventions in the Middle East. If the Bloc Québécois considers it essential for parliament to be involved in a debate, nevertheless the conditions under which this evening's debate is being held leave no doubt about where it is headed, about the decision the government appears to have already reached on this matter.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have, moreover, been far too uncommunicative this evening in informing the hon. members of this House of the steps taken in favour of a peaceful solution to the dispute which is pitting Iraq against the international community, and the House has not been given sufficient information on the arguments behind intervention by us and by the U.S.

What is more, in the Minister of Foreign Affairs' speech just now, he suggested that the hon. members of this House, the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as of the Standing Committee on National Defence, had been invited to attend information and discussion sessions on the situation in Iraq.

• (2020)

Since being elected and since taking part in the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, I was never invited to participate in such sessions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is suggesting that consultations took place when, in fact, this was not the case.

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Since members of Parliament were not consulted, and given the obvious lack of related information, we have questions to ask the government, questions that have not been answered but that must be answered before we take a stand on behalf of Quebeckers, whom we are representing in this debate.

The first thing that concerns the Bloc Québécois is that Canada did not truly real participate in a process to convince, through peaceful means, Iraq to comply with the security council's resolutions, including Resolution 687, which provides that Iraq must not produce weapons and must destroy all existing stocks.

Again, in spite of his eloquent speech here this evening, the Minister of Foreign Affairs did not demonstrate, nor did the Prime Minister, that Canada had, to this day, contributed to a sufficiently sustained diplomatic effort to this end. However, the minister did more or less confirm that he was leaving it up to other states to search for such a peaceful solution.

It is not enough to talk to the United States, to listen to the request made by the U.S. president. Calling the British Prime Minister or talking to our Australian counterparts is not enough.

If we are really seeking a peaceful solution, it is important that Canada look at our allies' positions on this issue. Canada should know and take into consideration the fact that several of its NATO and OSCE allies, including France, Belgium and Italy, have serious concerns about the military intervention favoured by the United States and supported by other powers, to say nothing of the reluctance shown by two other members of the security council, namely Russia and China. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out during question period today, Canada's efforts in seeking a diplomatic solution must not be limited to the discussions that took place two weeks ago with the Russian foreign affairs minister.

Canada must above all add its voice to the chorus of countries seeking first and foremost a diplomatic solution. It should get more actively involved in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict opposing Iraq to the international community.

We therefore call on the international community to make a more sustained effort to resolve a conflict that has endured for several years and in which no military action appears imminent. All nations acting in good faith should get more actively involved in seeking a peaceful solution to this conflict.

The second point on which the Bloc Québécois must get the facts, and every member of this House should have sufficient information, is one that should lead the government to make public the legal basis for such military action. Actions taken by the United States, Canada and any coalition of nations could obviously have a moral or political basis.

• (2025)

No one, except those who have not understood and not properly read the Security Council resolutions, is disputing the fact that Iraq has, by its actions in recent years, violated both the spirit and the letter of the Security Council resolutions. There is, therefore, an obvious basis for any intervention that would arise as the result of the lack of diplomatic solutions and Iraq's refusal to settle this conflict through diplomatic channels.

The moral authority of those who wish to ensure that the Security Council's decisions are respected is undeniable as well. We do not deny that there is such a moral authority and political authority and that the moral and political basis cannot be disputed. But what can be said about the legal basis for the intervention being proposed by the United States, and seemingly desired by Canada as well, barring a peaceful and diplomatic settling of the dispute?

In the address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs a few minutes ago, he suggested that this basis lies in a resolution according to which any violation of Iraq's obligations under Security Council Resolution 687 would constitute a threat to international peace and security, and would consequently pave the way for intervention of a military nature.

That statement was insufficiently explained and documented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and some feel another Security Council intervention would be required. That Council would have to specifically authorize the use of force in order to ensure compliance with the resolutions the United States and other countries consider to have been violated by Iraq.

We wish to see the government enlighten parliament and the hon. members of this House on the true legal basis for intervention and inform us as to whether it has sought legal opinions, whether it has in its possession legal opinions, or whether legal opinions have been provided to it by those desiring this intervention, the U.S. in particular, so that this House may be convinced that the Government of Canada, by committing to such intervention, is not violating international law and is not diminishing the authority of the United Nations. If military intervention by the United States, participated in by Canada, did diminish the authority of the United Nations, that authority and that decision might impact very badly on the future of the organization.

Like others, the Bloc Québécois believes that Saddam Hussein has failed to comply with international obligations under United Nations resolutions. This is a head of state who without doubt deserves to be punished for his actions. However, as the famous diplomat Henry Kissinger expressed it with a Spanish proverb, and I quote: "Traveller, there are no roads. Roads are made by walking".

The Government of Canada has no—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Pardon me, the hon. member's time has expired. The hon. member for Laval East.

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Madam Speaker, this evening's debate on the possibility of a war with Iraq is certainly not an easy one. We must consider all the effects of the decision the Canadian government is preparing to take in this conflict.

Yesterday's request by the U.S. government that the Government of Canada support a military intervention against Iraq is fraught with consequence. It would likely take, for the moment at least, the form of help in the areas of transportation and search and rescue teams.

• (2030)

The position of the Bloc Québécois is clear. We favour a resolution of this conflict by diplomatic means first, and in full compliance with the UN resolutions. The President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, must comply with the resolutions of the UN requiring him to totally dismantle his arsenal of mass destruction. Every diplomatic effort must be made to avoid this catastrophe.

Should the resolution of the conflict be through military intervention, the Bloc considers that a decision in this regard must be made with the approval of the security council, as it was in 1991. Because it is the UN Security Council that deals with issues relating to world peace and security.

Should it decide to act without the Security Council's approval, Canada would send the message that we can do without the UN and not comply with international law and treaties.

However, should the United Nations, through the Security Council, agree to military intervention, we would then have to decide on the nature of Canada's military contribution. Would it be similar to the one in the 1991 conflict, or would it be of a more aggressive nature? This is another important issue that should be debated in this House. It goes without saying that I hope we do not have to get to that stage.

The Bloc Québécois firmly believes that, in the reply Canada will soon have to give to the United States, our country should demand that any military action be first and foremost authorized by the UN Security Council. Canada must protect the credibility, the authority and the supremacy of the United Nations, which is the only authority in this matter.

To fully understand today's debate, it must be remembered that it was in the aftermath of the Gulf War that the UN Security Council ordered Iraq to unconditionally destroy all its weapons of mass destruction, both chemical and bacteriological, and its ballistic missiles.

In addition to not complying with over 30 UN resolutions, Iraq will trigger a conflict by refusing to let inspectors from the UN

special commission conduct inspections and destroy the stockpiles of weapons located on certain presidential Iraqi sites.

Tonight's debate deals essentially with two issues: to preserve peace and to promote disarmament throughout the world.

By tradition, Canada's foreign policy pursues objectives that seek to promote peace. For decades, Canada has been trying to project the image of a country dedicated to maintaining peace and security. Our peacekeepers have been sent to many regions where conflicts were raging, for the purpose of helping to restore and to preserve world peace. Providing defensive resources to resolve the Iraqi conflict would jeopardize everything Canada has worked so hard to accomplish in this regard.

With its success in the case of the land mines treaty, Canada has played a leadership role with respect to disarmament. As we have already said in the House, ratification of this treaty has not and will not resolve the problem of disarmament. Much remains to be done regarding heavy, conventional, small or light weapons. But let us point out that, for Canada to play an active role in an armed conflict would, once again, be contrary to the objectives pursued for years now.

Canada is not, however, as pure as the driven snow when it comes to disarmament. The annual report on Canada's military exports states that, in 1996, exports to countries such as Indonesia, China, India and Algeria increased.

• (2035)

Although the overall value of Canada's military exports went down in 1996, exports to low and middle income countries have, to all intents and purposes, doubled during the same period, increasing from 8% to 14%. These figures are the proof that much remains to be done, even in Canada, to disarm the planet and set the stage for real world peace.

In the conflict that concerns us, negotiations must therefore be stepped up, and in this regard the Bloc Québécois feels that the Canadian government has not made all the necessary efforts. These negotiations must therefore be stepped up so that a negotiated settlement can be reached. World order cannot allow such a conflict. Hostilities could worsen with unimaginable consequences for people, with Iraq favouring bacterial and chemical weapons to defend its territory. Such weapons, we must remember, are inexpensive to produce and, unlike nuclear weapons, require little storage space and so may be easily hidden. These indiscriminating weapons are launched without warning and affect both innocent civilians and military personnel.

The problem we now encounter with Iraq could one day arise with the growing powers of developing countries. We even know that certain governments are trying to acquire or already have the technology that affords them inexpensive deterrence capabilities

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and that can be used forcibly anywhere in the world against any country.

In closing, I consider the possibility of a conflict with Iraq very serious. I hope that it may be resolved in terms of the sharing of the burden, if the decision is the UN's alone. However, the Bloc's basic position is that diplomatic efforts should be made to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

[English]

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this time allotment will be divided between the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and myself.

So far in this debate the assumption is being made that Saddam Hussein will use biological weapons and therefore he must be destroyed. Before deciding on the proper course of action and without making such an assumption, we must examine the facts and the gravity of the situation.

First it must be remembered that Saddam Hussein is the one who declared war on Iran, a war that persisted for 10 years. It was Saddam Hussein who instigated the gulf crisis in 1989 and 1990. We are dealing here with an aggressive, dangerous and unpredictable man. There is no doubt.

It must also be stressed that there is no resolution by the United Nations Security Council requesting the United States or any other government to start a war in 1998. By no means has the security council, let alone the United Nations membership, the general assembly, given the mandate to any country to proceed with war.

Another assumption is that only Iraq among the community of nations possesses biological weapons. Who makes these weapons? Where do they come from? Have the United States, the United Kingdom, France, India or China ever declared that they do not possess such weaponry? I do not recall such a statement.

It seems to me there are two possible approaches for consideration by the community of nations. The first is to stoop to the level of the opponent and to fight fire with fire, but in this case such an approach hardly seems appropriate where no opening shot has yet been fired. The other approach is to pursue diplomatic solutions with the long term goal in mind of making it possible for the people of Iraq to replace the present leadership.

History teaches us that whenever we declare war, Mr. Hussein becomes stronger because his population rallies around him. In addition, whenever we declare war, the Islamic world perceives a threat by the western world. Whenever we declare war, we help

Saddam Hussein. Whenever we declare war, we solidify domestic support around him and polarize global public opinion. It seems that instead of waging war again, we should find ways to drive a wedge between the population and the military leadership.

• (2040)

Why not abandon the fruitless imposition of sanctions? Sanctions have not worked. They have served only to reinforce grass-roots support in Iraq for Saddam Hussein and to create hardships for the civilian population.

Why penalize the civilian population? Why not allow Iraq to sell its oil on the market? With affluence, civilian standards of living would improve. With improved standards of living, the people of Iraq would eventually recover to the point where they could replace the current military regime. It has happened elsewhere. That is certainly a better prospect than bombing, destroying and killing tens of thousands of innocent civilians.

It is interesting to note and worth putting on record the observations by Anton Kuerti, the world renowned Canadian concert pianist. He expressed his views on the situation in Iraq in a letter to the *Globe and Mail* published last Saturday:

There is a grim irony in watching the nation with the largest collection of doomsday weapons in the world seeking to forbid another nation from acquiring its own relatively negligible collection.

Granted, 20,000 weapons in sane hands may in the short run, be less dangerous than even one in the hands of a madman, but that does not make them safe or morally tolerable. We have not forgotten who used them first. Only those nations that had forsworn the possession of genocidal weapons have the right to insist that others do likewise.

It is even more ironic that the nation which refuses to pay most of its dues to the United Nations and sabotaged the worldwide attempt to outlaw land mines should invoke an outdated United Nations resolution to justify its imminent massive bombing raids, despite the fact that almost every nation on the Security Council is opposed to this new aggression—Just as neglect of due process of law brings the whole judicial system into disrespect, the scenario that is unfolding not only threatens to further destroy Iraq and any hope for Middle East peace, but to obliterate what little moral authority and respect the UN can still muster. If the UN becomes a tool for one country to manipulate and justify its unlawful actions, its useful life will be over.

The situation is very serious but it should not be resolved by way of armed conflict. We should work harder along diplomatic fronts with the French, Italian and Russian governments which are presently engaged in diplomatic negotiations with Iraq. The solution is not to be found through war. There are good reasons for the west to rethink its approach to Iraq and the gravity of the situation makes it necessary and urgent.

Tonight two Reform speakers in their interventions said that the only moral justification for taking life is to prevent loss of future life. I submit this logic is appalling because it endorses the killing

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of innocent civilians by the thousands on the assumption that lethal weapons might be used in the future.

With that logic, war could be declared on each nation holding weapons of mass destruction so as to prevent loss of future life. What a prospect. The morality of the Reform Party would lead to bringing back capital punishment. The state would take a life in retaliation for a similar act. What a barbaric example for a modern state to give to society.

● (2045)

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the prime minister undertook to this House that before Canada would consider any request for going beyond diplomatic action in the present crisis in Iraq, he would consult the House. He has done this and I think it is worth noting that it is a progressive step in the evolution of parliamentary responsibility.

The United States Constitution envisages the president and congress acting together, but increasingly they resort to armed force done by executive presidential action alone. We are the only country, I think, among the present group of countries interested in this issue where Parliament has been consulted. I think it is a precedent for future action and a welcome one.

There has been some discussion of 1991. It is worth commenting that although there was a big debate in Parliament, it did occur three months after the decision was taken to send the troops in. When the call comes at five in the morning "Please join us in military action", we simply say "Look, we have to consult Parliament". That is our approach. It is a new approach and we thank the prime minister for it.

There has been some discussion on the legal authority of the United States and by the same token those associated or allied with the United States to take action involving the potential use of force against Iraq. It has been said "You must go to the security council and get a fresh resolution".

I do not think that is so as a matter of legal interpretation. In fact the gulf operation was rather special. It was undertaken by a government on Canada's part previous to the present one, and the United States by a president previous to the present president. What was done was a little different from classic UN peacekeeping operations or peacemaking operations where in fact there is a UN force under the aegis of the UN secretary general and responsible to the secretary general.

In fact what was done was a series of umbrella resolutions delegating the power to the United States commander in chief and responsible to the president of the United States. I say that was an unusual action but the series of resolutions have a broad, legal

authority for which I think it can reasonably be argued that the authority to take the present action is there.

My own advice would be if the opportunity allows to seek a fresh security council resolution, but I do not think it is legally necessary and we would have to bear in mind that the veto power operates. It is intolerable that the veto should be used to prevent collective action on which there is a consensus. This was the argument we made and other countries made as far back as the Korean war in 1950 when the general assembly passed the uniting for peace resolution, an unprecedented constitutional step. I think the legal authority is there.

Canada's own role as we know has been the classic UN peacekeeping role which then foreign minister Lester Pearson devised. It is associated with his name. We do believe in the peacekeeping role. We have tended to eschew the use of armed force. Our role in the gulf war was limited to a supporting auxiliary role with an interdiction of search and destroy operations.

It is worth noting that the president of the United States in approaching us has asked us to do that and no more. It is search and rescue operations, transport operations, but not more. I think there is advantage for that, and it is not something that we have sought, but it means that problems involving the use of armed force, involving the law of war, simply do not apply in relation to the Canadian operations.

The United States in relying on the resolutions of course does not operate in a vacuum. The present United Nations based law is subject to the general law of war, the customary rules of international law. One of the rules is of course that you must exhaust the diplomatic methods, the peaceful methods, the lesser controls. The United States is aware of that. We are aware of that.

● (2050)

The prime minister and the foreign minister have assured us that diplomatic activities will continue. That is the primary obligation. It is only after they have been tried and exhausted to the full that one is allowed to resort to other options which may involve the use of armed force. The principle of the economy in the use of power applies if armed force is used. All parties to the gulf war operation were aware of that and parties to any future action in the present situation would be aware of that.

In particular, granted the evolution of international law, the developing juridical conscience, times have moved since 1991. It is true that the 1978 Geneva protocols additional to the Geneva protocols of 1925, which established stringent rules in the application of air power where civilian targets are involved incidentally to a military objective, apply even though it is true that neither Iraq nor the United States ratified them. International law supplied the general rules.

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I say this simply to stress that if one feels one has to move beyond the diplomatic stage, one does not operate in a legal vacuum. We are aware of this. Our allies are aware of this. We will be continuing with our diplomatic negotiations to make that clear if further options arise.

To recapitulate, it is not in my view necessary to obtain a fresh security council resolution. I believe there is enough available under the series of umbrella resolutions passed in 1991 and their continuing interpretation and application but it would be better to obtain such a new resolution. I welcome our foreign minister's undertaking that this is going on and will continue to go on.

As I say, if it should become necessary to apply some form of military force, the Canadian role at the request of the United States is limited to auxiliary support operations. However even in roles for allies going beyond that, the rules of *temperamenta belli* apply. It is not a situation of operating in a legal vacuum.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver East.

Before I get into my remarks, I would like to congratulate the member for Davenport, the dean of the House, for his very thoughtful remarks a few minutes ago. I certainly hope that the prime minister was listening to those remarks on the need for more diplomatic efforts before any action is taken tomorrow in cabinet. The prime minister indicated that he was going to be listening very carefully to the debate tonight. The member for Davenport had some very important things to say to the prime minister.

This is a very important debate tonight. I am advised that there are some young Canadians in front of this building conducting a vigil on the Iraq situation. Clearly, Canadians are engaged as well in the debate.

Earlier in the evening the leader of our party outlined why military action proposed by the United States against Iraq is reckless and ill advised. She has explained why Canada should avoid the fatal mistake of agreeing to participate in such an action at this time.

My first point relates to the role of Parliament with respect to our role here as legislators in a sovereign country that must make its own decision. The U.S. secretary of state, Madam Albright, said last night that Canadians support her. Is she taking us for granted? Was it a misquote? Or does she know something that has been kept from the rest of us?

Canada is a sovereign country. We must make our own decisions, whether they be about the MAI or about our defence policy, peace and security in an increasingly uncertain world.

This party is saying that we need to give diplomacy more of a chance. Canada has a long and honourable tradition as a nation of

diplomacy as has been noted earlier. We have just brokered an international treaty on the disposal of land mines. We did that even though our neighbour to the south did not approve and has not yet signed on. It was a proud moment.

Why do we now want to rush off to support an ill-advised military adventure proposed by the Americans?

• (2055)

And why do the Americans want our support so badly? Despite what we have heard from other parties tonight, the fact is that the United States does not have widespread support for taking military action at the present time against Iraq. The French are opposed. The Russians are opposed. The Chinese are opposed. Significantly the Arab countries in the Middle East are opposed.

In 1991 there was a bona fide coalition against Saddam Hussein. Today there is none. The United States is contemplating drastic action without much support from the world community. One might well ask what confluence of events in the United States is leading it into this strike at this time.

We have heard this evening without much backup as the member from the Bloc was indicating a little while ago about the involvement of the United Nations. Most of the remarks on the situation in Iraq are coming from Washington and not from New York where the United Nations is based. That poses a concern for us.

Whatever President Clinton's reason for considering military action, I suggest he wants Canada's approval and support precisely because we have a standing and reputation in the world community as an honest global citizen and he wishes to enlist our support for his plan.

Let me underscore again what the member for Halifax said about Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein is a dictator and an abuser of human rights. She said that we have been clearly on record as supporting those UN resolutions that forbid Iraq from acquiring, manufacturing or using nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. This is fully consistent with our policy of opposition to the manufacture, the proliferation and the use of nuclear weapons. Our party has long been on record on these issues and there can be no doubt about that.

The unsavoury nature of Saddam Hussein's character is not in doubt, but that is not really the point here. The question to ask is this: What is the point of Canadian participation in another bombing spree against Iraq? It is supposedly to find a way to secure Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions concerning the inspection and destruction of the country's chemical and biological weapons.

The sticky point seems to be the composition of the teams of UN weapons inspectors in Iraq. It is clear that the American presence among the senior ranks of these inspectors is viewed as a provoca-

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tion by the Iraqis. Surely an arrangement could be reached whereby both the U.S. and Iraq could be satisfied with the composition of an inspection team so that these inspections can continue. Could Canada not play a diplomatic role in this regard? The question to ask is whether the resumption of bombing is going to accomplish that objective or not.

The Mennonite Central Committee, a respected Canadian church organization with a long involvement in Iraq, has written the prime minister telling him that it does not believe bombing Iraq yet again will bring about compliance. This is what the Mennonite Central Committee had to say in a letter sent to the prime minister late last week:

The apparent intention of military action is to force Iraq's compliance of UN resolutions which require Iraq to destroy all weapons of mass destruction. But in statements made earlier this week, U.S. defence secretary William Cohen made it clear that military action will not bring a solution to the problem of Iraq's non-compliance. We must then ask why these measures are being so strongly considered and why Canada would consider lending its moral or even its substantial support to them.

In these circumstances, our caucus can only echo the pleas of the Mennonite Central Community which says in its letter to the prime minister "We urge you and your government to look for diplomatic ways of addressing the crisis".

The gulf war in 1991 and seven subsequent years of military action and threats have done nothing to ease tensions between Iraq and the west. The approach taken by the United States has in fact allowed Saddam Hussein to strengthen his grip on power as he portrays himself as a victim of aggression at the hands of the United States.

There is a fear that further military action would simply allow Saddam Hussein to play this old card yet again. It is not only church and peace groups that hold this analysis. Allow me to refer to General Norman Schwarzkopf who has been referred to earlier this evening.

The general told a British newspaper, the *Guardian* that further bombing of Iraq would have no effect on Hussein's defiance of the UN disarmament regime imposed on Iraq following the 1991 gulf war. Schwarzkopf warned that American bombing of Iraq might well smash the fragile international coalition that has supported sanctions against Iraq.

We in this caucus are sceptical whether further military action at this time against Iraq will work. It will cause untold death and suffering to people who have already suffered greatly. Rather than weakening it will only secure Hussein in his position.

• (2100)

I repeat that from our caucus we are saying no bombing now, no Canadian compliance yet to the United States request. Efforts

should be redoubled, diplomacy given a real chance and a multilateral solution sought.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate because it is a very important one.

The motion before us is whether or not we accept the invitation of the U.S. government to participate in possible military actions in the Middle East. The question that each and every one of us in the House has to ask ourselves is whether or not the proposed military action will actually solve the problem we are facing in Iraq and the Middle East and whether or not it will get us any further ahead.

We heard earlier today in the debate from our leader, the member for Halifax and from the member for Palliser that the NDP's point of view is a resounding no in this invitation. We say no because we understand and see what the legacy has been in our previous military conflicts in the area. The military action that has happened in the past has led to untold civilian deaths. We are also very concerned about the environmental implications of blowing up facilities and sites that contain deadly biochemicals, biological and chemical weapons.

Today the largest peace organization, the Canadian Peace Alliance, in a press release urged parliamentarians in the House to turn down the invitation and the pressure from the United States to become involved in military action. It knows, as growing numbers of Canadians know, that to rush into this kind of military madness means we are not placing enough energy, work and emphasis on what can be very significant diplomatic processes which by any means have not been exhausted. If one looks at a history of the gulf war and the gulf situation, Canada unfortunately has been part of an international process. We have actually broken our commitment since the 1991 gulf war to promote a regional peace process.

If the experience of the gulf war tells us anything, it is that a tragic legacy was left with 600,000 children dead. Some 1.2 million civilians have died from malnutrition and another 4 million people are at risk. They are severely malnourished because of the sanctions.

The Geneva conventions prohibit the destruction of vital systems for civilian populations. In the gulf war we saw that 84% of the infrastructure, like generating plants, water systems and sewage systems, were destroyed. These are the basic necessities of human life and survival. This is the real legacy of the military conflict in Iraq and in the Middle East.

We have to ask the question in the House why the Canadian government is even thinking of taking us down this path again. Listening to the debate today we are appalled to hear the position of the Reform Party. It basically comes out with a statement that says to kill people, to engage in military conflict, is all right if it

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means that somehow we will resolve this conflict. We reject the approach being put forward by the Reform Party.

We have to ask ourselves why it is the U.S. government is pushing a unilateral military solution. Is it to divert attention from domestic affairs, or is it really part of what has been a mounting campaign to assert U.S. control and military supremacy egged on by the arms dealers and the profiteers from civilian deaths? We too have a responsibility for the current crisis because we in Canada, our Canadian government, allows more than \$1 billion worth of military exports to this area of conflict.

• (2105)

We have to say that military actions only serve themselves. They do not solve the problems before us and will only lead to further conflict. Therefore we must reject the invitation from Mr. Clinton. Canadians must stand firm and push the American government to back away from the brink of yet another gulf war.

We must do that by actively supporting the United Nations and multilateral efforts to develop workable diplomatic solutions. We must work to involve other countries, not just the United States, in the inspection process and to end American dominance in the process.

Canada has the credibility and the record to accomplish this kind of objective. We have seen that with the work that was done on land mines. We have seen that we have the credibility to seek an alternate path rather than military conflict.

In coming here tonight to this debate I was remembering back to the gulf war. During that war young people set up a peace tent outside Vancouver City Hall because they were distressed by what they saw as growing military escalation they had no part of and the leaders of the country were taking us into.

The question today is what do we teach our kids? Are we as Canadians willing to truly and genuinely work for global disarmament and global security, or will we sit by and participate with the American government in this growing escalation and conflict? The horror of the war is borne by those who survive the death of their loved ones and the destruction of their homes and communities.

The dictator this is meant to be about—and let us not forget it—retains power and grows even stronger. We need aggressive diplomacy. We need tough negotiations, for example, to encourage Iraq to come forward with compliance by agreeing to a timetable to end economic sanctions. We should be part of a middle power effort to bring about diplomatic solutions.

I have a question for the prime minister. Does the government have the guts and the courage to work for a peaceful solution? Does it seek to work for global disarmament? Will the Government of Canada rush to the slippery slope of human destruction based on military might?

We in the NDP implore the government to stop, to count to 10 and stop this madness of impending war. Canada will not be better off. The people of Iraq will not be better off. Nor will global security be better off. That is why the motion and the invitation have to be rejected.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga West. The United States has formally requested Canada's assistance in a possible air strike against Iraq, enforcing Iraq to uphold United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Although the United States has not requested combat troops, it has requested non-combatative military support. Before any military support or actions could ensue, and in the hope of protection for innocent victims, we must carefully examine the ramifications of a possible air strike.

Canada has set examples through its peacekeeping forces and through initiatives such as removing land mines to make the world free and allow children to run. It will continue to protect innocent victims from being persecuted by any force in many corners of the globe.

It is, however, in our best interest and in the interest of those directly affected to work toward a workable diplomatic solution to this situation. In the event of diplomatic failure we must act as a conscientious nation, believing in peace, order and responsible government. We must stand behind the United Nations to protect the lives of innocent people.

Nuclear development by Iraq and the continual creation of germ warfare technologies by Dr. Germ is something we cannot overlook. It cannot be overlooked by the United Nations, Canada or any other nation.

Based on precedence alone, the United Nations cannot stand by and allow Saddam Hussein to continue his production of tools of mass destruction.

• (2110)

We are dealing with a man of no conscience. Saddam Hussein is a leader who has repressed his own people and viciously attacked the peoples of surrounding countries. Therefore we cannot sit by naively in the hopes that his development of nuclear warfare will have no grave repercussions all around the world.

We must not lose sight of Saddam Hussein's wanton and reckless aggression. He turned chemical weapons upon his own people in Iraq in 1988 with complete disregard for human life.

In 1991 Saddam Hussein launched Scud missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel. By all accounts he is continuing to develop tools of destruction and the means to deliver them. Other nations are

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guilty by association and by helping his supply. This is all in direct violation of explicit UN security council resolutions.

Israel suffered 39 Scud missile attacks during the gulf war. The population had to don gas masks. It was traumatic. It is reported by the United Nations chief arms inspectors in Iraq that Israel is to be a potential target of Iraqi missiles, this time, however, armed with chemical weapons which could wipe out large segments of its population and potentially that of others in the surrounding areas.

The possibility of such an attack is frightening beyond measure. The world has never been faced with such a threat or such a horrific form of devastation.

It is for those reasons we must make a call to the world to force Saddam Hussein to respect United Nations resolutions. The need for the international community including Canada to confront and stop Iraq is a necessity for all those who are concerned with global peace and security.

I was in synagogue at 7.30 this morning saying memorial prayers for my late sister, Joan Abbey Pass, and my late Uncle Nathan Cummings. A young man, David Schneiderman, was there also for his late dad. He read a poem that I feel is pertinent to the grave situation we face tonight. It is called "Why Do We Pray". It is an excerpt from "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" by Harold Kushner and reads:

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in a way
That man must find his own path to peace
Within himself and his neighbour.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation
For You have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair,
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease,
For You have already given us great minds
with which to search out cures and healing
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God
For strength, determination and will power,
To do instead of to just pray;
To become instead of merely to wish.

I believe that U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright spoke unequivocally about the reality of Saddam Hussein when she called the Iraqi president a liar, an obstructionist. I wish he would listen and would read this prayer and put it into practice. When she was

talking about his approach to arms inspection she said he had lied, delayed, obstructed and tried to deceive.

Our foreign affairs minister and our prime minister have said that the conduct of the Government of Iraq is not acceptable at this point. All of us favour long term stability in the Middle East and the building of a safe, secure and economically viable region for all people who choose to live there. Therefore we must find the means to apply effective international pressure on Saddam Hussein and stop his never ending challenge to the UN arms inspectors and his ignoring of the United Nations and the development of potential horrendous death weapons.

In the end it is the Arab Middle East which faces the gravest danger of weapons of mass destruction. That is why we must stand behind the United Nations in order to secure peace and stability for our world and generations to come. Let us hope Saddam Hussein comes to his senses and let some nations of the world stop selling them arms. Let our diplomacy work in the interest of all mankind.

• (2115)

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all let me say that unlike other times in my brief stay in this place, this is not an issue that I rise with any sense of joy to debate or discuss. Frankly, I see it as less of a debate and perhaps more putting on the record our feelings as parliamentarians and living up to our responsibilities. I am sure there is no one in this place who is particularly enjoying this evening's discussion.

As our Prime Minister said, we are at least debating this issue in advance of a decision. There are some who might cast aspersions on that, but I believe that to be the case. I believe that is truly one of the many principles that make us uniquely Canadian.

It is the Canadian way in terms of one of the differences. In a story I was told the distance between the government benches and the opposition benches is the distance between two people standing on the edge with a sword extended in each hand, and the tips of the swords merely touch. It is a symbolism that we are not a warring people, that we tend to fight our battles in places like this, that our weapons are our minds, that our ammunition is words and that our victims often are simply ideas and not people. At the same time, our victories are also the result of those ideas and hopefully in some cases the implementation of them.

We are not by nature a warring people. Often we seek consensus first, we seek compromise and we always seek a negotiated settlement. In my view, we will continue to live by and large by those very basic Canadian principles. Diplomacy is job one in Canada and with our representatives around the world.

Reality, however, says that to maintain our principles and our way of life we may, from time to time, when our backs are to the wall, when consensus is not possible, when compromise has failed

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and when negotiations have ended, be forced to make a difficult decision. This, in our great democracy, is one of those times, sadly.

In determining what message I wanted to share with members in this place and with Canadians watching this evening, particularly those in my riding, I talked with and asked a good friend of mine, the member for Thornhill, about some of the issues. She talked about how seven years ago people from her riding watched on CNN as people were huddled in shelters, wearing gas masks, as Tel Aviv was being bombed by scud missiles.

We all know that certainly one of the major targets of Saddam Hussein happens to be Israel. She made the point to me that there are people in her riding, and in mine, Shaarei synagogue, who would be looking at that and seeing their friends and families in jeopardy and who would be worried about them from seven years ago. Today, seven years later, they see the very same situation, not quite there yet, but people lining up to get gas masks.

What an incredible sight in 1998, in this world that is fundamentally so small, to see civilians lining up to get gas masks in anticipation of chemical warfare. How can we tolerate that? When compromise, as I said, has failed, then we have to look at what else might take its place.

• (2120)

I also talked with a good friend, an Ottawa cab driver. His name is Mel. Mel is from Lebanon. He pointed out to me how Lebanon becomes the battleground of many of the wars that go on in the Middle East and the terrible travesty, the pain, the killing, the death and the suffering that goes on in his country. He pleaded with me to stand here and say please, everybody, just stop the killing. It is easy to say. In an ideal world we would all love to be able to do that, whether it was in the Middle East, Ireland or wherever it was in this world. I said to Mel I am not sure I know how to do that.

How will military action put an end to this? Only if it is united, only if it is strong and only if every other avenue of diplomacy, compromise and consensus building has failed and we go united to solve this problem once and for all.

We are in a partnership. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot be part of NATO and rely on the protection of NATO forces and the protection of our neighbour to the south, and our relationship with them, and then, when a moment of conflict arises say sorry, we are just simply not going to be part of that.

What President Clinton has apparently asked for, we are told, is support. He is not looking for frontline troops. I regret and I fear that day may come. I suppose in reality it is very possible.

The fact is there are men and women who have fought tyranny in this country, grandfathers, parents, aunts and uncles of many of us

here, who have died for democracy, for the principles of consensus, of compromise and of negotiated settlements.

That is fine when we are talking about peacetime. We are not talking about a strike here or a labour negotiation. We are talking about an individual who simply refuses, having been given every reasonable opportunity, to comply not with a dictate from Bill Clinton, not with a dictate from the Prime Minister or from the United Kingdom, but with the United Nations resolution that clearly says that chemical weapons should be banned. He refuses to allow independent United Nations teams access to places where we fear he is storing these weapons.

Will he use them? I do not think there is a doubt in the world. If we are as a free society to back down from this tyranny, all other avenues having failed, I think we do a terrible disservice to our children who trust us to make these decisions. I hope and I pray that they are the right decisions.

But at the end of the day, in addition to the principles that I have talked about, I believe there is one fundamentally strong, clear and concise Canadian principle that we all must live with and that is that we back our friends and we support them, not in all things, not if we believe they are wrong. But in this case the evidence is irrefutable.

The worldwide stage is so small that anyone can see that Saddam Hussein is poised at whatever moment we know not to use whatever weapons we know not, with no compunction. It is very frightening to live in a world like that.

I would say to those who stand and speak in all sincerity that I do not doubt their sincerity, I do not doubt their passion, I do not doubt their desire for peace. I do not doubt that there is not one single person in this place who would ever want to see this country go to war. I do not think that there are war mongers in here. But I do believe that when we cut through all the passion we hear that we should simply keep taking, that there must come a point when we recognize Saddam Hussein is not listening and that we are jeopardizing the safety of not only the Middle East, Israel and Lebanon but indeed of Canada.

• (2125)

I for one will not sit and do nothing and pray that we will continue to have meetings and discussions. I for one believe that what our Prime Minister and our cabinet will be deciding tomorrow will be extremely important, and I support that decision wholeheartedly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with my hon. colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska.

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It is with a sense of regret that I rise before this House today because today the Government of Canada has agreed to send troops into harm's way. Do not get me wrong, I have learned the lessons this century has taught. I understand that when tyranny is permitted to reign the entire world is in danger. I understand that when freedom is confronted with danger, action must be taken. It is not this government's decision that offends Canadians, it is the way this decision was made.

Last week in this House my party put forward a motion to have a debate in this House as to whether Canada would participate in a U.S. led action against Iraq. The government turned down the motion and dismissed it as hypothetical. The Minister of Foreign Affairs went on national television and said: "You can't make a decision until you know what is being decided". It is words like those that instil confidence in the hearts of all Canadians.

Now we know what has been decided upon. Unfortunately for this House and, more important, unfortunately for all Canadians, what was decided came not from the Prime Minister's office. Canada's decision came directly from the White House in Washington D.C. Now, as all Canadians are aware, it is because President Clinton phoned the Prime Minister to ask for a favour that we meet in this Chamber to discuss what our nation's role should be.

It is not because the Prime Minister understood last week that there was a perilous situation growing in the Persian Gulf that might affect the lives of young Canadians. It is not because the Prime Minister has foresight that we are here. It is not because the Prime Minister wants to take a stand for what is right that we are here. We are here because President Bill Clinton asked the Prime Minister to do him a favour.

We are thankful that the Prime Minister has finally understood that Canada should have a role, that there are dangers in the world and obliged the president. Our only concern is that Canada's leaders do not have the understanding or the courage to assure Canadians what our role will be.

Tonight's debate in this Chamber is an excellent example of how this Liberal government simply does not respect the people it represents. We have entered into a debate over the most important decision a government will ever have to make, whether to send Canada's young men and women into harm's way. Remember that the government agreed to the American request because there is a danger in the region, there is a threat of war. As much as it is a terrible thought, when there is a war there is a danger of people dying.

This government thinks this is a serious enough matter to send Canadians into harm's way but it does not think it is serious enough

to introduce a votable motion for tonight's debate. It does not think it is serious enough to allow members to question government ministers and this government does not think sending young Canadians into harm's way is important enough to ensure that at least 20 members are in this Chamber to debate this issue.

I rose to speak about Canada's preparedness for this mission. I wanted to ask the government what forces Canada had and if they would be ready to go. I have so many questions for this government but it will not answer. For example, the 1994 white paper on defence calls for the Canadian forces to be able to deploy a joint task force headquarters and a naval task group, three separate battle groups or a brigade group, a wing of fighter aircraft and one squadron of tactical transport aircraft. I wanted to ask this government if it had fulfilled these white paper requirements and if Canada had these forces in place, but there is nobody on the government side to answer.

● (2130)

I wanted to ask if we had land forces available and, if so, what units? Do we have air forces available and, if so, what units? Do we have sea forces available and, if so, what units? There is nobody on the government side of the House to answer my questions and they are relevant questions.

For example, what is the status of our biological and chemical defence? Do we have an antidote on hand for anthrax and VX gas? How many Canadian forces personnel have recently completed the desert warfare course? What is the extent of our nuclear, biological and chemical weapons defences?

I do not raise these questions to scare Canadians. I raise these questions so the government will have the opportunity to reassure our forces and their families that Canada's government is looking out for them and will take all the required measures to ensure that they will be as safe as possible. I wonder why the prime minister has not reminded this House that the first time poison gas was used in warfare was against the Canadian troops in World War I.

We are sending troops to a region because Saddam Hussein has chemical and biological weapons. I hope this government understands its responsibility. Yet, we know that these decisions are tough for this Liberal government. Time ran out when the president phoned. The government does not have time to take a public opinion poll. A request is on the table that the prime minister cannot duck. There is no place to hide. He will have to make a decision and he will have to act.

While there is no place to hide, there is a place to stand. On principle. This is not familiar ground with this Liberal government. It is new for this government, especially when standing on principle happens to mean standing with Britain and the United States.

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Let me try to be helpful. Let us make things easier for the government. It does not have to declare its support for the United States. Instead, it can declare its support for the United Nations, for the rule of law and for the principles of civilized, responsible state behaviour.

Iraq is an aggressor. It was punished in 1991 and it remains outside the community of nations because it refuses to meet its obligations under UN security council resolutions. Those resolutions remain in force to this day.

Therefore, the choice of the government should not have been so tough. It can put Canada on the side of those who take the 1991 UN resolutions on Iraq seriously, including the enforcement of those resolutions, or it can put Canada on the side of those who want to minimize the importance of the United Nations.

Being on the side of principle will not burden or diminish military too much. After all, we have been asked to make a reasonably small contribution to the effort and support of the integrity of those security council resolutions.

Is this government prepared to take those resolutions seriously or it is prepared to see them continuously ignored?

It has never been clear to us on this side of the House whether it is the Liberal view that Canada should always look the other way or that Canada should align itself with those whose belief, when faced with lawlessness, is that it is always better to wait and talk and, when faced with real trouble, stick one's head in the sand. If so, it would be consistent with where they have been in the past on this very issue.

After all, it was the prime minister who, when he was leader of the opposition, called for all Canadian forces to return to Canada as soon as the first shots in the 1991 gulf war were fired. I hope the courage he is displaying today will remain with him if diplomacy does fail and if shots are fired again. He will need courage. All of Canada and all of the world will need courage because when shots are fired there is no telling how Saddam will respond. That is precisely why Canada must take part.

Standing on principle is new territory for the leader of the Liberal Party. However, if he stands strong, my party will be his ally, and all those who love justice will side with him and he will see that his footing will be strong.

As Canada embarks on this journey with its allies, I want to take this opportunity to assure all those who love peace in Compton-Stanstead, across Quebec, in Canada and around the world that the lessons of this century have not been forgotten. When tyranny is permitted to reign, the entire world is in danger. When freedom is confronted with danger, action must be taken. Have confidence that Canada is on the good side.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabasca, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will start by very briefly addressing three major items.

• (2135)

First, the topic of this evening's debate. This is not a debate, essentially, because there is no opposition of ideas. It is more like a confessional, where everyone goes to relate his petty sins and what he thinks about the Iraq situation. We are extremely disappointed.

Since February 1, we have asked to meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs—a meeting that was held on Sunday, February 1—with the Minister of National Defence, and with the Prime Minister. They refused, claiming there was no emergency. We also called for an emergency debate in the House, and that too was refused.

As we have seen in the Prime Minister's statement, they are now telling us this evening "We need you, parliamentarians. Parliament does not know what to do, has no position, so now we need you". That was the purpose of this evening's debate.

When the Prime Minister started to speak, his words seemed more like a declaration of war than anything else. We were given an official position to the effect that Canada was going to support the United States, not the United Nations but the United States, for an armed intervention in Iraq. If you look at what has been said in declarations of war over the last hundred years, what the Prime Minister had to say was similar. "I have no position. I need you."

When the hon. member for Sherbrooke said that the government had no position, the Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that he had not listened to the Prime Minister, that it did have a position. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke, he said "We have no position. We need you". I think the government has a real problem of credibility, particularly on the international scene.

The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, who then sat in opposition, asked the government of the time to give the assurance that it would not engage in or support any offensive action without first getting the consent of the House, and that such action would be under the aegis of the United Nations.

For the House to give its consent, we must have something to vote on. But I will get back to this later on. It is said that the famous UN Resolution 687 authorizes any intervention. Today, I asked a question in the House regarding this issue. I asked what interpretation the Minister of Foreign Affairs was giving to the resolution.

Again, the resolution was adopted on April 3, 1991. It is not a new resolution. It is reviewed every six months, but it is not a new

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resolution. It is the resolution which, among other things, asked all countries to leave Iraq and Kuwait.

It provides that all countries must leave Iraq and Kuwait, that the territorial integrity is recognized and must now be preserved. It is a very long resolution which also says we can intervene. At the time, the five major countries on the UN Security Council—China, France, Russia, England and the United States—were all in agreement. Today, China, France and Russia do not agree.

So, before saying we are going to use this resolution to intervene in Iraq, perhaps it might be appropriate to find out, through diplomatic channels, what the Russians, the French and the Chinese are going to do. Will they submit a resolution to the Security Council calling for an amendment to Resolution 687 in the days to come?

Today, questions were put to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He does not seem to be up on things. He says: "Yes, but you know it is not easy". They seem to be saying we must hurry up and invade Iraq, teach Saddam Hussein a lesson, because there is a danger that Resolution 687 might no longer apply or might be amended.

What we still want is for the government to sit down with parliamentarians. We learned this evening that the foreign affairs committee would be discussing the issue tomorrow.

Once again, I would like to digress for a minute. We were told that the foreign affairs committee might be discussing this issue tomorrow afternoon. There will apparently be a briefing on the Iraq issue. This evening the Prime Minister told us that cabinet would be adopting a position tomorrow morning. The foreign affairs committee will be receiving a briefing, after the government has adopted a position. This is backwards. It makes no sense. It is unbelievable.

Our position remains unchanged. We support the government's position—not that you have one, but the one you are supposed to have. We have a position.

● (2140)

What we are asking you to do is perhaps to share information. This way, you will have the support of this House, which you do not have right now.

Regarding the resolution, I would like for it to be quoted. Also, the Minister of Foreign Affairs should take a clear position with respect to China, Russia and France. And I would like to know, when he has discussions with his counterparts in these three countries about amending Resolution 687, is it only for diplomacy's sake, for publicity, a marketing ploy?

I cannot say that diplomacy is the minister's forte this evening, at least not today. Did you see the reaction the Minister of Foreign Affairs right after his speech, following the hon. member for Sherbrooke? Would you call that diplomacy? As we say where I come from, he lost it. He had a fit on an issue that is not one in this House. What will he do before the security council? How will he deal with China and Russia?

We are quite prepared to co-operate. We did, and so did our leader on Sunday, February 1, when he phoned the Prime Minister. The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead put in calls to the office of the defence minister. Calls were made on Sunday, February 1, but unfortunately, the minister was away on business. That is understandable. But no one could be reached. On Monday, we were told there was no big rush, that a meeting could be arranged if we wanted one. The United States beat the Government of Canada to it in offering us a briefing. So, I think there are problems.

I want to mention two things in closing, so as not to take too long. I have another quote. I know the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not really like that, but I am going to go ahead with it. In February 1992, following the conflict, the minister, who was a member at the time, said: "It is important for Canada to have a policy in this area. It is important for Canadians to know what policy the federal government will adopt when it is involved in major international initiatives. It is vital we know what goals, objectives and values motivate and colour this sort of initiative. It is not a matter of automatically responding. It is a matter of making choices and decisions and holding a proper public debate".

I think the minister had the opportunity today to act in accordance with he said in 1990, 1991 and 1992. He did not, and it is very unfortunate.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to put the following motion:

That, when the Government of Canada decides on its reply to the request of the president of the United States for assistance in the Iraqi crisis, the prime minister shall announce that policy to the House of Commons by way of ministerial statement and immediately thereafter there shall be a special question period for not longer than 45 minutes for questions from all parties.

[*Translation*]

Why? Because we want assurance from the government and the Prime Minister that, before Mr. Clinton, Mr. Blair or whoever is informed of Canada's position, the members of this House will be told. Furthermore, if the government wants the approval of this House, as did at the time the member for Winnipeg South Centre, now the Minister of Foreign Affairs, let it bring this motion before the House for debate and a vote. A little solidarity and a little parliamentary work will not hurt.

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[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, there is not unanimous consent.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, needless to say, this is a very important issue which is before the House tonight. I personally want to say how proud I am that we are having this debate.

We faced the same issue in 1991.

• (2145)

The member for Richmond—Arthabaska appears not to have been aware, nor does his leader, who was in the cabinet of the government at the time, appear to have made him aware of the fact that a commitment was made by the government of the day to send Canadian men and women into armed combat without one second of debate in this House.

The debate did not take place until 12 days after that commitment was made by the predecessor of the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons today who was in the cabinet at the time. He should know better than to make some of the comments he made today unless he wants to rewrite history.

There is no question that it is a horrific decision a government has to make any time it is called on to put its people and their lives on the line in a situation of military conflict. It is a horrific decision because when the weapons come out, people die.

It is a horrific decision because, as we look at the possibility of bombings in Iraq in the near future, we know that some of those bombs are going to be there to destroy chemical and biological weapons and that very destruction is going to release harmful substances into the world.

It is a horrific situation because when you get into a situation like that, you never know how far it is going to expand, what other conflict it is going to ignite.

All but one of the constituents who phoned me today about this issue and about the debate tonight said please let Canada continue its efforts toward a diplomatic solution. I do not think there is any question in this House that is the preferred solution. I do not think there is any question that is the preferred solution for our govern-

ment. But there comes a time when diplomatic initiatives require the pure and sure and certain knowledge on the other side that we are prepared to act if those diplomatic initiatives are not successful in achieving the desired goal.

Let me be clear in the way I see the situation. Shortly after the gulf war of 1991, the United Nations imposed economic sanctions on Iraq and it put clearly in the hands of Saddam Hussein the ability to remove those economic sanctions, the ability to again have food, medicine, economic products flowing freely into Iraq. The UN insisted on only one condition, the full and complete removal or destruction of all weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Since 1991 the ability to end the economic sanctions, the ability to again resume trade and the economic benefits that it would bring to the people of Iraq has been squarely in the hands of the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein. Instead of co-operating with the United Nations to ensure the identification, the destruction, the removal of those weapons, he has lied, he has denied and he has defied the will of the nations of the world as expressed through United Nations resolutions.

We know that there are horrendous amounts of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in Iraq thanks to the determination of a multi-nation, United Nations force in there to try and give effect to that 1991 resolution. But seven years later they are still being denied access to such things as, imagine this, one factory three kilometres by six kilometres capable of producing 50,000 litres of anthrax, botulinum and other weapons of destruction.

• (2150)

We have talked about how many millions of people could be killed by one missile carrying these kinds of chemical and biological weapons. What we have not yet talked about is that this kind of weapon knows no borders. Botulinum and anthrax do not stop at the population they were initially intended to kill, to kill without destroying property. This to me is a very obscene kind of weapon when we deliberately target human life in a way that will ensure that property is not destroyed.

I think Canada has no choice but to let Iraq and Saddam Hussein know that the world will stand behind this UN resolution, that we will continue our diplomatic efforts, but that in the end we will not allow this build-up of human destruction to continue. As we face this decision, I hope we think beyond it as well. Frankly, I hope we never have to implement it, but I also hope we think beyond it. I think all Canadians were proud of this country and the leadership role it took in barely a year, bringing to fruition a world ban on the production, use and sale of land mines.

I think the situation in Iraq forces us to ask ourselves some other very difficult questions and realize that the problem we are dealing with in Iraq will not be solved only in Iraq. We have to deal with why, how and who provided the chemicals and the ingredients that have allowed Saddam Hussein to build up this arsenal of death.

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If we are serious about the debate we are having tonight and if the world is serious about how drastic the situation in Iraq is, we must ask ourselves where else the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons are in this world. If they are that much of a threat in Iraq, what are we going to do about the threat they pose across the world? We must ask ourselves what other weapons are being stockpiled around the world, often with the help of some of the countries that now want to resolve the situation in Iraq.

Finally, I think it is important that Canada put its moral influence behind the last and hopefully successful efforts at diplomacy. It is important that a nation like Canada, not just the big powers, is part of this. We have never been an imperial force. We have never been a military force capable of wreaking havoc and domination on other nations. We have always been that middle power, that voice of reason in international affairs.

I hope that our being part of this last effort toward a diplomatic solution will be an important signal to other nations.

I want to ask one final thing of our government. There is still tremendous concern about many of our veterans who served in the gulf war in 1991, about the impacts on their personal health and safety from the chemical weapons they faced.

• (2155)

I would ask our minister of defence to make sure we have a plan in place before we send any troops into the Middle East, if that becomes necessary, to protect their health and to ensure that we look after them when they return if they have been damaged by their exposure in the Middle East. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this debate tonight.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Prime Minister for allowing this debate and also for allowing members such as me to express their individual opinions freely and openly and according to individual conscience.

I do not necessarily share the majority view of my colleagues from my own party but I must speak out in the way I feel. The question is this.

[*Translation*]

Should we or should we not participate in a U.S. led military operation and provide the U.S. with the logistic support it is asking for?

If ever there was a consensus in this debate, it is around zero tolerance for Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, brutality, savagery and cowardice and his systematic violation of human rights, especially those of the Kurdish people. We cannot let Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government continue to defy United Nations resolutions and inspection teams with impunity. We cannot let Iraq and the Iraqi government continue to produce chemical and

biological weapons capable of killing people by the millions around the world.

While there is a widespread consensus about the Iraqi dictatorship, that of Saddam Hussein, there is no consensus on the approach to convincing the Iraqi dictator and his government to do as democracy would dictate, yield to reason and comply with UN resolutions.

[*English*]

I have to admit, and I find it very sad to do so, that the United States has gradually become the lone ranger of the new world order. It seems to me, fond as I am of the United States and Americans, that since Eisenhower, with the brief exception of Jimmy Carter, all U.S. presidents seemed to have sought their own shoot-outs at the O.K. Corral, believing as they seem to do that U.S. might is inevitably right.

Unfortunately their shoot-outs have had far more serious consequences to the international world order than that at the O.K. Corral. They have known the Bay of Pigs under President Kennedy, the Vietnam war under President Johnson and the amplification of the Vietnam war by the massive bombing of Laos and Cambodia under Nixon, the brief respite under Jimmy Carter followed by the invasion of Grenada under President Reagan. Of course, there was the Iran Contra operation and, more recently under President Bush, Panama and of course the 1991 gulf war.

It seems to me, listening to the news, that President Clinton and his cabinet are sparring for another fight, almost brimming with eagerness to take on another shoot-out, this time against Iraq.

Let us give President Bush his due. Iraq had invaded a neighbouring country and the military operation to free Kuwait was sanctioned fully by the United Nations.

[*Translation*]

Several Arab countries supported the deployment of troops to the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia had agreed to let its territory be used for that purpose.

[*English*]

Today's reality is completely different. There is no invasion threat by Iraq, which does not have the capacity to do it. There is considerable diplomatic activity and pressure led by important nations such as Russia and France, members of the security council.

• (2200)

There is no clear support at the UN, in the world at large and certainly not in the Arab world. Saudi Arabia at this time refuses the use of its territory to any military operation.

[*Translation*]

The only countries supporting the United States are the United Kingdom, which has been traditionally tied to the U.S. by a special

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friendship, and to a lesser extent Germany. Under the circumstances, why should we accept to participate in a potential military operation?

[*English*]

Time calls for caution. I back the words of my colleague for Davenport for caution, restraint and for continuing diplomatic activity and pressure, in which we should play a leading role. We should have nothing to do with any bombing or military operation, massive or otherwise, which experts hold will not change the reality and displace Saddam Hussein. It will only provoke international unrest and cause an untold number of human lives to be lost.

Further, we should ask this question. Does the U.S. really need our logistic support to carry out this operation? The U.S., a mighty formidable power with its own military and logistic systems, does not need us. What it needs is our name on its sparse shopping list, to add one more country to the two that already support it to beef it up.

Given the reality of today's conditions, the example which should inspire us is that of Lester Pearson. I recall clearly, during the Vietnam war, on U.S. territory, when he directly addressed President Johnson, and said "your military operation flies in the face of common sense, of respect for human life and world opinion".

I ask the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to tell President Clinton that his request is premature and that all diplomatic avenues have yet to be explored. Given our tremendous international credibility we should use it and become the leader in exerting diplomatic pressures on Iraq. We should join Russia, France, Germany and others to urge them to obey the world order. I urge caution, restraint and continuing diplomatic pressure.

The answer we should give President Clinton is until all these avenues have been explored and exhausted, we must defer any intervention on our part. For the time being we should say no.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with representatives of all the parties in the House and I believe you would find consent for the following:

That for the remainder of the debate on the motion now before the House, the Speaker shall not entertain any requests for the proposal of proceedings by unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House for the government whip to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my support for a strong and determined effort to force Saddam Hussein to comply with the United Nations security council resolutions.

It is my hope that diplomatic efforts will bring about a resolution to this crisis first. However, if diplomacy fails, Canada has a moral obligation to support her allies in a military strike against Saddam Hussein.

• (2205)

I have listened to the dissertations of many in this House over the course of the evening. The one that particularly comes to mind is that presented by the member for Vancouver East, an NDP member, who really felt it was inappropriate to give support to this particular motion and to give support to our allies, the United States and the United Kingdom, in their efforts to enforce this resolution.

This world is becoming a more dangerous place. If you look at the events that are taking place throughout the world, it is clear that, one by one, conflicts are being added to conflicts as each year goes by.

I can recall a recent conversation with ex-military personnel who brought certain points to my attention about conflict areas in this world. It is incumbent upon those who are not the creators of these conflicts to stand firm, to be prepared and to assist those who may have a need against some aggressor.

The NDP member felt that there should be no action taken. I would like the NDP member for Vancouver East to talk to her colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar who was assaulted at one point in time while walking home innocently along a street here in Ottawa.

There is a need to check the aggression of some individuals in this country, in this community, and certainly in the world. I think of the need for a good, efficient, well-armed police department to be able to handle every affair that comes along that may threaten or jeopardize the peace. That also applies to a well-equipped military to deal with those offenders, if you will, of international peace.

I believe that is where Canada should play a part with our allies to check the aggression of some of those on an international level that will choose to inflict their will upon someone else. I believe Canada has a moral obligation to do that, that we must lend

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military support as well as political support, that we must put an end, with our allies, to terrorism internationally.

There is no question that our government has a responsibility to be clear with all Canadians on the status of this situation before us. It calls for assistance from our allies. I know to date this government has not made that commitment to action in Iraq and is still contemplating that matter. I think it is important that the Canadian government stand up and voice its support to take action against Saddam Hussein.

I recall from the 1991 situation where Canada stood behind our NATO allies to approach that conflict in an aggressive manner. Saddam Hussein had to be stopped. I recall that there were many within the Arab community in our country who had concerns about that, that there seemed to be this effort on the part of Canada supporting the United States which was supporting Israel. That is not what it is all about. It is about an aggressor who is trying to inflict his will upon someone else uninvited.

I think that to our Arab friends it should be made clear why Canada supported the U.S. and other NATO countries in attacking Saddam Hussein. It can only be answered because it is Canada's moral obligation to do so, to rid the world of a threat to world peace.

• (2210)

Second, I think it is important for those who are from the region who immigrated to Canada to understand that action taken against a man like Saddam Hussein is not an intent to punish those in the region or even in Iraq, but to target a despot who is attempting to disrupt peace. Saddam Hussein has made no effort in sparing even his own people in strong action, in violating their rights as human beings and even destroying them.

Again, I am encouraging the Liberal government to take a strong position. I know it will be deliberating this evening and tomorrow over this matter. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to offer our opinions as it has requested and our support.

It is interesting to note that the British government had this debate some weeks ago. It was very clear in my reading of the *Hansard* responses to the Iraqi situation upon viewing the UN report about the accumulation of various weapons that Saddam Hussein had been engaged in. The government came out very clear on the position that it was going to take. It opened itself up to questions. It sought a very legitimate line of questioning from all the opposition parties.

I know the government side here has chosen not to do that. Be that as it may, I think this does spell out a much greater openness. It offers greater support in a very timely fashion. It certainly allays the fears of those who may have questions that are unanswered in this debate. The British cabinet went through its procedure and opened up the matter. It was on the public record.

From the very beginning, in spite of the fact that the British government had deployed some of its troops, one aircraft carrier into the gulf and one on its way, it still supported diplomatic resolution to the crisis. That is important.

I believe it is necessary for Canada to involve itself with the United States and the United Kingdom as a show of support. I believe Germany is also onside now. Saddam Hussein will have to think twice if he intends to obstruct those who are on the UN inspection team. He will have to think twice and open his door again. I think that is the intent of this unified effort.

It must also be clear to Saddam Hussein that if he rejects the request by our allies, then strong action will be taken. For the most part it is much easier to convince a dictator to comply if you have an aircraft carrier sitting off the coast and the threat is immediate.

I know that we have an opportunity to deploy our military in support. I believe from my examination of the military, and I am not saying I am an expert, we have very well equipped troops in some areas. I believe those troops should be offered. I am sure when the government makes its decision it will do so in that support. I am trusting that will happen.

• (2215)

Let us deal with the argument that we have been asked to bow to every American whim. It has been raised a couple of times, once on the government side and once or twice over here. Proponents of this view argue that President Clinton is simply trying to deflect attention from his own domestic troubles.

This statement came up in debate in the British parliament. It became pretty clear that British parliamentarians would not buy that statement at all. Prime Minister Blair and the secretary of state clearly pointed out that the threat was immediate and against those in the region as well as anyone in Europe. Who was to say that some terrorist would not move weapons of mass destruction that can easily be transported into Great Britain?

That debate took place and the question was answered in this fashion. UN inspectors, which consisted of the British, the Americans and others, were prohibited by Saddam Hussein from inspecting sites that were believed to have certain agents which could possibly be used in chemical and biological warfare. That was the point. The threat was that Hussein may have been hiding other goods from the inspectors. It had nothing to do with Clinton's problems in the United States.

There are additional areas of support of the issue at hand, the threat that Saddam Hussein poses to the world. The nations are supporting not just the Americans but the enforcement of UN resolutions. These countries are standing up united against a terrorist.

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The Reform Party was clear in its opposition to previous American requests for military support. When President Clinton asked our prime minister for military support in Haiti we opposed that. Why? It was because there was not a clear mandate. The rules of engagement were fuzzy. There was no plan for withdrawal. The troops are gone from there now. The situation is still rather desperate in that country. The leader of the official opposition clearly pointed out to the government side the need for a plan, the need for a definite mandate and definite control over what was happening.

We are not saying when the Americans say jump that everybody should jump. This situation is much different from the situation in Haiti. The threat is much greater. There is a need for a definite set of rules of engagement, a plan. This is one point that we as an opposition party would put to the government to ensure that it could relate that point back to the people of this country.

It is clear that our support for military action would not simply be in response to an American request. We would be joining the Americans, the British, the Germans and other allies in standing up against a terrorist aggressor. We support action when action is required. On this occasion action is required.

It is incumbent upon Canada to stand united against a dictator, against terrorism.

• (2220)

We must demonstrate to Saddam Hussein and all Saddam Husseins of the world that when the international community draws a line in the sand it is not simply being rhetorical. A clear concern, even by many south of the border, is that when we draw a line in the sand we mean it.

I do not think it would be in our best interest in the international community to be laughed at behind closed doors for drawing a line in the sand and running the other way or sitting on the fence. It should be clear that we will act if it is necessary.

Our military has a proud history of fighting for democracy and freedom. I have had the opportunity to travel with vets over to Europe and listen to their experiences, their dedication, their loyalty and their determination. I know that other members across the way have joined in such excursions. It is very moving to listen to veterans of the second world war and other theatres of action. It moves me as a citizen who has never been engaged in a war because they fought for freedom.

Throughout the country's history Canadian forces have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to defending freedom. Whenever they were called upon our forces rose to the occasion with outstanding bravery and competence. Our forces did an outstanding job in the 1991 gulf war. They have since gained much experience

in peacekeeping missions overseas. I think of the Bosnia matter where several thousand of our troops gained experience in that theatre. They served professionally and with much competence. We have much to be proud of through their actions.

Contrary to what our colleagues in the Conservative Party have suggested tonight, I have every confidence that members of our military will rise to the occasion. They know their limitations and they know what they can accomplish. They often have a habit of exceeding our expectations time after time. I believe this mission will be no exception.

In summary, we want to see a peaceful diplomatic resolution to this conflict. However, we have a moral obligation to stand united with our allies if necessary. We must not allow dictators to make a mockery of the international community. Our military is capable and prepared to act. Let us demonstrate to Saddam Hussein that we will not tolerate his terrorism.

United let us show that our support will be military as well as moral and political.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood.

It is the second time in the House that I have risen to speak in a debate relating to the same individual and whether not Canada should participate militarily in the situation in Iraq. We did this in 1991 and we are doing it again tonight. I have not changed my mind since then. I believed then that we should have gone further and I believe tonight that if all else fails we have to participate.

Since the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989 the Canadian forces have played an increasingly important role in promoting international peace and security around the world. They have participated in an unprecedented number of peace supported operations during this time. It appears we may be entering into one more operation.

As we all know, Iraq has been refusing to let American officials and then later the whole United Nations team conduct weapons inspections. The importance of this refusal cannot be understated.

• (2225)

As a condition of the ceasefire agreement between Iraq and coalition forces in the gulf war the UN special commission, UNSCOM, was formed to supervise in part the destruction of Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

In addition to that initial destruction of Iraq's arsenal, the force was to develop a long term plan for monitoring and verifying Iraq's continued compliance with the commitment not to use, develop, construct or acquire prohibited weapons or equipment. These envoys have been taking place right up until the present day, or at least until Mr. Hussein refused their entry.

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Iraq must continue to allow weapons inspection teams to conduct their investigations. Saddam Hussein has shown in the past his disrespect for the norms and laws of the global community. Clearly his refusal to permit the required inspections is a test of our resolve to keep peace in that region.

If he can escape reprimand in his refusal he will continue to secretly rebuild his military. This is not the first time he has tried to obstruct inspections. Personally I do not think it will be the last time. That is why we cannot allow this to continue. A man of his ethics cannot be allowed to create weapons of mass destruction. Kuwait is proof of his intentions.

The potential for human devastation is great. A man like Hussein does not create these weapons only for deterrence purposes. He intends to use them.

Our options are simple. We can do nothing. The world can lay back and let Hussein rebuild his military, but we cannot then be surprised when he again attacks another country. It will be our own fault.

Let me say that next time there will be countless casualties and fatalities. The death toll of the innocent will be extreme. His next engagement will make the gulf war look like a walk in the park. I suspect that if he does not use chemical, biological or nuclear weapons during what will be his initial attack, he will undoubtedly use them in retaliation to a counter attack on his forces.

To do nothing is not a viable option. By acting now we can save possibly millions of innocent lives down the road. While there is always the chance of civilian casualties or even fatalities, I am sure there will be fewer now than if no action is taken.

We must remember that we value human life above all else. We are not so sure Saddam Hussein holds that same value. If he is allowed to strike, who knows how many innocent lives could be at stake? I truly believe that acting now is fully justified by his violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Another point that must be stated is that military action is not always the best response. This issue has been simmering for quite some time. In fact, some would say that it has been simmering since the ceasefire was signed on February 27, 1991. Every effort possible has been made to settle this very difficult problem. It is imperative that every diplomatic avenue be exhausted prior to resorting to force.

Unfortunately diplomatic efforts have failed thus far to resolve the issue. While a diplomatic solution is always possible Hussein's refusal must not go unchallenged. That is why military action must not be ruled out. That is why we are here tonight debating Canada's involvement in a potential military action against Iraq.

The next question is whether a U.S. led attack is justified or whether we should wait for the United Nations to sanction an

attack. My response is that Iraq is violating the agreement signed under the auspices of the United Nations. That agreement must be upheld. In that sense we already have the authority.

The need for action also presents Canadians with other questions than just if action is necessary. We must also ask ourselves whether our forces are ready and capable of participating in such a mission, and to what extent. The most important question is not just if they are ready and capable but should they be. It is not enough to say our forces can participate in foreign missions. We must be able to say that our forces are combat capable at all times.

This is an important point. There is a significant distinction between a peacekeeping force, which some people believe is a desire of Canadians only, and being combat capable which is what Canada needs.

Traditionally peacekeeping involved sending troops to keep a pace that had already been established. Originally peacekeeping missions did not involve more than land troops and perhaps air supply support. They did not involve all three components of our forces.

Combat capable forces entail a force which has the ability to react quickly to any type of military threat, a force that can integrate all three components of forces to mount a formidable counter attack. That means we need to maintain our air force, our naval force and our land force. This includes necessary equipment to fulfil their assigned tasks.

● (2230)

Even peacekeeping has changed dramatically over the years. In modern day missions each component has become vital to the overall mission. At various points throughout our missions in the former Yugoslavia, we had all three components of our forces engaged. So even peacekeeping requires more of a multipurpose combat capable force.

I would like to highlight the achievements of our forces. Our troops reached out to help and spared no effort in responding to humanitarian crises in Rwanda. While they could not stop the bloodshed, our tiny force was able to save thousands of lives.

They continued to assist the international community in dealing with the tragic conflict in the Balkans. Their military contribution, as I said earlier, has included land, sea and air capabilities, as well as a wide range of humanitarian activities.

They helped stabilize the volatile situation in Haiti and initiated a wide range of humanitarian projects throughout the country. They led a multinational response to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance in central Africa, thereby serving as a catalyst to help break the impasse that kept refugees in camps for two years.

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At the same time, Canadian forces personnel have maintained their traditional roles here at home including search and rescue, and during the Saguenay region floods, the flooding of the Red River and most recently in the ice storm in eastern Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

Through all types of challenges like I have mentioned, the Canadian forces have proven themselves ready and capable of responding to the needs of their country and to whatever international peace support operations they are assigned. To me that is a multipurpose combat capable force.

The present situation in Iraq needs to be resolved. If diplomatic efforts fail, we must not only consider military force but ensure that through the use of force Iraq complies with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

When all else fails, Iraq must be stopped and Canada must be part of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to emphasize the appropriateness of consulting parliament today on this very important matter. This is an emergency debate on possible Canadian intervention in Iraq.

Having been a member here since 1993, I believe I see a progression in the government's attitude that bears pointing out. In my opinion, it is indeed very important for parliament to be formally consulted before the government takes a position, when there is no immediate emergency forcing a very rapid decision. In the present situation, and other similar ones, I believe it is important for the government to take time to find out what all parties think of the situation.

Unlike matters of internal policy, often the strength of consensus that can come out of such debates would further strengthen the Canadian government's position in international policy.

The attitude evident in this consultation of parliament today on this important matter, intervention in Iraq, would have to be repeated in the position adopted by the Government of Canada.

Let us recall that the current situation is the result of the Gulf War. As a result of that war, the UN imposed some quite severe conditions on Iraq, arms destruction, compliance with certain requirements, with a view to ensuring that the war could not resume and that the same situation would not repeat itself.

That position was taken by the UN. It is under the responsibility of the UN Security Council. I feel that care must be taken to respect these authorities. The United Nations Organization is a body that can be a worthwhile tool in crisis situations, provided its power is acknowledged and provided that, each time there is a crisis

situation, we do not decide to act in parallel, thus exposing its powerlessness.

● (2235)

Therefore, the government's position will have to take into account respect for the United Nations. In its past diplomatic efforts—going as far back as the Suez crisis—our country has, more often than not, respected the UN's moral authority as much as possible. Sometimes it did not do so, even though it should have, and we should reflect on this.

One wonders why we are again facing such a problem following the gulf war, in which thousands of people died. When human lives are sacrificed in a war, regardless of the motives of either side, the losers are those who died and their families.

In a debate like this one, we must be careful not to behave with triumphalism, or think we have all the solutions. We should be modest and try to make sure the actions we are going to take are appropriate. We should take our time and be careful not to do things because we are angry or in a show of force, since the consequences could be very negative.

Therefore, every diplomatic effort must be made regarding the situation in Iraq. Several members of the international community hope that every diplomatic effort will be made. They hope an innovative approach can be found, that we can call on countries that may have better relations with Iraq. It is important to exhaust all diplomatic channels before resorting to a military intervention. However, should diplomatic efforts fail, it would be important to come back here to make sure our position would be based on all the available information.

I do not think that anyone in the House disputes the fact that Iraq must comply with the UN resolutions, must meet the conditions laid down, because international peace demands that there still be respect for the mandate the UN has been given and is responsible for carrying out. It is there to speak for the world community and I therefore think we must ensure that the decision taken in respect of Iraq is complied with. No one disputes this.

We may, however, want to ensure that there are no sanctions, such as military strikes, which will obviously have very painful consequences, including for the civilian population. It is very rare that wars can be conducted without civilian casualties. I think this aspect deserves considerable attention.

How can we be sure that agreements will ultimately be respected and that there will be an end to the present opposition between a country such as Iraq, which is a middle power, and a giant like the United States, so that we do not find ourselves facing a crisis such as this every four or five years? There are lessons to be learned from the past. Why was the Gulf War not conclusive, and what is the reason for Iraq's present attitude? I think it is important to try to understand this perception, the deep motivations of a country such

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as Iraq, so that the solutions to the crisis truly address the root problems.

There are therefore objective players that must have a role in this diplomatic offensive—I am thinking in particular of all the Arab nations, of Russia, and of all countries with possible special links with Iraq, which have had more direct contacts—in order to persuade Iraq to comply with the UN conditions.

• (2240)

The Bloc Québécois indicated it would be appropriate for the position that the government will probably take tomorrow or in the coming days to be reassessed later on, should diplomatic efforts not be as successful as anticipated. I do not see any point in painting ourselves into a corner right away and making a final decision that would automatically lead to military strikes.

Even if no Canadian troops were involved in direct combat, Canada would still have to accept the consequences of supporting the strikes. This support could have a positive effect in helping to resume negotiations. On the other hand, it could lead to the strikes themselves, the results of which remain to be seen in terms of military effectiveness and impact on civilian populations.

All these factors must be considered in assessing the current situation. I feel it is important to make one thing clear. The United States apparently claims to have the right to act without having to go back before the security council. A closer look at the conditions imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council shows that the current situation implying an automatic right to military retaliation is not included.

Before making its position final, I think that Canada should take this into account and, before supporting any military strikes, make sure that they have been approved by the UN Security Council and that the council has confirmed that all the conditions have been met.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are telling me that my time is up. I will therefore conclude by saying that, before taking a definitive stand on this—

The Deputy Speaker: Pardon me, you had 20 minutes.

Mr. Paul Crête: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, that is what I originally thought. This will allow me enough time to further develop my argument on this situation.

In the present situation, looking at the positions adopted by the international community, on the one hand we have the United Kingdom, for example, which is clearly alongside the Americans in this crisis. It is the most staunch of Washington's allies.

On the other hand, France is not keen to participate in a military operation against Iraq. It continues to exercise diplomatic pressure for Iraq to give in and allow unconditional access to all of its sites.

There may be an approach that could be used. Might we not have a sort of task force made up of countries with attitudes similar to France's, which could intervene, serve as a mediator in this situation, so as to come up with a solution other than a military strike?

As for Russia, they say President Yeltsin is strongly opposed to military action against Iraq and is making statements which may seem a bit hotheaded concerning the possibility of a third world war. That does, however, give us some idea of the impact of a too hasty authorization for an American attack.

Then there is China, which is opposed to any military action against Iraq. The majority of the Arab countries are opposed to military action. These are forces that may play a significant role in the present situation.

I think there is still time. There are a few weeks left for a diplomatic offensive, with a difference. In the future, there should be a call for a joint effort by those who want to avoid a military offensive and for an in-depth look at the issue.

At the start of my presentation, I was saying that it was interesting the government should consult Parliament before taking a definite position. If in fact the government has the wisdom to find a consensus from the debate here, which is not immediately obvious, let us look at it in detail.

For example, the New Democratic Party opposed any military intervention.

• (2245)

Would the New Democratic Party not be prepared to say "Let us undertake a diplomatic offensive and we will have another debate afterwards"? If there are no results, it could then reconsider its position in the light of the efforts made and the results achieved.

The Reform Party quickly indicated its readiness to support the American position. I suggest it join with the consensus for an all-out diplomatic approach and then, if it fails to achieve the desired results, we can reach a consensus on the need for a strike. The Conservatives' attitude is similar.

I understand that the position of the Liberals presented at the moment is not necessarily that of the Liberal Party or of the government as set out in the Prime Minister's speech in this debate. I think the conditions are there for an acceptable outcome, one that truly reflects the will of Canadian parliamentarians and thus of Canadians.

So all the positions set forth here could be elements of a consensus, which would look a bit like the Bloc's position. In other words, strikes if necessary, but on the basis of decisions by the UN Security Council once it has decided that all diplomatic avenues

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had been pursued without success. Above all, there must be another debate before any decision is taken to have Canada provide military support against Iraq, because we would then know whether or not the strike was supported by the UN Security Council. We would know whether or not all nations felt that diplomatic efforts had failed.

Perhaps three weeks after these efforts, a solution will be reached. Perhaps not, and the countries who now oppose a military strike will reach the conclusion that one is necessary because no other course of action remains. Once again, this could give peace one last chance.

I will conclude, and it will only take a few minutes. I think this issue must be approached with great modesty, with great respect for human life, with faith in the diplomatic tools available to us, and with our eyes wide open of course. We are in a situation where there is a history, a particular reality, as well as a need to find compromises. If the real objective is to allow inspection of all sites, would there not be a possible compromise whereby these inspections could be carried out by representatives of nations acceptable to both parties? Does this not hold out some possibility?

Having seen some of the aftermath of the Gulf war, where the Americans won a military battle, I think that the first priority in defining Canada's position should be the human beings affected by that war. In deciding on a course of action, we must ask ourselves how we can ensure that the people of Iraq, the inhabitants of that country, have the maximum chances of building a decent life in the future, and leaving behind this constant threat of military intervention.

I am not judging the Americans and Iraqis. I am, however, pointing out that there are civilians in the middle of this battlefield who are not necessarily responsible for the actions of the Iraqi government. I think this has to be the key criterion in the position adopted by the Canadian government.

• (2250)

I hope all parties will agree to the consensus proposed by the Bloc Québécois, which I will summarize as follows: strikes, if necessary, after the decision has been made by the UN Security Council and after it has been established that all diplomatic efforts have failed. Then we should have the opportunity, in a second debate in the House, when all the efforts made have been analyzed, to determine whether such strikes are necessary.

I urge this House and the government to take such a responsible attitude so that Canada can emerge from this situation with an even better international reputation. I particularly want the people who could be affected by a military strike or by a peaceful diplomatic solution to this problem to be able to say that parliamentarians who had to debate this issue in the various parliaments around the world took a responsible attitude. That is what I want to see happen in this Parliament.

[English]

Mr. John Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today and take part in this debate.

Today we are being asked to consider actions needed to stop a man out of control, a dangerous man who scoffs at the world community, a man who holds peace and stability in contempt. The world must act.

We are morally bound to support a reasonable response to Saddam Hussein's deplorable and selfish acts. If we do not, our children and our grandchildren will remember our lack of resolve with sadness.

Canada has always stood for freedom and decency, peace and security. Canadians have recognized for a long time that the defence of Canada does not stop at our borders. Nor does our interest stop there. As a nation dependent on trade for our prosperity, as a multicultural country connected to the peoples of the world, and as a people who believe that we are committed to working for a peaceful, stable and prosperous world, Canadians are inextricably internationalists.

Today we are proving that again. We must show our support for international efforts to ensure the Government of Iraq complies with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. We must be willing to use the Canadian forces to show Saddam Hussein that his actions are totally unacceptable.

The men and women of the Canadian forces have played a long and distinguished role in a variety of missions in the Middle East. They have contributed to international peace and security on many occasions and they must do so again.

I want to emphasize two important points. First, each and every mission we have carried out in the Middle East has been carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. We have never deployed our forces to represent the specific interest of any nation.

Mr. Speaker, I must break at this time to say I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Erie—Lincoln.

In other words, we have only sent our forces to the Middle East in support of our traditional worldwide contribution to international peace and security. This time if needed we must support the international efforts to ensure the Government of Iraq complies with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The second point I would like to emphasize is that when we have operated in the Middle East we have made a difference. We have gained the respect of our allies and other members of the United Nations. In a wide variety of missions that we have carried out in that part of the world, we have helped serve the cause of peace and the sanctity of international law.

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The members of the Canadian forces have proved time and time again that they are more than capable of operating alongside the best armed forces in the world. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Canada's navy demonstrated its ability to respond quickly and effectively. With no warning, our naval and air personnel working around the clock prepared the ships and helicopters for sea and sent them on their way in record time. It was an example of what the commander of the Canadian task force called "plain old Canadian pioneering spirit".

Once hostilities broke out, Canadian ships were responsible for protecting the coalition logistics forces in the gulf. I must emphasize that the Canadian task force commander was the only non-American officer to be assigned a significant wartime command.

• (2255)

That Canada assumed tactical control of the coalition logistics force made up of vessels of some 11 countries was evidence of the respect that Canadian sailors and ships earned from coalition partners during operations in the Persian Gulf.

Canada also sent 26 F-18 fighters to the gulf. Known as the Desert Cats, they flew a wide variety of missions that further demonstrated the skill and flexibility of the Canadian forces. Still later we deployed a complete field hospital to the region to treat coalition casualties as well as Iraqi prisoners of war.

The Canadian gulf war deployment was a logistical triumph. In a short period we assembled a versatile force and deployed it halfway around the world. In all more than 4,500 Canadians contributed to the success of the coalition's mission. The members of the forces made a difference.

The Canadian forces' performance in the gulf war was simply outstanding. Their contribution extended well beyond their numbers and equipment, a tribute to their training, their versatility and their ingenuity. They received nothing but praise from our coalition partners.

Our men and women served with professionalism, dedication and courage in support of the United Nations and in defence of the values and interests of Canada.

But the Canadian forces did not just show their mettle in the Persian Gulf. Canada has a long and distinguished history of peacekeeping service in the Middle East.

In the 1950s very early on in our peacekeeping efforts, Canada joined in a large multinational UN effort to bring peace to the Middle East. For over four decades now, Canada has maintained a vital presence in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Middle East. Some were short missions lasting only a few months and others are still ongoing.

Among other missions, Canada participated in both the first and second United Nations emergency forces. We contributed to the United Nations observation group in Lebanon. We assisted with the United Nations Yemen observation mission and the United Nations interim force in Lebanon. We were also participants in the United Nations Iran-Iraq military observer group.

Canada has been a longstanding participant in the United Nations truce supervision organization, or UNTSO, since 1954. The task of Canadian forces personnel assigned to this mission is to monitor, supervise and observe ceasefire agreements and to provide military observers on the Golan Heights, in south Lebanon and in the Sinai.

Since 1974 we participated in the United Nations disengagement observer force, or UNDOF. We still have Canadian forces personnel serving on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria. They provide second line logistic support to UNDOF. Canada also provides communications detachments to all UNDOF units.

Since 1991 Canada has also participated in the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait observer mission whose mandate is to monitor the Iraq-Kuwait border. Canada assists with this task by serving as UN military observers.

Canada also participates in the multinational interception force which monitors and enforces various United Nations Security Council resolutions concerning the import and export of Iraqi commodities, including oil.

Since 1991 four of our warships have spent three to five months deployed to the Arabian Gulf area. Our most recent contribution was HMCS *Regina* which patrolled the Arabian Gulf from April 3 to July 9, 1997.

The Canadian forces were still contributing to the United Nations special commission until Saddam Hussein stopped us. UNSCOM is charged with the inspection and destruction of Iraq's ballistic missiles as well as its chemical, nuclear and biological facilities.

We believe that UNSCOM work must not be stopped. It must go on. It needs to go on to ensure that there is a clear message to Saddam Hussein, indeed to the world that defiance of this kind of the UN will not be tolerated. It is this blatant disregard for the ideals that we stand for as well as the very real threat posed by weapons of mass destruction that we abhor. We must take action to resume these inspections and ensure unfettered access.

• (2300)

We must demonstrate our resolve and make it clear to Saddam Hussein that we will never ever give into his malicious threats and acts of defiance. We must show him that intransigence is unacceptable and he must be made to understand that the only option is the right option. It is for the Government of Iraq to comply fully with the United Nations security council resolutions.

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As our fine record has shown, Canada has never stood silent on the issues that matter. What matters now is that the world is being held hostage to the most destructive force of defiance. In the face of such defiance, we must not back down. Canada has played an important role in the ongoing multilateral efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. We must continue this tradition by supporting the present and future endeavours to stop those who would continue to threaten and destabilize the region and indeed the world.

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to have the opportunity to rise this evening to address the question of the invitation to Canada by the United States of America to participate in possible military actions in the Middle East before—and I emphasize before—a decision is made by this government.

Sound and reasoned arguments must be made and responded to. The consequences are too great.

On occasion, critics question the role of members of Parliament, suggesting that they do little to earn their remuneration. To such detractors I say stand in our shoes this evening as we deliberate Canada's role in this impending crisis with Iraq, as we consider the possible involvement of the well trained, loyal and brave men and women of our armed forces and, just as important, the impact on the families of our service personnel: wives, children, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers.

Let us also not forget the innocent civilian population in Iraq who could suffer because of the folly of their leader. Let us be mindful of the cost of war in human terms, in economic terms and in ecological terms.

The responsibility of committing Canada to a military response to the current crisis in the gulf is a heavy onus, a commitment that could jeopardize world security, that could lead to war, possibly a third world war if Russian rhetoric can be believed. This onus is most formidable.

We recall the tremendous Canadian contribution to the gulf war in the winter of 1991 when 3,837 Canadian men and 237 Canadian women served with distinction. We are grateful that there was not a single Canadian casualty or prisoner of war taken during that conflict. Tonight I find myself asking, would we be so fortunate a second time?

How have we arrived at the brink once again?

The international community has generally backed the United States in its struggle to get Iraq to comply with agreements and orders issued at the end of the gulf war in 1991. More recently, the United States has had trouble rallying support from its former gulf war allies on military strategy for more air strikes.

Iraq began this latest round of tension by refusing to deal with the United Nations weapons inspection teams as long as the teams included Americans. After weeks of exchanging words with Iraq,

the United Nations gave up in mid-November and pulled its teams out of the country.

After negotiations involving Russia, France and other countries, the inspectors returned to Iraq, but continued to face day to day frustrations. Weapons inspectors are checking for the presence of weapons of mass destruction, including those linked to biological, chemical and nuclear warfare.

Baghdad believes the weapons inspection process is taking far too long. Iraqis accuse the Americans on the multinational team of being spies.

Until the weapons inspections are finished, the United Nations will not lift economic sanctions against Iraq. Those trade barriers have been in place since August 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. We have arrived at a stalemate.

What do we fear? We fear Hussein, a dictator, a leader of a regime that has no respect for human rights and human values and who has brutalized his own citizens, including the use of poison gas against dissident Kurds and who has no hesitation in risking the safety and security of Iraqi citizens once again for his own purposes. We fear a regime that is alleged to have tested germ warfare agents on prisoners and refuses United Nations inspectors access to dispel such reports.

We fear a regime that launched a germ warfare program and is said to have stockpiled an arsenal of biological weaponry, a host of lethal viruses, bacteria and deadly toxins, the victims of which would suffer a horrible death and again a regime that refuses to let United Nations weapons inspectors conduct their work to dispel such reports.

We fear a regime that over the years has been caught with evidence of continuing efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction and again refuses to let the United Nations weapons inspectors conduct their work to confirm such weapons do not exist.

Let us make no mistake, diplomacy rather than military power to end the crisis is the preferred solution, the solution we hope for and the solution we pray for. Canada has an enviable and well earned reputation as a peacekeeper. In the tradition of Lester Pearson, the role of warrior may be somewhat alien but it is one that we are capable of and will not shirk from.

● (2305)

We must be more than thorough in our deliberations. Are there compromises and positions that we have not explored? Could the UN consider lifting humanitarian sanctions which have adversely and sadly affected the civilian population of Iraq and which have led to death and disability for innumerable men, women and children, a record that I am not proud of.

Can we do this without jeopardizing the resolve, strength of purpose and unity in having Hussein comply with the United Nations resolutions which we deem so necessary? Are we satisfied that they are so necessary? Can Canada take an active role to

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negotiate a solution satisfactory to all? We have done much but can we not do more? Can we not work harder to prevent this pending conflict, to promote a peaceful resolution. All diplomatic measures must be explored and explored to the point of exhaustion. But if it fails, military action should be supported under the United Nations umbrella.

Canada respects the United Nations. Canada respects international laws. Canada respects agreements signed thereunder. Unfortunately Saddam Hussein does not. Under the United Nations security council resolution 687 of April 1991 which set out the ceasefire terms for ending the gulf war, Iraq is obliged to "accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless of all its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles with a range of over 150 kilometres; and research, development and manufacturing facilities associated with the above; and to undertake not to develop such weapons in the future". One might say that is not terribly difficult to comply with.

Despite constant Iraqi deceit, concealment, harassment and obstruction, the United Nations Special Commission, UNSCOM has succeeded in destroying 38,000 chemical weapons, 480,000 litres of live chemical weapon agents, 48 operational missiles, 6 missile launchers, 30 special warheads for chemical and biological weapons, and hundreds of items of chemical warfare production equipment. Iraq originally claimed that much of it was for peaceful use but later admitted its real purpose.

Iraq claimed that the VX nerve gas project was a failure. UNSCOM discovered that Iraq had the capability to produce VX on an industrial scale and produced four tonnes. Work was also going into numerous other agents such as sarin, tabun and mustard gas. I could go on and on with examples of Iraq's blatant violations of its ceasefire terms.

UNSCOM is concerned that Iraq may still have operational scud type missiles with chemical and biological warheads. Critical missile components, warheads and propellants are not accounted for nor are 17 tonnes of growth media for biological warfare agents, enough to produce more than three times the amount of anthrax Iraq admits it had. Key items of chemical warfare production equipment are also missing.

The question is can Hussein be trusted. The answer is terribly obvious. In the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, "There is a clear and present danger. Hussein's flagrant violation of the United Nations and international law is intolerable, unacceptable and must cease". If Saddam Hussein refuses to comply with the United Nations security council resolutions, he must be held responsible and accountable for the pending action.

We earnestly seek a compromise, a negotiated settlement, a diplomatic solution. Yes, we wish to avoid war and we must earnestly work to achieve these ends. If this is not possible, Hussein must know that Canada will stand united with the UN forces. We must be prepared to act and if action is necessary, we will.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central and as the official opposition deputy critic for foreign affairs to participate in this debate concerning the crisis in Iraq. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. Albert. From now on all my colleagues will be sharing their time.

Today the issues with respect to Iraq are should we accept or reject the United States' offer and what to do if reasonable diplomatic and peaceful efforts fail. This serious issue has many implications: political, economic, military and above all, it has human and moral effect.

We should all take note of the problem that we have very few facts to deal with in this debate.

● (2310)

We need more information from our government so that we can all effectively debate this issue.

There is a history and pattern of terrorism, lies and betrayal by Saddam Hussein who has consistently tried to destabilize the Persian Gulf.

Canada has been involved in the Persian Gulf since 1990 in a meeting with the United Nations Security Council to ensure a clear and effective international response to Iraqi aggression.

We have supported various international sanctions against Iraq. In 1991, we made a commitment to the multilateral force that defeated Iraq and enforced conditions of peace on Iraq.

In October 1997, the American members of the United Nations weapons inspection teams were ordered out of Iraq. The terms of peace were broken.

I have a long list of historical facts but since my time is limited, I will skip them.

Last month, weapons inspection teams were blocked from 72 sites in Iraq. Fourteen of these sites were inspected since. We know there have been some 40 sites in Iraq that have been declared as presidential palaces since the gulf war. There is no reasonable explanation beyond weapons sites in a country that has had its wealth severely curtailed since the gulf war.

It has been confirmed that Iraq has manufactured and stocked chemical and biological weapons. Iraq has significant stocks of anthrax, VX nerve gas, botulinum and aflatoxin. It is such dangerous stuff I cannot even pronounce it, but I know it can kill millions of people.

Saddam has used chemical weapons on his own people, the Kurds, during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988. By 1989 the Iraqi ambassador to Kuwait stated that Iraq has enriched uranium.

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The world has reasonable grounds to assume that Saddam Hussein will use these weapons.

Iraq has a history of destabilizing peace activities. Iraq invaded Iran, Kuwait and attacked Israel. We, the Canadians, are not against Iraqi people. We know they are victims of Saddam Hussein, his weapons, his dictatorship, United Nations sanctions and the war.

We are concerned about human life and human suffering because there is human life on both sides of the issue whether Iraq is attacked or not. We are also aware that the lives of Canadian soldiers are also at stake if we commit our military support.

We have to carefully see if this risk is outweighed or not. This could have been done if the Liberal government had shown leadership and had taken a position. Then it could amend it after the debate.

The Leader of the Official Opposition had to fill in that vacuum. Before we commit our support, we must meet the six point criteria as our leader mentioned. So far, we meet three of those criteria.

There is a serious international threat and it seems that the diplomatic efforts are failing. Second, there is multinational support for military action and, third, our role can be within our fiscal and military capabilities, but we do not know yet if government is satisfied with the strategy. What is the mission and plan for the military action and what is the command and control structure? Is it satisfactory?

We know certainly that we need more information from this government. Canada must support and co-operate as requested in order to ensure that the original United Nations resolution 687 that Iraq agreed to following the Persian Gulf war continues to be respected by Iraq.

We support a diplomatic solution to the crisis caused by Iraq. That is plan A. Everything that can be done should be done to ensure that a diplomatic solution is reached. Failing that, we go to plan B and that plan is military intervention.

• (2315)

We want a solution that avoids all bloodshed and loss of human life, pain and suffering. That is plan A. By declaring our willingness to go to plan B, we are sending a strong message to Iraq. That message is that it either negotiates a solution diplomatically, fairly and peacefully or the crisis will be solved by military might.

There still remains a chance that a diplomatic solution can be reached. Lieutenant-General Amer al-Saadi said that the discussions have been constructive, very open and realistic, and therefore he pleads for more time.

We should be sure there is reasonable time for these talks to continue and be completed before a military intervention. I hope

Saddam Hussein will yield to the military pressure and back off. I really hope he does, at least for the sake of the innocent people.

Iraq will either stop producing weapons of mass destruction through diplomacy and agreement or Iraq will stop producing weapons of mass destruction by force.

I firmly support the Canadian obligation to ensure that Iraq complies fully with the United Nations resolution regarding Iraq.

Canada has a long tradition of leading the world in peacemaking and peacekeeping. We have given a great deal of assistance in negotiating diplomatic solutions around the world. We have always participated in the most significant international efforts. Recently we have much to be proud of in this regard. We have spearheaded an international land mine ban treaty, we have assisted in Rwanda, Haiti and Bosnia.

The world knows Canada as a peace loving, diplomatic nation. If we show support for the U.S., Britain and our allies in the Persian Gulf, as we have been asked, the world will take notice. As a nation we want to strive to stand firmly with our traditional allies for the cause.

We have been asked by the United States to provide transportation support and search and rescue support in a non-combative role. This should be left to the military experts to determine and not to the politicians.

I urge that while committing our support, Canada should become active in pursuing a diplomatic solution as well and show leadership.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I often wonder why every few years we stand to debate the most serious of issues facing any democracy. That of course is whether we should commit our men and women to defend the principles in which we believe.

We believe in democracy, which of course is the right of people to choose their own government. We know that in Iraq there is no democracy. The people have no right to choose their own government. But that is not sufficient for us to become involved in a military adventure on the other side of the world.

We believe in free speech and free expression. We know they do not exist in Iraq today. But again, that is not sufficient for us to become involved.

We believe in individual freedom and opportunity, and we know that the people of Iraq today have a life that is anything but free. There is no opportunity. Life in Iraq is quite bleak. But again, I do not believe that is any reason for us as Canadians to become involved in a military adventure over there.

We expect our leaders to serve their people. Saddam Hussein is a dictator. He does not serve his people. He uses them and he abuses them. He has starved the children of his country, and for that we have to be concerned.

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We have the right to protect ourselves, our families and our children. When that is at risk we do have the right to defend ourselves.

Saddam Hussein has demonstrated in the past that he has the capacity to attack. He has attacked his own people. He has demonstrated his capacity to attack a foreign country. We have seen that through his invasion of Kuwait. We have seen that through the scud missile attacks on Israel. Unfortunately he has also demonstrated that he wants to have the capacity to do it again because of his failure to abide by UN resolution 687.

• (2320)

He has continued to develop biological, chemical and perhaps even nuclear weapons. He could attack us with these weapons. That is why we must be concerned, and that is why we must think about defending ourselves, even though we are on the other side of the world. Unfortunately those kinds of weapons can be transported quite easily. We are not without risk. But first things first.

First is diplomacy, diplomacy with strength to lead us away from war, not toward war. Unfortunately I see diplomatic effort being used today to justify the use of force, not to avoid the use of force as we listen to the words of the secretary of state for the United States, where she is promising and guaranteeing that unless there is some resolution in the very near future there will be force.

I can understand the frustration of the United States in its efforts to enforce UN resolution 687 to remove the weapons of mass destruction from Iraq. I compliment our neighbours and friends to the south who have worked so hard and so diligently to protect the free world for the last number of decades, and how they have tried to ensure that Iraq abides by this resolution. I know they have reached impasse. I know they have reached failure at this point in carrying out their mission.

We must remember that it is a United Nations resolution, not a United States resolution, that is to be enforced.

As we are debating this issue of war and peace in the House tonight, I ask whether this issue of war and peace is being debated in the United Nations tonight. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, the answer is no. Is our foreign minister at the United Nations trying to build support for an attack on Iraq? Unfortunately the answer is no. Are the Americans calling on the United Nations and the Arab countries to apply even more pressure on Iraq so it will see the error of its ways and abide by the resolution and back down from the eyeball to eyeball confrontation? It appears to be, unfortunately, no.

If we are so concerned on this side of the world, where are the fears of the neighbours of Iraq? I know they have some concerns. Surely if the United Nations is to work properly we should be able

to expect a great deal more support for this type of military venture we are contemplating than the coalition that has been put together so far.

When I look at the United Nations, I think that international institutions have a role to play in the world. If they are ignored, they become irrelevant and the world is a more dangerous place because of that.

If our international organizations do not work, we should fix them. We do not ignore them. We do not bypass them. We do not throw them away. We fix them.

This evening I think we should hear a voice of caution. When we are threatened, we have the right to retaliate. We should use force only when we are forced to and we should attack only when we are attacked.

We are threatened today by the tools of mass destruction that we know are in Iraq. Before we use force to resolve this issue, before we attack Iraq to hopefully bring this issue to a resolution, I think the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany and every other country that believes in democracy and decries dictatorship in any country around the world should be standing in the United Nations enlisting the support of the entire world before taking the fateful next step. The fateful next step is not just an attack on Iraq but what happens after that if Saddam Hussein survives and decides to retaliate against us.

We must think about that because we know he is a dangerous person.

• (2325)

We know he is prepared to throw his troops to the wind. We know he is prepared to sacrifice everything for his own personal objectives and we know that if we think that we can remove some but not all the chemical and biological weapons and he survives, he will live to fight another day.

The world will be a safer place when Saddam Hussein is gone, but I think it will also be a safer place when the western world with its democratic positions can work within the international institutions and work toward peace, not war.

As we contemplate war here this evening, I hope peace is uppermost on the minds of all leaders of all the western world and all the democratic countries that strive to serve the people, not lead them into another military venture where the outcome at this time is far from certain.

Caution. I said earlier that we threaten when we are threatened. We can use force when we are forced to. And we can attack when we are attacked. But we should be careful and think it through. Diplomacy in the end, when it works, is always the best way to do it.

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[Translation]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Cambridge.

The purpose of the debate tonight is to determine if Canada should take part in yet another air strike against Iraq.

I remember a debate we had in this House seven years ago, at about the same time, in January. We then supported the UN, because the world community was behind the mission. Our actions were based on the UN resolution to defend Kuwait against an Iraqi invasion. We saw what the results of that mission and its aftermath were.

Today, the United States is asking Canada to join with Great Britain and Germany in an action against Iraq. The situation is not all that clear, because we know full well that several of the countries who took part in the 1991 mission have not given their support this time around. These countries would prefer a UN-led effort to a U.S. initiative supported by a few allies.

We are told that diplomatic measures have failed. I just want to point out what has been achieved in the past few years thanks to the diplomatic measures the United States is decrying.

First of all, the inspectors who travelled to Iraq detected more than 2,000 violations they were able to straighten out, twice as many as during the Gulf War with Iraq in 1991. One has to wonder why some people are so anxious to speed up the process when peaceful measures could be taken to avoid killing people as we did in 1991 and to avoid the consequences of that conflict, which have been so harmful to the children of that part of the world.

Mr. Richardson, the US ambassador to the UN, said that he was losing patience. What a strange statement coming from a man who is supposed to promote peaceful, diplomatic solutions. He said he was losing patience.

It seems to me that, when we are dealing with a conflict in which the lives of thousands of people are at stake, we should not lose patience. We should if possible look for diplomatic means to avoid another massacre like the 1991 attack against Iraq, and especially against its children.

• (2330)

The point I want to make, not only to members of this House, but to those who are watching, is: where is the consistency in our policy? Canada is recognized throughout the world as a peaceful country that tries to find solutions. Even at home, we show a great deal of tolerance, we negotiate and we come up with solutions.

One wonders which UN resolutions are the most important ones. They should all have the same importance; all resolutions are important. A large number of other resolutions were also adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Take, for example, Resolution 242 dealing with the Middle East, and Resolutions 338 and 425, on Lebanon's integrity and independence. These resolutions provide that foreign forces in Lebanon, such as the Syrian and the Israeli forces, should leave. These UN resolutions were adopted years ago. Yet, neither the United Nations nor Great Britain seem in a hurry to tell the aggressors in Lebanon that a resolution is in effect and that they must leave. So, one wonders.

I can also think of the resolutions concerning Cyprus, southern Lebanon, the west coast and the Gaza Strip, where facilities are not supposed to be there. Yet, even now, these resolutions are not being implemented. One wonders. If all resolutions are equally important, why was the situation in the Middle East allowed to deteriorate for more than ten years? Do you think that countries in the Middle East are not closely watching the United States, Great Britain and other European countries wondering if they will deploy their huge forces to bomb them? There are other resolutions that are completely ignored.

Canada is recognized around the world as a peaceful country, which sends out troops to maintain peace. That is our role. We should be involved in a diplomatic mission, not a mission to bring more destruction to this part of the world that has known nothing else in the past 30 years. The fact that the role played by Canada is one that is admired by countries around the world and that solutions should always be sought through diplomacy must be taken into consideration. Solutions should not be decided on the basis of what suits certain countries.

For far too long in the Middle East, people have had little confidence that Western democracies really wanted to help resolve their problems. Is it any wonder that they question our intentions? Which the countries around the world supplied Iraq with massive destruction weapons in the past, when they were at war with Iran? Which countries sold these weapons? Iraq and other countries in the Middle East certainly could not afford to produce such weapons. Arms suppliers to the Middle East were Western countries, including Great Britain and the United States.

Now, in an about-face, they decide to act on a number of UN resolutions and bring destruction again to their country. In light of the destruction that has taken place in the past seven or eight years, of the children that have suffered, of the embargo against Iraq, there is a limit.

• (2335)

It is very difficult to convince the people of the Middle East that the West wants peace, when they see the opposite. That is a point of

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view that must be re-examined. We ought to say that all United Nations resolutions must be implemented in the Middle East, not selected ones.

In closing, all that the United States would like from Canada is the use of our reputation. We are respected throughout the world, we have people's trust. Why would we want to lose that trust? The United States knows very well that a country of 29 million does not have the arms of destruction it does. We know very well that the U.S. is not counting on our weapons to settle the problems in the Middle East, Iraq in particular.

I am convinced that, with time, with diplomatic means, we will see that guys like Saddam Hussein, tyrants and monsters who have been created by the West, will be done away with by their own societies.

Let Canada keep its reputation as a country of peace, and let it not be a party to missions of destruction.

[English]

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Gatineau for refreshing our memories with regard to who supported Iraq in the war against Iran.

I am pleased to rise today to debate the recent invitation to Canada by the United States of America to participate in possible military action in the Middle East. While I understand what our American neighbours and allies are asking, I feel I do not have enough information to lend my support to what is being asked of us.

In the past I have supported requests for Canadian participation in peacekeeping missions but this is not a peacekeeping mission. This is a unilateral military action led by the United States against Iraq and supported by Britain.

Unlike the gulf war seven years ago, this proposed military operation is not in response to an Iraqi invasion of another country. As a matter of fact when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 it was six months later that the U.S. led a coalition against Saddam Hussein.

Why rush into this when diplomatic solutions are still a possibility? Seven years ago neighbouring Arab states supported the military offensive against Iraq. Today the very same Arab states, which are most at risk if Iraq continues to stockpile chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction, do not support military action.

Clearly this is not an internationally sanctioned effort by the United Nations. France, a major European country which seven years ago took part in the U.S. coalition against Iraq, has distanced itself from a possible military strike. Russia and China, two large and important members of the security council, have in recent days made strong statements against waging war against Iraq.

Were this an internationally sanctioned effort by the United Nations I would be more likely to support our involvement. I share

the frustrations of American and British allies who have been unable to resolve the Iraqi situation with diplomatic efforts. I share their concerns that a madman like Saddam Hussein has been stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. I agree that the world must act to address the problem, but it would be preferable if the world agreed on a common course of action.

• (2340)

After all, will not the dropping of American and British bombs on chemical and biological weapons release the very same chemicals into the air, harming or even killing innocent civilians, especially children? Perhaps other efforts should be undertaken before we proceed with military action.

I understand that some of the Arab states have been trained to negotiate an agreement whereby a second UN inspection team, one that is not as offensive to the Iraqi government, could be appointed to inspect those sites which the American land team is being precluded from accessing. Perhaps this is another diplomatic measure which should be considered.

However I firmly believe that the decision to launch attacks on Iraq should be taken by the United Nations Security Council and not by the White House. We live in an international community whereby the actions of one nation can impact on the lives of many. Unfortunately there appears to be little consensus among many of our allies.

This morning I received a copy of a letter to the prime minister from the Islamic Humanitarian Service. Its head office is located in my riding. In the letter it stated that Saddam Hussein, the tyrant, will be unaffected personally if military attacks are carried out. However innocent civilians will be the biggest victims of such an attack. In recent days the French foreign minister has made similar comments. The problems of starvation and disease will be intensified while Saddam Hussein will continue to live in comfort.

They are absolutely correct. Ordinary people have suffered since the gulf war in 1991 but Saddam continues to live in luxury.

The Islamic Humanitarian Service appealed to the prime minister to oppose the whims of the United States. They have asked that Canada maintain an independent foreign policy and stay out of the conflict. This is the message I have been hearing all day from constituents in my riding of Cambridge. I share their view.

Let us not rush into sending our brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces into a war before all diplomatic solutions have been exhausted. Unless there is a decision by the United Nations Security Council to proceed with military force against Iraq, Canada should not contribute troops or be part of it for oil or anything else.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has an obligation to support our allies in stopping terrorism by Saddam Hussein. Generally speaking Canadians do

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not have a clear picture of the weapons of mass destruction the United Nations has confirmed continue to exist in Iraq despite the fact that UN inspection units have destroyed 480,000 litres of chemical weapon agents, 30 chemical warheads, 38,000 chemical and biological weapons, 690 tonnes of chemical agents and 3,000 tonnes of chemical weapons ingredients.

Three months ago UN inspectors reported that there were still 200 suspected chemical and biological Iraqi manufacturing sites. Of those 100 would be biological facilities, 80 chemical facilities and 20 nuclear facilities.

UN inspectors confirmed the existence of an industrial scale VX nerve gas production facility, four tonnes of VX nerve gas—one drop can kill—anthrax, botulinum, aflatoxin inventories and the Al Hake biological weapons facility.

• (2345)

President Clinton of the United States had this to say on November 14 about the UN inspection teams: “These quiet inspectors have destroyed more weapons of mass destruction potential over the last six years than were destroyed in the entire gulf war”.

I could say more about all of this but I think what is clear is that we have a terrorist in Saddam Hussein who is producing weapons of mass destruction and he is prepared to use them. We know he is prepared to use them. He used chemical agents against Iranians and people in his own country.

While we all prefer a diplomatic solution, it is perhaps worthwhile to go back a bit in history and consider a statement Winston Churchill made in 1938:

If we do not stand up to the dictators now, we shall only prepare the day when we shall have to stand up to them under far more adverse conditions. Two years ago it was safe, three years ago it was easy and four years ago a mere dispatch might have rectified this position. But where shall we be a year hence?

That was in 1938. We know what happened in 1939.

In the U.K. a couple of weeks ago the House of Commons noted that Saddam now has enough anthrax to fill two warheads every week. He is continuing to receive missile components and may soon be able to produce long range missiles. There is no room for compromise here. Diplomacy will only work if Saddam Hussein's evasions stop.

When I speak of committing the Canadian military to support our allies to stop terrorism, I do so with the clear thought in my mind for the military personnel and their families, people such as those in Canadian Forces 19 Wing in Comox in my riding. The military stands ready to carry out missions assigned by Canada.

There is a clear message in all of this for Canadians. We must give our military the resources they require to carry out the

missions we demand of them. These missions from time to time are going to require combat capability.

I recognize that there are some widespread concerns within our military and we should not bury these concerns in these debates.

Skilled Canadian forces personnel in some categories such as pilots and technicians are being lost faster than they are being replaced due to active recruiting and substantially higher pay in the private sector. There is concern and uncertainty about the future strength of the military and viability of some military occupations and trades. Continued downsizing has led to a belief that more bad news is on the horizon.

Frequent deployments in hazardous and difficult theatres of operation away from spouse and children have adversely affected individuals and families. I believe if we are going to ask our professional military to carry out combat operations, that Canada owes it to our military to provide them with the resources they require to do their jobs. That should be our caveat. The military put their lives on the line and they need and deserve our collective support.

I have to ask myself why would Saddam Hussein produce four tonnes of VX nerve gas when one drop can kill? Why would he produce 8,400 litres of anthrax when less than one one-millionth of a gram can kill?

Why would Saddam Hussein, despite the fact that Iraq had signed a nuclear non-proliferation treaty, put himself in a position to produce a nuclear bomb by 1993 if the gulf war had not intervened?

• (2350)

Why would Saddam Hussein refuse to fully document missiles until 1996, five years after it was required? And why does Saddam Hussein continue to produce contradictory and unreliable reports on chemical and biological weapons for the UN inspection team?

We all appreciate the fact that when all else fails, our military is asked to pick up the pieces. The current situation in Iraq may lead to a particularly nasty circumstance which everyone would prefer to avoid. We have a moral obligation and it is in the national interest to stop terrorism. The military is the instrument and agent of last resort if diplomacy fails.

There is no doubt we are facing a serious international threat. We must focus on getting Saddam Hussein's weapons factories out of business and allowing UN inspectors to do their job.

I have some difficulty in concluding my remarks because I am left with an empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. If only the world were full of reasonable people we could entertain a reasonable solution. History tells us that the world simply is not like that. That is why our military and our military tradition is so important.

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It is much easier to debate this issue in the House of Commons than it is for a military family to say goodbye to a member of the service departing for a combat mission. Let us hope it does not come to that but let us be absolutely prepared if it does.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to contribute to this debate on the potential role for the Canadian forces against Iraq. As Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition critic for veterans affairs and based on my own military experience, I am sensitive to the nature of Canada's military involvement against Iraq.

Canada was built by immigrants from around the globe. Who better than Canada to defend world peace. Canada was one of the first signatories to membership in the United Nations and we are most admired internationally for our peacekeeping role in international conflicts. This peacekeeping role has been assumed notwithstanding significant inadequacies in funding to our military forces.

Our military performed admirably in the first gulf war. Our Canadian Armed Forces are ready, willing and able to serve with distinction and honour once again. Canada is willing to support the United States and Britain in addressing concerns associated with global security. Our neighbour to the south has long been a major defender of world peace and is deserving of our respect and support but first we wish to list the criteria for involvement.

Criteria are required to assist in deciding how Canada should respond to requests for our participation in military operations to establish or maintain peace in the world; that diplomatic efforts to resolve it have failed; that there is multinational support for military action; that there is a workable strategy for military action to resolve the issue; that the plan includes a clear definition of Canada's role; that the role expected of Canada is within our military capacity; and that there is a command and control structure satisfactory to Canada.

Canada has an obligation to support its allies in stopping terrorism by Saddam Hussein. Our support should be military as well as moral and political. The focus of our military actions should be on putting Saddam Hussein's weapons factories out of business and allowing UN inspectors to do their work. As parliamentarians we should make the political decision to support. We should then let the defence department make the recommendations concerning the form and scope of our military support. The reason for supporting military action is our moral obligation and our national interest in stopping terrorism and war on innocent civilians.

● (2355)

We must be mindful that our Canadian forces may once again be exposed to chemical and biological contaminants during the course

of the mounting conflict and that such exposure may have far reaching and longstanding effects on their health.

Ask Louise Richard what unknown dangers await in the battles of the gulf region. Louise was a member of the Canadian forces in the first gulf war and today, in her early thirties she is debilitated by multiple health problems believed to be gulf war syndrome. While Louise acknowledges there are necessary risks taken by our military when serving in battle, she is disappointed of the current government's inability to help our veterans with the problems they are now left with.

Many of our gulf war veterans have had to rely on other countries to aid in their treatment. This must not happen again. If we decide to send our men and women to battle, we must also assume the responsibilities associated with their health and well-being when they return home. Ms. Richard who suffered as a veteran of the gulf war still agrees that risks must be taken to stop war's tyrants.

Iraq, defeated in the gulf war, committed crimes against its citizens and others and had to be stopped. Part of the terms of the ceasefire was to accept the monitoring and destruction of its weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, Saddam has not allowed this to happen and in fact has hidden an arsenal of warheads and chemical weapons. In the past, Saddam has used these chemicals of death against citizens of his country and others. The weapons must be destroyed and the capability to produce more be removed or there will forever be a threat to others.

It is very clear to me that an effective inspection for chemical and biological weapons could not be conducted without U.S. observers. I believe that political pride should be of secondary concern to the avoidance of the escalation of international military conflict. The only exception to this view would be where avoidance of international military conflict leads to the fruitless efforts at appeasement so well demonstrated by England's Neville Chamberlain before the commencement of World War II. We soon learned that there is no piece of paper to wave that will stop men like Saddam Hussein and Hitler.

Saddam lives by weight of arms and might. He will only submit to the same.

We have only to review the recent past threat and carnage unleashed by this committed tyrant of war seven short years ago. It was only the combined will of two dozen nations that clipped his military might and sent him home, but it left his chemical and biological threat alive. These two were scheduled for inspection and destruction until Saddam intervened once again. This is the threat that Saddam could build on to the point of regional threat again.

Saddam's legacy of 1991 in the mother of all wars is left over 100,000 dead, oilfields set to torch, cities in ruins, his country in

tatters. Yet seven years later the world might face more. Canada must do its part to stand and help extinguish this threat to the nations of the world in the name of world peace.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

I am pleased to take part in tonight's debate on a possible Canadian participation in military action against Iraq. I am convinced that my constituents realize the importance of this debate given what is at stake on the international scene.

Let us set this debate in its historical context. The last time Canada had to make a decision about whether or not to take military action in that part of the world was in 1991, in the Gulf war.

• (2400)

[English]

In 1991 an international coalition attacked Iraq after it had invaded the neighbouring kingdom of Kuwait. Canada's contribution was three ships, 24 CF-18 fighter bomber planes, one Boeing 707 tanker air craft and 1,830 Canadian Armed Forces personnel. As do many Canadians I believe that conflict was largely a measure to protect the world's supply of oil.

The question is why we are back in the same position as we were in 1991. Why are we contemplating putting our armed forces into Iraq? The answer is clear. Iraq is once again flaunting its disregard for international standards.

Let me make some distinctions. I am as aware as anyone of the political advantages to be gained by the United States in its domestic matters with another armed conflict. I cannot support those political considerations as a unique reason for risking Canadian military personnel and using Canadian military dollars.

We cannot forget that the basis of this situation is Iraq's refusal to co-operate with an agency of the United Nations. This agency was established as a condition for ending the Persian gulf war. Iraq is violating this condition and, worst of all, is endangering lives around the world through its production of biological weapons.

The Toronto *Star* made an interesting analysis in its coverage. According to the *Star* Iraq has passed up potential oil revenues totalling more than \$100 billion since mid-1991 because it has refused to co-operate with the United Nations sponsored program to destroy its capacity for producing weapons of mass destruction.

Why would a country pass up that kind of revenue, especially a country where according to some organizations a child dies every 10 minutes due to malnutrition and disease? The implication is that

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the refusal to allow inspection by UN personnel is worth more than millions of dollars and worth more than those children's lives. If that is the case, this is a spine-chilling prospect for everyone on earth.

The United Nations commission charged with the disarmament of Iraq found chilling evidence of Iraq's intention regarding the production and stockpiling of biological weapons. As reported in the *Chronique ONU*, the special commission found proof that Iraq had obtained or was seeking the equipment and material necessary to produce biological weapons. Iraq was unable to provide a non-military justification for the equipment and materials.

On July 1, 1995 Iraq admitted to having established an offensive program of biological weapons, including the manufacture and stockpiling of large quantities of toxic agents. The commission also found that Iraq had not produced a reliable accounting of its military biological weapons. Until this accounting was provided, UNSCOM was unable to complete the mandate assigned by the security council.

For several months Iraq has refused to allow United Nations inspectors to continue their investigations. Iraq maintains that it has destroyed all the materials necessary to produce biological weapons by dumping them in the desert and has refused to allow UNSCOM inspectors to inspect the sites of suspected illegal weapons programs.

Iraq has couched this refusal in allegations that American members of the UN team were conducting illicit spying activities for the United States. Given the evidence of the special committee this refusal is suspect. That is the historical substantive context of the situation.

Let me move to the political context of Canada's potential role. There are several issues I would like to briefly mention. It is clear that a diplomatic resolution to this conflict is in everyone's best interest. While it is important to show the Iraqi government that the world supports the UN mandated commission, the citizenship of the inspectors is not a reason to risk Canadian personnel or use Canadian military dollars. I suggest that we call the bluff of the Iraqi and the Americans and send in other inspectors.

• (2405)

I understand that the Arab league, the Soviet Union and other influential bodies are working toward a diplomatic solution. I firmly believe that we cannot in all good conscience move any further toward an armed conflict without exhausting all diplomatic avenues.

[Translation]

Second, I would like to briefly discuss the specific mandate of the Canadian armed forces. The United States is asking merely for logistical support from the Canadian forces—nothing more, nothing less. Clearly the United States is trying to legitimize a

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military intervention. As in 1991, the Canadian contribution will not be innumerable weapons and war machines.

Since the white paper, the Canadian armed forces have bet on their role as peacekeepers. If we take part in this conflict, what kind of message will we be sending? Is this the way we want to spend our defence budget? I have no answer to these questions, but they are certainly relevant in the current debate on Canada's possible participation in the Persian Gulf.

I cannot sufficiently underscore the fact that the community of nations Canada belongs to must wager on a negotiated solution to the current impasse, otherwise we will be facing armed intervention.

I would like to point out that the lack of consensus among the Arab countries on military intervention in Iraq means that Canada must carefully consider its conflict resolution options. Caution is the watchword.

As I said earlier, Canadians are aware that Saddam Hussein's regime is ill-intentioned. Some oppose the production of weapons of mass destruction, biological and others, by Saddam Hussein. The objective is not disputed, but the means to achieve it require some thinking.

Some of my constituents told me of their concerns about the political situation in the Middle East. While they approve the objective, which is to prevent the production and the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, some are concerned that a military intervention could trigger a conflict that would go beyond the Middle East region. Others wonder about the effectiveness of the various measures being considered by the international community to stop the production and the stockpiling of such weapons.

I understand these concerns. Again, a military intervention may be necessary, but the current situation requires that we conduct an in-depth review. I hope this debate will help us make the appropriate decisions.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate on the possible intervention of Canadian troops in the military strike against Iraq.

Yesterday President Clinton requested Canada's support in this initiative by way of transportation and search and rescue.

The intervention of our military forces in this situation is of grave concern to all Canadians. I am pleased the government has decided to have a debate on this crisis.

Throughout our history Canada's relationship with the United States has been based on partnership and co-operation. We have been supportive of our friend and our neighbour. In 1991, as a part

of the United Nations contingent, Canadian troops provided logistic support in the gulf war against Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

We are a humanitarian nation and historically we have participated in the solving of crises in the world through peaceful measures. Our humanitarianism and our strong commitment to peace have enabled us to be a model to the world.

● (2410)

This is the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, and in this year we see a leader trampling on the human rights of his people.

The situation we are debating tonight is also about human rights. Canadians place a high value and have respect for individuals and their right to live in dignity. To act contrary to this value concerns many Canadians. We understand the frustration in dealing with Saddam Hussein and his chemical and biological weapons, tools of mass destruction, refusing to follow through on the UN security council resolution 687 of April 1991.

War is a fundamental threat to human life and every effort is to be made not to allow this threat to become a reality. Whether through the stories we hear from our parents or grandparents or through television footage or history books, we are horrified and are constantly reminded about the human sufferings of war.

In the riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore I have constituents from various war torn parts of the globe who have expressed to me the horrors of war and its effect on their lives. They have experienced firsthand the consequences of war, the anguish, the tremendous pain and the suffering of families.

A decision to use military means to solve the problem of Saddam Hussein is not to be taken lightly.

On my recent visit with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade to Bosnia I witnessed the environmental degradation that war brought to that nation. It will take some time before the three million or so land mines are removed from that country.

From December 2 to December 4, 1997 Canada took leadership on the banning of land mines. We recognize that these weapons of war cause great physical and emotional harm to persons who have been victimized by them. We know that hundreds of civilians were adversely affected by the gulf war in 1991. At present many are grossly malnourished and live in inadequate conditions as a result of the embargo.

The consequences of war are real and they can be averted through the actions of nations. It is the responsibility of the international community to take leadership in finding non-violent means to resolve crises in the world.

It is Canada's responsibility to provide moral leadership. Our nation can play its part by being tenacious in seeking out and

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exhausting all channels of foreign diplomacy under the auspices of the United Nations. This entails looking at the wide range of possibilities from the perspective of government and the perspective of the non-governmental agencies.

Taking lessons from Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King addressed conflicts in a peaceful manner.

Peace in the Middle East has been at the forefront of Canadian foreign policy. We have been working toward peace in that region through non-military means. We do not know of the far-reaching consequences of a military strike against Iraq to the peace process in that region. Nor do we know whether military action will achieve the desired result: ridding the world of Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction.

We know about the issue of compliance, allowing the inspectors to get into the areas where weapons of destruction are kept. Maybe we should be looking at an avenue for some other set of inspectors to participate.

I ask whether we have used up all peaceful resolution to this conflict. Have we used up all means at our command? Have we participated in every measure that is available to make sure that we deal with the crisis in our midst? War is costly and we must clearly examine the price before taking action.

• (2415)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of a story that a former member of this House used to tell when we were debating the nuclear arms race in the early 1980s. The former member for Saskatoon East, Father Bob Ogle, used to tell a story about two men in a room full of gasoline. One guy had two matches and the other guy had three matches, and the guy who had three matches thought he was safe.

I think there is a lesson in that for us here. Whenever we are engaged in a conflict, or whenever we are contemplating a conflict which has the potential that this conflict has, we need to realize that it may well be a situation, no matter what the outcome, in which there are no winners and losers but rather a situation in which everybody loses when we choose war as an alternative to diplomacy.

Having said that, I would like to pick up on what I take to be a very earnest and constructive suggestion that was made earlier by one of my colleagues, the member for Palliser, but which has also been made by some Liberal backbenchers. Have we exhausted all the diplomatic options here? It seems to me, unless I have it wrong, that a lot of this has its origin in the objection by Iraq to American inspectors.

Is it worth going to war over the constitution of these inspection teams? Is it not possible for the Americans to swallow their pride, take the chip off their shoulder, and for the rest of us, by having the

Americans do that, to call Saddam Hussein's bluff and say if the American inspectors are the problem, we will have a team of inspectors without Americans? We could then see what he does and see whether there is an option here that has not been seriously considered because there is so much of the American ego wrapped up in whether they are allowed to participate in these inspection teams.

It is something that needs to be considered by the government and by other governments. I was glad to hear that coming from the other side of the House. It seems to me that is one element of a possible solution that needs to be explored further.

I waited until the small hours to get on the record to say a number of things. First, I think this is a question about which persons and members of Parliament of goodwill can disagree with each other because in the final analysis it is a matter of judgment. This is in some ways a hard call for anyone to make, as to what the response of the government should be. The position of the NDP was made quite clear by my leader earlier in the day.

What I want to do tonight is say what I think this is not about. It is not about one's feelings of loyalty or one's appreciation of Canada's contribution in past conflicts, or one's feelings about the Canadian Armed Forces and the roles it has played in various past conflicts or in peacekeeping. I have heard people get up and say these kinds of things, all of which I agree with. But the implication is that because we feel good about the things the Canadian Armed Forces has done, either in previous wars or in peacekeeping, to be critical of this particular suggestion would involve some kind of disloyalty to those institutions or lack of appreciation for what has gone on before.

Quite the contrary. I am sure that veterans across Canada, like anyone else today, are debating among themselves as to what the right course of action is. I am sure you could find veterans who feel the government is doing the right thing and veterans who feel the government is doing the wrong thing. We can probably find gulf war veterans who feel one way and other gulf war veterans who feel the other way.

• (2420)

So it is not a question of loyalty or appreciation of these institutions or of past conflicts. Indeed, as has been mentioned on a number of occasions, the American general who led the Americans in the gulf war in 1991 has expressed serious reservations about the advisability of proceeding to bomb Iraq and has raised the question, as others have, whether this simply would not be ineffective and in some ways play into Saddam Hussein's own plan.

I say also that this is not, from an NDP point of view, a question of taking a position rooted in an uncritical pacifism, although there may be people within our party and other parties who hold to a strictly pacifist position. I heard the member who just spoke refer to Mahatma Gandhi. I am sure Mahatma Gandhi being an absolute

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pacifist would have absolutely no use whatsoever for the government's position on this or for the American position on this.

But that is not the position from which we are arguing this day. As members will know, we have voted in the past and spoken in the past in favour of Canadian troops participating in various contexts, in Haiti, Rwanda and in a variety of contexts in which they might have had to engage in combat or in other forms of armed activity. We have not drawn back from that possibility when we felt that it was in the best interest of that particular country or a peace in that particular region.

Again I come back to the point that what we are really debating here in many respects is a question of judgment on the position the Americans are taking at this point which the government appears eager to approve although it is going through the motions of a parliamentary debate. We sort of woke up this morning to the secretary of state for the United States, Madam Albright, basically saying that Canada was already on board. I welcome this debate but it is hard to believe that the government really came into this debate with an open mind, that things were not already well in train.

It is a question of judgment and NDP judgment is that this proposal by the United States is not warranted and that such a proposal is even more to be criticized as so often is the case because it comes with such self-righteousness. I want to explain what I mean.

It seems to me these kinds of positions would be so much more credible if they came with a little *mea culpa*, if they came with a little history, if they came with a little acknowledgement of the role that the west has played in creating the situation we now face. I am thinking of a number of things that should be put on the record just so that in the end somebody might still want to argue that Canada should participate in a bombing of Iraq.

There are a number of things I would like to put on the record. For one thing, it was the west that armed Iraq to the teeth. I can remember earlier in my parliamentary life when it seemed that the west was rooting for Iraq when it was at war with Iran. There was no talk then of the evils of Saddam Hussein. There was no talk then of the danger of arming this madman of a dictator, and he was every bit as much a madman dictator then. It is just that then he was doing what we wanted him to do. I say we in the west sense. And now he is not.

• (2425)

One cannot help but feel there is a certain amount of hypocrisy. We need to be more consistent in our attitude toward people like Saddam Hussein and not just play politics when it suits our needs. We turn a blind eye to his nature and when it no longer suits our

needs we are more accurate in our description of him and may even, when it suits us, magnify it.

I have heard a lot of talk this evening, particularly from the Reform Party, about trusting our allies. Why should we have some uncritical trust of our allies? That is not a Canadian tradition. It is not the tradition under which Lester Pearson operated when he questioned President Johnson on the Vietnam War. Should we have trusted our allies in Cambodia, in Vietnam, in Panama and in a variety of other situations? Just because we are allies of the United States in NATO does not mean that we have to be uncritical allies in everything else it does, that we have to share its perception of every problem that arises in the world. The one case in which we do not do that is with respect to Cuba.

Therefore there should not be this uncritical argument offered that we need to simply trust our allies. If we are allies and good friends then, as good friends will do, we need to be able to ask the tough questions of our good friends, whether this is the best course of action.

We hear a lot about the importance of the UN. I would feel a lot better about all of this if it were actually the UN asking Canada to participate in this. But it is not the UN, it is the United States. The call did not come from the secretary-general of the United Nations. The call came from President Clinton.

Here we are, seven years later after the last gulf war, in exactly the same position. The UN is no stronger. It is arguably weaker than it was then and at that time we were all able to identify the problem that the UN was not strong enough to act on its own and therefore had to almost contract out its work in that case to this coalition, a coalition which incidentally does not really exist any more because the agreement that existed at that time does not exist today. I think that is important to keep in mind when the government tries to give us the impression that it is simply following what the UN wants it to do based on resolutions with respect to the ceasefire that came out of the 1991 situation. The agreement that existed in 1991 clearly did not exist in the security council or on the rest of the world today.

Let us talk about the UN. One of the things the government could have been doing over the last several years is working to strengthen the UN. I am sure that is what the government has in mind but the fact is there have been no serious proposals for UN reform that would enable the UN to have a capacity of its own to deal with leaders like Saddam Hussein who chose to violate its resolutions.

Instead, seven years later we are still in the position of the UN's being so weak as to create a context in which the United States takes upon itself the determination of what the UN says will be enforced.

I argue that it is not just Saddam Hussein and others who are weakening the UN. Obviously by disobeying the UN this is to be

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deplored. However, what is also to be deplored is the way in which the United States has weakened the UN over the last 10 to 15 years by consistently refusing to meet its payments to fund the UN.

The attack on the UN comes from many directions and for many reasons. The last thing we need is anybody getting in the context now of wanting Saddam Hussein to respect UN resolutions, to get on their high horse about how much they love the UN.

• (2430)

I can appreciate that coming from Canada because I think Canada's record with respect to the UN is impeccable. I do not always agree with the positions we take there, but our support of the UN has been consistent. That cannot be said about the United States.

Let us not tolerate from our American friends a lot of self-righteousness about the United Nations because the United Nations comes under more criticism in the United States of America than almost any other place that I can think of.

Again, with respect to UN resolutions, I agree that UN resolutions should be enforced. One cannot help but get the impression that some resolutions are more important than others, that some resolutions have to be enforced. Other resolutions can just lay there collecting dust decade after decade after decade. There is no mobilizing of the international community to enforce these resolutions.

I say again, just a little humility when it comes to this so that we can avoid this sort of jingoistic, uncritical attitude which, as soon as we get into this kind of situation, all of a sudden our side, our civilization, we can do no wrong, we have always done things the right way, we have never done anything wrong, we are the good guys.

I think we are the good guys in comparison to Saddam Hussein, but we are not the good guys in the sense that we have contributed to the situation in which we now find ourselves in a variety of ways.

Again, with respect to the question of respecting international judgments, UN resolutions. We have a World Court ruling on nuclear weapons. Do I see the nations of the nuclear club of this world saying there is an international judgment? They have ruled nuclear weapons to be criminal, but no action on that front.

We saw the World Court rule that the mining of the harbour in Nicaragua was illegal. Did the United States pull up stakes and stop what it was doing in Nicaragua?

The list goes on and on and on of occasions when the United States has not shown respect for UN resolutions and for other international judgments that have been made about its behaviour.

That does not make what the United States wants to do in the case of Iraq wrong on the face of it or in principle. All I ask is just a

little more humility when it comes to these things and some acknowledgement of the fact that when it comes to respecting international judgments, the Americans are very much in a position of not being in a position where they can rightfully cast the first stone.

There are a number of other things, the position of the Kurds. Any resolution of the Iraqi situation has to deal with the reality of the Kurdish people but we do not see any action on that front on the part of the Canadian government. Why? Because of our NATO ally, Turkey, which does not want to deal with the reality of the Kurdish people as a people.

Our hands are tied there with respect to the Kurds so that the Kurds, whether in Iraq, Iran or in Turkey, are being persecuted. Finally with respect to weapons of mass destruction, Iraq is not the only country with weapons of mass destruction. There are many countries with weapons of mass destruction.

What we need is a global arms control regime that will deal with this because surely the solution is not bombing every country that has weapons of mass destruction and will not get rid of them.

That is not the solution and may not be much of a solution from a scientific point of view because I am just a lay person when it comes to this. If there is anthrax stored somewhere, is bombing it a solution?

My idea of when things get bombed is that things explode and things get scattered all over the place. The idea of anthrax and everything else being scattered all over the place as a result of bombing does not seem to be a very good idea. We may very well be getting into a situation that we cannot anticipate.

• (2435)

That is all the more reason every possible avenue should be explored before a military solution is sought. We in the NDP do not feel that has been done which is why we are taking the position we are in Parliament today.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the days leading up to this take note debate, I had the occasion to discuss the possible participation of Canada in a military operation against Saddam Hussein with some of my constituents. I will share the fruit of those discussions with my colleagues.

I can say categorically that there is unanimity and a preference, as there seems to be in the House from the debate I have listened to tonight, for the use of diplomatic channels to solve this problem. We want to arrive at a solution by peaceful means. There is a keen desire to see an intensification of our efforts: bilateral, multilateral, at the United Nations, at the security council or wherever. We as a country, through our representatives the prime minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs who have a considerable positive reputation world-wide, should use whatever influence we can to

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promote diplomacy to arrive at a satisfactory resolution of this matter.

Some suggestions came forward in my discussions. Perhaps one of the more imaginative recommendations I heard was that the prime minister should offer the services of our foreign affairs minister as an honest broker with Baghdad to a country that might be more aligned with Iraq. This would be based on the considerable reputations that both the prime minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have achieved especially in recent months with the signing of the anti-mine treaty. I agreed to pass on this suggestion to the appropriate authorities.

I have heard this second suggestion from a few people, that Canada should encourage a lifting or a reduction in the sanctions currently imposed on Iraq. The Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated tonight that is one possibility that has been considered at the United Nations.

The suggestion we have heard most often this evening is that we should consider the make-up of the inspection teams. We could explore whether there is an opportunity to solve this lack of respect for the United Nations resolutions and agreements to which Iraq is a signatory by modifying the make-up of the inspection teams to be more amenable to Iraq.

These suggestions have already been mentioned tonight but I wanted to repeat them because these suggestions have come from my constituents.

The second conclusion that has emerged from my discussions is that there is certainly a preference that any Canadian participation be made under the authority of the United Nations, that we as a country should only participate in a military manner in a military strike against Saddam Hussein if the United Nations were to ask. I must admit at first blush that one might be inclined to agree with that motion as I was and as I may still be. But if one looks at the prevailing situation it becomes less obvious.

• (2440)

For instance, since 1991, and as late as November of 1997, the UN security council adopted resolutions signifying essentially that the non-compliance of Iraq was not acceptable and was tantamount to a threat. For weeks now U.S. secretary of state Albright has made numerous foreign visits to shore up support for a military intervention led by the United States. As a matter of fact, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party quoted the secretary of state quite clearly as saying that time is running out.

There has been a barrage of media coverage on this in the last weeks. It would be very difficult not to know of the intentions of the United States.

We have heard tonight many colleagues suggesting that we not participate unless it is at the express request of the United Nations. I would argue that might be a tad facile. The people who are either on the security council or who gravitate around the security council are intelligent. They are serious. They are knowledgeable about world affairs and current affairs. It would be very difficult to believe that if the people who make up the security council did not intend to let the United States proceed that they would not explicitly say so.

They have not said no. They have not told the United States to stop the sabre-rattling or to stop preparing for a military intervention. They have remained essentially silent. One could be justified in thinking that there is, at the very least, tacit support from the United Nations security council.

There is a saying in French which might be useful to reflect on: "qui ne dit mot consent". "He who says nothing can sense". That is the situation we are confronted with.

The United Nations is remaining silent on the fact that the Americans are preparing for a strike quite explicitly and quite openly, with repeated attempts by the secretary of state to shore up support. By not denouncing that, by not saying "We are not prepared to have the Americans lead a strike", they are essentially supporting it. That might be a convoluted way of looking at things, but I believe it has some merit.

One thing which has emerged from the discussions is that if and when the time does come for action, even military action, with respect to the question of whether Canada should participate, reluctantly and unfortunately, more often than not, the answer was yes. It is not unanimous. There are people who believe that we should not participate. However, on the whole, the comments are "Unfortunately, yes".

If such a time should come upon us, then we as a nation must live up to our own obligations, our international obligations, and perhaps even to our moral obligations.

Canada is not a neutral country. Time and again we have stood with our allies. In times of peace we stand with them in strategic alliances, in peacekeeping missions and so forth. In times of war we have stood beside them in the defence of our shared fundamental values. I believe that these values include the ability to live one's life in relative security, certainly secure from the deadly threat of biological or chemical weapons in the hands of a man such as Saddam Hussein.

I began my remarks by saying that there is unanimity in exploring every diplomatic means available to us. From the discussion I have listened to tonight, there seems also to be unanimity in the objective of removing from Saddam Hussein the ability to use these biological and chemical weapons. While we

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may have differing views as to how that should be achieved, we nonetheless agree in this House on that particular objective.

What we have here are escalating alternatives from moral suasion to sanctions to diplomacy. What alternative then is left if these do not bring the results we wish?

• (2445)

There is the threat of force and finally, the use of force. We are not there yet, but I believe I speak for the majority of my constituents when I say that if and when the time comes that the threat and use of force is required, Canada should stand firm with its allies and with the United Nations.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is never easy to go to war, especially for a country like Canada. Canada is known worldwide for being a peaceful country, for being a country that promotes peace, a country known worldwide for its recent land mine negotiations, a country and a flag that are well respected around the world for its peacekeepers.

We are being asked tonight to debate the issue as to whether Canada should support an international effort to send a message to Saddam Hussein. The message is that the world today does not accept the type of behaviour Saddam Hussein has expressed through his human rights abuses, through his deception, cheating and lies with the UN special commission investigating his weapons of mass destruction. It is a message that this world, the United Nations and all countries of the world do not accept his behaviour.

Who better should the international community call on but Canada, a country that has reacted in the past to terrorism in world wars, in Korea, in the gulf conflict and through our peacekeeping efforts around the world. We have reacted and we still continue to react to that type of behaviour.

We have been asked certainly because of who we are and what we represent, because we will add legitimacy to an international effort. That is the case and we should be proud of that. We should be proud of the efforts previous Canadians have made to world peace. Other countries will certainly say that if Canada is involved, there must be some legitimacy to those who say that Saddam Hussein must go.

I have listened to this debate tonight and like the hon. member from Ottawa, I spoke to many constituents over the past week to get their ideas on this issue. What I heard in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant is very similar to what is heard here in Ottawa. There are mixed messages. In fact if we look at the media, we can understand why Canadians are concerned and confused as to what the issues really are in this because I do not think they have been debated properly. Canadians have not been told the whole story as to some of the atrocities Saddam Hussein has done.

It is argued by some that the actions we may take over the next few weeks or months will not do anything to hurt Saddam Hussein. It has been said that all they will do is hurt the Iraqi people. But what is worse? The atrocities Saddam Hussein does against his own people?

• (2450)

That was a debate many of my constituents had. Would it be worse to deal militarily with some of the collateral damage, men and women who will be hurt by this, men and women who Saddam Hussein puts in front of his military establishments as shields against attack, or would it be better to let him go on as he did in the 1980s with the Kurdish people? It is a tough question to answer.

Last year the United Nations Commission on Human Rights condemned the massive violations of human rights in Iraq. It noted that it was the worst country in the world for disappearances. Over 16,000 people have disappeared in Iraq.

Iraq does not have the same laws as Canada and it does not have the same traditions as Canada. Iraqi people do not have the right of association. They do not have the right to stand up and say what they feel about their leadership. They do not have an opposition like the one across the floor. They are not allowed to do that and if they did, they would either go missing or they would be killed.

It is estimated that in the 1980s when Saddam Hussein made his campaigns against the Kurds, some 50,000 to 100,000 Kurds died. Women and children. Whole villages, small rural villages disappeared. Is this the type of person we want leading a country in the world, in this global village? I think not.

Why are we at this point? Why are we at the point of military build-up in the gulf? It is because the United Nations special commission which was set up after the gulf war to review Saddam Hussein, to look for weapons of mass destruction and to oversee their dismantlement, has been lied to and has been cheated and has not been able to do its job. We are at a standoff. Do we do what most of us would want to do and negotiate a settlement? But if we do, how do we trust him?

We negotiated a settlement on the gulf war. The United Nations brokered a settlement. It was given assurances and commitments by Saddam Hussein that he would tell it about his weapons. He said he never got involved in biological warfare or chemical warfare. We found out differently. How do we trust a negotiated settlement with this man?

The UN special commission succeeded in destroying 38,000 chemical weapons, 480,000 litres of live chemical weapon agents, 48 operational missiles, 6 missile launchers and 30 special missile warheads which could have been used for biological weapons. That is scary.

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The threat that this man has on the world scares me. I am sure it scares a number of Canadians. That is why we need to take action. We need to send a message to the world that it is unacceptable behaviour. And who better to do it and who better to get involved than Canada.

• (2455)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Calgary Southeast.

This is a very difficult debate. Any time we engage in a decision that is going to cost people's lives, it is something none of us in this House take lightly.

Clearly the situation we have today is very unlike what occurred in 1991 in gulf war one, if we want to call it that. The parameters are not as clear and the situation is more nebulous. The threat, while there, is not as clear. Nonetheless we have some decisions to make. Should we stay or should we go? Should we bomb or should we not? Should we ask the United Nations to take a different course, or should we support our allies, the United States?

The United States would not have asked us for support publicly if it did not believe it was going to receive it. Clearly the U.S. believes it is going to receive some support in some way and that in all likelihood would be modest and token support to show moral support for the U.S.

However we have some decisions to make so let us deal with the issues as they come up. It is certain that Saddam Hussein has chemical and biological weapons. Of that there is no doubt. The issue is how to get rid of them.

The objective of this whole exercise must be to allow UN inspectors to get into Iraq unfettered. The question is how to do that.

The United States wants to bomb if diplomacy fails. Let us look at some considerations.

If a VX or sarin gas plant were bombed, sarin and VX nerve gas would be released into the air and would spread around causing thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people to die. The situation could be catastrophic. The worst case scenario would be very bad. It would also polarize individuals within the country and would probably drive support to Saddam Hussein. Support within his own country would harden, just like it did after 1991.

Also, it would end the visits of UNSCOM in Iraq. We can be certain of that. UNSCOM has done an outstanding job of establishing the presence of nuclear weapons grade material and also the presence of chemical and biological weapons. This has enabled us to get rid of them. Those inspections would end in the event of bombing.

We have to consider that the action of bombing must outweigh the downside: polarizing support within Iraq; polarizing the people against the international community; potentially causing a huge catastrophe in the release of sarin and VX nerve gases and biological and chemical weapons; and also a hardening of positions in the United Nations and the end of weapons inspections in Iraq.

If we bomb, the bombing must take place on military targets alone. We must avoid any kind of collateral damage of the civilian population.

If diplomacy is to occur, there is something important we are missing here. Diplomacy should involve the Arab nations. In fact the secretary general of the Arab league has said very clearly he would support diplomatic initiatives and in fact that is the preferable way. The Arab league is against the bombing scenario. Let us make it put its money where its mouth is and ask the Arab league to put together a group of diplomats intent on going into Baghdad to try to organize a diplomatic solution.

Some give and take could occur. One of the complaints Saddam Hussein had was that the weapons inspectors were all people from the U.S. and U.K. One compromise that could easily be made would be to involve other weapons inspectors along with the U.S. and U.K. individuals, such as members from Arab nations. This would add an element of impartiality and would eliminate that argument.

We should also not end any sanctions and support a trade of oil for food so that the Iraqi people will have some kind of relief for the terrible situation they have endured for so long. Oil for food and medicine would also demonstrate clearly to the Iraqi people that the international community is very much sympathetic to them but is against the brutal regime that brutalizes them more than anything else. I need not remind the House that the greatest number of casualties suffered under the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein is among the Iraqi people.

• (2500)

The U.S. has asked us for support which will likely be peripheral support. We can provide that support if diplomatic initiatives have truly been exhausted.

There are some inconsistencies in our foreign policy. We are all desirous of supporting UN resolution 687. At the same time we ignore the UN resolutions in the Middle East. We ignore the illegal grouping of Israeli soldiers in South Lebanon who should have been removed a long time ago. We also ignore UN resolutions relating to the areas shared by the Palestinian and Israeli people. We ignore UN resolutions on the West Bank, the Gaza strip and Jerusalem.

If we are to be consistent and fair not only to ourselves but to the world, and in particular to the Arab community, we must support all UN resolutions fairly. We cannot say on one hand that we are supporting resolution 687 while on the other hand choosing to ignore another UN resolution dealing with the Middle East. If we

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want to be seen as a fair player we have to support all UN resolutions equally and fairly. In doing so we will be seen as being a far more equitable and fair player in the Middle East.

One of the problems with the Middle East is that although most of the nations there despise or at least fear Saddam Hussein, they mistrust, and rightfully so, the west because of the failure of western foreign policy to come to the aid of some egregious situations that are taking place right now in the Middle East.

Ultimately the final solution in dealing with Saddam Hussein has to come from within. The political solution is the solution that will end the regime of Saddam Hussein. It has to come from the remnants of opposition parties that still exist within Iraq.

The bombing, if it is to occur, must be understood by the Iraqi people to be in support of them and against the regime of Saddam Hussein. It is also important for the Arab community to get on side with whatever we do. We must ensure that diplomatic initiatives are exhausted and that the Arab community is intimately involved in those decisions. If it is not, any decisions that are made will be looked upon again as western influence in Middle East problems and the lack of sensitivity implicit in that.

It is also important for us to understand our role as Canadians. We have two roles. We must support our neighbours, the United States. We receive much from them and are grateful as co-operative partners in military affairs. However, as has been said many times before, a military solution must come after a diplomatic solution.

We can take a leadership role in trying to put forth through the United Nations a very clear and specific request to the Arab league to involve them as mediators in the quandary we are faced with right now to ensure that weapons inspectors can go into Iraq. This might be accomplished by explaining to them very clearly that the effects of a chemical, nuclear or biological attack by Iraq on Israel would involve casualties on Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian people and the Jordanians.

I realize that our time is coming to an end, but I implore our country, the foreign minister and the prime minister to push the Americans to aggressively achieve a diplomatic solution for us to take our leadership role to the UN and to the Arab league, to pursue a diplomatic issue and to try some different innovative ways to involve the Arab community in achieving a diplomatic solution before a military solution becomes our only option.

• (2505)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to take part in this take note debate particularly

because I actually have a private member's motion before the House dealing with Iraq. Motion No. 279 proposes:

That in the opinion of this House, the government should endorse the formation of an international criminal tribunal for the purpose of prosecuting Saddam Hussein and all other Iraqi officials who are responsible for crimes against humanity, including the unlawful use of force, crimes committed in contravention of the Geneva Convention and the crime of genocide.

I would like first to address the rationale behind my motion. Many people observing the debate tonight will have heard many members discussing geopolitical considerations, the question of war and peace, the question of the United States foreign policy and its relationship to the United Nations. However I am afraid that perhaps not enough people realize the extent to which we are dealing with an utterly morally bankrupt and tyrannical regime which is arguably the most vicious and tyrannical regime on the face of the world today.

World leaders in the past have drawn parallels between Saddam Hussein and other great figures of political and moral evil of the century like Adolf Hitler. I submit that such comparisons are not entirely outlandish.

I mention these things because it is important to understand with whom it is we are dealing. Saddam Hussein's regime, as was mentioned, has been responsible for the unlawful deaths, execution and torture of countless hundreds of thousands of his own civilians and hundreds of thousands of citizens of other nations such as Iran and Kuwait and the disputed territories of Kurdistan.

The United Nations has repeatedly reprimanded the Government of Iraq for its atrocious human rights record, a record which among other things has former detainees testifying as to torture techniques that include "branding, electric shocks administered to the genitals and other areas, beating, burning with hot irons, suspension from rotating ceiling fans, dripping acid on the skin, rape, breaking of limbs, denial of food and water, and threats to rape or otherwise harm relatives. The security forces in Iraq have killed many of their torture victims and mutilated their bodies before returning them to their families." Also as a gesture they require the victims' families to pay for the cost of their execution. That is the kind of regime we are dealing with. It is a regime which simply cannot be reasoned with.

I have heard many members of this place say that we must fully exhaust all avenues of diplomacy. No rational person could possibly disagree with that proposition. The problem is that for seven years now the civilized world has attempted to implement and enforce United Nation Security Council Resolution 687 which requires the destruction of all weapons of mass destruction and facilities for the production of such weapons in Iraq.

For seven years the regime of Saddam Hussein has belligerently and deliberately lied, ducked, dodged, obfuscated and refused to

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co-operate with the order of international civilization in the unanimously passed resolution of the security council.

The United Nations, the United States, the European powers, the Arab neighbours of Iraq, and Canada as a middle power have all played a long and exhaustive role in attempting to find a diplomatic and peaceful resolution to what could be a devastating and violent conflict.

• (2510)

The diplomatic solution has not worked. That is why we are now at this juncture today. I emphasize this because many of those who have expressed enormous reticence at even Canada's symbolic involvement in military action, principally on the part of the United States, continue to emphasize the need for a diplomatic solution with their heads in the sand. They seem not to recognize that those diplomatic solutions have been tried and tried, have been exhausted and have proven not to work.

I could quote the head of the UNSCOM team of weapons investigators that has been operating in Iraq. He recently reported to the United Nations Security Council on discussions he had with Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariz Aziz.

He says that these talks were characterized from the beginning "by extended statements by the Iraqi side to which no even remotely equal reply was invited, accepted or apparently wanted. Moments of abuse and denigration of the UNSCOM and its professional officers, an attempt literally to apportion all blame to UNSCOM past and present for the disarmament task had not been completed and sanctions on Iraq had remained in force and the deputy prime minister spoke at length about how Iraq had divested itself long ago of all its weapons of mass destruction, their components and their means to produce them" and on and on and on.

This is the kind of diplomacy the United Nations faces when dealing with Iraq. Diplomacy cannot be exercised with a stone wall. Diplomacy cannot be exercised with a tyrant who refuses to negotiate. Diplomacy cannot be exercised with a tyrant who places no value on the lives of his own people.

There is one thing and one thing alone that Saddam Hussein understands: the force he has used so ruthlessly on his own people.

Let us get one thing perfectly clear. This is not some theoretical threat we are talking about. This is not some exercise in American sabre rattling that some of our more colourful members would suggest.

We are talking about a tyrannical lunatic who has control over weapons that could potentially kill millions of innocent civilians in terrorist attacks. Other members have discussed the verified evi-

dence of chemical and biological weapons still in the possession of Iraq.

According to UNSCOM's February 4 report there are "38,000 chemical weapons, 480,000 litres of live CWHs, 6 scud mobile missile launchers, 19 missiles, 30 special chemical missile warheads, hundreds of other chemical and conventional warheads, hundreds of chemical weapon production items, 690 tonnes of chemical weapon agents, 3,000 tonnes of chemical weapon precursors and ingredients and a 1,000 kilometre range super gun".

They have all confirmed the existence of industrial scale VX nerve gas production facilities and production of four tonnes of VX, one drop of which can kill. They have discovered 19,000 litres of botulinum, 8,400 litres of anthrax and 2,000 litres of aflatoxin. I do not even know what all these things are but I am reliably informed that each one of them is enormously deadly.

I want to close with this sentiment. If we do not join our allies in forceful action to intervene in this tyrant's refusal to obey the international order, are we prepared as peace loving Canadians to wake up some day in the not too distant future to hear broadcasts on our television news that Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Tehran or Kuwait City have been decimated with deadly biological weapons launched from Iraq? Are we prepared for that fate?

I submit we are not, and that is why I submit that the most peaceful thing we can do is to support our allies in intervening aggressively once it is determined that all diplomatic means to this problem have been exhausted.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make some remarks tonight on the issue which will hopefully reflect the views of Canadians on just what we should be doing now in connection with the Iraq enforcement action.

• (2515)

The backdrop is the Iraq war following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the ceasefire which followed and required the destruction of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. UN inspectors have taken possession of and destroyed a number of such weapons, including 480,000 litres of chemical material that has been referred to along with other weapons in the debate tonight.

I am splitting my time with the member for Mississauga South.

The job following the Iraq war is not complete. Iraq has bucked, obstructed and prevented completion of that task. We now live in a world where we cannot tolerate the existence of such weapons in the hands of those who would threaten the world order. Perhaps I do not need to point out that Iraq has not just developed such weapons but it has used them domestically and threatened to use them internationally.

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In the face of these Iraqi threats and the complete absence of trust or confidence in its leadership, the world community is determined to eradicate these weapons. The question is how and what should Canada's role be. We are not in a position to do nothing. We are not only a UN member, we are also members of NATO and of the Commonwealth. We are already part of these alliances. When our UN, our NATO and our Commonwealth partners reach a consensus on an essential common goal, we must stand with them. It is now a given that international enforcement and peacekeeping are a part of our new world order. They are essential to global stability.

Here is my short list of what Canada should be doing which I present on behalf of my constituents. Our government must be in a position to accept or verify the latest intelligence data gathered by the United Nations and the alliance partners. Canada and its alliance partners have invested large amounts in assets that gather intelligence. While most of this data will not be released so as to protect procedures and sources, they will be available to our government members who must make the decisions, and they must assure Canadians that they have done this.

We must reassure ourselves that all United Nations and diplomatic initiatives have come to an end. There may well be some additional poker playing by the Iraqi leadership in the few weeks or days to come. I would personally rather win in a poker game than in a military engagement. Only then should we make a determination to support the alliance in a military engagement. This would be consistent with our Canadian history, over 100 years of Canadian history of participating in alliances of this nature.

As a partner in any such alliance, we must ensure the alliance will operate to secure the United Nations objectives and will not act contrary to the UN rules. We should provide such support to the alliance as is consistent with our ability and what its needs are.

We should continue to assert Canadian ways within the alliance. Only if we are present will we have the ability to assert these Canadian ways. Remember that Canada has developed over a long period of time its own ways of acting internationally. Sometimes we are rather good at it. We must not miss opportunities to influence the way in which the alliance carries out its task in this instance.

This enforcement action must be limited and must be contained almost at all costs. I realize that once one enters into a military engagement one runs the risk of losing control of it. I cannot accept that we would enter into this where there was any material risk of an expansion of the engagement beyond what the partners had agreed to.

• (2520)

I have three more points to make. First, this enforcement action should not be seen as a one-off exercise. There is a message here

for all countries that would flaunt the evolving modern rules of international order. All this is important to our collective global future.

Second, the targets of any enforcement action must be military. In an action like this we anticipate that there may be some military engagement on the ground and special operations to secure the goals of the action. However, it is my view that Canadians will not accept but will in fact reject any alliance operation which puts civilians at risk.

Third, it will be very difficult to replace the leadership in Iraq without leaving a power vacuum. In my view, a power vacuum in that region is almost as dangerous to the world order as the current circumstance.

Where would we be if we all did nothing? Would we simply wait meekly for the sucker punch that would inevitably come, with the attendant violence and instability? I do not think we want to wait meekly. I think we want to act internationally.

I do not believe that we can do nothing. We must act responsibly as Canadians in the way we have done in the past. We are now called to act to protect the international order with our partners. On the terms which I have outlined tonight, I believe that Canadians will be prepared to do that. I do not believe they have much choice.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this take note debate. Clearly over the last seven hours, members of Parliament have made it very clear this is a very important issue for Canada. It is not to be taken lightly. We are talking about a threat to world peace.

Members have been very clear. I have written many notes, which I have changed often over the last number of hours. I want to abandon a few of the points I was going to make, only because I believe they have already been well made by members, including the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

The president of the United States has asked Canada to provide non-combat support. It is important to understand that the request is for non-combat support.

The Prime Minister undertook to consult with the House prior to making his decision with his cabinet. I want to start by thanking the Prime Minister for providing the opportunity to all members of Parliament to voice the views of their constituents and their own views on behalf of their constituents.

Today I received a fax from a constituent, Ms. Janis Alton, who has written me often on matters of international peace and security and human rights issues. Ms. Alton has touched on a few points which I think Canadians would like expressed in the House.

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There are just as many questions that have to be answered. The importance of the debate is not necessarily for us to answer those questions but rather to ensure those questions are posed and fully explored as part of the decision making process.

Ms. Alton is utterly opposed to any military action. She stated in her fax: "While Iraq's leadership continues to resist full compliance with a security council order for inspection and destruction of its weapon sites, at the same time, its civil society has no voice in the matter".

She goes on to talk about human rights issues and the plight of the civilians. That is certainly an important aspect. Canadians want that assurance. That is part of the consideration. I believe that all members of Parliament hope that every possible protection and consideration will be given to innocent victims to ensure that the kinds of things that people can only imagine do not occur.

• (2525)

Ms. Alton concludes that military action should only take place with the sanction of the security council. It has been pointed out a number of times today that only two of the five security council members have given their support at this point.

The question is whether the reasons for the non-support at this point of the other members, France, Germany and Russia, are substantive which should be exhausted prior to taking any further actions. Ms. Alton has suggested seeking the resolution of the lack of unanimity of the security council is an important question for us to raise.

A number of constituents have raised with me the issue of the United States. It is the indictment that this is a unilateral action of the United States and Canada cannot be pushed around and manipulated.

This kind of attitude probably has no place in terms of the decision making process. We are talking about the fundamental issues of peace and security of the world, very serious issue, and to suggest that somehow this is a unilateral action is somewhat shortsighted.

There is no question that Saddam Hussein has not complied with resolution 687 of April 1991 nor with any subsequent resolutions. We cannot forget, however, that historically in matters of peace and security Canada has not been a bystander. Thousands and thousands of Canadians lost their lives for peace in the world. Canada has been a player, has been supportive.

The security council itself, however, has made it known very clearly that in its view Saddam Hussein represents a threat to the neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran. When we mention these countries altogether, I think we cannot help but recall how many conflicts have gone on there

for how many years and how volatile the situation is. This is a very serious situation.

There is the question of guarantees. Clearly there can be no guarantee that any military strike is going to achieve the desired results. But the question then becomes if every diplomatic option has been exhausted fully to the satisfaction of all and no further action is taken, then what?

It is a very good question. What happens? I believe it is the view of the UN that failure to comply with the UN resolution is not a passive position. It is in fact taken to be a threat, a real threat to world peace.

In the ceasefire agreement, Saddam Hussein in writing accepted that he would, under international supervision, destroy, remove or render harmless the weapons of mass destruction and that economic sanctions would be in place until compliance.

This compliance, as many members have outlined, is under the auspices of UNSCOM, the UN special commission which was established by UN security council resolution 687. Many members have outlined its responsibilities. It has not been allowed to do its job. This is important from the standpoint that this agency represents the interests of all the members of the UN.

• (2530)

It represents the monitoring agency and the agency which is going to deal with things. One of the previous speakers went through a very substantial list of the destruction of chemical weapons, missiles and missile launchers and other warheads that UNSCOM has succeeded in destroying to date. Yet there are still many more there. This is a serious threat.

Before I came to the House today I looked on the web. I wanted to see what CNN was reporting. One of the stories says that defence officials said on Monday that the U.S. is sending as many as 3,000 ground troops to Kuwait as tensions heightened over the weapons inspection impasse. Secretary of state Madeleine Albright said the United States has the authority, responsibility, means and will to launch substantial military action against Iraq if there was no diplomatic solution. These are very powerful words and no one can question the commitment or the resolve in regard to dealing with Saddam Hussein.

In closing, I want to make my input to the Prime Minister as follows, and I think it is supported by the House, that all diplomatic options be exhausted fully. We need those assurances. Second, that every effort be made to secure the support of the UN security council. This is a very important element. Third, we have to have the kind of assurances that there would be the greatest possible protection for civilians. Finally, that we take every precaution to ensure the protection of our troops if they participate.

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It is a very serious issue and I believe that the House has spoken very clearly that we have no choice if there is no diplomatic solution.

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is my first term in Parliament. I did not anticipate debating the possibility of Canada participating in a war.

Through the campaign I was asked many questions, but no one asked this question, no one asked about war. What prepares one for a debate such as this and the possible outcome of it? I believe it should be our humanity and our desire for peace that guides us.

Canada should be on the side of those who seek to resolve this crisis through negotiations and diplomacy. There is nothing to be gained in the long run through a strategy of provocation and threats. I join a Yukon resident, Rod Snow, who I just spoke to, who is opposed to the prospect of force. It is an admission of failure, the absolute failure of the world's leaders. It is not an admission I would like to make.

We must approach this extremely critically based on knowledge and based on what we know. It is hard to make decisions on what we do not know. As a parliamentarian I have not been briefed by our government. We have not had any UN representative to brief us. I do not know all the weapons information that there is. Are they there in Iraq? The UN inspectors have not been able to go in and confirm what is there.

What do we know about our Canadian army? Are they prepared? We just heard, as they have just come through the ice storm and assisting people through floods, that their budget is gone, they are understaffed, they face cutbacks, they are underfunded. We can barely give them helmets, a decent wage or even basic housing. There is very little we give them and in return what we are asking our soldiers to give us is possibly their lives.

We do not know what the financial cost of this endeavour will be to Canadians. Is it open-ended? Will we be able to get out? More importantly, can we afford the human cost?

What do we know about Iraq? We know Saddam Hussein is a dictator. We know that he is a gross human rights abuser and that he kills his own citizens. That is no reason for us to believe that it would be better for us to kill his citizens than for him to do it himself. That is no reason for us to go in and join a military strike of bombing.

• (2535)

We know that the widows and children of the gulf war are starving and dying daily. There is little if any medicine. The cities are crumbling and the young and the elderly are living under sanctions imposed in part by us. They may have biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, but so do other countries.

I would like to know who is arming this dictator. Who is selling the arms? Once again, the UN inspectors have not been able to finish their work.

Our ultimate objective, of course, is peace. What we need to do to reach this is to make sure that the UN inspectors can get into Iraq. If we join this strike as planned by the U.S., not by the UN, if we strike first there is no peace.

What would cause the greatest harm is bombing. We know that the bombs are not precise. We know who will be beneath those bombs: families, mothers, fathers, children, people who have already suffered, who are already starving and dying and who are already living under a brutal dictator.

I have heard over the last few days that what we have here are principles. Our principles are at stake. I believe, more importantly, that lives are at stake. Before we jeopardize human lives by the use of deadly weapons and approve death sentences for many civilians and before we expose our Canadian soldiers to war who may be ill prepared for it, we must make every effort to get UN inspectors into Iraq.

There will be no winners in this war. However, there is time and there are options. We do not have to go to war. We do not have to be pushed into this, especially in such a short time period, January 29 to this date. The pressure is building that we have to join, but we do not have to join.

What we need to do is make sure there is an international team of UN inspectors that excludes the U.S., Britain and possibly even Canada, but inspectors who would be allowed into Iraq to do their work. We could ease the inhumane sanctions that are causing more suffering for civilians and use that as leverage for the UN inspectors to enter Iraq.

I have heard that Canada has an obligation to join its allies and go to war. However, we are not obligated to start a war or to be a part of a war where we know the majority of suffering will fall on civilians. The language has changed so much that the death of civilians is called collateral damage. It is not seen for what it is, torture and death.

What we face is the possibility of damage by Saddam Hussein and the possibility of a threat. Once again, other countries have weapons of mass destruction. This damage and threat can be warded off with diplomacy. As leaders of the country and as members of Parliament, it is incumbent on us to make sure that we use that diplomacy.

We face the certainty of harm in comparison to the possibility of the threat from the country of Iraq. We face the certainty of harm and destruction if we join the U.S. in bombing Iraqi citizens because those are the people who will suffer. Saddam Hussein has shown himself to be very capable of surviving anything. However, it is those who are most vulnerable who will not survive and will suffer further and further.

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We also face the unknown that will follow if we do start bombing. There will be a conflagration in that area. It might ignite. It may spread. It may drag on for years.

Most of all, we must seek a humane solution. A humane solution is one where we do the least harm and the most good.

In ending, I would like to thank the Speaker, the pages and the clerk for seeing this debate through to the end and also all my parliamentary colleagues who stayed well into the night. Hopefully

this is a debate that we will never have to have again and that it will only happen once in our lifetime.

● (2540)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, pursuant to order made earlier this day, this House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. later today, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1.40 a.m.)

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