



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 10, 1998**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 10, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1005)

[*English*]

## POINTS OF ORDER

BILL S-3—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, I am now ready to render a ruling on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford on February 2, 1998 concerning Bill S-3, an act to amend the Pension Benefit Standards Act, 1985 and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I would like to thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, the whip of the official opposition, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House as well as the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni for their helpful contributions in this matter.

[*English*]

In his presentation, the opposition House leader expressed concern about the introduction of public bills in the Senate. He went on to state that Bill S-3, which had been introduced and passed in the Senate and was now on the order paper of the House, should be considered a money bill and that, as such, it should have originated in the House of Commons.

Before proceeding further I would like to make two points of clarification. With regard to the introduction of bills in the Senate, may I respectfully remind members of a ruling I delivered on October 9, 1997, following the question of privilege raised by the same honourable member on this very subject. At that time I indicated that according to our practice, bills may originate in the Senate or in the House.

Second, allow me to make a very small correction to a remark made by the hon. House leader of the official opposition. He reminded the House that Bill S-3 had been originally introduced as

Bill C-45 in the previous Parliament. In fact the similar bill from the previous Parliament was Bill C-85 and not Bill C-45.

I will now deal with the substantive procedural issue before the Chair. The hon. member alleged that both bills were essentially the same. Thus, he argued, since a royal recommendation had been attached to Bill C-85, one should also be attached to Bill S-3.

[*Translation*]

In reply to this argument, the government House leader stated that Bill S-3 does not—and should not—contain a royal recommendation since it is not a money bill.

[*English*]

So-called money bills refer to those bills which raise taxes or bills which appropriate money, whether based on annual supply votes or on bills which authorize statutory expenditures. Bills appropriating public funds must be accompanied by a royal recommendation which establishes “the objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications” as explained in citation 596, page 183 of Beauchesne's sixth edition.

• (1010)

I have carefully examined Bill S-3 and find that there are four components to this legislation, none of which in my opinion either imposes a tax or appropriates money for any purpose.

In the 1987 legislation creating the Office of Superintendent of Financial Institutions, responsibility for supervising federally regulated private sector pension plans was provided for. It seems fairly evident that the powers of the superintendent would be extended by Bill S-3. It may well be that additional expenditures would be incurred because of those enhanced powers of the superintendent.

Should an increase in resources be necessary as a result of these new powers, the necessary allocation of money would have to be sought by means of an appropriation bill because I was unable to find any provision for money in Bill S-3.

For these reasons I have determined that Bill S-3 does not require a royal recommendation and does not contravene the provisions of Standing Order 80(1). I rule therefore that Bill S-3 is properly before the House.

In making this or any other ruling, the Chair examines the arguments raised in light of the standing orders of the House and our precedents and practice developed over time. Although I may not always come to the same conclusion as a member raising a

*Routine Proceedings*

point of order, I share with all of you the common objective of having deliberations in this House unfold in a fair and orderly fashion according to our rules and practice.

I do not rule for or against a member or a party. The Chair rules to uphold the standing orders and the practice of this House. In this task I continue to depend on the vigilance and assistance of all hon. members and I wish to thank the hon. opposition House leader for raising this particular matter in defence of the privileges of the House.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to seven petitions.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INCOME TAX ACT

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-312, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (percentage of gifts that may be deducted from tax).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce a bill entitled an act to amend the Income Tax Act, percentage of gifts that may be deducted from tax. This bill will put charitable donations on the same tax footing as political donations for the first \$1,150. Thereafter any tax credits for charitable donations would remain the same.

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

\* \* \*

● (1015)

### PETITIONS

#### PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS COMPENSATION FUND

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including Canadians from my 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 in the discharge of their duties on a daily basis and that the employment benefits of police officers and firefighters are often

insufficient to compensate families for those police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty.

They also point out that the public mourns the loss of police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty. They wish to support in a tangible way the surviving members of their families in their time of need. The petitioners therefore ask Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund to provide benefits to families of public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

#### HERBAL REMEDIES AND SUPPLEMENTS

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce several petitions today.

The first petition is signed by 124 Canadians from British Columbia. The petitioners are concerned about the government's handling of herbal remedies. They feel that these remedies have been dealt with in a heavy handed manner.

#### AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns the age of consent. I would like to present this petition on behalf of my former colleague, the former member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, who was a key player in initiating the move to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16.

The petitioners request that Parliament affirm the duty of parents to responsibly raise their children according to their own conscience and beliefs and to retain section 43 of Canada's Criminal Code.

#### JOY RIDING

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in the final petition which I wish to present, the petitioners request Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to increase the minimum and maximum penalties for the offence of joy riding and to impose financial responsibility on the offenders and/or their parents or guardians whose negligence contributed to the commission of the offence.

#### MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present two petitions to the House this morning.

The first petition has to do with the multilateral agreement on investment. The petitioners state that the MAI is fundamentally flawed in so far as it seeks to protect the rights of investors without seeking similar protection for workers through binding core labour standards and that the MAI is anti-democratic in so far as it would be binding for 20 years, thus tying the hands of several Parliaments and future governments.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to reject the current framework of MAI negotiations and instruct the government to seek an entirely different agreement by which the world might achieve a rules based global trading regime which protects

workers, the environment and the ability of governments to act in the public interest.

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this petition concerns a ruling by the international court of justice on July 8, 1996 wherein the court stated unanimously that in accordance with article VI of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

Therefore the petitioners pray and request that Parliament support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of an international convention which will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

#### AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition deals with amendments to the Criminal Code and requests that the age of consent for sexual activity be raised from 14 years to 18 years of age. This petition is signed by 231 individuals from my riding and indeed from across Canada, Ontario westward.

#### HERBAL REMEDIES AND SUPPLEMENTS

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by 115 people who are calling for amendments to be made to the Food and Drugs Act dealing with herbal remedies and other nutritional supplements. The petitioners call for increased personal freedom without government interference to use herbal remedies and supplements.

The petition is signed by citizens from the area of 100 Mile House and Lac La Hache.

• (1020)

#### NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present three petitions to the House today.

The first one concerns the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is signed by citizens who are calling on Parliament to support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of an international convention which will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

#### CANADA PENSION PLAN

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by citizens who are calling upon Parliament to rescind Bill C-2 which imposes massive CPP pre-

#### Routine Proceedings

mium hikes while reducing benefits and changes the CPP financial arrangements to provide a payout to the Bay Street brokers and bankers.

The petition also further calls on the House to institute a national review for a retirement income system in Canada.

#### MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** The third petition, Mr. Speaker, concerns the multilateral agreement on investment. It calls on Parliament to reject the current framework of MAI negotiations and instructs the government to seek an entirely different agreement by which the world might achieve a rules based global trading regime that protects workers, the environment and the ability of governments to act in the public interest.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in which citizens of Canada draw the attention of the House to a fundamental flaw in the MAI in so far as it seeks to protect the right of investors without seeking similar protection for workers through binding core labour standards. They also point out that the MAI is anti-democratic in so far as it will be binding for 20 years and ties the hands of several Parliaments and future governments.

The petitioners call on Parliament to reject the current framework of MAI negotiations and instruct the government to seek an entirely different agreement by which the world might achieve a rules based global trading regime that protects workers, the environment and the ability of government to act in the public interest.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### 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. 54 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 54—**Mr. Reed Elley:**

Since inception of the GST ans with respect to outstanding GST accounts as at the end of the last recorded fiscal year, what has the government determined to be: (a) the total number of outstanding accounts; (b) the total amount assessed to these accounts; (c) the total number of litigation's against these accounts including those in process now; (d) the court costs and collection costs associated with these accounts; and (e) the total number of seizures exercised by Revenue Canada in collecting amounts owed on these accounts?

**Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal, Minister of National Revenue, Lib):** Since inception of the GST, and with respect to outstanding GST accounts as at March 31, 1997, end of last fiscal year: (a) the total number of outstanding accounts—approximately

*Supply*

718,000; (b) the total amount assessed to these accounts—\$2,288,658,000.

Since the inception of GST, all numbers are estimates based on manual input from field offices: (c) number of litigations against accounts—3,879, this figure includes the number of legal actions taken, including those still outstanding; (d) court costs—\$499,224, collection costs—unavailable. Court costs include the cost for legal agents and any other related outlays, such as registration fees for writs.

With the passage of Bill C-2, Department of National Revenue Act, royal assent May 12, 1994, the departments of taxation and of customs and excise were consolidated, and GST operations have been merged with those of other product lines. Accordingly, the costs of collecting specifically GST as of 1995/96 are no longer available on the same basis as in the past. The Department of Justice also provides support to Revenue Canada. However, the costs associated specifically with collection activities are not tracked.

e) Number of seizures exercised—1,081.

[Translation]

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—THE FUTURE OF QUEBEC

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ)** moved:

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to decide their own future.

**The Speaker:** Let me read the motion back to you. It reads as follows: “That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to decide their own future”.

[English]

Mr. Duceppe seconded by Mrs. Debien moves:

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to decide freely their own future.

Colleagues, I am reading it in both languages because there is a word missing in the English version of the motion that will be corrected on the order paper.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Berthier—Montcalm.

Today we are debating an issue of the utmost importance for people in Quebec and Canada: that the House of Commons recognize the right of the Quebec people to decide their own future.

Last week, Quebec society reached a consensus, denouncing the reference to the Supreme Court as an attempt by the federal government to subjugate the democratic will of the people of Quebec to a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Quebeckers from every political stripe, both federalists and sovereignists, agree with this. As early as last December, the Pro-Démocratie group sent out a call to mobilize against this direct attack aimed at Quebec’s democratic institutions.

This group is made up of influential people such as Jean-Claude Rivest, a Conservative senator, André Tremblay, a former constitutional adviser to Robert Bourassa, Pierre Paquette, the CSN general secretary, Claude Corbo, a former rector of the University of Quebec, the author Marco Miccone, and Monique Vézina, chair of the Mouvement national des Québécoises et des Québécois and former federal minister.

• (1025)

This is a historical consensus. I choose the word “historical” because, for more than 30 years, regardless of the political debate, there has always been a broad consensus on this crucial question within our society, a consensus that dates back to the very birth of Canada, based on the concept of two founding peoples.

As far back as 1977, René Lévesque made a clear statement on this right, in response to attacks from Prime Minister Trudeau: “There is no question of the future of the Quebec people being decided by anyone other than Quebecers themselves”.

That statement was reflected in a National Assembly resolution in response to a framework referendum act tabled by the federal parliament in 1978. That resolution, adopted in May 1978, read as follows: “That the members of this Assembly unequivocally and firmly reiterate that they subscribe to the principle that Quebecers alone are entitled to decide their own constitutional future, in accordance with the dispositions and rules this Assembly sees fit to enact”.

This historical consensus has been expressed on more than three occasions since that resolution: in 1980, at the time of the first referendum on sovereignty; in 1992, during the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord; and in 1995, during the last referendum. On three occasions, the federal government recognized this Quebec consensus by participating of its own free will in the referendum campaigns and by even accepting Quebec’s consultation of its people in keeping with the Quebec referendum legislation at the time of the Charlottetown accord.

*Supply*

But now today we find the federal government, led by its Prime Minister, trying to deny this reality, this consensus shared in by all of the key stakeholders of Quebec society.

That is why Claude Ryan and Daniel Johnson spoke out last week against this historical backtracking. The two former leaders of the no camp in the last two referendums on sovereignty merely reiterated their support and deep attachment to Quebec and Canadian democracy. For them, and for millions of Quebecers, the debate on the sovereignty of Quebec is not a legal question, but a political one, a question of democracy.

For them, and for millions of Quebecers, in the debate on Quebec sovereignty the democratically expressed voice of the Quebec people is what counts, not the decision by nine federal government-appointed justices.

For them, as for millions of Quebecers, the debate on sovereignty goes far beyond a legal issue.

There is a huge distance between the people of Quebec and the federal government, which is trying to subjugate the sovereign will of a people to the will of a court of law, to submit our will to a constitution, which the National Assembly has never approved and which was imposed unilaterally on us by Ottawa.

For democratic Quebecers, the sovereign will of a people is above a constitution. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is doing his level best to subject the vote of Quebecers to the Constitution of 1982.

People who believe in democracy know that people decide on constitutions; constitutions do not dominate people. If there were no people, there would be no constitutions. We place the democratic voice of the people of Quebec above the Constitution of Canada, whereas the federal government and its Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs are trying to subject Quebecers to the Constitution, which never received the approval of the National Assembly of Quebec.

And they chose the supreme court to attack Quebecers' fundamental right. The supreme court, their supreme court, their rule of law, their outdated colonial pretensions.

As was pointed out by an international law expert, Alain Pellet, the chair of the United Nations International Law Commission, we are dealing with one of the worst attempts by a government at political manipulation. The Prime Minister is trying to use the supreme court as a political and partisan tool.

It is a frontal attack on the institutions of Quebec, on a fundamental right of the people of Quebec and especially on the principles of democracy dear to Canadians and Quebecers both.

• (1030)

Today's motion will be very revealing. We will finally see whether some members of this House are capable of backing their words with their actions.

In 1991, the New Democratic Party said: "The New Democratic Party recognizes the right of Quebecers to self-determination. The New Democrats will respect the result of the democratic expression of this right." If the New Democrats are willing to respect the result of a referendum, it means that what matters to them is the ballot box and not the opinion of the nine Justices of the Supreme Court.

In 1991 also, the annual meeting of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada passed the following resolution: "Be it resolved that the right of Quebecers to self-determination be confirmed." Therefore Conservatives also recognized that it is a political question, since they acknowledged that it is the right of Quebecers to decide their own future, not the right of nine justices appointed by the federal government. New Democrats and Conservatives will therefore have to abide by the democratic will of their own rank-and-file members and support the motion introduced by the Bloc Quebecois.

Finally, if Reform members vote against the motion it will not be the first time that they target Quebec. Yesterday, they were denying Quebecers the right to be candidates. Today, if they vote against the motion, they will deny Quebecers the right to freely choose their own future.

Even though the Liberals got involved in the referendum, they never explicitly recognized the right of Quebec to democratically decide its own future, but the Liberal Party of Quebec did so a number of times.

The message sent to the House of Commons through our motion is intended for all parliamentarians, in Quebec and in Canada. It is an unequivocal message that neither judges, the federal government or the rest of Canada will decide the future of a whole nation.

In conclusion, I must recall what my father, Jean Duceppe, said on June 25, 1990, in his last speech. He said, and I quote: "One thing is for certain. The future of Quebec will no longer be decided in Newfoundland, Manitoba or elsewhere. It will be decided in Quebec by the Quebecers themselves".

[English]

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the leader of the Bloc a simple question. He mentioned people being beyond the Constitution, the voice of people being above the Constitution. Could he tell the House where the principle of the rule of law enters into his thinking? To make it more clear, will one of the governing

*Supply*

principles in the new Quebec that he envisions be adherence to the rule of law?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Reform Party for his question. I said in my speech that we saw, in 1982, that the rule of law is the rule of law of Canada and not of Quebec. Quebec was not asked whether it accepted the Constitution of 1982. All parties in Quebec, both federalist and sovereignist, never accepted that Constitution.

I would have liked to see how, for example, the leader of the Reform Party would have reacted if, in 1982, the Constitution had been patriated without Alberta's consent. Let us think about that for two minutes. I am convinced that the leader of the Reform Party would have denounced this unilateral action. Federalists have been coming here since 1867 to support unilateral actions, always to Quebec's detriment. We have seen them at work.

Now, today, I am being asked whether, in a new Quebec, the rule of law would prevail. The answer is yes, and it will be a true rule of law, not a hypocritical one, like the federalists who knowingly violated Quebec's referendum law at their "love-in" on the eve of the referendum on October 30, 1995.

• (1035)

They came and told us: "we love you", while at the same time violating the very principles of the referendum law. "We love you" in French, in English, in multicultural, in all languages. They cannot even speak French in Nagano. We have had enough of this hypocritical rhetoric, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are debating this morning a most important motion, probably the most important that the House will be examining during the 36th Parliament, since it deals with the foundations of our political system, democracy, and aims at allowing a people to express itself freely.

The goal of this motion is to obtain the acknowledgment of the consensus reached in Quebec, according to which it is for Quebecers to decide freely their own future. Faced with this Liberal government, which is trying to hijack democracy, we could not stand idly by. We could not allow what they are doing to democracy.

Every party in this House has a civic and political responsibility to rise against this dangerous political manoeuvring by Ottawa. As the Leader of the Bloc Québécois said earlier, other parties in this House will have to make their position on this issue known. Reformers, Conservatives and New Democrats alike will have to take a stand on this most important issue, democracy. When the

time comes to vote, we will see on which side those parties stand. Will they be on the government's side, which is trying to use the supreme court for political ends?

If they vote against this principle, they will become accomplices and players in this machiavellian plan of the government. Their hands will be stained by their rejection of a democratic principle recognized throughout the world.

However, Quebecers have understood what is at stake. In the last several weeks, we have seen and heard men and women from every political background condemn the government for what it is trying to do. Since I have little time left, I will name only a few of them. Claude Ryan, chairman of the no committee during the 1980 referendum and former Leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec; Daniel Johnson, leader of the no committee in 1995 and present leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec; some senators, and among them Jean-Claude Rivest; former Conservative ministers, among them Monique Vézina; reporters who are not always on our side but who have vigorously condemned what the federal government is doing. There were also members of the church hierarchy, namely Mgr Blanchette, bishop of Rimouski; Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, who delivered the same message, namely that it is for Quebecers to decide their own future.

Liberals, Conservatives, civilians, the secular clergy and members of religious orders, former ministers, senators and even present politicians, all have in common a sense of democracy. The consensus was reached in Quebec and it is still there. The government must take note of that. As Claude Ryan rightfully proclaimed on February 4, 1998, "democracy is more important than anything else". The future of Quebec is not a legal but a political issue. It is not a legal debate for lawyers or judges but a democratic debate for the people of Quebec.

I find the actions of the federal government, the way they use the Supreme Court of Canada, revolting and shocking. I am not the only one to think so.

Let me just quote the Chairman of the International Law Commission of the United Nations, who is not a sovereignist and who is not beholden to Quebecers. I doubt anyone will question his credibility and expertise in international law. In a brief to the Supreme Court of Canada, he said that he was deeply disturbed and shocked by the partisan way the questions were asked and suggested that it was the duty of a court of justice to react to what clearly appears to be a blatant political manipulation attempt. This is quite something.

• (1040)

However, if Mr. Pellet had gone over all the decisions made by the Supreme Court of Canada throughout the years, he would have seen that this is not the first time Ottawa has tried to manipulate the



Supreme Court judges on issues dealing with the Constitution and the division of powers.

In Quebec, we have a saying: “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.” The Supreme Court judges probably feel like saying: “Do not argue with the people who appoint and support you.”

It seems like the learned and distinguished judges sitting on the Supreme Court of Canada, or rather the loyal servants of the central power, have always been trying to distort the 1867 Constitution.

Ernest Lapointe, who was justice minister and attorney general of Canada in 1925, a long time ago, once made the following statement, to which, I think, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs should listen carefully. He said that the federal power is a creation of the provinces, and not the opposite. That is quite easy to understand. However, through the years, we have noticed that the Supreme Court judges, in collusion with the federal government, do not see things the same way.

There is another consensus in Quebec about the legal impasse we have reached. People feel that things have never been so bad, and it has been like this for a long time.

The Supreme Court is like the Tower of Pisa, because it always leans the same way. This is more than an image, it can be proven. You only have to review the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada to get the picture.

Quebeckers cannot expect anything from the Supreme Court of Canada. It is biased when it comes to protecting Canada and centralizing powers.

Following the patriation of the Constitution, René Lévesque said, in 1982: “What it does for Quebec is that it simply makes it virtually impossible to resist centralization every time the federal government wants to impose it”. Unfortunately, history has proven him right.

Since 1982, we have witnessed a systematic consolidation of federal powers and prerogatives to the detriment of provincial constitutional jurisdictions. This tendency is not only because of Ottawa’s political will, but mainly because of the many decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada.

A statistical look at all the cases heard by the Supreme Court that came from provincial appeal courts between 1987 and 1996 reveals a pretty astonishing fact. Almost six out of ten judgements from Quebec are reversed, whereas the national average for all the provinces is about four out of ten. It must be, on the part of Supreme Court judges, a special treatment for a distinct society.

The year 1981 was a very dark moment in Canadian history since it is the year when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the federal government’s decision to unilaterally patriate the

### *Supply*

Constitution. That opened the door to the largest possible centralization of powers by federalists.

In 1981, judges of the Supreme Court said that the federal government had the right, despite the provinces’ opposition, to ask London for a patriation that would affect provincial powers, but that it would violate a constitutional convention by doing so. Therefore, the unilateral patriation of the Constitution by Trudeau and by the present Prime Minister of Canada was viewed by the highest court in the country as legal but illegitimate under a constitutional convention.

Today, to render judgement on the three matters submitted them by the federal government, the judges will not even have to examine constitutional conventions because these questions are based solely on the Canadian Constitution of 1982.

Time really flies. You are signalling me that I have only one minute left. I will certainly have the opportunity at some later point to say more on this subject and to refer to several judgements, dealing with matters ranging from Hydro-Quebec to intergovernmental affairs, to show that, more and more, centralization of powers by the federal government is done with the blessing and the complicity of the Supreme Court.

• (1045)

I would like to propose an amendment to the Bloc Québécois’ motion on this allotted day:

That the motion be amended by adding the word “alone” between the words “Quebeckers” and “to decide”.

In addition, a comparison of the French wording of the Bloc Québécois’ motion with its English translation in today’s order paper reveals a number of what I hope are unintentional translation errors. When reading it, it is obvious that the English and French texts differ substantially.

In the interests of clarification, I have translated the motion for the House and I would like to table it so that both the English and French versions reflect our original intent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm for tabling the correction already ruled in order by the Speaker of the House earlier this morning.

The amendment is also in order.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to comment on the speech by the member for Berthier—Montcalm and that of the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Today is an historic occasion, as both speeches made very clear. The appeal to representatives of other parties is important because there was a very significant parting of the ways in Canada in 1982, and there will be another even more obvious one today if the other elected parties in the House decide to vote against the motion and

*Supply*

allow the Supreme Court's decision to take precedence over that of the Quebec people.

This is why I would like the member for Berthier—Montcalm to be able to make all Canadians and Quebecers understand why democracy must take priority. What in particular should Quebecers and Canadians understand about our motion so that their decision is a clear one and so that the Canadian public, which has seen three referendums since 1980, can be sure that here in the House, which is a symbol of democracy, all parties act with respect for this democracy?

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It gives me an opportunity to add something to the argument I was making.

Indeed the purpose of our motion is to have the House recognize the existence in Quebec of a very broad consensus on a very critical issue, that of democracy.

• (1050)

The mere fact that someone like Claude Ryan, a political opponent who headed the no committee in 1980, is now recalling the first referendum held on Quebec sovereignty and now speaking up to seek recognition for the very important principle of democracy, and siding with the likes of Lucien Bouchard and the leader of the Bloc Québécois, that is very important.

Also when someone like Daniel Johnson, the present leader of the Quebec Liberal Party who will face the premier in a campaign debate in a few weeks or months, takes a stand on the critical issue of democracy, like he did this week, all the political parties in the House should understand that, by rejecting the Bloc's motion they would be rejecting a well-established consensus in the province. Moreover, for the Conservative Party and the NDP, it would mean going against resolutions duly adopted by their members during their convention.

It is for Quebecers to decide their own future. It is not a legal issue but a political one. It is not up to judges and lawyers, but to the province's population that is of age to do so. Recent referendums demonstrated how the Quebec people deals with such issues properly, in an organized manner.

Answering this question gives me the opportunity to add a very precise point. I could not mention it in my statement for lack of time.

Over the last few years, a new principle has become apparent in the Supreme Court of Canada's authoritative judgments. Someone said earlier that the questions raised by the Court created some fears. It is now clear that those fears were justified since the new constitutional jurisprudence does not simply deal with the division

of powers; in some cases, it clearly asserts the constitutional intention to create a single country.

That notion is nowhere to be found in the Canadian Constitution. That is the judges' interpretation. So much so that in her presentation in response to the amicus curiae's presentation to the Court on Quebec's right to secede, in a case now before the Supreme Court of Canada, the Attorney General of Canada declares that it is clearly the intent of the Constitution and the wish of the founding provinces to unite in a federation to create a single united dominion.

I think that this is not the way Quebecers see the situation. To me, the real meaning of the concept of founding provinces and of two founding peoples that existed at the time has been lost on the way.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the leader of the Bloc for giving me the opportunity to explain once again for the benefit of the Bloc the reasons why the Canadian government asked the supreme court for legal clarifications on a unilateral declaration of independence.

However, let me deplore the totally uncalled for charges both spokespersons of the Bloc made against one of the most respected courts in the world, whose decisions have been quoted by the major judicial authorities in the whole world.

I could give various quotations supporting the competence of the highest court in the land. I will give you only one, and I quote "I have been practising law for 20 years. I can testify that justice in Canada is in good hands and that we have judges who are responsible and aware of their obligations".

That was said on September 1, 1988, by a former federal minister who is now the Premier of Quebec, that is, the Hon. Lucien Bouchard.

I could add this, and again I am quoting him "As for me, I am for the rule of law in all cases. Rights must be respected. In a society where the rule of law applies, it is totally unthinkable, in particular for a first minister, to consider threatening brutal action against the rule of law".

That was said on September 21, 1996, by the current Premier of Quebec. I want to do him a favour and prevent him from continuing to claim that he can, in fact, take dramatic action outside the rule of law, for this is indeed the purpose of our reference to the supreme court.

• (1055)

We have never said the issue was to keep Quebecers in Canada against their will, but the opposite. Our country would not be the

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same if it were not resting on the voluntary participation of all its constituent parts.

What is at issue is the claim by the current Quebec government that, under the international law—and they must stop telling us that this is not a legal issue, as they are the ones who claim they have a right—they have the right to proclaim themselves the government of an independent state as a result of a referendum process they alone would have defined and interpreted.

We believe there is no such right. When there is disagreement on a legal issue, the thing to do is to go to the highest court or to some court in order to get clarification, which everybody should welcome as a needed clarification in democracy. I say it is undemocratic to refuse to hear a legal clarification and ask people to make a decision without knowing the legal consequences of their decision and the legal context surrounding it.

If we say in Canada that we cannot keep part of our population against its clearly expressed will, it is not because we are bound by some international or Canadian legal requirement—at least that is what we believe and we will see eventually what the court's opinion is on this score—but because that is part of our political culture in Canada, part of our values. We feel that our country would not be the same, as I said earlier, if it did not resting on the voluntary participation of all its constituent parts.

The issue in this debate does not concern peoples' will, but the way peoples' will should be expressed. We think that this procedure should be crystal clear and transparent, and express this will in such a way that it will be obvious to all.

If a community in Canada does not want to be part of Canada any more, which clears the way for separation, a most unfortunate occurrence, this community would not proclaim itself to be a people and bring along other peoples against their will. Because if that were the case, I would ask Bloc members whether this is a purely political issue which has nothing to do with the law. In that case, they would surely agree with this motion: That this House recognize the Cree consensus that it is for the Cree to decide freely their own future. Are the Cree less of a people than Quebecers?

You can see that they would be the first say: "Oh, no; the Cree do not have this right. We have it, and, on top of that, the right to take the Cree along with us. But no, they do not have this right". This is a double standard that has no moral basis and, in our opinion, no legal basis. We will see what the court has to say about the legal basis.

The political culture Quebecers and all Canadians share has been summed up very ably by Ernest Renan, a French philosopher who said that a country is based on the clearly expressed will of a community to live together. We believe that Quebecers, if the

issue is clearly defined, will always say that want to go on sharing this common life inside a great federation they have contributed to, along with all the other Canadians.

What I have just said should have been obvious and readily acknowledged for a long time. On September 26, 1996, in explaining why we were referring this matter to the supreme court, the attorney general of the day, who is now the health minister, said in the House, and I quote:

The leading political figures of all the provinces and indeed the Canadian public have long agreed that this country will not be held together against the will of Quebecers clearly expressed. And this government agrees with that statement. This position arises partly out of our traditions of tolerance and mutual respect but also because we know instinctively that the quality and the functioning of our democracy requires the broad consent of all Canadians.

He went on to say:

The issue is not whether a democracy such as Canada can keep a population against its will. Of course, it cannot. The issue arises from the false claim by the Government of Quebec that it alone, in a unilateral fashion that changes according to its short term political interests, can decide the process that may lead to secession. Quebecers as well as their fellow citizens across Canada would be dramatically affected by the break-up of our country. Everyone has the right to be certain that the process is lawful, mutually acceptable and fair to all.

● (1100)

This position, which I just stated, as did my colleague in September 1996, is not new. It was stated by the Prime Minister of Canada a few days before the 1980 referendum, that is on May 14. The Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau said: "This is what we have to tell the yes side. If you want independence, if you want to vote yes, you will not achieve independence, because you have made it conditional on an association. If you want association, voting yes is meaningless, because it does not bind the other provinces, which may refuse to associate with you. This is the impasse in which this vague and confusing question put us". These comments were made just before the first referendum, on May 14, 1980.

What did the Prime Minister, who is still our Prime Minister, say during the first referendum? This is what he said in this House on September 19, 1995:

And perhaps I could explain this to the Leader of the Opposition. I would like to quote to him from a document produced by the government of Mr. Lévesque, and of course he knows Mr. Lévesque. In 1977, in a document which appeared under the title: *La consultation populaire au Québec*, they said: "Referendums would be consultative in nature". I agree. The document says: "The first imperative of politics in a democracy is a clear majority". I agree. The document goes on to say: "The consultative nature of referendums", they should have said referenda, in any case, "means that it would be unnecessary to include in the legislation special provisions on the majority required or the minimum participation rate".

We could ask the Bloc Quebecois to comply with the Quebec Referendum Act. Again, on September 19, the Prime Minister added:

*Supply*

Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, I want to make sure that the Canadian constitution is complied with.

On September 20, the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, I answered all those questions yesterday and the day before. I even quoted from René Lévesque's program, in which he mentioned the concept of a referendum as consultation, the need to respect the laws and constitution of a country and the need for a clear majority.

If we accept that Canada can be broken up, it is not because we are forced into it by law, it is because of a political culture peculiar to us, one which other highly respectable democracies do not share. The Australian constitution states that it is an indissoluble federal Commonwealth. Is Australia a bad democracy? Surely not, but according to the Bloc definition, it would be a pariah among nations.

Article 167 of the Belgian constitution states that "No devolution, no exchange, no adjunction of territory can take place except by virtue of legislation".

Denmark blocked the separation of the Faeroe Islands after a 50.7% yes referendum. Is Denmark a pariah among democratic nations? No.

In the Czech Republic, "The territory of the Czech Republic forms an indivisible entity, the borders of which may be modified only by constitutional legislation".

In Finland, another multicultural nation, "The territory of the State of Finland is indivisible".

I have a long list of democracies which have decided they were indivisible.

In conclusion, let me say that it is absurd to state that the decision can be made by one side alone. The amendment is therefore absurd, because secession must be negotiable. Quebecers cannot decide the division of the debt on their own.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Oh, yes, they can.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** I therefore ask the unanimous consent of the House to move the following amendment to the amendment:

That the motion be amended by adding the following after the word "future": "while respecting the rule of law and the principle of democracy for all".

• (1105)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The amendment moved by the minister is actually a substantive amendment to the main motion. What is presently before the House is the amendment moved by the member for Berthier—Montcalm. Therefore, any sub-amendment must be related to his amendment.

According to the rules of procedure, I must declare the minister's amendment inadmissible.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Madam Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to have the amendment ruled admissible anyway.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Is there unanimous consent to rule the minister's amendment in order?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The member for Joliette, on a point of order.

**Mr. René Laurin:** Madam Speaker, by making this request, is the minister not challenging your decision since you already ruled his amendment to be inadmissible?

If the House unanimously agreed to ask you to rule the amendment in order, would it not be telling you you were wrong?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Unanimous consent was requested. We will leave it at that.

**Mr. Bob Kilger:** Madam Speaker, I just want to clarify something.

First I want to stress how important today's debate is. In any case, I believe it to be consistent with the rules of this Parliament, this democracy, this institution, to ask for unanimous consent on any issue at any time.

It is not a matter of questioning the Chair's ruling but of asking for unanimous consent, which in the present case has unfortunately been refused. We have always respectfully abided by the decisions of the Chair and of parliamentarians from all the parties represented in this House.

• (1110)

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have both a favour and a question to ask the minister.

I cannot conceive of a minister rising in this House to question the quality of democratic life in Quebec. You will agree with me that it takes some nerve to tell the Quebec people, who, not just once but twice already have overwhelmingly expressed their willingness to be involved, by reaching a consensus in a referendum process, in the process their government was asking them to participate in. I will not stand idly by while the minister rises in this House and questions the democratic quality of the consultations that have taken place in Quebec.

One thing is crystal clear to the Quebec people and that is that the minister is isolated, a lone wolf. His yearning for attacking the deep-rooted democracy in Quebec is doomed to failure because the likes of Claude Ryan and Claude Corbo, the former rector of UQAM, have stood up to him. They contend that the Supreme Court cannot be the one to decide because what this is about is the

*Supply*

right of the Quebec people to freely make an informed decision the only way it can be done and that is through a referendum process initiated by the Quebec National Assembly.

All members of this House, and government members in particular, who do not recognize this process violate Quebecers' cherished right to democracy.

I would like to know if the minister will have the honesty to recognize that he is alone and isolated in his position and that the dynamic forces of Quebec, everyone who took part in the various referendum processes these past few years, said no, it is not up to the Supreme Court to decide. Will this minister now rise in this House and admit that he stands alone, that he was wrong and that Quebecers have the right to come to a decision through a referendum? That is what democracy is all about.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Madam Speaker, we must comply with the provisions of the Quebec referendum act. That is the bottom line. It provides that a referendum is consultation and that, after the consultation, the results are assessed.

The issue is whether the government of all Canadians can fully assess the results. That is the issue. It seems that that is self evident in any democracy in the world. It is a very basic principle of democracy that Quebecers are also Canadians and that their possible loss of Canada can arise only from a decision that is clearly expressed and recognized as one. It cannot be a decision the provincial government takes because at that point in time it has the option of withdrawing Quebec from Canada according to a procedure it alone has established and interpreted.

I ask the member, who claims he believes in democracy, whether there is one democracy in the world that supported this procedure—I can hardly wait to hear—and whether there are many political parties in democracies that oppose the constitutional state and democracy for all.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister, who has just—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The member for Winnipeg—Transcona, on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, I am sure if you consult the tradition, the practice and the intent of this procedure for questions and comments the idea is that the questions and comments not only be spread around the parties but, when this rule was created, the intention was that members of parties other than that of the person who just spoke would get precedence.

We are now about to have two questions in a row from the Bloc Québécois. I think it should be spread around.

• (1115)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I must tell the hon. member that he is quite right in his assessment of the situation. Unfortunately I did not see him rise before the other member.

**Mr. Jim Gouk:** How could you miss him?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** I am not exactly small. Do I have to get up on my desk?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I was only looking in one direction.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like the minister to tell me whether he still does not find it a bit odd that his court justices were asked for their opinion as a last resort. It is a bit like a divorce case. This is about divorce.

It is as if a couple had a difference in separation proceedings and one of the spouses told the other that his or her mother was going to settle the dispute. It is a bit like that.

Does he not think that his justices—appointed by him, paid by him and in his service—are not likely to be biased in the decision they are asked to give, a decision that should, if they have understood their role, suit their minister?

That is what is upsetting the people of Quebec at the moment, and he did not resolve the problem in his speech, earlier. I would like him to be a little more explicit.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Madam Speaker, I believe I answered the hon. member by quoting the words of his leader, the Premier of Quebec, who recognized the quality, in fact the great quality, of the Canadian justice system, including the supreme court.

Yes, we have a court renowned throughout the world and one of the most often quoted. The opinion it will give will be considered by judicial experts and courts all over the world, because it will carry weight in some other countries, something which will be considered as very important.

I am confident that the justices really want to be honest and competent.

The other thing that should be said is that we are not asking the court whether it is right or wrong to secede. We are not asking the court to declare that Quebecers should stay in Canada against their will. We are asking the court to tell us whether or not the PQ government, the present Quebec government, has any legitimacy when it argues that it has the right to proclaim itself the government of an independent state based on the results of a consultation of the people it alone established and interpreted.

*Supply*

We should not confuse the issues for political reasons. They are too important for that.

If the court renders a decision favourable to the position of the Government of Canada, everybody will benefit from this information. We are not going to make important decisions without that information.

If you are a union leader and you tell your members that you can launch an illegal strike, you are not acting in a democratic way.

What the Government of Quebec is presently asking its citizens to do is precisely that—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I apologize for interrupting the minister, but his time is up.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just want to put it on the record that I do not believe that I was not seen. I believe I was not chosen. I believe the Chair had the right, after acknowledging that I was right in my interpretation of the rules, to move to recognize me and not the member for Chambly. The Chair chose not to do that twice and I regret that very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Resuming debate.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion because it raises the issue of the future of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

The official opposition is very concerned about the future of Quebecers. We want to do everything we can to make sure that this future is as good as possible.

[*English*]

I suggest that the motion before us is only half a motion. The motion is really referring to the rights of Quebecers but it does so without qualification. It appears to imply that the right of Quebecers to decide their own future is some absolute right but in reality, there are no such things as absolute rights.

• (1120)

Every right is subject to qualifications and limits. Rights are limited by the rights of others. My right to extend my fist stops at the end of your nose. So what we have before us is half a motion. The missing words are subject to the rule of law and the principle of democratic consent.

The official opposition maintains that Quebecers have the right to decide their own future but first of all in accordance with the rule of law. In the case of Canada that means in accordance with the Constitution of Canada which is the supreme law of our country.

Whether or not the Bloc or the PQ like the Constitution of Canada, it is the law of the land. That law contains no explicit

provision for the secession of a province. The only way a province could lawfully secede would be to pass a constitutional amendment which would then have to be carried in this House and approved by the other provinces.

The point that the current law does not provide for a unilateral secession seems patently self-evident to us, but if that point will gain more authority by a ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada, so be it. That is why we favour the reference to the supreme court to get a determination on this matter.

Members of the Bloc will say that they do not intend to respect the rule of law with respect to this point, the right of a province to secede, but I would plead with the Bloc members to tread very carefully on that ground.

Once you say—particularly once lawmakers say—that you respect the rule of law except on this point or that, you are opening a door which you may never be able to shut. And if you teach your people that there are exceptions to the rule of law and that when they disagree with the law they should feel free to break it with impunity rather than to change it, you are starting down a very dangerous road.

That is why I asked the hon. leader of the Bloc after his speech whether he believed in the rule of law within a new Quebec. He said yes. Yet if the Bloc teaches the people of Quebec that there are exceptions to the rule of law, what will be the answers of such members when some citizens of Quebec say to them down the road “We do not like your law. We intend to break your law and we declare that we have a right to unilaterally break it because you taught us that this is permissible”.

Another qualification on the Quebecers’ right to decide their own future is the principle of democratic consent. Reform has been quite clear on this point. We want Quebecers to remain in Canada. We fervently desire to unite Canada for the 21st century.

We believe that Canada can be united by reforming the federation on the principle of equality and through a rebalancing of the powers. But we have also stated that if a majority of Quebecers responding to a fair question in a fair referendum process were to decide in favour of secession, the Government of Canada would then have an obligation to enter into negotiations of terms and conditions of secession, terms and conditions on which Canadians would then have to pass judgment.

Before the Bloc Quebecois members rejoice too much at our endorsement of this principle of democratic consent, let me make clear that it is a two-edged sword. If we affirm that Quebecers have a right to decide their own future in a referendum, that right should apply to every Quebecer including those who see their future as part of Canada.

The ballot for a referendum on secession to be fair to all concerned should bear two questions. And I do not mind saying what the wording of those questions should be: Should Quebec separate from Canada and become an independent country with no special legal ties to Canada, yes or no? If Quebec separates from

Canada, should your community separate from Quebec and remain part of Canada, yes or no?

If a majority vote on the first question on separation is sufficient to trigger the negotiation of a secession, a majority vote on the second question in a particular district or municipality would trigger the partition of Quebec, a change in the boundaries of Quebec in accordance with the right of Quebecers, in this case a minority of Quebecers, to determine their future. In other words if Canada is divisible, as long as the process employed respects the rule of law and the principle of democratic consent, then Quebec is divisible by the application of the same processes and the same principles.

• (1125)

I conclude by saying it is because the secession of Quebec would not only diminish Canada but would also diminish Quebec, it is because both Canada as a whole and Quebec as an entity would ultimately be injured by secession and partition, that we search for a third way beyond separation and status quo federalism. We earnestly plead with Quebecers to consider that third way and to generate a new consensus around that third option as the best guarantee of a secure and a prosperous future.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC):** Madam Speaker, we welcome this opportunity to debate this motion in the House of Commons.

I want to take the opportunity to ask a few questions of the leader of the Reform Party to understand clearly where he stands on some issues.

I would like to quote an article written in the *Calgary Sun* on October 30, 1995 by his principal adviser, a Mr. Ezra Levant, whom we see here almost on a daily basis in the House of Commons. He wrote an article entitled "Ten reasons to vote yes".

I would like to offer the opportunity today to the leader of the Reform Party to clarify the position because I understand this is the position of the Reform Party of Canada. And if it is not, then the leader of the Reform Party has a choice. He can either fire his principal adviser who is presenting this position and has not backed down or it is the position of the Reform Party.

Let me quote what Mr. Levant says in the name of the Reform Party on why they should vote yes in the referendum. His second reason is to end bilingualism and multiculturalism. In paragraph 3 he states "If we kicked out Quebec, we might then have the fortitude to tackle Canada's other ethnic separatists, natives"—natives are ethnic separatists according to him—"demanding their First Nations". He then goes on to say "Next would be the National Action Committee on the Status of Women" and then radical environmentalist groups.

Mr. Levant in the name of the Reform Party goes on. In paragraph 4 he states that we should "end the corruption of

### *Supply*

Parliament. For decades, Quebec's largest export to Ottawa has been politicians who bring old style patronage to Parliament. We won't miss the politics of road paving". I see the Reform members agreeing with that. That is the attitude they have shown.

I have a second short question. The leader of the Reform Party in 1990 at the opening of Reform's offices in Montreal said "If Reform Party MPs were elected in Quebec, they would work for separatism if that is what their constituents wanted".

Could the Reform Party leader explain to us how he conciliates his position of populism that says they represent strictly the views of their MPs? How can he explain that he would accept that there would be Reform MPs in Ottawa representing separatism?

I will quote from the July 21, 1994 *Toronto Star*: "In our view the wishes of the constituents ought to prevail in determining how the members vote. If we get a member of Parliament in Quebec, that member will be expected to represent Quebec's interest".

Those are two straightforward questions for the leader of the Reform Party.

**Mr. Preston Manning:** Madam Speaker, first of all I find it incredible that the leader of the Conservative Party would put his focus in this debate on articles taken from the *Calgary Sun* and the *Toronto Star*.

The first one was written by Mr. Levant long before he worked for us. These positions do not represent the position of the Reform Party, as the hon. member knows. But it gives us an opportunity to declare what our positions are.

I have made it abundantly clear that our principal position is to want this country united like it has never been united before and to put an end to the kind of division that has been brought about by old line party politicians practising on this national unity issue and making a career out of it for 30 years and leaving us in the position where we are at.

Second, we believe that the key to uniting this country is to find a new balance of powers between the federal and provincial governments.

• (1130)

We have practical evidence from the pollsters and from our own experience that it is the one concept for changing the federation for which there is growing support inside Quebec and outside Quebec.

This is the principle on which we believe the country can be united. We are going to do everything in our power to communicate the rebalancing of powers in which we believe inside Quebec and outside Quebec and to provide a third option for Quebecers and not the status quo federalism that has been represented by this party and that party for 30 years and not the separation of the

*Supply*

country advocated by that party, many of which members were recruited into politics by that party.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, if there is one constant for the NDP concerning the motion before the House today, it is our steadfast support, since our founding in 1961, for cooperative federalism, which reflects the duality of Canada and the distinct place of Quebec within the federation.

As Tommy Douglas said in 1967 with respect to the first report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism:

The Canadian Constitution must create equality between Canada's English and French speaking communities, as well as the conditions necessary for both these communities to have equality of opportunity. In order for there to be such equality, special arrangements must be concluded with the Government of Quebec in order to negotiate a new division of responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments.

[*English*]

Since our founding convention in 1961 the NDP has been very clear in its support of the notion of Canada as two founding peoples.

**Mr. Randy White:** It sounds like debate.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** It is debate. Pay attention. I spoke in French and threw the Reformers off.

**Mr. Randy White:** No respect.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** In any event, what I was saying was that since the inception of the NDP in 1961 we have been very clear in our perception of Canada as two founding peoples, with the understanding that we have other founding peoples in Canada in terms of our aboriginal people. We have gone on from that time to accept both in reality and in debate various forms of asymmetrical federalism.

I remember in the debate on patriation—Madam Speaker, if this is so important to members of the Bloc, maybe they could have their caucus meeting outside the House so I can hear myself think. I am talking about you, Bellehumeur.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Order, please.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** We have traditionally supported forms of asymmetrical federalism and we have traditionally supported self-determination for Quebec. Many of the resolutions that were quoted earlier by members of the Bloc in their opening speeches reflect accurately positions taken by the NDP in the past and

positions which are held to this day with respect to the ultimate ability of Quebecers to freely decide their own future.

I did not think there was any dispute about this. I do not really understand Bloc members when they say there is a new consensus in Quebec around this, that Claude Ryan has suddenly done something new.

• (1135)

It seems to me that in all of Canada, in the referendums of 1980 and 1995 and in the debate that surrounded those referendums, there was always the acknowledgement by the prime ministers of the day and by other political leaders that in the final analysis the future of Quebec within Canada was a political question, not a legal question, and that it would be up to the people of Quebec to decide their future within Canada. Any attempt to detract from this principle is unacceptable.

The questions at issue, which unfortunately the Bloc did not try to clarify in the language of its motion, are what is the role or purpose of the supreme court in this matter and what is the role of the rule of law in this matter. There are process questions that need to be answered. The Bloc did itself a disservice by not trying to address some of the process questions in the motion. I heard some of the members address such concerns.

There was a reference to referendum and a clarity of process, et cetera, but they are asking a lot of us and a lot of other members of Parliament—and we may yet do it—to vote for a motion that leaves questions of process up in the air.

This is our concern. It is not an anxiety about or an objection to the principle that Quebecers might freely decide their future and someday might decide to leave the country. We think that would be a tragedy of historic proportion, but we have never said that Quebecers should be kept in the country against their will.

However, just as Quebec entered the country by negotiation it is not unreasonable to make the claim that Quebec, having chosen freely in a clear and fair process to leave Canada, would have to leave Canada by negotiation with the rest of Canada. The rest of Canada would have some say in how that would happen, not whether it would happen. That seems to me to be only fair, particularly when we consider that there are outstanding questions with respect to the self-determination of aboriginal people within Quebec, a territory that was not a part of Quebec when it entered Confederation.

These are reasonable questions. They are not raised as threats or in any way to diminish the freedom of the people of Quebec to decide their future. They are raised as reasonable questions of fairness and process which any Bloc Quebecois member would



raise in any other context, were they not absolutely preoccupied with making the political point about what is happening at the supreme court.

I understand their objection to the way in which the referral to the supreme court could be and sometimes appears to be used by the federal government in an inappropriate way. When I say that there are questions of process that need to be decided, it is not a blanket approval of the way the Liberal government is dealing with the issue.

I listened to the rant against the supreme court by the hon. member from the Bloc. It made me regret all the more that we were not able to get the Meech Lake accord through.

One of the objects of the Meech Lake accord was to change the supreme court structurally so as not to have it subject to such accusations, however inaccurate they may be, to change the supreme court structurally by changing the way the supreme court was chosen.

There would have been three judges chosen by Quebec and the rest of the judges would have been chosen from provincial lists. All the provinces, not just Quebec, could have had more of a feeling that a court which finally decides federal-provincial matters would be a court that all levels of government participated in creating through the appointment process.

• (1140)

But that was not to be and because that was not to be along with a lot of other things included in that accord, we have the political situation we have today. We have my colleagues in the Bloc, whose genesis is in the defeat of the Meech Lake accord.

I am inviting my colleagues in the Bloc to have more to say throughout the day about process, about how they see the principle which they have expressed in this motion with which we agree being embodied in process and about how many of the questions raised in terms of process will be addressed.

I believe the people of Canada feel they have some part to play in this, not in instructing Quebec or in keeping Quebec within the country against its own will. But, if Quebec makes a decision to leave Canada, they want a role to play in determining the nature of the separation, how it will happen and what the relationship will be after separation.

That leads us to the topics of partnership, sovereignty association and all the things in which presumably the rest of Canada would be involved if it ever came to that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Rochelleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking our colleague from the New Democratic Party for his open-minded words with respect to Quebec. We recognize the New Democratic Party historically, but I

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would still like to ask him whether he, his fellow parliamentarians and his political party are aware of the gravity of the situation and the ramifications of a reference to the Supreme Court of everything having to do with the constitutional question, which has dragged on for 30 years.

First of all, are the members of the New Democratic Party and members in the House generally—and I address Quebecers across the way—aware that this whole process denies the existence of the Quebec people and instead identifies Quebec as just another province?

Second, are they aware that the whole constitutional question, which has dragged on for 30 years, now rests in the hands of nine judges whose allegiance is to the Parliament of Canada and to Canadian institutions, which appoint them and pay their salaries without consulting the provinces, particularly Quebec, and that these judges will soon be asked to rule on the future of Quebec and its democratic institutions as they relate to a Constitution that the Parliament of Quebec has never recognized and that it in fact denounced in 1982?

What we are saying, and we would like to hear the New Democratic Party's frank view on this, is that the people of Quebec alone have the right to make this decision, because they are a people. What is happening here is that the existence of the people of Quebec is being denied. Do the people of Quebec alone have the right to decide their future?

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, it is conceivable that I and others outside the Bloc Québécois either do not appreciate the gravity of what is before the supreme court or have a different view of the gravity of what is before the supreme court.

My understanding is that whatever is before the supreme court in no way impinges upon the ultimate political freedom of Quebec to determine its future. My understanding is that what is before the supreme court has to do with process.

I think members of the federal government, and perhaps all of us, are playing catch up. For the longest time there was sloppiness on the federalist side with respect to what would happen if there were a vote for separation. It was a bit of a parlour game. We had a referendum. We had debates. We had whatever. But there was a confidence on the federalist side that the separatists would never win such a referendum. That confidence bore a certain laziness with respect to asking questions about what we would do if the separatists ever won the referendum. It was always assumed that they would not.

• (1145)

In October 1995 when separation was that close, all of a sudden the people on the federalist side woke up and said that it was not a

*Supply*

parlour game any more, that it was not just some kind of ongoing Canadian amusement. It was real.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves more fundamental questions than we have asked ourselves in the past about how this would transpire if in some future referendum there was a victory for separation. I think that is in part the genesis of the supreme court reference.

I just want to make it clear that in our minds it is a legal thing. It has nothing to do with the ultimate political question of how Quebec is either to be kept in Canada of its own free will by arriving at new arrangements that satisfy the desire of Quebecers to feel they are being recognized and treated as a distinct or unique society within Quebec or, having failed to do so, Quebec leaving Canada.

Part of the answer for that from the point of view of the NDP is to rebuild the social democratic consensus that once existed in this country. Part of the problem is that for the past 10 or 15 years we have been governed from the right and we had a history of being governed from the left of centre federally. That is partly what kept the country together.

We have seen a diminution of our national institutions, of the ties that bind us thanks to free trade. I always remember during Meech Lake that the Tories were singing the praises of Canada while they were destroying it with free trade, deregulation and privatization. Had they given some thought to their other policies, maybe they would have been able to achieve what they set out to achieve. Instead they were destroying the country on one hand and trying to save it on the other.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to join in this debate on the opposition motion moved by the Bloc Québécois on an issue that has taken up much of the time and energy of Canadian politicians for the last 30 years.

I first want to deal with this motion. The motion reads as follows:

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers—

and as amended:

—and for them alone to decide their own future.

This is an issue that my party has already dealt with several times. It was the subject of two referenda in our recent history, in 1980 and 1995. Madam Speaker, I have no problem in telling you that my party, my caucus, can support this motion.

It does not create a major problem for us. But I also want to be very frank because, on this issue, the important thing is that the truth be told. The problem in this debate is not what the motion says, but what it does not say.

It is not the words in the motion that people might object to. It is everything surrounding the motion, including its impact and how some people would want to proceed in the event of a break-up. The real problem is there. Yes, the motion is fine and we can support it. We do not have any problem with it in principle. It does not create a major problem for us.

But at the same time, it leads us to ask other questions and we can say right away, because we do not want to give the wrong impression, that we have few answers. This is part of the problem. And this also must be said frankly. This is always in the spirit of portraying things as they are. It is commonly known that we are opposed to a Supreme Court reference as proposed by the federal government.

● (1150)

First of all, it bears repeating that a reference to the Supreme Court by the federal government, or to a court of appeal by provincial governments, is always an exceptional measure. It is very seldom used, and with great caution, by governments.

And for good reason. Dragging the courts into political debates is not without consequences. There will be very real consequences for the courts and for Canada if we privatize, if I may be a bit ironic about this, if we privatize political issues by referring them to the Supreme Court.

The reason why we never thought this is a good idea is that the Supreme Court will not be in a position to tell us anything we do not already know on the substance of the matter. Legally, since we are always in a society that abides by the rule of law, the Canadian constitution does not provide for the breaking-up of the country.

From the legal standpoint, if we ever have a scenario of separation, we will be confronted with a legal vacuum, a kind of black hole. I keep repeating this, and it bothers quite a few people. My friends in the Bloc are already reacting to this. Whenever I talk about this, people laugh, but it is just the plain truth.

**Mr. René Laurin:** Not again. You are funny.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** You find that funny, but Quebecers have to suffer the consequences and I do not think they find it as funny. That is the problem.

In international law, we have to say things like they are. I cannot help but laugh when I hear people right and left, people from both sides, refer to the fundamental principles of international law. What I would like to know is who is going to enforce the decisions made in international law? Who are we going to refer to? On what authority will we decide to implement those decisions?

In international law, there is no rule. I am sorry, but the way we see it, I will try to be accurate—one cannot say that there is no rule, because there are some, but the way we see it, where someone would say: “Here in a legal principle, a decision, which we will

*Supply*

implement", that is not how things work. There is a sea of principles in which we could swim for ever and ever.

There is another rule. Ultimately might is right, the strongest wins out. That is the plain truth. I will not elaborate on that because, needless to say, that is not a scenario anyone would wish for. It is simply a question of common sense. The Supreme Court could come back to us with that option.

What upsets me the most, however, is that with this kind of reference to the Supreme Court we tend to recognize, to say publicly that the breakup of our country is so likely that the head of the Government of Canada and the government itself have come to the conclusion that it is a possibility to be considered.

We have to be honest and realize that, in every type of relationship, if we keep talking about a breakup, it will eventually happen.

The same thing holds true for a country, spouses, or business partners. I think that the current government is not keeping the referendum commitments made in 1995 when it focuses on the breakup scenario.

We have brought forward a number of ideas to help move the debate along.

[*English*]

Since the 1995 referendum we have made it very clear that we oppose this supreme court reference. We think it is a bad idea. By the way, we certainly acknowledge that there are great number of Canadians outside of Quebec who think this is a good idea and I know that. However, I just think a lot of people are living under the illusion that this is going to solve a problem when it will not. It is a political problem.

There are a number of things we can do. I have written to the prime minister and the premiers at least twice in the last year making some constructive suggestions on behalf of my party and the men and women in my party who believe there are solutions and a consensus at hand.

In fact, we feel frustrated because we happen to know that there is a very real will for change in the country. It is reflected in all parts of the country, in Alberta, Ontario, the Atlantic and Quebec. This will for change is compatible with what governments in Quebec have also been seeking for the last 30 years. It is within our reach if we have a leadership that is able to understand it and seize that opportunity.

• (1155)

Among the things I have written about to the premiers and the prime minister are rebalancing the federation and limiting federal spending power. I have recommended some institutional changes.

Our country has matured to the point where we can change some of our institutions.

My party and I believe there should be a covenant, that we should renew the social and economic union of Canada. Under a new institution, a covenant, we could agree to national standards in health care for example. We could make a commitment to delivery of services to people. We could put the focus on the services we are rendering rather than on the governments that deliver the services. Through such an agreement we could install predictable financing.

Health care is probably the most important example. Over the last few years our health care system has been slashed in its funding. It is broken and needs to be fixed. Here is a good place to start for the sake of our parents, our grandparents and our kids who deserve a good health care system.

Senate reform and the recognition of Quebec are among the ideas we put forth. We have had the worst of debates on these issues. The Reform Party has gone out there cynically and for 10 years it has lived off of denouncing Quebec and the idea of distinct society. It ran on that issue during the last election campaign.

Now the concept of unique character is on the table. The minister and the Liberal government have said that unique character and distinct society mean exactly the same thing. It is intriguing to us how the Reform Party will swallow itself whole on this issue.

**An hon. member:** How profound.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** The Reform member says how profound. I can only regret that he and the people in his party have been an instrument of division on this issue. I quoted an article from the principal adviser of the Reform Party of Canada and its leader.

**Mr. Jim Gouk:** He was a college student at the time and did not work for the party.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** One of the members said that he was a student at the time and did not work for the party, so we are getting some denials which is important. Mr. Levant said:

Such a divorce would be painful. But after a year or so of realignment, things would probably be better than they are today. Here are 10 reasons why Alberta would be better off.

I will quote three of them:

Eliminate bilingualism and multiculturalism—If we kicked out Quebec, we might then have the fortitude to tackle Canada's other ethnic separatists: Natives demanding their "First Nations". Next would be the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Then the radical environmentalist groups.

The fourth reason he gives to kick Quebec out is to end corruption in Parliament. Is it any wonder that we are where we are today.

In conclusion, we have no problem with this motion. It is the consequences surrounding it and what is not said in the motion that we have great difficulty with.

*Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is with great satisfaction that we heard the leader of the Conservative Party say that he has no problem supporting the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois. But he has questions about what the motion does not say. He speaks about reality and truth.

I want to remind him of a reality that is still very present, namely that of the constitutional deadlock. For thirty years all the political parties in Quebec have been asking for radical changes to the Canadian Constitution. Every single party was calling for it. At the time, we were hoping to be able to stay within Canada, to live happily under this constitution and to have the respect we deserve. Unfortunately, English Canada was acting as if Quebec did not want to lose Canada.

So far, Canada has never acted as if it did not want to lose Quebec. The roles have always been reversed, we were never taken seriously. Even the Charest report, the author of which just spoke in this House, gave all powers to Ottawa. The federal government did not listen to Quebec. It did not listen to the people's demands. From what it said, it looked like it understood us, but through its majority, it kept imposing its federalist and centralizing designs on us.

• (1200)

What happens in reality when a law is abusive or unfair? People will not obey that law. We saw it with cigarette smuggling. Because taxes were too high, very few people obeyed that law. The government did not take too long to understand what was going on and changed it. It lowered taxes so that people could be happy and proud to obey that law. That was not done with the Constitution.

Quebeckers have been saying for 30 years that they are unhappy with the Constitution and that they want changes. Each time Quebeckers said yes to Canada, in the two referendums, they did so because they truly hoped substantial changes would be made to the Constitution. But they were duped. Such changes were never made.

Canada got a wake-up call when 49.4% of Quebeckers voted yes in the last referendum. Canadians now realize, as the NDP member said, that it is no longer a game. Quebeckers mean business. If it were to become reality tomorrow, Canada might wonder whether it is prepared to lose Quebec. As for Quebec, it has already done its thinking, and an increasing number of Quebeckers realize that they are not happy to live in this country under current conditions.

Does the rest of Canada want to force Quebec to stay, even if it is not happy, to justify the notion of unity, as the leader of the Reform Party said? Is this the case? Do they want to force Quebec to stay against its will, because it is important to look united? This is the reality.

Can the Conservative leader tell me whether he agrees that this is the reality that makes us want to become a sovereign Quebec.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to reply to the hon. member for Joliette and debate with him. First of all, not to flatter him, I think I can detect in his remarks a *cri du coeur* from someone who does not want Canada to break up.

**Mr. René Laurin:** That is right.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** He says that is right. He may well be reflecting the views of many Quebeckers who want this country to work, who want Canada to work.

**Mr. René Laurin:** The reality is that it does not work.

**Hon. Jean J. Charest:** They want it to work. The hon. member knows as well as I do—and we are going to tell it like it is—that the majority of constituents in his riding would like Canada to work. That would be their first choice. He knows it and I know it. It is important to point it out and it is important for those outside Quebec to hear this because we do not want to leave them with the impression that having a sovereignist government in Quebec means that a majority of Quebeckers are in favour of Canada breaking up. They are not.

Let us be more specific. The great majority of francophones in Quebec, those who vote and are concerned in this debate, feel profoundly attached to Canada and want the Canadian system to work.

I disagree with the hon. member for Joliette, however, in that I do not assess my country on the simplistic basis of the Constitution. I think of my country, Canada, with 300 years of history behind it and 300 more ahead, as more than a bunch of constitutional amendments. It is a partnership that was established between English and French-speaking Canadians in the early days of our country. That is how our language and culture were able to live on. That is how the British Empire at the time was able to keep this piece of land in North America. This is a partnership that evolved into a federation, an economic and social partnership reflecting the values shared by everyone who live here, whether French-speaking or English-speaking. That is the context in which I set my assessment of my country.

That being said, I will conclude by saying that, as I see it, regardless of our constitutional failures, anglophones and francophones alike view Canada as a great success that I care for, both for myself and for my children.

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have my turn to speak to the Bloc Québécois motion before the House today, which reaffirms, since the consensus is nothing new in Quebec, that it is for Quebeckers to decide freely their own future.

*Supply*

• (1205)

First of all, if I may, I shall make a brief comment on the words of the leader of the Conservative Party in which he rejoices at constitutional failures. Many conclude each time there is a failure that the system, at a certain point, is no longer changeable. That is what has led a growing number of Quebecers to back sovereignty.

Many have done so because it strikes them as natural for a people to have all the tools necessary to manage and control its own future. Others came to that conclusion because of circumstances, when the inability of the present political system to meet their aspirations became evident, whether in accordance with the formula developed by Robert Bourassa around the distinct society or some other formula. They found themselves with the door shut in their faces, not only closed but locked as well.

We have moved from one constitutional failure to another. The difference between the hon. member for Sherbrooke and members over here is that we realize that, at some point, the thing must come to an end. Discussions cannot go on forever. I personally do not want to be here when I am 55, still talking about the latest constitutional failure, and about what ought to be done in the next round of negotiations in order to avoid another failure.

The hon. member for Joliette said that this has been going on for 30 years. I believe that 30 year point was reached 5 years ago. Now we are up to 35. We have been talking about it so long that we have stopped keeping track of the time.

In response to this federal strategy, what do we have in front of us now? What is comes down to, finally, is who is entitled to decide the future of Quebecers and of the Quebec people. Ottawa's strategy, and the federal government's in particular, is clearly not unanimous. The Conservative Party clearly said it did not support them. For a number of reasons, we can believe that the New Democratic Party would not support them either, following the resolutions passed at its political conventions.

The future for the federal government has to be defined by others besides Quebecers. By whom? By the justices of the supreme court? By people in the other provinces? Because in the end, the question they are putting to the supreme court is: if Quebecers cannot do it, who can?

We can see clearly where they are leading us. Their traditional constitution amending formula involving provincial consensus. In the end, it means subjecting the future of the people of Quebec to the approval of a province, and I will let you decide on that. But you can clearly see that it would make no sense for the people of Prince Edward Island, and I have nothing against them, or the people of Newfoundland, Alberta or Saskatchewan, to have a veto over Quebec's future. It makes no sense. There is no basis for it, and on the very face of it, I think it should not even be considered.

What is Ottawa's strategy? They are playing both horses. On one hand there is the hard line of the minister, the one who told us during the last referendum campaign that Quebecers had to be made to suffer to prevent the recurrence of such a situation, where we get a bit excited at expressing our deepest hopes. It is now implementing its plan, on the one hand toying with the concept of partition, and on the other asking the supreme court to rule the whole sovereignty issue illegal within the present constitutional framework; it keeps on making incendiary declarations right, left and centre.

Furthermore, the provinces are led to believe there might be a glimmer of hope for some changes. This is the kind of line the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party keeps on pushing, changes are possible. What does all this mean? Let us have a look. In Quebec, nobody is talking about the Calgary declaration. And yet, this is the great constitutional reform process Canada is currently promoting.

In about seven paragraphs, it sets out Quebec's uniqueness. A statement which is promptly watered down on four or five occasions by the fact that provinces are all said to be equal. These are profoundly contradictory pronouncements. If Quebec is truly distinct, meaning different, it should be given, through a formula yet to be determined, the tools to shape its own future. But the declaration is silent on this point. Quebecers are told "You are unique, but you will be treated like everybody else". So we are unique, period. End of story.

This is hard to sell. It is done in an underhanded way, on the Internet, and through a small questionnaire stuffed in an ad-bag so that nobody can see it. It is all hush-hush, but it will be passed by Parliament, possibly on a Friday afternoon, so that people do not talk too much about it.

• (1210)

In this way, they could say to Quebecers, but not as loudly as during the referendum "See, we still love you", to allow Daniel Johnson, the federalists leader in Quebec—officially, in any case—to campaign in Quebec and say that there is a willingness elsewhere to make changes.

Each time, they start again with a lower offer than the previous time. We are part of a distinct society, an interpretative clause in the Constitution, a different sharing of powers and the Meech Lake accord that included a number a things that were given to Quebec. Of course, that did not respond to the aspirations of all Quebecers, but there were some elements in there.

No, it did not work, we started off with less the next time, Quebecers were given less. Then there was the Charlottetown accord, rejected by all Quebecers. Since this did not work, the federal government tried giving even less. Then they wonder why there are more and more sovereignists in Quebec or people who

*Supply*

have drawn the conclusion that this system does not work. They want it both ways.

Now, our dear intergovernmental affairs minister has launched a philosophical debate in all this. He is a former university professor who wants to solve a deep academic issue, that is whether democracy exists within the law or the law exists within democracy. This is his pet subject and he wants to have his argument examined and validated by the supreme court.

The very foundations of democracy, and all of us here are products of democracy, provide that it is up to people to decide their future. It is not up to us to use all kinds of constraints, to put people in a straitjacket and tell them they cannot decide their future. What does a unilateral declaration of sovereignty imply? It implies that Quebecers would, after an eminently democratic exercise—that is a successful referendum in which a majority of people would have supported sovereignty—decide to start the process to achieve sovereignty.

There is a stage in this process about which Ottawa is silent. We sovereignists have always said, in good faith, that we will negotiate with Ottawa. In fact, a period of one year was even provided for this in a draft bill tabled in the National Assembly. A transition mechanism was defined. Ottawa is assuming it will not work because the unilateral declaration of sovereignty will come at the end of the negotiations if an agreement is not reached. So, Ottawa starts from the premise that we will not be able to reach an agreement, that we will not want to negotiate, etc.. There is some bad faith here.

Ottawa admits it would not respect the democratic will of Quebecers. Every now and then, the minister tries to tell us that he would recognize that will, provided it is expressed within the law. It is not true, because the minister would try to define how he would negotiate with Quebec. He would not be preparing the next stage, he would be preparing the first stage. I have no problems with Canadians discussing how negotiations should be conducted with Quebec, or who should represent them. I realize the Liberal Party has a problem, and I would be very surprised to see the current Prime Minister negotiate on behalf of Canada. They will not dare debate this issue.

The strategy is obvious: getting a Supreme Court decision stating that the Canadian constitution does not allow a unilateral declaration of independence on the part of Quebec, and that such a declaration would be illegal. We will then see the likes of Guy Bertrand come out in the open and tell us that we are thugs, armchair revolutionaries, and whatnot. Guy Bertrand has been the inspiration of all this. He is the one who launched this Ottawa strategy with the Reform leader breathing down his neck, and the intergovernmental affairs minister jumped on the bandwagon.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the Bloc Québécois is not the only one condemning this strategy. I will not have enough time to read all the quotations I have here, but let me give for the record the names of people who agree with us: Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte; Mr. Claude Ryan, the leader of the federalist no committee in 1980; Mr. Daniel Johnson, the leader of the no committee in 1995, and still the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party—he is therefore the current leader of the Quebec federalists; Mr. Lucien Bouchard; Mr. Alain Dubuc; the hon. member for Sherbrooke; the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois; Mr. Alain Pellet, chairman of the UN International Law Commission; Mr. Gordon Wilson, a constitutional adviser to the B.C. premier. There are many more. This consensus which is building up extends beyond Quebec borders at the international level.

The federal government should recognize the obvious. Its strategy of using the Supreme Court for its own purposes should be set aside. It should in good faith let Quebecers decide freely their own future like everybody wants them to and let the discussions in the coming years deal with this issue.

• (1215)

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Témiscamingue for this overview that was much too brief for lack of time. I will try to be brief in my question in order to give him ample time to answer.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on a vital aspect of this reference to the Supreme Court. Is it acceptable, in 1998, in a democracy, for a government to refer such matters to a court, its own creation, consisting of a panel of nine judges appointed by the federal government itself? To reinforce that argument, one just has to look at the very close ties that the last two judges appointed to the Supreme Court have to the Liberal Party. Is it normal, is it acceptable, in 1998, in a democracy such as Canada, for a federal court consisting of a panel of nine judges appointed by the government to be asked to substitute itself for the democratic will of 7 million Quebecers?

**Mr. Pierre Brien:** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's question is so clear that the answer becomes obvious.

It does not make sense to let nine judges hold in their hands the future of our people, because it is the future of Quebecers that is at stake here. We talked about the appointment process, the fact that these judges are appointed by the Prime Minister. Moreover, two of these judges were appointed after it was known that there would be a reference to the Supreme Court on that issue.

Looking closely, it is obvious there is a kind of incestuous relationship there, to say the least. In their infinite wisdom nine judges will decide, based on the Constitution, what kind of a future we, Quebeckers, can have.

Think about it. During the last democratic exercise in Quebec, the voter turnout was almost 93% if I remember correctly. So 93% of all those old enough to vote, millions of Quebeckers, voted at the end of a long debate during which the federal government kept repeating what it always says, that is: "The question is not clear. What is at stake is this and that". Today, they may have come to realize that their campaign was not all that effective, because now they say: "The people did not understand". I for one think that the people did understand very well indeed.

It was a long debate, nothing new in Quebec. The people know full well what is at stake. At the end of the campaign, 93% of all voters decided: "We are going to vote, to state our positions."

The majority voted no. We respect the will of these people. No one has put in motion the process leading to sovereignty. Nevertheless, we still believe that it is the best solution and we continue to promote it.

We were reelected as Bloc members, as sovereigntist representatives in Ottawa. People in Quebec will have to choose between sovereigntists and federalists during the next provincial election. This is par for the course, and people are fully aware of the situation.

In the final analysis, how can there be a balance between 7 million people on one side and nine supreme court justices on the other? Let us be serious. It does not make any sense and I have no doubt that Quebeckers understand this very well. That is why the provincial Liberals in Quebec, the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party, the bishops, a cardinal, business people, people from all walks of life, say that it does not make sense.

Only the Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs defend this strategy, and they drag the federal government into their crazy enterprise, plus the person most sympathetic to the Quebec cause, the leader of the Reform Party. Can you imagine this fine group organizing our future? These people are trying to manipulate the court, to put us in shackles, and they would like us to buy it? No way.

• (1220)

Calmly, peacefully, we keep explaining the situation and we realize that, as people from all walks of life start to react, more and more of them are adding their voices to those who already oppose this reference, and I am convinced that the movement will snowball.

### *Supply*

Therefore, to answer my colleague's question, it is clear that this makes no more sense in 1998 than it did 25 or 30 years ago and it will be the same five years from now because, in a democracy, citizens are free to decide their own future. This is true for all peoples, including the Quebec people.

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as the member for Jonquière, who was democratically elected June 2 to represent the constituents of my riding in the House of Commons, I wish to support the motion introduced by the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, concerning the future of the Quebec people, and to repeat my conviction that Quebeckers alone have the right to decide their future, and that the current reference to the Supreme Court on the sovereignty of Quebec is contrary to our democratic values.

I have spent several years of my life in community and political work and throughout these experiences and for as long as I can remember, I have observed Quebeckers' attachment to the democratic values of our society.

The referendums to date have always had a high turnout, showing our people's wish to decide their own future.

On the eve of the Supreme Court hearing on the legitimacy of a unilateral declaration of independence by Quebec, I think it vital to appeal to all Canadians and to point out to them once again that the Chrétien government is on the wrong track in relying on a legal authority to resolve the essentially political question of a people's right to decide its own future freely and to take responsibility for its destiny.

I am not a lawyer and I am not about to launch into legal arguments. My eminent colleagues in the Bloc Québécois are doing a brilliant job today of demonstrating the futility of the exercise in which the Supreme Court is now engaged.

What I want instead is to appeal to common sense, which is in keeping with the feelings of the majority of Quebeckers, whether federalists or nationalists, concerning what I would call the hijacking of democracy.

We are again seeing a process which fits perfectly into Plan B, concocted by the Chrétien government to keep Quebec within the Canadian federation. This time, though, the reference to the Supreme Court strikes me as totally pathetic, since it is evidence of the failure of the Chrétien government to rise to the challenge of renewing the Canadian federation.

The Chrétien government's strategy was to stir up public opinion in Quebec on the legality of a unilateral decision to secede. Instead, it is being bombarded on all sides with the testimonials of Quebeckers stating their right to self-determination loud and clear. Whether federalist or sovereigntist, all join in opposition to the federal claims on the right to self-determination. All agree that it is for Quebeckers to decide their own future.

*Supply*

The federal government is presently facing a strong consensus, a common front of all those who have at heart the defence of our democratic values and the institutions with which we have equipped ourselves in Quebec in order to express our societal choices. The federal encroachment in the Supreme Court was found unacceptable, even by such people as Claude Ryan and Daniel Johnson, although they headed the federalist forces in the last two referendums.

By so doing, they confirmed the fundamental break between the Quebec Liberal Party and the federal Liberals.

• (1225)

By rejecting the very substance of the legal arguments raised by the Chrétien government, Claude Ryan and Daniel Johnson have rejected beforehand the ruling by the Supreme Court.

Besides, Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed the establishment of a non-partisan groups composed of sovereignists and federalists, like the Pro-Démocratie group, which was joined by key figures like Monique Vézina, Jean-Claude Rivet, Pierre Paquette and André Tremblay, to name only a few.

Leading the movement which has always been more in evidence in all classes of Quebec society, the Pro-Démocratie group makes a point of condemning the initiative of the federal government in the following terms: "We share the conviction that the constitutional debate is first of all a political debate and that it should be resolved by political means. Constitutional law is based on decisions made by the people. It is not the role of constitutional law to substitute itself to the people's prerogative of choosing their own political system."

Other key figures like Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, archbishop of Montreal, and Monseigneur Bertrand Blanchette, archbishop of the diocese of Rimouski, have said that the Supreme Court should not decide the future of the Quebec people, thus echoing the position taken by the bishops of Quebec and Canada in favour of self-determination, at the centennial of Confederation in 1967.

I wish to stress one more time that all these people think it is up to the people of Quebec to decide their own future.

It must be recognized that the highest court in the country is widely mistrusted in Quebec today. Everyone of us will remember that in 1980, in the famous case regarding the veto right that Quebec thought it had, the Supreme Court concluded that the federal government could amend the Constitution with the support of a substantial majority of the provinces.

This constitutional deadlock has lasted for 15 years. Quebec has learned that within the existing system, no compromise is acceptable to the English-Canadian majority.

For 15 years, political players have been prisoners of that majority and incapable of renewing the federal system.

The federal government has found no better solution than to go into the legal arena in an attempt to muzzle the democratic expression of a whole people.

With this new case, the Supreme Court is heading towards a new impasse. Should we be surprised? Is it any wonder the supreme court defends the institutions that created it?

In the end, it is nothing more than the expression of the centralizing will of the federal government and bears witness to the impasse facing Canadian federation. The fact is that the Chrétien government has no argument to counter the advance of the sovereignist movement.

The reference to the supreme court is, in the words of Quebec premier Lucien Bouchard, an act of powerlessness. In addition, the reference to the supreme court arises from the change in public opinion in Canada, which is galvanizing around the doctrine of the equality of the provinces and the denial of any special status for Quebec other than a symbolic and totally insignificant one.

When I see the consensus within Quebec on our democratic values and the defence of our institutions, I am more than ever sure we can meet the challenges facing us in building our country.

I invite all of you watching me on television to express your opposition to the Chrétien government's initiative.

Our struggle will not end until we have given ourselves a country for the year 2000, because what counts for us is the right to decide our future. Let us be proud to be Quebecers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All members should refer to one another by title and not by name, please.

**Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think it was Montesquieu who, in the 18th century, considered the separation of the three powers, that is the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, as the foundation of democracy.

Now, the executive branch is asking the judicial branch to interpret the Constitution.

• (1230)

That would be agreeable if the Constitution had not been unanimously rejected by the people on whom the court's interpretation is to be imposed. The initial Constitution was developed by two peoples, the two founding peoples. The Constitution of 1982



was adopted by only one of these two peoples and now this people wants to impose it on the other one because it forms the majority.

Does my colleague think, like myself, that this process is nothing more than another sign of the domination of the rest of Canada over Quebec?

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Terrebonne—Blainville for his question. I fully agree with him.

I think he is right. The Canadian government completely ignored the fact that there are two founding peoples when it referred the case to the Supreme Court. There are the Canadian people and the Quebec people. By referring these three questions to the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court, the federal government misused that institution and proved that it has no sense of fair play.

I want to state for the record that, by referring the case of Quebec sovereignty to the Supreme Court of Canada, the federal government loaded the dice in its favour, as it always does.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the ability of Quebecers to decide their own future is at the heart of the motion tabled today by the Bloc. This principle and that of respect for democracy and the rule of law are as dear to the hearts of government members as they are to the hearts of our colleagues opposite. It is this principle, our right to decide our own future as exercised during the 1980 and 1995 referendums, that I will address.

These principles—that are being discussed in detail today—have already enabled Quebecers to choose Canada. By applying these principles, we Quebecers have refused to relinquish either one of our identities as Quebecers and Canadians, which increase rather than limit our opportunities. One thing is for sure: twice we Quebecers exercised our right to decide our own future, and twice we decided to stay within Canada despite the attempt to hide the option behind a confusing question.

Several reasons supported the decisions we made. Each time, Canada proved to be the logical choice since it has always allowed Quebecers to promote their culture and language throughout the world. The linguistic duality of this country and its multicultural character open the door to world markets for Quebecers and other Canadians. These components of the Canadian identity are valuable assets for the future.

As we approach the next millennium, during which multiculturalism will flourish as will countries that will successfully meet the challenge of a harmonious multicultural society, I am confident that we Quebecers will again choose to stay within Canada.

[English]

On each occasion Quebecers have found that Canada gives us an exceptional quality of life. On each occasion we have been

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proud of our country's remarkable international reputation. On each occasion we have understood that Canada has one of the most developed economies in the world and that we, Quebecers, have contributed largely to its prosperity.

[Translation]

If on two occasions Quebecers chose Canada it is because not only are we aware of the rich history we share with our fellow citizens across the country, but we are resolutely forward-looking. We know that in the new economy we must combine the strength of major entities with the flexibility of smaller ones, national solidarity with regional autonomy; our federal union is vital to our survival.

• (1235)

On each occasion, Quebecers took into account the fact that through the years Canadians have built a strong social safety net. Compassion and solidarity, the Canadian federation's underlying values, are shared by citizens from coast to coast. These are the values that prompt us to lend a hand in difficult times.

Need I remind the House how quickly the country as a whole responded and helped all those affected by the recent ice storm? Beyond linguistic and cultural differences, beyond distances, these values are shared by all. They form the Canadian fabric.

On every occasion, Quebecers said no to secession and yes to Canada. We have invested too much of our creative energy in this country to let it go. Quebecers have contributed their culture and their way of life to Canada, making them part of our common heritage.

What makes Canada strong is the values inherent in our identity. Openness, solidarity and respect for individual rights are often mentioned, and rightly so. These same values have shaped our common history.

[English]

Quebecers' desire to stay in Canada has always been the subject of a consensus. That consensus has twice been tested and has twice held firm. On each occasion Quebecers have said yes to the Canadian component of our identity. I am sure that we will do so yet again if the secessionist option is submitted to us Quebecers again for approval for the third time in less than 20 years.

[Translation]

The 1995 campaign and some revelations since have shown to what extent the referendum process was very very much like manipulation and intellectual dishonesty. That is why the Canadian government has decided to put forward initiatives aimed at clarifying the stakes of secession.

*Supply*

Every member of this House will recall of the circumstances around the publication of the infamous book by Jacques Parizeau entitled *Pour un Québec souverain*, the case for a sovereign Quebec. Quebeckers, like Canadians as a whole, were shocked to learn that the one-year period for the negotiations that was always alluded to was only smoke and mirrors and that Mr. Parizeau had no intention of abiding by it. On the contrary, he wanted to drag us Quebeckers into an adventure which, as great as it was, was no game.

Fortunately, when the lobster trap closed, on October 30, 1995, we, Quebeckers were not caught in it. The strategy of the secessionists is to bury our heads in the sand and to play with ambiguity. For its part, our government wants clarity. A possible secession would have a huge impact on Quebeckers and Canadians as a whole.

It is thus essential to ensure that the referendum process follows well defined, precise rules accepted by everybody.

This debate, if there is one, should be held calmly and peacefully. We cannot sit idly by when the Bloc member for Richelieu says cynically that his party wants to destroy federalism. Nor can we remain indifferent to the terrible call for intolerance by the Bloc member for Louis-Hébert who said, in 1995, that only so-called old stock Quebeckers should vote in the referendum.

Finally, we cannot accept the disgraceful declarations by Jacques Parizeau on the evening of October 30, 1995. The list of the irresponsible comments by the secessionists is very long, but I do not have the time to speak to that.

• (1240)

I could add, however, that the lofty statements about respect for democracy coming from the Bloc would be more acceptable if they were coming from more credible individuals.

Despite the dogmatic opposition of the Bloc, our country is progressing and changing. Just a few weeks ago, the Canadian Parliament and the National Assembly passed a resolution amending the Constitution, which allows the Quebec government to proceed with the establishment of linguistic school boards.

The secessionists supported this amendment, proving that it is possible to work together for the common good, when they want to. If the interest of Quebeckers took precedence over partisan interests, the Government of Quebec would work with us much more often than it does.

The vast majority of Quebeckers are proud to be Quebeckers and also proud to be Canadians. They do not want to reject one of the two elements of their identity, and certainly not in a confused way, and against democratic principles and the constitutional state.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, we cannot support this motion from the Bloc, a party which is against the constitutional state and

democracy for all. As Quebeckers and Canadians, we cannot support this motion.

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine referred in her speech to a huge operation of intellectual manipulation when speaking about the referendum in 1995. I would like to ask her two questions. I am convinced that she has all the intellectual capacity to answer them brilliantly.

My first question is: How does my colleague describe the millions of dollars spent by Option Canada, which did not hesitate to violate the referendum law and the measures governing the funding of political parties within a referendum?

My second question is: How does she describe the declarations of love and the phoney promises that were made loud and strong by the big names of federalism, starting with the Prime Minister and continuing with other big names who are also here in this House?

I am anxious to hear the answer of my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. I am sure she will do me the honour of clearly answering this question.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, we already experienced two referenda in Quebec, in 1980 and in 1995.

**An hon. member:** Don't forget 1992.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Each time, the question was confused and, despite the confusion that existed, the majority of Quebeckers voted against it.

And if they respected democracy, there would not be a third referendum, because the will, the ability of Quebeckers to decide their future has already been expressed twice and, in the end, despite the confusion, the answer was very clear. By a majority, we said "We want to stay in Canada. We want to preserve our identity as Canadians and our identity as Quebeckers". We answered "We want to stay in Canada".

I find it deplorable that the secessionists are still saying that there must be yet another referendum when the will has been expressed clearly.

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I seems to me that the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine does not recognize the Quebeckers' ability to understand when she would have us believe that the Quebec people did not understand correctly the two questions that were put to them in 1980 and 1995.

• (1245)

Of course they understood them correctly. We must recall that promises were made to Quebec by big federal guns, Pierre Trudeau at the time and later Jean Chrétien, and these promises were

broken. Quebec has always wanted to command respect within Canada but we have been denied that as well when Canada failed to recognize Quebec's distinct nature. I would say that there is a solid basis for Quebec's frustration, which make us want to get Quebec out of Canada.

There is nothing antidemocratic in wanting to go through the referendum process again and it does not confuse the issue. It is entirely democratic. But once again, in spite of the demands made in the past to show respect to Quebec, the federal government is the one who failed to fulfil this requirement, making a reference to the Supreme Court and failing to acknowledge the Quebecers' ability to understand and Quebec's determination to freely decide its future.

It seems to me that the hon. member should also recognize that the process was not antidemocratic in the past, was not intended to confuse anything and was not dishonest. It was not an attempt to manipulate. On the contrary, we were quite clear, still are and will continue to be until—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. There are only 20 seconds remaining in the five-minute question and comment period.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, the question asked in the 1995 referendum was not clear. A CROP poll held in July 1997 revealed that 44% of Quebecers who voted yes in 1995 thought that, after a yes victory, Quebec would still be part of Canada. This clearly illustrates the state of confusion that prevailed at the time.

The question must at least be clear. I would like to know why secessionists would not use a question similar to the one asked in Armenia in 1991: "Should the Republic of Armenia become a democratic republic, independent from the USSR?" This question is rather clear—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry, but the period for questions and comments is over.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Claudette Bradshaw (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our country is respected around the globe for its commitment to individual freedom and democratic values and the rule of law that sustains them.

Indeed, as Argentine President Carlos Menem said today, Canada is a nation that has grown to symbolize perseverance, democracy, solidarity and tolerance.

Canada is a remarkable country. I believe in the 21st century it will be an even stronger and more united one. Why? Because I

### *Supply*

think Quebecers will continue to choose to remain part of a country that they have done so much to build.

Most Quebecers are proud of both their Quebec and Canadian identities and do not wish to have to choose between them. However, if Quebecers should ever choose to leave Canada, I would want them to make this choice, as I am sure they would wish clearly and unequivocally. I would not want Quebecers to break the bonds of solidarity with their fellow Canadian citizens in an atmosphere of confusion where no mutually acceptable ground rules were in place.

[*Translation*]

I firmly believe that Quebecers will choose to remain Canadians because Quebec benefits from being part of Canada and is an essential component of our nation. The province prospered in Canada, particularly since the Quiet Revolution. The Quebec economy includes thriving high tech industries, such as aerospace, biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry.

• (1250)

The federal government did its share to help those industries which, in turn, help all of Canada face international competition. For example, tools like R & D tax credit and the Export Development Corporation helped the high technology industries to develop, and the federal government's major strategic investments continue to produce the kind of growth that stimulates the creation of well paid jobs for young Quebecers.

Quebec within Canada also has a dynamic, living and unique culture. There are more than 100 theatre companies, 100 publishers, 20 dance companies and 25 orchestras and choirs in the province, and many of them receive federal assistance so that they can perform in Canada and abroad.

[*English*]

Quebec is flourishing within Canada and Canada is flourishing because of Quebec, but there are always new challenges to be addressed. In many instances this commitment has seen the prime minister working side by side with the premiers. As the minister of intergovernmental affairs has often said, what Canadians need today are strong provinces, a strong federal government and strong relationship between them.

I could name a great many policy initiatives on which the different orders of government have co-operated recently. I will content myself with mentioning two, the Canada child tax benefit and the new partnership on labour market training.

[*Translation*]

According to statistics, one in five children lives in poverty in Canada. That is just unacceptable. As Lutheran theologian Die-

*Supply*

trich Bonhoeffer put it, a society's morality is judged by the way it treats its children. Our children are our future. When a child has to go to school on an empty stomach, we all lose out.

[English]

In May 1996 the federal government offered its provincial and territorial partners the opportunity either to assume full responsibility for job training measures, funded through the employment insurance account, or to develop a new core management partnership.

The Canada-Quebec job training agreement, in the words of the prime minister, demonstrated that the governments of Canada and Quebec could work together to find practical solutions that are adapted to the real problem of Quebecers. As an executive of the Quebec business organization, the Conseil du patronat, was quick to observe, the agreement shows that it is possible to conclude administrative agreements in key areas without having to amend the Canadian constitution.

[Translation]

In fact, the manpower training agreements and the new national child benefit show what can be accomplished, within the scope of administrative agreements and through the exercise or non-exercise of powers without having to change one iota of the Constitution.

However, that does not mean that our Constitution is or should be immutable. Our Constitution is not a straitjacket preventing us from changing it. Rather, it is a framework allowing for orderly and timely changes. It reflects our evolving identity as Canadians.

We have seen recently how our Constitution can adapt to the evolving needs of Canadians with the passage of a constitutional amendment requested by the Quebec government to set up the province's school boards along linguistic rather than denominational lines. Everybody in Quebec agreed that denominational school boards reflected the reality in Quebec in 1867. Today, however, linguistic school boards are more in line with the values and sociological realities of Quebecers. The Parliament and the National Assembly combined their efforts at the appropriate time and invoked Section 83 of the 1982 Constitution Act to proceed with a bilateral amendment.

• (1255)

[English]

I am sure the constitutional amendment will enable Quebec to flourish further within Canada. It will enable Quebecers to have a stronger school system that responds more closely to their needs.

Indeed it was seen as such a positive step by the Government of Quebec that the minister of education, Pauline Marois, was moved

to praise the federal minister of intergovernmental affairs for having «livrer la marchandise».

I am confident the government of Prime Minister Chrétien will continue to deliver the goods for Quebecers and for all Canadians. All these changes, both constitutional and non-constitutional, show that our federation is capable of responding to the needs of Quebecers.

Of course we have our challenges. Which country does not? Our challenges are ones that can be resolved through negotiations and a long tradition of accommodation. We must put our difficulties into perspective.

We face serious challenges but they are nonetheless the problems of a prosperous country with strong, democratic institutions and a thriving civil society. None of these challenges should lead to a break-up of our country. In fact thousands of people from other countries apply to share our problems every year.

[Translation]

We must not lose sight of the fact that there have been debates and discussions on the Canadian identity since the beginnings of the federation. The debate has, of course, become particularly lively in the past few decades, but the consolidation of national unity is an ongoing task.

To those who choose to wallow in past humiliations, real or imagined, chewing them over and over, we offer our vision of the future, a future in which Canada will continue to be a source of influence for the world, a source of pride for its people.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Once again I wish to remind hon. members to refrain from referring to other hon. members by their surnames or any other name except their title or the name of their constituency.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask the hon. member what she thinks of the statement by her colleague for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine referring to the confusion over the question asked of Quebecers in the 1995 referendum.

I will read her the 1992 referendum question on the Charlottetown Accord, and then the one from 1995. I would like to know where the confusion lies. In 1995, 94% of the people of Quebec spoke. I shall read the question the federal government asked in 1992: "Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on August 28, 1992?" That was the 1992 referendum on the Charlottetown Accord.

And then in 1995 the question asked by the Government of Quebec was as follows: "Do you agree to Quebec becoming

*Supply*

sovereign after making a formal offer to Canada of a new economic and political partnership under the terms of the draft bill on the future of Quebec and the agreement of June 12?"

I would like to know whether our Acadian colleague shares the view of her colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce on the confusion that clouded those two questions. It is very clear to us. The people of Quebec spoke out clearly in 1995. When it has a similar question put before it, soon I hope, there will be a resounding yes.

**Mrs. Claudette Bradshaw:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for calling me his Acadian friend. It is true that as Acadians we are friends of Quebecers. However, I would like to relate my version of the evening of the referendum.

I was sitting in my kitchen with my children, my husband and some friends, because my friends wanted to be with us on the evening of the referendum. They came to our place for supper, and we watched the referendum together on television. I can tell you we were anxious during the voting because we wanted Quebecers to know how those of us outside Quebec were feeling.

I intend to answer your question. I will say that my children and my friends agree with me that the question in the last referendum was not clear and specific.

• (1300)

I do not think it was the same question. I have to say that we talked that night and we felt that the question did not make it clear to those voting with the separatists that they would separate from Canada. For that reason it was not clear. I think the book Mr. Parizeau wrote after the referendum made it clear that they would have voted for separation.

**Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I see a lack of logic in the position of the members opposite.

While they say the questions in the last two referendums were not clear, they use the responses to these questions to argue that Quebecers chose to remain in Canada. Either the question was unclear or it was not.

If it was, so was the answer, and so the 50% less three-tenths cannot be used. If it was not, then they should stop saying it was.

**Mrs. Claudette Bradshaw:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the answer to my friend is on two occasions Quebecers clearly stated that yes they wanted to still be part of our great country and remain Quebecers as well as Canadians.

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Today's day of opposition by the Bloc Québécois is extremely important and significant. The motion moved by my party leader and amended by my colleague for Berthier—Montcalm reads as follows: "That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to freely decide their own future."

For Quebecers, the stakes are basic since the debate deals essentially with democracy and the right of peoples to decide their own future. Whom are we talking about exactly? I am proud to say: the Quebec people who probably naively believed in the 1867 agreement when it was one of the two founding nations of Canada.

One hundred and thirty one years later, what we are talking about is Quebec's right to self-determination, a right it is denied by the federal government, as witness its reference to the Supreme Court. What was happened to cause the federal government to consider the reality of the Quebec people so negligible?

For the past 30 years, relations between the federal government and Quebec have not always been rosy. If I may, I will briefly remind the House of a few important events which will shed some light on what is happening today.

In 1980, four years after the Party Québécois was elected in 1976, Quebec held its first consultation on the future of Quebec within the Canadian federation. The outcome was clear, the rules of democracy understood and accepted by all concerned.

After the yes side defeat, Quebec abided by the decision of its citizens and continued to act within the Constitution of Canada. Two years later, in 1982, the federal government of Trudeau decided, in a great impetus of independence, to renew and patriate the Constitution. Despite Quebec's unwillingness and despite nice but shallow promises made in 1980, the federal government unilaterally patriated the Constitution.

At that time, the government, once again through a reference order, had asked the Supreme Court to make legitimate a unilateral patriation without the agreement of all the provinces. The answer met the expectations of the federal government. Patriation without the agreement of all the provinces is legal. But is it ethical? That is something else.

Trudeau and his henchmen did not bother with these subtleties. For him, the new Constitution of 1982 would be the right one, and too bad if Quebec did not recognize it.

• (1305)

The problem is neither sovereignists nor Quebec federalists have recognized and recognize the Constitution of 1982.

In 1992, after years of negotiations both difficult and useless, the Canada-wide referendum is held on the Charlottetown accords. In Quebec, this exercise is framed by the Quebec Referendum Act. Again, all parties recognized the rules of the game and no one had

*Supply*

any doubt about the legitimacy of this democratic exercise. The referendum of 1992 unequivocally rejected the Charlottetown accords: in Canada, because these accords gave too many powers to Quebec, and in Quebec, because these accords were below the traditional demands of Quebec.

In 1995, Quebec held its second referendum on the future of the Quebec people. This consultation again took place under Quebec's Referendum Act. Once again, the rules of the game were agreed to by all. The issues were clear. No one, not even the Prime Minister of Canada, questioned the legitimacy of the right of Quebecers to decide their future.

Everyone remembers the result of the 1995 referendum. The yes side, the side that wanted change, got almost 50% of the votes, with 94% of registered voters taking part in this highly democratic exercise.

Having nothing to offer Quebec, the federal government went with what is now known as its plan B, a plan based on fear, a plan based on denying the existence of the Quebec people. One of the main elements of this strategy is the reference to the Supreme Court in order to deny Quebec's right to decide its own future.

Yet, ever since the 1960s, Quebecers have always thought they could decide their own future and have always acted accordingly. The referendums that were held in Quebec are good examples of that. With its reference to the Supreme Court, the government is giving nine judges it appointed the right to decide Quebec's future. That is a most undemocratic and illegitimate move. When a government asks judges to make political decisions, democracy is always threatened.

The federal government is using the Supreme Court to validate its plan B, just as the Trudeau government sought approval for unilaterally patriating the Constitution in 1982. The result of this action by the government in 1982 was that Quebec refused to recognize that Constitution. Today, the federal government is invoking this Constitution to pick on Quebecers, by refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the National Assembly and the free will of the people the assembly represents, in other words, by denying the Quebec people its right to exist.

As in 1982, the federal government stands alone, its positions have garnered no support. About the reference to the Supreme Court, there is a consensus in Quebec that only Quebecers have the right to decide their own future and that no court of law can take that right away and decide for them.

In fact, even the staunchest federalists in Quebec have decried the tactic used by the government. Mr. Claude Ryan, the former leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec and leader of the No side in 1980, was very clear on the reference issue: "It is for Quebec and for Quebec only to decide its own future."

In his comments to the *amicus curiae*, Mr. Ryan said that, on the right to self-determination, which can be interpreted as including the choice to opt for sovereignty, there is in Quebec a broad consensus between the key political parties and the vast majority of politicians working at the provincial level. All agree that, at the end of the day, the future of Quebec, whatever option is chosen, depends on the political will of the Quebec people.

The current leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec and leader of the No side in the 1995 referendum, Mr. Johnson, approved Mr. Ryan's analysis and joined the vast consensus reached in Quebec. The right of Quebecers to self-determination is a political issue, not a legal one. A legal measure would never stop a nation from democratically deciding its own future.

• (1310)

For the past week, the intergovernmental affairs minister has been making astonishing statements about the Supreme Court reference. After loudly invoking the rule of law, he recognizes, following Mr. Ryan's statements, that democracy prevails, but that the rule of law is essential. For us, the primacy of democracy is a fact and Quebec's right to self-determination cannot be challenged. Because they respect democracy and the right of people to self-determination, because they respect Quebecers, the nine Supreme Court judges will refuse to answer the questions of the federal government.

Maurice Maeterlinck wrote, and I quote: "There is nothing finer than a key, as long as one does not know what it opens".

The federal government has given a key to the Supreme Court with the intention of locking up the people of Quebec, but it did not know what this key opened. We see it now with the consensus in Quebec: there is no key to lock up the people of Quebec, there is no key to lock up democracy.

[English]

**Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to the presentation of my honourable colleague. I would ask her two simple questions. First of all, does she believe in asking the people of Quebec once, twice or three times? How many times does she want to ask the people of Quebec what their views are and then when is she going to be ready to accept the expressed will of the people of Quebec? That is my first question.

My second question deals with how you train people to count votes and how you teach young people democracy. Is it by teaching them to look at a voting slip and accept a voting slip based on what has been indicated is the will of the people? Is it to teach them how to be un peu croches and reject 86,000, 100,000 votes? How many tens of thousands of votes are you allowed to reject based on

*Supply*

disinformation and poor counting and then have to be recounted how many times?

So tell me about this very democratic society that puts an unclear question, says no twice and does not count the votes properly. Is that democracy in Quebec?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral:** Mr. Speaker, I am really not sure what I should do. Should I avoid answering the questions like my colleagues opposite do? I could make a nice speech instead, with elegance, and perhaps even with a measure of humour.

If I decide to answer my colleague's questions, I will probably show a more mature attitude and more respect for parliamentarians.

The choice between the two is quite clear for me, just as clear as my choice was in 1995, and also in 1980 and 1992.

The first question was about the number of referendums. I would like to quote from the classics by saying: "Hone your work carefully; spare no effort". There will be as many as it takes.

My deeply held belief is that the Quebec people exists, that it has the right to have a country of its own and to run it in its own way, being respectful of international conventions and of its immediate neighbours and of countries that are a little bit more remote. That is what I believe.

Since this belief is a driving force for me, I am here to achieve a goal. I do not think I or my colleague opposite can ever say that two is enough, or three, or ten.

"Hone your work carefully". I am confident that Quebecers will finally take this extraordinary opportunity to join all other nations in the world when the next referendum comes, because we will have our own country by the year 2000.

The second question dealt with democracy and the vote counting.

• (1315)

I am almost tempted to make a comment. The Liberals must be really shattered, they must be really worried to wonder, to draw a parallel between the value of democracy in Quebec and a few unfortunate decisions that were made in all good faith by scrutineers who were under the stress that is normally felt in all polling stations.

Mr. Speaker, like me, you probably had the opportunity to witness the counting of votes, perhaps as a scrutineer or a secretary or a representative of the yes side, the no side or the perhaps side, and to know what goes on. There is some tension in the air. There is

some stress and everyone wants to do his or her best. But you know, and I only have to look at my colleagues on the other side, obviously, it is not because one wants to do his or her best that one always does the right things. The evidence is in front of me. The Liberals want to do their best, but sometimes it does not work very well. So democracy is not in jeopardy in Quebec. Democracy is one of our fundamental values and I have confidence in Quebecers' maturity.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to join in a debate which is the prelude to the political mobilization of Quebecers in support of the consensus re-emerging in Quebec which, as stated in the motion moved today in the House by our party, holds that it is for Quebecers, and Quebecers alone, to freely decide their own future.

Contrary to what the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs is saying, the Government of Canada has put three questions to the supreme court dealing with the future of Quebec and phrased them in such a way that it has shocked and troubled the chair of the UN International Law Commission, Alain Pellet, and I quote "on account of the partisan manner in which they are asked", not because it wants to clarify the rule of law and become its champion.

No, this is a political move. So political in fact that it might jeopardize the credibility of this same court held hostage by the law, according to the prominent lawyer Jacques-Yvan Morin. This strategy is aimed mainly at discouraging Quebecers from opting for sovereignty when the time comes because it would be illegal.

However in Quebec nobody, not only federalist allies, such as Daniel Johnson and Claude Ryan, is being fooled by such shifty tactics, such trickery, which, as Hannah Arendt put it, "never conflict with reason, because things could have happened just the way the liar claimed they happened".

This strategy is probably also aimed at influencing the international community, which Canada will ask to oppose any action the supreme court might have ruled illegal. However, the international community is not and will not be fooled by this none too subtle federal stratagem. One day it will recognize the will of the Quebec to have its own country and to become a full-fledged member of the international community.

• (1320)

The international community will recognize a sovereign Quebec, a Quebec that will reassert, as it has stated for decades, its intention to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the other international instruments ratified by Canada, guarantee the English speaking community and the native people the rights they need to develop within a sovereign Quebec, as well as respect all relevant commitments to ensure the stability of the continent and the whole world.

The Bloc Québécois has been trying and keeps trying to expose this legal tactic that undermines democracy in Canada and it will

*Supply*

intensify its discussions with foreign representatives, here in Ottawa and abroad, to politely and patiently explain to them why Quebecers will soon opt for sovereignty, why Quebecers no longer want to deal with the Canadian impasse and why they want a state where people speak French and enjoy a Quebec culture.

When the time comes to decide its own future, Quebec will have legitimacy on its side, as always. Canada, or at least the part being represented by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and his entourage, believes that it has the law on its side. The minister argues that the rule of law is crucial, but allow me to digress here for a minute.

To be so crucial, it would have to be understood. Last week, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs showed us that he does not understand anything about international law. When he was talking about unilateral decisions made by Canada, he said things that exposed and brought to light his lack of knowledge in this area, which we will continue to decry.

The law is not crucial. Democracy is, the will of the people is crucial, and that is what the Canadian government is about to learn at its own expense. There is today a large consensus which the international community will take note of, a large consensus that it is for Quebecers to decide, and Quebecers will soon have another opportunity to decide their own future.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that, as our leader stated this morning, we support the motion put forward by our colleagues from the Bloc Québécois.

It is unfortunate that, once again, the Liberal Party of Canada has managed to focus the national debate on the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada. It is unfortunate—and I will say this before asking my question to my colleague—because, at a moment where Canadians have gone through successive serious crises over the past year and a half, that particular item is not on their agenda. Our priorities are definitely elsewhere.

Since Canadians are not sending us a clear message that a constitutional debate in the House of Commons is a matter of the utmost urgency, I would like to ask my colleague if he thinks that this debate has been fuelled for 30 years by irresponsible politicians who have made historical mistakes, especially over the last 20 years, that went against the objectives of Canadians as well as Quebecers as a whole.

A survey released a few weeks ago showed that 80% of Quebecers among those who voted yes have had enough and are sick and tired of the constitutional debate.

Is it an issue that is used and abused by politicians? I would like to hear what the member has to say on this subject.

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First I will say that the politicians whom the member calls irresponsible are those who, for more than 30 years, have been proposing reforms to federalism without ever being able to see them through.

• (1325)

It is not as if Quebecers, and several of their governments, have not sought to take part in reforms aimed at changing the federation in order to bring it in line with Quebecers' expectations. The ones responsible for the division today are the politicians, and I agree with you that the Liberals of Canada are without a doubt the ones who must accept the bulk of the responsibility, in particular Prime Minister Trudeau, who we are not upset to hear is now losing his popularity in Quebec. The Liberals are the ones who created the stalemate and they are the ones who continue to maintain positions that perpetuate it.

The sovereigntist politicians have their faults, but they also have their good points, and one of their good points is definitely that they wanted to find an alternative, and alternative within a federalism which has reached a dead end and continues to be stuck there. Our alternative, since René Lévesque founded the Parti Québécois, is the one proposed to the people of Quebec, sovereignty plus an offer to Canada in all friendship and respect to those who make up Canada, an offer of partnership or economic association.

We have done so, and will continue to do so, giving priority to the democratic approach and inviting Quebecers to reflect on their future and to decide on that future after sober reflection. Quebecers have the right to decide their future, as they did once in 1980, a second time in 1992, a third time in 1995, and they will still be free to decide their future again, and soon we hope, so that Quebec may be a country by the year 2000.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments, for a very short question. The hon. member for Mount Royal has the floor.

**Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you asked for a very short question and I will therefore ask such a question to my colleague, with all due respect and considering that he has the right to explain and defend his ideas. Could the hon. member tell me why he did not want to accept the amendment moved by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, which was to include in the motion before the House the words "respecting the rule of law and the principle of democracy for all"? Why did he not want to deal with this amendment and accept it?

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Through you, Mr. Speaker, I will tell my colleague that I was not there but I understand that the amendment was not accepted because it was deemed not to be in order by the chair.



*Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with the member for Beauce.

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, I would like to convey a message to Quebecers on the part of the people of my riding: we want you to remain within Canada. We believe that you make a contribution to our country by your uniqueness.

*[English]*

The future of Quebec is very important to the residents of my province and my riding. After all, the people of Ontario and Quebec have a long and significant history as partners and friends. Historically we were the twin engines of growth in Canada. Today our two provinces are bound together by a complex web of ties, families, friendships, professional partnerships and trading links.

*[Translation]*

Many francophone Quebecers have played an important role in the life of my province, and among them are Richard Monette, artistic director of the Festival of Stratford, and Yves Landry, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Chrysler Canada. On the other hand, Quebec has benefited from the talents of Franco-Ontarians, namely Paul Desmarais of Power Corporation. The magnificent synergy of our two provinces is embodied in such people.

*[English]*

The presence of Quebec within Canada is also of particular importance to the franco-Ontarian community that enriches my province of Ontario.

- (1330)

Let me just mention a few of their achievements. Both writer François Paré and playwright Jean-Marc Dalpé have won governor general's awards for their work. Ottawa's Franco-Ontarian festival, LeFranco, has grown to be the premier francophone cultural event of its kind in North America. The Ontario economy is bolstered by over 7,500 francophone owned businesses, companies and corporations. In economic terms the provinces of Ontario and Quebec are among the most closely linked of all Canada's provinces.

According to the most recent figures available from StatsCan, which are for 1996, almost 60% of Quebec's interprovincial exports were to Ontario and over 70% of its interprovincial imports came from my province. Meanwhile some 40% of Ontario's exports were indeed to Quebec and some 50% of its imports came

from that province. Quebec is indeed Ontario's largest trading partner within Canada and vice versa.

For all these reasons, social, cultural and economic, it is very important to Ontarians that Quebec remain within Canada. As friends, it is natural that we should not wish Quebecers to leave Canada in an atmosphere of confusion without a mutually acceptable process and a framework to ensure fairness and clarity.

However, I remain confident that Quebecers will continue to choose to enjoy the fruits of Canadian citizenship. I feel confident that they will continue to build the federation alongside Ontarians and their other fellow citizens from British Columbia, the prairies, eastern Canada and the north, for there is no doubt that together Canadians are indeed a winning combination.

Former New Brunswick premier Frank McKenna said in his very emotional farewell address Canada is a country that has the civility to be able to deal with the most difficult issues in the most peaceful way imaginable, a country that has been able to fulfil the dreams and aspirations of hundreds of thousands and millions of people and it is a country that people want to come and live in.

One reason why Canada is so attractive for people around the globe is that we have found ways to accommodate and indeed to celebrate our tremendous diversity. In a world where so many countries are torn apart by ethnic and regional grievances, this is no mean feat. In a country such as ours with its great distances and a citizenry drawn from the four corners of the globe, respect for diversity is essential.

Few Canadians would deny that the First Nations, Inuit and Métis, together with the new and not so new generations of immigrants, all contribute an important though by no means identical way to our country.

I was pleased to see this aspect of Canadian reality reflected in the statement of principles drawn up by nine of Canada's premiers in Calgary, together with a commitment to individual and provincial equality. That commitment to equality, however, was by no means a call for uniformity. The premiers indeed signalled their recognition of Quebec's uniqueness within Canada in this context. It appears to be a signal to which Quebecers can respond.

An Environics poll taken some time after the text of the Calgary declaration was released showed that over one-quarter of Quebecers who currently support secession would change their minds if all nine other provinces passed resolutions recognizing the unique character of Quebec.

This clearly illustrates the ability of the Calgary principles to bring Canadians together from coast to coast to coast. That is what we in the government of Canada wish to do. We wish to bring Canadians together to continue building this remarkable country so that all Canadians can benefit from our combined strength in facing the challenges of the new millennium.

*Supply*

Advanced communication technologies are increasingly turning the world into the global village envisaged by Canada's Marshall McLuhan.

• (1335)

With our two official languages and our multicultural citizenry, Canada is increasingly well placed to compete in this new global reality.

Of course, the reasons for staying together as one country go way beyond our economic strength. Together we have built a strong social union which reflects our commitment to sharing and our sense of a national community. Together we are a stronger presence in the world and on the world stage.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a wealth of ties which bind Canadians together on a wide range of different levels. Our economic achievements are by no means negligible and it is clear that divided, our economy would be weaker than it is today.

There is no question that at present Canada is a success as plenty of international organizations and experts agree. According to OECD, Canada's economy and employment growth are set to outperform those of all other G-7 countries in 1998.

The investment bank Credit Suisse First Boston has indicated that it anticipates the Government of Canada will receive a credit upgrading in the near future. The world economic forum rates Canada as the fourth most competitive economy in the world based on such factors as the shape of the country's finances, our infrastructure and our technology base.

The economist intelligence unit of London predicts that we will have the third best business environment in the world over the next five years. As the president of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, Charles Baillie, observed, Quebecers can survive economically without the other provinces and vice versa. But, he said, "since when is our standard and our aspiration simple survival? Canada has meant more than simple survival, much more than that to all its citizens, including Quebecers".

I know Quebecers are interested indeed in more than survival. I know they want to continue to flourish as the only majority francophone society on this continent.

In the motion today Bloc members say they are against the democratic principles and rule of law of their own province of Quebec, my province of Ontario and indeed our country of Canada. It is for those reasons that I cannot support this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to my hon. colleague for Mississauga West, a region I know well.

My brother, Maurice Marchand, lives in the riding of Mississauga West, and, like me as a Franco-Ontarian, is quite familiar with the treatment afforded francophones in Ontario.

Contrary to what my hon. colleague has just said or wants to have us believe, francophones have not been treated well in Ontario. The very opposite is true. In the history of Canada, if there is one province that is more responsible for mistreatment and for failing to respect the rights of francophones outside Quebec, it is Ontario. It prohibited teaching in French for nearly 50 years and only in recent years has it granted francophones their own schools. This is another issue I would have liked to tackle. It is a bit off topic, but it is related to the Quebec issue.

It shows once again how little respect is accorded the French language in Canada, and the very same thing can be seen in Quebec as well. Canada has not found a way to honour the integrity and unique character of Quebec. The uniqueness of its character is ignored despite the fact that Quebec has for many years expressed a need for some recognition.

In the past, a number of referendums were held. Changes in federalism promised to Quebec never materialized. The member for Mississauga West is trying to tell us, like a number of members on the other side of the House, the federalism and the Canadian Constitution have changed. It is true, but do they not think the federal government's stand on Quebec has hardened in the process?

Is its reference to the supreme court to prevent Quebecers from freely expressing their will and their decision to become an independent country not further proof that the federal government has taken a tougher stand with Quebec rather than really honouring its claims for several years?

• (1340)

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that if the hon. member's brother lives in my riding there is probably a fairly good chance that he voted for me. If he did I thank him.

The member made reference to some of the history in Ontario. What he failed to do was recognize some of the gains which have been made, particularly in recent years.

I was part of the David Peterson government in the province of Ontario. We made several changes in our province to recognize the importance and the significance of the francophone community.

That was not easily done. There were a lot of people who were saying why do we need bilingual signs on our highways in the province of Ontario. We would not find bilingual signs on the highways in the province of Quebec. That is an interesting double standard.

We have ignored that particular problem. We have done that because we believe in Canada and we believe in Quebec as being part of Canada.

I also point out there are a number of French schools and French immersion courses in Ontario. Many people in my riding insist on having their children go through their entire elementary education in the French system. That is tremendous. I wish I had done that. Then my attempts at French in this place would be dramatically better than they are today. The reality is Ontario recognizes the importance.

The bottom line which the member and other members of his party refuse to admit is that they have clearly spoken out today against the democratic principles of Quebec, of Ontario and of Canada. They have spoken against the rule of law of Quebec, of Ontario and of Canada. For that reason we will not be supporting the motion. However, we do support the people of the province of Quebec's remaining in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a Quebec MP, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the future of Quebec within Canada.

I find the motion before us significant on more than one account because it stresses our democratic values. It is not every day we parliamentarians have the opportunity to discuss such an issue; this is the reason why I find this debate so important.

Our government's position should another referendum be called in Quebec, the third one in less than 20 years, has always been clear. We do not want to deny Quebecers the right to decide to separate from Canada if they believe it is the best thing to do.

What we have always maintained however is that the referendum process must be clear and allow Quebecers to fully understand what is at stake. Whether we are for or against Quebec's secession, it would inevitably have a serious impact on every field of human activity, not only in Quebec, but also in the rest of Canada. This is the reason why the process must be clear. This is the reason why we are making sure it will be.

Bloc members accuse us at times of wanting to deny Quebecers the right to decide their own future. Nothing is further from the truth. Canadians have always been known for their sense of freedom and democracy. This country was built on openness and tolerance. Respect for these ideals and their implementation give Canadians a very enviable reputation internationally. This legacy inherited from our forefathers is part of our identity and, as Quebecers and Canadians, there is probably nothing we hold as dear as what sets us apart from the rest of the world.

As the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs so rightly said, Canada would no longer be Canada if was not based on the

### *Supply*

voluntary participation of all its constituent parts. Nobody is forced to be part of this country. Anybody who accuses our government of trying to exercise such force does not understand our position at all or does not want to understand it.

We respect democracy, but contrary to some of our friends opposite, we also believe in clarity. We do not want Quebecers to lose their country over a misunderstanding.

• (1345)

We do not want the democratic experience to be turned into a bad joke. People have the right to understand what they stand to lose by opting for Quebec's separation. They will have to make their choice with full knowledge of the facts.

Bloc members will undoubtedly wonder why we are so prudent with them, since we have already taken part in two other referendum campaigns at the end of which Quebecers still expressed the will to remain Canadians. The answer is simple: since 1995, several facts that were made public clearly demonstrated that the referendum process had not been followed with a concern for the respect of democracy.

Let us recall the controversial statements of Jacques Parizeau about a unilateral declaration of independence. Indeed, the three party agreement signed on June 12, 1995 between Mr. Parizeau, Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Dumont included dubious aspects. Concluded in mid-panic in the face of the probability of a bitter defeat, it had the effect of confusing Quebecers by painting in glowing colours the possibility of an economic and political association with Canada, which Mr. Parizeau himself had never believed in.

Indeed, we have to see that the approach suggested by secessionist leaders—to use an euphemism—has not always been crystal clear. And how. For years opinion polls have been showing that a clear question on Quebec's independence gets less support than if vague and utopian concepts such as “association” and “partnership” are added to it.

Association and partnership scenarios are continually presented as certainties, when over the years all successive federal governments and those of the other provinces have always rejected the sovereignist option.

In this regard, results of the last referendum are most revealing. A few months before October 30, 1995, an opinion poll indicated that 80% of Quebecers, including 61% of yes side supporters, said they were “proud to be both Quebecers and Canadians”. Yet, 49% of Quebecers voted in favour of sovereignty on that day.

Other results also enlighten us on the ambiguity that was knowingly fostered by secessionist leaders with regard to their option. According to a poll conducted at the very end of the referendum campaign, 80% of Quebecers who intended to vote

*Supply*

yes thought that, should the yes side win, Quebec would automatically continue to use the Canadian dollar as its currency. Close to 80% believed that economic ties with Canada would remain unchanged, while 50% thought they would continue to use the Canadian passport, and 25% believed Quebec would continue to elect federal members of Parliament. Another poll showed that close to 20% of yes voters thought that a sovereign Quebec could continue to be a Canadian province.

As you probably remember, the question asked in the referendum held on October 30, 1995 was based on the tripartite agreement of June 12, 1995. Unlike in 1980, when the question was made public five months before the referendum, the PQ government released the 1995 question only six weeks before the vote.

The agreement reached by Parizeau, Bouchard and Dumont was quite extraordinary in its own way. The government pledged that, once the secessionist plan was approved by a majority of people, it would wait one year before proclaiming sovereignty and would conduct negotiations on the infamous economic and political association project with the rest of Canada. However, as Mr. Parizeau would later say, nothing would have prevented Quebec from deciding that the negotiations were going nowhere, thus leaving it free to make a move whenever it deemed it appropriate to do so. This is sure a nice example of transparency and of respect toward Quebeckers.

I will not dwell on the remarkable unworkability of the 1995 sovereignist project. I simply want to stress the confusion that it generated among Quebeckers. A confusing and convoluted question almost resulted in the breakup of the country. We do not want the fate of our country to be dependent on tricks or semantics.

We want clarity, not confusion. The democratic process does not truly fulfil its purpose if we try to confuse voters instead of helping them make a decision. Voters must understand the consequences of their decision, and it is precisely the role of the government to make sure they do.

We are in favour of democracy, but we also trust Quebeckers' judgment. Quebeckers played a major role in the building of our country. They have left their mark throughout history, thanks to their determination and their drive. Canada provides them with even greater opportunities. Quebeckers excel in many areas.

• (1350)

What we inherited from my ancestors, yours and all those who came to settle in this beautiful country of ours is the strong will to build our future on a solid base made up of solidarity, compassion, freedom and respect for our differences.

These values come out for instance in our social programs and the assistance we provide to any part of the country that is hit by a natural disaster. These values are enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is the kind of country I want to pass on to the next generations of Quebeckers and Canadians.

The right of Quebeckers to decide their own future is at the very heart of the initiatives the Government of Canada has taken to clarify the problems that could eventually arise from the separation of Quebec and the breakup of Canada. Yes, I believe in the future of Canada and I firmly believe that, in a democratic process that would respect all of the principles underlying our federation, Quebeckers will decide to remain in the country they have helped so much to build.

We cannot support this motion after seeing the Bloc Québécois refuse to recognize the rule of law and the principle of democracy for all. Such a refusal cannot be approved by the people of Beauce, by Quebeckers and even by Canadians.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am really surprised to hear the hon. member for Beauce quote statistics about the 1980 referendum and the 1995 referendum, when his party and all his colleagues are about to support what is bound to happen in the supreme court, who will deny Quebeckers this very right. I wonder how he will be able some time soon to express his views about democracy and self-determination for the Quebec people.

The federal Liberals are more and more alone in this adventure. Think about the positions taken by Claude Ryan and the leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec, Daniel Johnson. They seem increasingly to be distancing themselves from the federal Liberal members of Parliament. There is in Quebec a consensus that this reference is pointless, illegitimate and disrespectful of our democratic values.

Does the hon. member realize that he can only rely on his Reform allies and Guy Bertrand to help him defend the hard line set out in Plan B, which is decried by the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois, the Liberal Party of Quebec, some international experts and the people of Quebec?

**Mr. Claude Drouin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague opposite that I am not alone since the majority of Quebeckers are on our side, saying that we should make things very clear in order to have a sound basis because the country will not be divided on the basis of innuendos and trick questions.

That is why we must turn to the supreme court to clarify every legal aspect of the matter, and I am sure Quebeckers will support our initiative.

[English]

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member from across the way why the government was not interested in bringing before the people of Quebec the Calgary declaration as proposed by nine of the country's ten premiers. Why did the Liberal government

not choose that opportunity to go before the people of Quebec and get a feeling from them on how they felt on those seven points that the rest of the country are prepared to consider with the issue of unity?

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Drouin:** Mr. Speaker, that issue was raised by the provinces and it must be resolved in conjunction with the provinces. We would have liked the Quebec government to consider it. Unfortunately, it has refused to do so. Let us hope it changes its mind and decides to submit this issue to Quebecers.

**Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the question asked by my colleague from Lotbinière, which seems most relevant.

I want to ask the member for Beauce if he is conscious of the lack of support for the Liberal Party of Canada, particularly its Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, in Quebec. Think about a former leader of the Liberal Party, Mr. Ryan, and the present leader, Mr. Johnson, two former leaders of the no side who faced us with complete honesty and with all their talent, both in 1980 and in 1995.

• (1355)

Think about Jean-Claude Rivest, Conservative senator and former special advisor to the Liberal premier, Mr. Bourassa, a federalist, who said at one point that never again would Quebec go through what it went through after Charlottetown. Think about André Tremblay, special constitutional advisor to Robert Bourassa in Charlottetown in 1992. Think about Cardinal Turcotte—and that tops it all—who, despite his very delicate functions, has had the courage to take a stand in this debate, knowing what kind of criticism he would draw because of that. Where does the Liberal Party of Canada stand in Quebec at this moment apart from the support it gets from Alliance Quebec? I would like my colleague from Beauce to respond to that.

**Mr. Claude Drouin:** Mr. Speaker, I could repeat what I said to his colleague previously, but when I am given a list of 12 people and told that it represents the majority, I have a problem with that.

If the member wants to quote Mr. Ryan, I would like him to repeat everything he said. He said that he would like to have a clear question. Will it be possible for you to have a clear and honest question? I do not think so.

[English]

**The Speaker:** My colleagues, before I begin with the statements, I address myself to the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona. If you were seeking the floor, I will recognize you now and you will be the first intervener after question period.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I will wait until after question period.

*S. O. 31*

**The Speaker:** It being nearly 2 o'clock, we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### 1998 WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Canadian Olympian Kevin Overland of Kitchener who won the bronze medal in 500 metre speed skating very early this morning. His bronze medal race was over in only 71.86 seconds but I am sure the memory will last a lifetime.

Kevin will also compete in the 1,500 metre race on Thursday and the 1,000 metre race on Sunday.

Kevin's sister Cindy is also on the Canadian Olympic speed skating team with her first race, the 3,000 metres, tomorrow. Their father Ernie is a coach and their sisters Amanda and Kate are also in training for future national teams.

On behalf of Kitchener—Waterloo I join Canadians everywhere in congratulating Kevin, and Red Deer, Alberta's silver medalist Jeremy Wotherspoon for their medals and on having fulfilled their Olympic dreams. I wish Cindy much luck in fulfilling hers.

To all our Olympians, well done.

\* \* \*

### THE BUDGET

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, sometime soon the government will introduce its 1998-99 budget.

One of the major points of interest will be what this Liberal government intends to do with any budget surplus. Liberals appear to want to put 50% of any surplus into increased government spending with the rest being divided between debt reduction and tax relief.

But the question is what do Canadians want? I put this question to my constituents and their opinion differs vastly from the Liberals' plan. With over 2,000 responses to my survey, the average response of the people of South Surrey—White Rock—Langley was to have 55% of the surplus going toward debt reduction, 36% going to tax relief and less than 9% going to increased government spending.

Once again Liberal fiscal priorities are completely out of step with average Canadians.

*S. O. 31*

### FLAG PROTOCOL

**Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to propose an important amendment to protocol as it relates to the lowering of flags at federal government buildings.

Currently the lowering of such flags to half mast is an honour reserved for a small group of public officials.

• (1400)

However, in recognition of the important work federal public servants do for our communities and our country, I encourage the Minister of Canadian Heritage to allow the lowering of flags at federal government facilities where workers are mourning the death of a colleague.

Several federal government employees in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie have requested this measure, and I fully support their proposal. In my opinion such a move would be a fitting gesture of respect and appreciation for those men and women who, without the media fanfare afforded to elected officials, perform vital services to Canadians on a daily basis.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### BILL C-28

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Saint-Eustache—Sainte-Thérèse, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for the past week, we have been asking the Minister of Finance serious questions regarding Bill C-28. Instead of getting clear answers, we heard insults and contradictory statements from the finance minister, the ethics commissioner and even the vice-president of Canada Steamship Lines.

We feel the government is playing Battleship with us. When we tried G-6, the Prime Minister got up and said “No”. The next day, we tried B-3 and the Deputy Prime Minister said “No”. But I think that in the case of C-28, the Minister of Finance should rise and say “Touché. My ship is sunk”.

We are entitled to answers. The Liberals should stop trying to take us for a ride.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CITIZENSHIP AND HERITAGE WEEK

**Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is Canada’s annual Citizenship and Heritage Week, a week long celebration that includes National Citizenship Week, National Flag of Canada Day and Heritage Day. A special focus this year will revolve around young Canadians. A variety of youth oriented activities will take place across the country.

This week represents an opportunity to pay tribute to the value we as Canadians share and to the enduring traditions that have formed the fabric of our nation.

I encourage all parliamentarians to recognize the individuals and organizations that have been participating and contributing to the program of special events in their communities.

This is an opportunity to further strengthen the vibrant, positive community bonds that exist throughout the country.

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### IRAQ

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, some have expressed the view that Canada really has no choice but to respond favourably to American requests on Iraq, given the significant integration of our economy with the U.S. that has taken place since free trade. Indeed the Liberals, pathetically, now seem to accept and even defend the very restrictions on Canadian policy they once joined with the NDP in warning against.

Under the Liberals, Canada has become a country of no choices. Unlike the hope held out by the alternative federal budget and other proposals for change, the Liberals’ Canada is a country not able to freely choose its own future. If it is not the Americans it is the money lenders and bond holders or NAFTA or the WTO, and soon it will be the MAI.

Under the Liberals, globalization is an ever tightening but apparently welcome vice that constricts our ability to be ourselves.

For the NDP, globalization must become the opportunity for a truly global community in which Canadian values proliferate rather than are exterminated. We must create a global economy that is not just a marketplace designed for the profit strategies of multinational corporations.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### QUEBEC’S RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from now on, new federal policies and programs will be closely scrutinized to determine their impact on rural areas.

This announcement was made yesterday in Rimouski by the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, who was accompanied by the Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food and Fisheries and Oceans, and by the Liberal member for Bellechasse—Etchemins—Montmagny—L’Islet, at the conference held by Quebec’s Solidarité rurale.

The president of Solidarité rurale, Jacques Proulx, called the plan a “great victory for rural Quebec”. This decision will make

the Canadian government a special partner in ensuring the future of rural development in Quebec.

It will enable the Canadian government to promote local development within a global vision.

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[English]

### CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, last week in the other place a Senate committee heard from several veterans organizations. They all stated that they were not consulted on the proposed expansion to the war museum that included a Holocaust gallery. The recent controversy regarding the Holocaust gallery could have been avoided if veterans had been consulted.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs has been notably absent throughout this controversy. It is his responsibility to intervene and ensure that adequate consultations take place.

• (1405)

The Senate subcommittee on veterans affairs should be commended for taking it upon itself to allow our veterans to be heard. It was quite evident from the hearings that veterans groups want the Canadian War Museum to be severed from the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

I call upon the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the government to listen to our veterans and do what is necessary to take control of the war museum and place it solely under the auspices of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

\* \* \*

### ABORTION

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, a million babies, give or take a few, have lost their lives in the last 10 years. Is parliament horrified? No. Is the media in an uproar for the government to do something? No.

Thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada and weak-kneed politicians, Canada has been without any restrictions on abortion for 10 years. Not only are there no restrictions when a woman can get an abortion between the time of conception and until the baby emerges alive from the birth canal, but the government has forced taxpayers to pay for the killing of these one million babies.

I have introduced a motion that would at least put a stop to government funding for abortions, a measure which two-thirds of Canadians support.

*S. O. 31*

My private members' Motion No. 268 calls for a binding national referendum at the time of the next election to ask whether or not voters are in favour of government funding for medically unnecessary abortions.

I urge every member who feels strongly about saving the lives of tens of thousands of helpless infants to support this motion and to help me convince the House to make it votable.

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[Translation]

### MARIE LAURIER

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with the Olympic Games unfolding, we should not forget our young Canadian athletes who dream of reaching the top level in sports. That is why I would like to draw your attention today to the success achieved by a 14-year-old athlete in my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard, Marie Laurier.

At the Canadian figure skating championships held in Hamilton from January 5 to January 12, Marie Laurier won the gold medal in the junior singles category. Last year, in Vancouver, she won the title in the junior couples category. Marie never spared any effort, and she has the results to show for this.

We can take pride in our young athletes who work so hard to get recognition nationally and internationally. At that level of competition, the talent and concentration needed to succeed require almost superhuman preparation and training. Our athletes are very deserving.

Marie, I wish you the best for the future, and every success in upcoming competitions.

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### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has shown the world its real bilingual face in Nagano. The Canadian heritage minister says it is unacceptable and the foreign affairs minister says it is unfortunate.

Last summer, when war veterans were there, Major Brossard, our military attaché in France, had to ask for some French to be spoken during the historical briefing on German bunkers.

In Vimy, in November 1997, before an audience made up of 300 French people, a lady asked me, during speeches by the veterans affairs minister, the Canadian heritage minister and the secretary of state for parks: "Why don't you have interpreters? You're not here as conquerors." I answered that this is Canada's own brand of bilingualism.

*S. O. 31*

The day Quebec is sovereign, you will see what being respectful of minorities really means. For the time being, Canadian-style bilingualism is restricted to “mesdames et messieurs” and “merci beaucoup”.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, two recent reports add to the growing body of evidence concerning the economic and social pressures facing many Canadians.

A report at Industry Canada entitled “Keeping up with the Joneses” indicates that real personal income per capita is almost 25% lower in Canada than in the United States.

A second report issued by the Vanier Institute of the Family indicates that the average Canadian family needs 77 weeks worth of work, that is two wage earners, just to cover basic annual expenses.

The increasing competitiveness of the workplace often demanding overtime and the rigidity of employers regarding family commitments come at the same time as growing expectations that the parents be more involved in their children’s activities and their education.

In a society where we are expressing concern for family integrity surely there is a role for government—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Calgary West.

\* \* \*

**SENATE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, what a month for Senator Andy Thompson. He suffered through his own ice storm when he spilled his pina colada while doing the macarena. To make matters worse, he had to trade in the cocoa butter for a winter coat so he could show up for work in the frosty north.

• (1410)

Hundreds of Canadians have told me in writing that they want this mucho grande Senate to end. They want to choose who represents them in the upper house.

We do not have to live with these absentee amigos. The prime minister can choose today. He can respect the will of Canadians and recognize senate elections or he can continue to appoint Liberal cucarachas to the Senate.

\* \* \*

**QUEBEC**

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec’s cultural and linguistic situation is special because francophones must constantly fight for their place in North America.

The *60 Minutes* program aired by CBS last weekend misinterpreted the Quebec reality by stating that the province wanted to become a francophone enclave. Nothing is further from the truth. Those responsible for the program lacked objectivity and missed an opportunity for professional journalism.

I ask that the facts be reviewed concerning the description of Quebec’s social linguistic situation. Time should be taken to show both sides of the coin on an issue which is so important for Quebec francophones.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MAGOG-ORFORD REGION**

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday, on behalf of the Secretary of State responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development-Quebec, I announced that a \$15,000 contribution would be made to the Magog-Orford Chamber of Commerce, to identify concrete measures to encourage our U.S. neighbours to come and shop in Brome—Missisquoi.

We have to remind our neighbours in Vermont, 300,000 of whom live within an hour of the Canada-US border, that with the recent drop in the value of the Canadian dollar, the GST and Quebec sales tax refunds they are entitled to since their purchases are considered exports, and the decrease in our customs tariffs, they will find in my beautiful riding of Brome—Missisquoi excellent business opportunities as well as the most breathtaking scenery in all of the Eastern Townships.

Welcome to our American friends.

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[English]

**SENATE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today the upper chamber will be honoured by the return of the infamous Senator Thompson. We should all go out of our way to welcome him back to make sure he settles in okay. We should start by getting the senator reacquainted with some of the local customs.

The upper chamber is not like the beaches of Mexico. Shirts must be worn at all times. Midday siestas are discouraged although not uncommon. The pages almost always refuse to serve banana daiquiris. There is no happy hour and you must check in your mariachi at the door.

We could also get our senator a few welcome back gifts: aspirin for the lingering margarita headache, a winter coat for the cold Ottawa evenings and a Canadian flag to remind him of the hardworking, overtaxed Canadian public.



*Oral Questions*

Maybe the senator will be so moved by the generosity that he will join in the chorus of Canadian voices demanding that the Senate must be reformed.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN EXECUTIVE SERVICES ORGANIZATION**

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize five members of my constituency of Scarborough East who have made significant contributions to the world community through Canadian Executive Services Organization: John Goldie, Jim and Leslie McDonald, and Roman and Sheila Russek.

John Goldie made available western construction methods to the people who live in Ukraine which will increase the safety of their construction. Jim and Leslie McDonald helped a hospital facility in the Philippines to design medical waste disposal systems. Roman and Sheila Russek helped to redesign a factory in Poland engaged in cable construction.

Roman, Sheila, Jim, Leslie and John are to be congratulated on their contribution to building our world community. Canada is proud.

\* \* \*

**NEWFOUNDLAND SCHOOL SYSTEM**

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, latest statistics show that the Newfoundland school system is facing a sharply declining enrolment. Total enrolment this year is down by 4,597 students or 4.3%. This enrolment drop is largely related to out migration of families with children, families in which parents have left home to find work elsewhere in Canada.

After nearly 50 years in Confederation my province still has an unemployment rate more than double the national average. That out migration is currently at 9,200 people per year and is continually going up. As a result, whole communities have been decimated leaving only seniors in many areas.

• (1415)

A very distinct society in Newfoundland is in danger of dying. The ability to work elsewhere in the nation is very much appreciated but most Newfoundlanders would like to see the federal government take the lead in solving the problem a little bit closer to home.

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**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**IRAQ**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday parliament discussed the Iraqi crisis long into

the night and cabinet apparently discussed it this morning, but some critical questions remain to be answered by the Prime Minister.

If diplomacy fails and force is to be used against Saddam Hussein, Canadians want to know what the overall military objective is. Is it to take out weapons factories or is it something bigger?

What exactly is the overall mission and how will we know if it is successful?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the position of everybody at the moment is still to have a diplomatic resolution.

Now that parliament has expressed its views, we as the government decided that this morning that there will be support coming from Canada. There will be a frigate and Hercules airplanes going there. There will be some Canadians on board United States AWACS aircraft. I can inform the House of what has been decided to offer to the coalition.

At the moment the diplomatic efforts are still ongoing. I spoke for a few minutes with Mr. Chirac who is very active. He discussed his activities.

When the time comes for a strike, if we are obliged to have a strike, we will be able to inform what will be the exact targets the military operation will aim at. At the moment we are not at that stage yet.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Last night, Mr. Speaker, the weakest presentation made in the debate on Iraq was made by the Minister of National Defence. He said nothing had been ruled out, nothing had been ruled in, and had nothing much more to say.

If the American secretary of defence appeared before the Congress the night before committing forces to an action and had nothing more to say than that, he would be fired by the next morning.

What will the Prime Minister do to fill this vacuum at the top of the Department of National Defence?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is a minister who is responsible enough to wait for a decision of the cabinet before announcing something.

I have just told the Leader of the Opposition of the plan concerning Canadian participation at the moment. I have talked about a frigate. I have talked about the Hercules airplanes and the participation of Canadian soldiers with the AWACS airplane surveillance of the area.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has a moral duty to assure Canadians that our personnel have been committed to support action with a clear mission, a clear vision of their role and adequate resources to do the job.

*Oral Questions*

The time for these vague answers and vague assurances has passed. Will the Prime Minister provide that plan, that mission and that resource detail, or will we find out about it from CNN and Bill Clinton?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have clearly spoken about the position of the government. A frigate will be doing its duty there. It is a very modern ship and very well equipped with very capable officials on board.

The Hercules airplanes will be serving the forces personnel. They have used them many times in the past and know what to do with them. Those who are already on the AWACS planes will keep doing what they are doing now.

It is very simple to explain, but it seems to be very difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to understand very simple things.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, on the day the Oscar nominations are being announced we want to give the finance minister the full monte.

Canadians are swamped with our titanic size debt. It is \$77,000 per family. We are swamped with titanic size taxes, the highest in the G-7. Canadian families are barely keeping their head above water.

• (1420)

When will the finance minister throw Canadian families a lifeline in the form of across the board tax cuts and specific targets for debt reduction?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have in previous budgets provided poor Canadian families with the child tax benefit, which is a very important initiative. We have provided those families in which there are disabled Canadians with lower taxes. We will continue in this vein.

There is no doubt that the great reward for the clean-up of the country's balance sheet that has been effected by Canadians will be that over the course of time clearly the tax burden will be lowered.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, that was a real Oscar winning performance. It kind of reminds me of Forest Gump.

Canadian families are paying \$6,000 a year in taxes just to pay their share of the interest on the debt. They have seen their disposable incomes fall by \$3,000 per family since 1990.

Instead of titanic sized spending increases, what Canadians want to know is when will the finance minister introduce a budget which brings in broad based tax cuts and, of course, specific targets for debt reduction?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government certainly intends over the course of this mandate to reward Canadians for the tremendous sacrifices they have undergone as this country has come back from what was the deficit despair.

I should like to say to the hon. member and to all members of this House who have been quite patient in asking questions on the forthcoming budget that we will answer those questions on Tuesday, February 24 at 4.30 p.m.

[Translation]

I am pleased to announce that I will be tabling the budget on Tuesday, February 24, at 4.30 p.m.

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**FEDERAL COMPENSATION PROGRAM**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a growing number of analysts, commentators and editorial writers, as well as Daniel Johnson, leader of the Liberal Party, fail to understand the attitude of the federal government, which refuses to compensate Quebec for damages to its hydro-electric system. They all question the President of the Treasury Board's restrictive interpretation of the compensation program.

Does the Prime Minister recognize that the provisions of the federal compensation program give his government the latitude to compensate Quebec?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there was a disaster in the Saguenay region and another one in Manitoba, and the rules were applied to the satisfaction of both provincial governments at the time.

Companies like Hydro-Quebec do not qualify. Government assistance is targeted to small and medium size businesses and to farmers. In the case of the Saguenay region, for example, no money was given to Alcan or to the paper mills that sustained damages, because government assistance is not for them.

The eligibility rules are very clear. They were established in 1988 when Lucien Bouchard was a minister in the Conservative government.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the guide clearly says that the federal government has the latitude to compensate hydro companies. It is not the words but only the section numbers that were changed in 1988. I suppose it is a subtlety that the Prime Minister fails to grasp.

That being said, will the Prime Minister recognize that the decision on whether or not to compensate hydro companies for the damages they sustained is up to the federal government? In other words, the ball is in the government's court. Will it respond to the requests that have been made?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are applying the rules set out by the Conservative government in 1988, when Lucien Bouchard was a minister in that government.

Again, we did not compensate hydro companies for any damages sustained as a result of the flooding in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. It is very clear.

Our role is not to help large corporations. Our role is to help small businesses and farmers. That system worked well in the Saguenay region and, last year, in Manitoba, and we intend to continue with what has served Canadians well during—

**The Speaker:** The member for Témiscamingue.

• (1425)

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

Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board repeated his refusal to compensate Quebec, giving the excuse that Hydro-Québec is a very large company able to pay for the cost of its own repairs. The federal policy manual states that the federal government may compensate large companies, and I quote: “In an exceptional situation, if the minister thinks it justified”.

Are we to understand that the ice storm and the damage to the hydroelectric system are not exceptional enough for the government to feel it is justified in taking action?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have made it clear to the Government of Ontario, which also sustained considerable damage, that Hydro Ontario was no more eligible than Hydro-Québec. We are not compensating large companies. We will not be providing assistance to Bell Telephone, which also sustained enormous losses in Quebec during the last storm, because the system provides that companies that can insure themselves must cover their own damages. Companies such as Hydro-Québec and Bell Telephone can afford to insure themselves against disasters.

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised to see the Prime Minister make no distinction between Hydro-Québec and a private company not owned by Quebecers. There is a big difference.

The principles underlying federal assistance would allow the government to pay compensation because, one, electricity is an essential public service; two, there is a clause to compensate large companies; and, three, there is a precedent in Newfoundland.

Why, then, is the government stubbornly refusing to compensate Quebec?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government thinks that companies such as Bell Telephone, Hydro Ontario and Hydro-Québec, the latter having made \$700

million, could have spent a few million dollars on insurance and not come to the federal government for money.

\* \* \*

**IRAQ**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister justified a military intervention against Iraq by saying that Saddam Hussein is violating the ceasefire. Yet, in 1991, he stated that we should not take part in a war that is not fought under the flag of the United Nations.

Does the Prime Minister intend to follow the United Nations or the United States?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Both, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, General Lewis MacKenzie also opposes military aggression against Iraq, saying “as many as 5,000 Iraqi children under 5 are dying each month as a result of UN sanctions, and bombing Baghdad will only make matters worse”.

What further diplomatic measures have the Prime Minister and his foreign affairs minister taken in the last 72 hours to avert those senseless bombings?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are very active diplomatically. Earlier I was talking with the president of France concerning initiatives. I consulted with him and gave him my views, and he gave his. We hope we will be successful with the Russians to persuade Saddam Hussein to respect the resolutions of the United Nations.

Tomorrow the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be in New York discussing matters with the secretary-general of the United Nations.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is quite timely, in view of the answer just given by the Prime Minister on Canada’s involvement in an initiative in the Gulf.

Since the Prime Minister admits that he has been in touch with the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the President of France in the last 72 hours, I would like to know if, during these talks, he demanded that any action be taken under the authority of the United Nations in order to give greater moral authority to any such action.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I explained in my speech yesterday, we are acting in accordance with a United Nations resolution and a ceasefire resolution that was violated by Saddam Hussein.

*Oral Questions*

When the ceasefire was signed, Saddam Hussein agreed to allow the inspections he is now refusing. Because he is in violation of the ceasefire terms, the 1991 resolution is still valid for all the parties concerned.

• (1430)

[*English*]

**Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I take it by the response of the Prime Minister that neither he nor his government asked that this intervention happen under a new resolution of the United Nations, a new resolution made necessary by an admission of his Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday who said there was division within the security council.

The Prime Minister will know that there are more chances of success and fewer chances of bloodletting and children and innocent people suffering if there is a firm determination and resolve within the United Nations. That will give the world and Canada moral authority and less chance of war.

Why does Canada not—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be in New York to discuss that and other subjects.

I said that the president of the United States, the prime minister of Great Britain and I and others who have agreed to participate were advised that we are acting under a valid resolution which has existed since 1991. When Saddam Hussein broke the agreement of ceasefire he gave us the authority to have the resolution of 1991 respected by him.

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**THE SENATE**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today we are hoping for a sighting. Senator Andrew Thompson is due back in the Senate from his siesta in Mexico. His visit could be a rare and exciting event around here, something like the swallows coming back once a year to Capistrano.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why is the Canadian taxpayer paying the senator's salary? Does this government not believe in work for wages?

**The Speaker:** I do not know whether this falls under the administrative responsibility of the government. However, if the Prime Minister wishes to address this I will permit him to.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I said that Senator Thompson should do the honourable thing and resign. I cannot kick him out. If I could, he would have been gone a long time ago. To do so I would have to amend the

constitution. I do not think we want to amend the constitution at this time just for that.

I hope he will do the honourable thing and resign. The Canadian people are asking him to do so.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian public is begging for Senate reform and this Prime Minister, rather than saying he hoped that he could kick him out, should not make any appointments to the Senate from now on. Senators should be voted in and voted out.

The Prime Minister says he cannot fire him. The Canadian public, the people paying the bills, wants to know this. Why not? When will he change the Senate so that it will be elected and accountable to the Canadian public?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we voted for an elected Senate on this side of the House. The Reform Party voted against it in the Charlottetown accord.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Following the ice storm disaster, a great many small and medium size businesses in the Montérégie and central Quebec regions in particular are in dire straits. There is an obvious need for financial assistance and for federal involvement.

Does the Prime Minister intend to propose an assistance program identical to the industrial business assistance program, which was put in place in Alberta in 1987, following the tornadoes and floods that hit that province?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the President of the Treasury Board and the Secretary of State responsible for Quebec Regional Development are in Montreal to discuss such a program with business people from the area that was affected by the ice storm a few weeks ago.

• (1435)

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister surely knows what mandate he has given them.

In the name of fairness, will the Prime Minister reassure us by stating that all the measures taken to help Alberta businesses will also be implemented in Quebec?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the program that the Canadian government approved in the past two years to help businesses in the Saguenay region and in Manitoba is being discussed as we speak by the two ministers in

Montreal. Of course, the program will also apply to business people from eastern Ontario.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Bruce Starlight wrote a confidential letter to the minister of Indian affairs, alleging corruption on the Tsuu T'ina reserve.

Those allegations are now being looked into by the RCMP. Instead of keeping Mr. Starlight's letter confidential, a copy of it with the minister's own stamp on it was sent to the chief under suspicion.

Yesterday the minister said: "That letter was not conveyed by me or by any official in my department". How can she say that with certainty when this investigation is not even finished?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I indicated was that the letter was not conveyed to the chief by me or through official channels.

I would like to say, though, that as I went through the facts yesterday, there are some other facts the House should consider.

First of all, for the last week there have been only allegations and unfounded innuendoes. The Reform Party has been undermining public servants. It has been challenging duly elected chiefs and councils with no evidence.

I quote the hon. member who said: "It really is easy to draw these conclusions, however, we do not have the evidence". No evidence.

Why do they not wait for the investigation to conclude and then we will deal with the facts?

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that quote has been taken right out of context. The evidence is very clear that Mr. Starlight wrote to the minister.

That letter, with her stamp on it, is sitting in Chief Roy Whitney's office as we speak. How can the minister say that the letter was not conveyed by her or by any official in her department? How can the minister say this confidential letter did not come from her department when her own stamp is on it?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have made very clear the responsible approach we are taking with regard to this letter.

I have to ask what the motivation is of this opposition. I guess it puts me in mind of a comment made by a political forebear of mine, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who said that it is easy to raise prejudices.

### Oral Questions

In his recent book John Ralston Saul, a Canadian philosopher, says it is a major responsibility of those with power not to raise prejudices. I believe that is why we are on this—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Colleagues, I would caution you on both sides of the House not to impugn motives either in the question or in the answer.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### BILL C-28

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the start of the debate regarding Bill C-28 and a possible conflict of interest involving the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister has been maintaining that the Bloc Québécois is mistaken.

At the same time, the government systematically refuses to let us call upon people who could shed some light on this issue.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister realize that, far from dispelling any suspicions surrounding his minister, he is actually making him look worse by taking an attitude so lacking in transparency?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the attacks on the finance minister's integrity are unfounded. As I have said on a number of occasions, the Minister of Finance has my complete confidence.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, besides public officials, the only person the government has given us access to is its ethics counsellor.

• (1440)

But, with all due respect, an ethics counsellor is neither an expert in international income tax planning nor a shipper.

In this context, is the Prime Minister in fact asking us to close our eyes and to blindly trust him?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I clearly stated that the Minister of Finance has my complete confidence. His business concerns are in the hands of an administrator, in compliance with the guidelines issued, and in the four years and some months since he became finance minister, his behaviour has been beyond reproach.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs just said a couple of minutes ago that behaviour was motivated by prejudice. I must tell this minister that

*Oral Questions*

I lived on a reserve, I taught on a reserve, and I raised five Indian foster children in my home.

I want to ask the minister of Indian affairs right now if she will retract that vicious slur she just made on the floor of the House of Commons.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recognize the contribution the hon. member has made. But I have to wonder why, when there are so many good examples of strong healthy aboriginal communities in this country, they never find their way into the questions and the comments of the members opposite.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is our motivation to help grassroots aboriginal people who trusted the minister, to go to her in confidence. People can say whatever they want but I want to ask the minister, whose side is she on right now, the bureaucrats and the chiefs or the grassroots aboriginal people at the band level?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, without question aboriginal people in this country need the help of all of us. When I look at the agenda of the party opposite, it would cut \$920 million per year from my department's budget. That is money for education, for housing, for water and sewers, all those things aboriginal people in this country need so desperately.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**IRAQ**

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

During last night's emergency debate, the minister pledged "to follow through on the kinds of continuing dialogue and exchange of information to ensure that Parliament is fully involved in the ensuing developments".

My question is simple. Is the minister considering holding a vote in the House, as was done during the 1991 debate, to give all parliamentarians an opportunity to express themselves before the government authorizes Canada's military participation in—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot say for sure. I assume the hon. member is aware there was a debate last night which was open to all members of Parliament and which dealt with the question of the nature of Canada's participation.

The final decision on those very crucial matters remains with the Government of Canada and with the cabinet. We will certainly maintain every effort to keep Parliament informed. There is a full briefing for all members of the standing committee this afternoon.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Human Resources Development. What assurances can the minister give the fishermen of Atlantic Canada that there will be some help for them when the Atlantic groundfish strategy runs out in August?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that today I am publicly releasing the post TAGS review prepared by Eugene Harrigan and his team. I want to thank Mr. Harrigan and his team for their very good work.

• (1445)

The objective of Mr. Harrigan's report was to get a sense of how the end of the TAGS program would affect individuals, families and their communities. The report provides us with a very good portrait, the best ever, on what will be the reaction when TAGS ends at the end of August. It will serve as a useful basis for discussions with my colleagues, the stakeholders and the provinces.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been 26 days since we heard about the letter sent by Bruce Starlight to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Can we expect a report on the investigation soon or do we have to wait until the media frenzy dies down and the budget comes out so we can sweep it under the carpet?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take the work of the investigator very seriously. I want to make sure that there is a full investigation done. We will report on the results when it is complete.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that should take no time at all. The letter has the minister's stamp on it. The letter was leaked, it ended up in the wrong hands and Mr. Starlight is being sued.

Will the minister announce today that her department will pay Mr. Starlight's legal fees? Yes or no?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, it is not the usual practice of the department to pay for such things. It would be absolutely inappropriate for me to make a determination of

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whether it would be the right thing to do until the investigation is complete.

We are doing our very best and we will do even more in the future.

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**HEALTH CARE**

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

A woman died in an emergency room after a four hour wait. A woman raped at knifepoint was turned away from an emergency room. Canadians clearly favour an increase in medicare funding so these tragedies do not repeat themselves.

Will the Minister of Finance act on the advice enclosed in the alternative federal budget and other proposals for change and restore federal health transfers to 1995 levels?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge and we share the concerns of Canadians that we have quality health care when it is needed and where it is needed in this country. That is why this government supports the principles of the Canada Health Act. That is why this government just this year increased the cash floor in the transfers to the provinces to enable the provinces to reinvest in health services where they are needed most.

That reflects the priorities which this government puts on health care in this country.

\* \* \*

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the alternative federal budget also shows that the \$1.9 billion needed to fight child poverty can be found. The Minister of Finance said in December and even today that child poverty is a priority. But it appears that the government is backing down and will recycle yet again last year's \$850 million.

What hope is there for kids when the government's commitment is nothing more than headlines and recycled announcements? What new funds are being committed for the national child benefit?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as of July 1 this year a further investment of \$850 million will go toward child poverty. We are committed as a government to adding another \$850 million to that during the life of this Parliament. We will do that because it is a commitment of our government.

We have restored and added to the CAPC program of my colleague, the Minister of Health. It is a very good program. There is the head start program in the department of Indian affairs.

**HEALTH CARE**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps to follow this line of questioning I will pose my question to the Minister of Finance.

Montreal and Toronto area emergency rooms are in a crisis situation. Patients are lying on gurneys in hospitals because they cannot get beds. Our health care system is in shambles because there was \$6 billion ripped out of the federal transfers to provinces by this government.

Will the Minister of Finance assure this House that the \$6 billion will be reinstated to health care before any new program initiatives are brought in by this government?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have made clear, this government shares the concerns of Canadians that we restore and maintain the quality of health care in this country. It is to that end that we are committed.

● (1450)

The hon. member should remember that some of the emergency rooms that are overcrowded and some of the places which require reinvestment are in provinces that already have surpluses, that have money to reinvest. If some provinces choose to cut taxes instead of making those reinvestments, that should be taken into account.

For our part, we have increased the cash floor for the provinces and that signals our priority.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, we are getting the same old malarkey. They take dollars and give back pennies.

The crisis in health care funding is a result of the money that has been taken out by this government. Will this minister ensure Canadians that we will have standards in place to ensure that the quality of health care is not compromised? Will this minister agree today to work with the provinces to achieve a health care guarantee on standards of enforcement mechanisms so Canadians can enjoy the same standard of health care right across the provinces?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are working toward that very objective daily. Next week I will meet again with my counterparts in the provinces and territories.

One thing I can tell my hon. friend for certain is that we will not pursue that quality the way he and his party suggested by removing cash transfers to the provinces and by removing altogether any influence on the part of the federal government. That is not the way

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to go. We shall do it the Liberal way. We shall do it the effective way. [Translation]

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Rural communities make an important contribution to our country, but they often feel neglected and forgotten. What is the government doing to make sure the challenges confronting Canadians living in rural areas all receive the same consideration as the issues that concern those who live in urban centres?

[English]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has certainly pointed out the importance of rural Canada in the strength of this country. I am pleased to state that every program and policy that comes before this government and the cabinet will be scrutinized through a rural lens by the minister and the ministry so that they can be fully applicable to rural Canada and rural communities.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs attempts to deflect these criticisms of her department by saying that Reform would cut the spending of her department. I want to tell her why we want to cut the spending. It is because we do not believe that a fraction of the money put in the top of that department ever gets to grassroots aboriginal people.

Will the minister tell this House how much of the money poured in the top of her department gets to ordinary aboriginal people and how much gets sucked off by consultants, Liberals—

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of Indian affairs.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition drew these concerns to my attention some months ago. Indeed, I have called his office on at least two occasions asking him to come and join me and identify these specific allegations. I have yet to hear from him. I am truly wondering if he is interested in these files or not.

**MILLENNIUM FUND**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Minister of Human Resources Development made the following comment regarding the Millennium Fund: “We will strive to avoid any duplication of the services provided by the Government of Quebec”.

Will the minister admit that the only way to avoid any duplication of Quebec’s financial assistance program is simply to give directly to the Quebec government the moneys that it is entitled to, instead of setting up any new structure?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois member for giving me another opportunity to remind the House and our fellow citizens that the Quebec student loans program is funded to a large extent by the Canadian government. Should any improvements be made to the Canadian student loans program, the Quebec government will get its share for that province’s student loans program.

As for the Millennium Fund, we will make sure there is no duplication because we want to work in partnership with the Quebec government.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

[English]

**LABOUR SPONSORED INVESTMENT FUNDS**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, labour sponsored investment funds are an important source of venture capital for small businesses that wish to grow, expand and create jobs. In Manitoba the crocus fund was responsible for 80% of all the venture capital issued in that province last year.

Will the Minister of Finance ensure the survival of these funds by restoring the tax credit and the contribution ceiling to their previous 1996 levels?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the member for giving me notice of this question.

As the hon. member knows, the tax credits for LSVCCs were originally brought in by the federal government and the provincial governments in order to make sure that these funds had the initial impetus to get going. Since then they have raised large sums of money and by and large have been successful. It was deemed at that point by the provincial finance ministers and federal finance minister that the generosity of the credit should be cut back.



*Point of Order*

We are in the process of monitoring the situation.

[English]

\* \* \*

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the president of the Medical Research Council of Canada, Dr. Henry Friesen, recently wrote that the health of the health research enterprise is in serious jeopardy. Its funding has been slashed back to the 1987 levels, and it is now forced to reject 80% of its research requests. Canada is the only member of the G-7 to have cut support for medical research.

Is this the minister's great vision for the future of health care in this country?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the government took office there was no doubt that this country's financial back was against the wall. A number of very important decisions had to be taken, none of which we wanted to do, thanks in fact to the terrible mess that we inherited.

The fact is since then we have created the Canada Foundation for Innovation and have put some \$800 million into it.

We are very cognizant. The Minister of Health has been very articulate on the importance of medical research and we will continue to support it.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Many people in B.C. and across Canada are concerned about the report and recommendations of the Citizenship and Immigration Act and how it will affect the lives of Canadians. How will the minister ensure that the opinions of Canadians are heard and will affect the decisions of this report?

[Translation]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the report of this advisory group was made public on January 6, 1998.

In one way, the consultations can be said to have already started because several Canadians have already responded and are writing us daily and consulting our Internet site.

In addition, I am going to conduct a broad national consultation, from Vancouver to Halifax, beginning in late February so as to hear from the largest possible number of stakeholders interested in immigration policies. We have even added consultation days, and parliamentary committees—

**The Speaker:** Sorry to interrupt. The hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my wife and my children are status Indians. When the minister of Indian affairs accuses us of being motivated by prejudice, she is insulting me and my family. I demand that the minister retract her statements that she made to the member for Skeena.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the circumstances facing the hon. member, but I have to look at the other facts.

I recall very clearly the former member for Capilano—Howe Sound talking about the life of aboriginal people. Yesterday in the House the member for Delta—South Richmond indicated quite clearly his party's position when it comes to issues of aboriginal rights. To them they do not exist.

• (1500)

I have a final point. I am reminded of a Calgary *Sun* piece of October 30, 1995, written by a man named Ezra Levant, a main adviser—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADA DAY**

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

For Canada Day, the minister has organized a huge contest, open to children under 18, that will close on February 27. Each of the 12 provincial and territorial finalists will win a chance to take part in the Canada Day festivities on July 1.

Does the minister think the prize offered is not enough to interest young Quebecers in taking part in the contest, since that province's winner will be the only one to also receive a computer?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is a new one on me.

\* \* \*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period the minister of Indian affairs stated that my questions were driven by prejudice.

*Supply*

This is a totally and completely unacceptable statement for the minister to make and I ask you to ask her to withdraw it immediately.

**The Speaker:** The minister has been named. The minister is in the House. She seems to want to get to her feet. She has the floor.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was not trying to impugn anything against the hon. member. I was just trying to reflect the facts as I see them. If I have hurt them so severely, I would be glad to apologize.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—FUTURE OF QUEBEC

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to advise you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Langley.

• (1505)

For all the people out there who just joined us, I would like to read the motion put forward by the hon. member from the Bloc Quebecois. The motion reads as follows:

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to decide freely their own future.

This motion seems to deal with the concept of self-determination, which is not without controversy, but is usually considered as being fair and democratic. However, we will not be able to support the principle of self-determination as long as we do not clearly understand what it implies.

It is a well-known fact that, for the Bloc members, self-determination includes the right to a unilateral declaration of independence. Separatists have clearly indicated that they refuse to consult with the rest of Canada, even if the decisions made in their province will have a profound and lasting impact on the rest of the country.

It is also clear that this motion tends to discredit the reference to the supreme court, which will start next Monday. Some people are opposed to any discussion about the possible legal restrictions to secession. This reference to the supreme court to seek the opinion of the highest court in the land on this issue is considered a denial of the right to self-determination. This shows clearly that, when the Bloc Quebecois and others speak about Quebec's right to decide its

own future, they are suggesting that the rest of Canada is not entitled to participate in any way.

No change as profound and irreversible as Quebec's secession can be made unilaterally. It can certainly be argued that, after a vote on sovereignty, in which a clear question is put to the public, and as long as 50% plus one of the population is in favour, Quebec will be able to enter into negotiations with the federal government. The people of Quebec have the right to self-determination as long as these conditions are met.

There is no denying that separatist and federalist leaders in Quebec have questioned the government's decision to ask the supreme court to rule on a primarily political problem. However, general agreement within Quebec's political elite does not mean there is broad grassroots support among Quebecers.

[English]

However recent comments made by Quebec's political elite have suggested that self-determination and the right to declare a unilateral declaration of independence are mutually dependent self-supporting rights.

If self-determination includes the right unilaterally to deny the northern Cree their expressed desire to remain Canadian, their expressed desire to continue to be protected under section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, we cannot in good conscience support this motion.

It should be clear that self-determination as it is explicitly understood by Bloc members of the House is not supported by the natives in Quebec. They cannot be counted among those who are said to be in general agreement with the principle of sovereign rule. Self-determination defined in such broad terms with the inclusion of such sweeping political powers is clearly in violation of aboriginal rights and is not supported by this group of Quebecers.

• (1510)

If self-determination includes the power to unilaterally deny 50 municipalities in Quebec the right to remain Canadian, we cannot in good conscience support this motion.

My colleagues from the Bloc are acutely and painfully aware that there are municipalities across Quebec, each with its own democratic mandate, which have voted to remain a part of Canada should a yes vote unfortunately occur. I hope that these municipalities and the hundreds of thousands of people they represent are not wrongly included in the so-called consensus to which this motion makes reference.

If self-determination is thought to include the right to unilaterally secede from the rest of Canada, it is likely that very few Quebecers would support this principle. There are censuses on the right to seek separation from Canada through democratic and legal means. Legitimate democratic means would involve seeking a clear indication of support from the people of Quebec in a referendum presenting a clear question.

*Supply*

The legal avenue would necessitate that the province of Quebec be obliged to enter into negotiations with the rest of Canada to determine the terms of separation. Partition, passports, currency and debt allocation are the issues that would require open discussion before sovereignty could be achieved.

It is a tiny minority of Quebecers who would wish to ignore the legal and moral responsibility to settle on the terms of separation before a unilateral declaration of independence. It is in response to the position of this tiny minority that the supreme court is offering its opinion.

The legal reference does not affect self-determination unless this concept has come to include the right to ignore any legal obligations to the vast majority of Canadians who wish to see Quebec remain a part of Canada. To my amazement it would appear that there are in fact some members of the House who would adhere to this understanding of self-determination.

There is a better solution to our unity problems than to concede defeat and argue over the process of secession. We can all work together in the House to rebalance the federation. This is what we call the third way. Members of the House know it well.

Let us join to make Canada work for Quebec, for Alberta and for the rest of Canada. Members of the Bloc do the country a disservice with their singular focus on secession. Canada can work. I pray that we all can work together for this mutual beneficial end.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC):** Madam Speaker, before asking my colleague a question, I would like to apologize to the Reform Party for getting elected. During the last election campaign, the Reform Party and its leader recommended electing members whose leaders did not come from Quebec. I am even prouder that I was elected with the best leader of all this country's political parties.

Since the thinking is that we will get the courts to sort out the constitutional question, I would like to ask my colleague whether he still agrees with the advertising in the last election campaign that was critical of Quebec's politicians. It cost us at least 25 Conservative MPs in Quebec by polarizing the vote and insulting all Quebecers and French Canadians.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, we all learn from our mistakes. The message of what was said in those commercials is simply what we have said from the beginning of Reform's inception, that the west wants in.

We may not use the same way of getting that message across in future and perhaps that could be up for debate. However most people saw that message from Reform's point of view, We need to have all Canadians involved in the constitutional process and in

any process that involves changing the constitution. Also the leadership of the country has to come from across the country, not just from one province and not from just one region.

That is the message we tried to get across. We continually fight for the fact that the west wants in. In this case let us try to represent regions effectively. That is what Reform stands for.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague from the Reform Party said. I think that he is champion of federalism, especially on the Quebec partitioning issue.

• (1515)

There is much speculation these days around the fact that, if Quebec can part from Canada, it too can be divided or partitioned. The example of the Cree is often given. I would advise my federalist friends to be very careful with this very dangerous argument.

I will ask my colleague two questions. At least Quebec is light years ahead of the rest of Canada in recognizing aboriginal peoples. In fact, there is a National Assembly resolution providing for the recognition of 11 aboriginal peoples. Will the Reform Party join the Bloc Quebecois in recognizing for instance the 50 other aboriginal peoples elsewhere in Canada?

Also, on the issue of partition, if my hon. colleague agrees that Quebec can be divided and the Cree can leave with the northern part of Quebec, the same rule should currently apply to Canada. Can the Nisga'a, Sahtu, Dogrib and 600 communities in Canada afford to leave, each with their little part of Canada? If not, the same is true of Quebec.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, specifically what I have identified in my speech today is that there have been groups that have not only wanted recognition as the hon. member refers to but want to remain a part of Canada regardless of what happens in the politics of Quebec. I think that is something the hon. member and the Bloc has failed to recognize. There are Indian groups and municipalities that have said that regardless of Quebec's secession, they want to remain a part of Canada.

The fact is that the Bloc has not addressed or talked about that issue at all. Unfortunately, we do not get any details from the Bloc when it even comes to secession.

To answer his second question, the fact remains as I said earlier to a colleague who asked a question, we in the Reform Party are looking at different ways. We know there are problems in Quebec. There are problems in Alberta and right across this country. That is why we are looking at a third option, something that status quo

*Supply*

federalists and separatists have not brought to the table. We are looking at rebalancing the powers in this country. We are looking at trying to work with the regions in this country to make the federation stronger.

What I urge my hon. colleague from the Bloc to do is to start looking at realistic options to try to build a stronger nation for the future.

**Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC):** Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions I would like to ask the hon. member. I consider him to be a very thoughtful member.

What this debate actually entails is to find out what the rules are for secession. One fact we do know is that the supreme court ruling will not tell us anything that we do not know already. At the end of the day there are no rules when countries split up either domestically or internationally. There are no 20 points which we can actually put down on a piece of paper and say that they are the rules if there is a yes vote in any referendum.

This kind of debate and this kind of question the government is posing to the supreme court essentially privatizes the political leadership of government.

I would like to ask the member again, because I understand him to be a reasonable and thoughtful individual, about whether he agrees with the ads which the Reform Party utilized in the last election and should they ever be used again.

The second question I want to ask the member is whether he will distance himself away from Ezra Levant's comments in terms of what he stated in the Calgary *Sun* on October 30, 1995, on the eve before the country could have actually broken up. Mr. Levant makes comments such as "Say no to other special interest groups. Is it any wonder that Canada has so many special interest groups? After all, they see Quebec's payoff for being a constant nag. If we kicked out Quebec, we might then have the fortitude to tackle Canada's other ethnic separatists, natives".

This kind of extremism is not what actually adds to the political process. I ask the member if he will distance himself away from these comments. Also, if he were the leader of his party, would this person be under his employ?

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, I think I made myself quite clear when I answered the other question from a member of the hon. member's party. The fact remains that the message was quite clear in those commercials.

• (1520)

Whether the presentation is going to be used again is up for debate. Personally, I was not happy with the presentation, but we learn from our mistakes, as we have seen from many members of other parties.

The key is that the message was clear. It is something that the west wants. We have to try to represent other regions of this country equally in the federal Parliament. That is exactly what we are going to stand by.

To answer his other question, it is interesting that the Conservatives have brought this out of their sack of goodies. The fact of the matter is Ezra Levant was not a part of the party when he was writing for the *Sun*, like many other journalists in this country when they report on politics. They are allowed to voice their opinions and they are allowed to do so freely.

I hope the hon. member is not suggesting that we should have any censorship on the media or gag laws. That is something which most members of this House would fight against.

The fact of the matter is, regardless of what he said as a journalist, it does not reflect his current work for our party. I am really upset that the member did not paint the proper picture. The fact is that he was a journalist when he made those comments.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Questions or comments. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. It should be my colleague on debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I must tell the hon. member that the information I have is that the member did have 10 minutes to speak and therefore the questions and comments period is 10 minutes.

**An hon. member:** Five minutes.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** No. Ten minutes. The hon. member was speaking for 20 minutes with 10 minutes of questions and comments.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker I indicated at the beginning of my speech that I was splitting my time with my colleague.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I am afraid that I did not hear that. We will have to check the blues and we will get back to the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to give our friend from the Reform Party an opportunity to practice speaking French in this House as he does on a regular basis.

He probably noticed recently that, in Quebec, federalists are joining with sovereignists to state that the Quebec people should decide their future, that the supreme court has no business interfering with the freedom of speech of Quebecers and that it is up to them to settle the matter in a future referendum.

*Supply*

I would like to know what the position of the Reform Party is on this issue in light of the emerging consensus among Quebecers, including federalists like Claude Ryan and Daniel Johnson.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, I addressed that point somewhat in my speech when I said that even though there may be some sense of consensus in Quebec, the fact of the matter is that there is not a clear consensus as to whether first of all Quebec has actual support for separation from the rest of Canada.

As the Conservative member pointed out, in the Constitution currently there is no legal provision for any province to separate from the federation.

Clearly we need to have some legal parameters as to what this means. That is why we have supported the reference to the court.

**Hon. David Kilgour:** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak against the motion of the Bloc Québécois. The motion is that the House recognize a consensus—

• (1525)

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona before he started his debate announced that he would be dividing his time with me, the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley and I am ready to speak in this debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** My answer to the hon. member is that we are checking the blues right now. On the other hand, under the circumstances if the House has no objection, does the member has the unanimous consent of the House to speak at this point?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Ms. Val Meredith:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. I have spent the last three months working with the B.C. unity panel going around the province of British Columbia discussing the issue of Canadian unity. I am very aware of the emotions that run to a high level when we talk about this issue.

The motion the Bloc has introduced is “that this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers”—and it was amended to read—“alone to decide their own future”. I think the question is can they make that decision on their own without consideration from the rest of the country.

It would appear to me that this motion has arisen because of the three questions that have been put before the Supreme Court of Canada to make a recommendation on. I want to clarify what those questions are for the Canadian public listening to this debate.

The three questions that have been put before the Supreme Court are:

One, under the Constitution of Canada can the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?

Two: Does international law give the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec the right to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?

Three: In the event of a conflict between domestic and international law on the right of the national assembly, legislature or Government of Quebec to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally, which would take precedence in Canada?

I would suggest that the question is not whether or not Quebec can raise the issue of separation, that Quebecers are not in a position to say by referendum that they want to secede from Canada. The question is do they have the right to do so without the input from the rest of the country.

I know the analogy has been made before but the analogy of a divorce is very apropos in this case. A member of a marriage can state that they want to leave the marriage, that they want a divorce but there are laws in our country that help that process to proceed, that have to be followed for that divorce to go through.

There has to be a mutual agreement on the division of assets and liabilities. If a mutual agreement between the two parties cannot be reached, then the intercession of the courts is required. One partner cannot say that they are taking the house and the kids and walk away from the marriage. If it is not agreed upon, the courts enter the situation and the courts decide whether it is fair for one spouse to take the house and one spouse to take the children.

If there was not law in this matter and in all other matters, then what we would have in this country is anarchy. I do not think anyone wants to see that happen.

Quebeckers can decide whether they want to leave, but the laws must be followed. Even the former Quebec premier, Jacques Parizeau, understood the rule of law when writing the draft bill that he introduced in 1994. I would like to quote two sections of that draft bill.

In section 10 he acknowledged that laws passed by the Parliament of Canada shall remain in force until amended or repealed by the national assembly. It is very clear that he believed in the existence of laws to give some direction.

The second thing that he acknowledged and which I want to quote was, “In so far as the negotiations unfold in a positive fashion, the national assembly will declare the sovereignty of Quebec after an agreement is reached on the partnership treaty”. After an agreement is reached.

*Supply*

• (1530)

It is very clear that he did not mean an unilateral declaration when he recognized the need for an agreement with the other partner. I do not think it is possible for the Bloc to suggest that Quebec can separate unilaterally and not allow or extend that to parts of Quebec that could then unilaterally separate from Quebec.

My colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona brought up the aspect of the aboriginal communities and others who have specifically indicated that they do not want to leave Canada and that they would make the decision to stay in Canada given that option. For the Bloc to suggest that Quebec has the right to unilaterally leave Canada but not extend that to members of the Quebec province, be they the Cree in the north or other municipalities, is hypocrisy in the least.

Unilateral declaration of independence would set a precedent for the Quebec Cree, for the Outaouais and the island of Montreal to vote on partition. If separatists wish to ignore the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, they set the precedent for the partitionists to ignore any Quebec court ruling. If Quebec separatists believe that this is purely a political decision to be made solely by the people of Quebec, they are setting a precedent for the partitionists to make purely political decisions made solely by the people in the affected regions of Quebec.

There is a real myth that there is this thing called the rest of Canada that Quebec could negotiate with. Separatists are living a pipe dream if they believe that an independent Quebec would be able to make a negotiation and an agreement with the rest of Canada. If Quebec were to separate there is no guarantee that the rest of Canada would remain intact. No one can predict what would happen in the aftermath of the breakup of the country, but none of the realistic proposals include a rosy scenario.

I assure separatists that if they were to be successful in separation there would be very little willingness in British Columbia to welcome Quebec as an equal partner. However British Columbians are more than willing to accommodate Quebec within Confederation.

Hopefully the country will never come to a point where Quebec decides to leave. Hopefully the separatists will never get a majority. It is clear to me and others that people in Quebec are looking at a third option. People in Quebec are realizing that separation is not the answer to getting rid of the status quo. It is clear to me that people throughout the country, including British Columbia, feel very strongly that Canada is worth fighting for and Canada is worth making changes so that all provinces, all regions, have a much greater say in their future.

Although maybe not perfect, the Calgary declaration was brought by nine premiers to the Canadian public to talk about other options: the devolution of power, the equality of citizens and the equality of provinces. Hopefully this attempt by Canadians to talk

about the unity issue in a positive way, in a way that all regions including Quebec can benefit from, will be successful.

As a result of my work with the B.C. unity committee I can say that Canadians are willing to talk and make concessions. Canadians are willing to accommodate the differences in our societies and in our country under the understanding that all Canadians are equal and that all provinces have equal status within Confederation.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Before carrying on with questions and comments, I would like to offer a clarification.

We have checked in *Hansard* and found that the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona had indeed said he would be sharing his speaking time. I think this settles the matter.

• (1535)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we will have to address three important elements in the whole scenario of the right of Quebec to separate from the rest of Canada. When Quebec entered into Confederation it became a part of a partnership. At the time there were no terms concerning what would happen in the event the partnership would come to an end.

First, to that extent any one partner of all 10 partners in the partnership would have to seek the consensus of the rest of the partners, or at least the consensus of the majority of the partners, before the partner departs.

The second one concerns the notion of native people in Quebec who entered into a historical agreement with the rest of Canada of the day. The agreement these people had with the rest of Canada has to continue to remain intact notwithstanding what would happen to Quebec.

Third, if we were to move with the assumption that Quebec is a level of government that has a right to decide on its own what happens to it, we would have to look at the third level of government, the municipal governments in Quebec in urban settings or urban cities such as the city of Montreal and other cities in western Quebec.

If we were to move forward with the notion that Quebec is a level of government that has a right to decide once it consults its people, the city of Montreal as a level of government would have the right to consult with its people and make a decision based on it.

The whole issue is irrelevant now in light of what has happened around the world. Borders are collapsing at an incredible speed, faster than the speed of light. People are coming together around the world faster than ever before. The European Union is now moving toward political, monetary, economic and social unions

where language is no longer an issue. People to people relations are becoming the prime element of our global village.

To that extent, rather than continuing to frighten the people of Quebec and the small, medium and large businesses of Quebec with uncertainties, we as Quebeckers, as Canadians, must work together to ensure that society as a whole is meeting the needs of our people. There is nothing one level of government in Quebec, the provincial level of government, cannot do now within Confederation. It can do just about anything it would like to do. It has control over education, labour, health, immigration and transportation.

What is it the Government of Quebec wants to do and cannot do in the present Confederation?

**Ms. Val Meredith:** Madam Speaker, it is obvious a question was not posed. It was just comments. However I agree with the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

It is a very serious issue. It is something that Canadians are very able and wanting to address. Canadians want the issue settled. They do not want to be dealing with the unity issue 20 years from now.

I urge my hon. colleagues to let us get on with settling the issue once and for all.

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as I was saying before, the government would oppose this motion but not because of its terms. It reads:

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebeckers to decide their own future.

This is fine. It is because of the fact that the Bloc Québécois refused to give unanimous consent this morning to our proposed subamendment which would roughly translate as being that Quebeckers should decide their future but with respect for the rule of law and of democracy for all.

• (1540)

As Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa I have had the opportunity to meet with people in places as diverse as Peru, Honduras, Brazil, Uganda and Rwanda. Visiting places like those has made me even more aware of how fortunate we are in Canada with our high standard of living and our comprehensive social safety net.

In some cases my visits have shown me just how important respect for individual rights and democratic values are and the crucial role that the rule of law and an independent judiciary play in upholding both. These travels have already driven the message home. If Canadians, with our virtually unparalleled good fortune, are not capable of settling our differences and building our future together, it does not bode well for many other people around the world. A member of parliament from a southern African country

### *Supply*

said to me a year ago that if this country could not stay together how could his own country stay together.

Having written extensively on relations between western Canada and central Canada I know that learning to live together will remain a constant challenge for Canadians.

It is certainly an ongoing task but respect for differences is a hallmark of the country. In my own province of Alberta, first nations, British and French settlers have learned to live side by side. They were joined by Ukrainians, Poles, Germans and people of many other nationalities, many of whom were fleeing persecution or economic deprivation in their own homelands. We have welcomed a new generation of immigrants who are often from the Pacific Rim and more recently from Latin America and the Caribbean.

This history has made Canadians more open to cultural diversity than perhaps anywhere else on the face of the earth. It is part of who we are. I strongly believe that we can overcome the difficulties of today and build a Canada for tomorrow that is even stronger, more united and entirely secure in its diversity because it is part of who we are as a nation.

I have been reminded that I am sharing my time.

[*Translation*]

My current portfolio makes me keenly aware of Canada's presence on the international scene. This presence reflects our commitment to democratic values and the lessons our country's true diversity has taught us.

It was a Canadian, John Humphrey, who 50 years ago drafted the initial Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, as predicted by Eleanor Roosevelt, was to become humanity's Magna Carta. The Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs stated recently before an American audience, and I quote:

Our democratic tradition, our commitment to the rule of law and our bilingual, multicultural society have prepared us well to help Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union make the transition to democracy.

As a matter of fact, we are doing our very best around the world to convince governments to support human rights and the values inherent in a democratic regime.

[*English*]

Would it not be an enormous shame if Canada, which has served as an inspiration for so many countries, were to crumble? I do not believe it will. The vast majority of Quebec, the Québécois and Québécoises, will remain committed to building their future within Canada; but if they should decide otherwise, it must be with all the facts before them.

Nothing would be more sad for the country than if a quarter of our population were to leave "in confusion without a legal framework to overcome our divisions in a dangerous ambiguity

*Supply*

that is unacceptable in democracy”, to quote my ministerial colleague.

[*Translation*]

I come from a province which is one of the engines of economic growth and innovation in Western Canada. However, Alberta is also the cradle of pioneer spirit in Canada.

• (1545)

Therefore, in Alberta, we appreciate the kind of determination needed to overcome difficult situations. So I do appreciate the efforts required of French speaking Quebecers not only to protect a mainly francophone society on this continent, but also to allow it to prosper.

[*English*]

This is no small achievement. Now is the first time in the history of humanity that almost an entire continent, North America excluding Mexico, is more or less unilingual and more or less unilingual in what has become a major international lingua franca, the language of business, the language of the Internet.

In spite of this, since the beginning of Confederation, Quebec has never been as francophone as it is today. In 1997 no less than 94% of Quebecers can express themselves in French. This is a triumph for Quebec and it is an enrichment for the whole of Canada.

[*Translation*]

I know solidarity is a value dear to Quebecers. It is also important to Albertans. Those of you who believe that Alberta is a bastion of rough-edged individualists might be surprised to learn that it has the highest percentage of volunteers of all provinces.

On a larger scale, Canadians from sea to sea feel they belong to the same community. It could be said that it is when tragedy strikes that our belief in solidarity shines through; such was the case during the recent ice storm, the floods in Manitoba and in the Saguenay in Quebec, and the tornado which ripped through my home town of Edmonton in 1987.

Every time it was obvious that Canadians care for one another and love their fellow citizens. Is there a more telling sign of the links uniting the prairies to Quebec than the decision by the head of the Saguenay relief fund to send \$1.5 million to flood victims in the Red River area in Manitoba?

[*English*]

Do we really want to see these ties broken by the secession of Quebec? At an international level this solidarity is of vital importance as well. Our two official languages give us an edge when it comes to competing internationally. They are two of the various

official languages of the European Union, a market into which we are seeking to expand. Both are recognized languages at the United Nations.

English is the official language of 56 countries, and French of 33. Our country benefits for membership in both la francophonie and the Commonwealth. It should be noted that our image abroad is strengthened by the important role that Canada plays in international peacekeeping.

It was a Canadian, former prime minister Lester B. Pearson, who came up with the idea of an international peacekeeping force for which he won the Nobel peace prize.

Since that time, thousands of our fellow Canadians have served on international peacekeeping missions. Our bilingual capacity has been invaluable in countries like Haiti, Cameroon and Rwanda and in helping our troops to work with peacekeepers from other nations.

Our peacekeeping is good for Canada's international image. The fact that we are a united country gives us more economic weight. Together we are strong enough to be a member of the G-7.

All provinces benefit from this membership. Domestically, all employees benefit from being part of a large internal market. The importance of international trade was underlined recently by an economic who estimates that when adjustments are made for distance and size of market, Canada's provincial trade is some 14 times more with each than with American states.

Quebec, for example, imports about \$33 billion worth of goods and services from other provinces. Our economic union, our international strengths are important building blocks for the future of this country.

To position Canada optimally for the challenges of the coming millennium, we must draw on the strengths and diversity it brings all of us.

I was delighted when the premiers met last September in Alberta. They stressed the importance of diversity in drawing upon statements and principles that can serve as well for the 21st century.

As the premier of our smallest province, P.E.I., put it, the Calgary declaration sends a positive signal to Quebec by recognizing the province's unique character but it does so within a framework that mirrors the ideals of a great many Canadians from coast to coast.

It is a celebration of Canadian diversity with an emphasis on the importance of provincial and individual equality. The declaration of Calgary and the broad public relations it has engendered can also be positive steps toward national reconciliation and a stronger future together.



• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. member, who is a minister as well as a lawyer. He is extremely familiar with the Canadian justice system. I liked his serious speech. However, I would like him to look a little further at what is currently going on in the justice system, and especially at the use that the federal government, of which he is a minister, is making of the Supreme Court of Canada.

I do not know if he had the opportunity to hear me this morning when I made my speech where I tried to demonstrate in the 10 minutes allotted to me that, since 1981, the supreme court, with the unilateral repatriation of the Constitution, has been more than a tribunal that was there to interpret the law. With these decisions, since 1981 and 1982, the supreme court judges became legal scholars; they became tools for the federal government to centralize more powers at the federal level. Let us just think about the veto that was taken away from Quebec in 1982. In 1983, in trade and economy, there were some extremely important judicial precedents.

In 1989, there was the General Motors case, where provinces were told this is not your jurisdiction; everything at the interprovincial level is under federal jurisdiction. There were decisions in 1990 and in 1993. Recently, there was the Hydro-Québec case, where Hydro-Québec was told that environmental studies were not their concern, but under federal jurisdiction.

Each time Quebec went before the Supreme Court of Canada because it had no choice, because it was taken there, even about the language law, even about extremely important institutions in Quebec, it came out weakened. I would like the member, as a lawyer, as a law professional who looks at what is going on in the supreme court, to give me an answer if he has reviewed the supreme court's decisions.

I would also like him to explain to me why decisions made by Quebec's courts of appeal, superior courts that come before the Supreme Court of Canada are reversed six times out of ten by the tribunal known as the Supreme Court of Canada. This is the case for Quebec. But when it comes to decisions made by courts in other provinces, they are reversed by the Supreme Court of Canada only four times out of ten. Why is that? I would like him to explain this to me. Why is it that the supreme court treats Quebecers and the whole Quebec justice system in such a way?

**Hon. David Kilgour:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm. His comments are very eloquent. I certainly hope judges will read them and people will reflect on them. The hon. member is well aware that, in West Germany, there is a constitutional court made up of eight judges. Four of them are appointed by the Länders, and four by the federal government.

*Supply*

In a federal system, I personally think we should have a court whose members are appointed by both sides. I am convinced the hon. member and the people in my region gave some thought to this issue. We hope that, in the near future, the provinces, including Quebec of course, will have the right to appoint half of the judges. It could be that the people appointed by the two sides might be perceived as being, shall we say, less neutral. I was very interested in the hon. member's comments.

• (1555)

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am also very pleased to address the motion moved by the Bloc Québécois. First, let me say that I intend to oppose this motion. However, I would like to explain why I hope Quebec will never take a chance and go for the secessionist gamble.

For obvious reasons, French speaking communities in the other provinces have special ties with Quebecers. We speak the same language and we may share more intimately certain episodes of our history. As a Canadian and a francophone, I am obviously concerned by the political situation in Quebec, and I hope that province will continue to be part of our country.

There are of course many similarities between French speaking Quebecers and francophones from other parts of Canada. However, the context in which we live is very different. Francophones who live outside Quebec are in a minority position in three ways. They are a minority on the continent, in their country and in their province. French speaking Quebecers are also in a minority on the continent and in their country, but they form a majority in their province.

Linguistic and cultural insecurity can partly explain the desire of some Quebecers to opt for secession. We francophones living outside Quebec are particularly apt to understand this feeling of insecurity.

We know, however, that the French language is not threatened in Quebec and that it is becoming even more prevalent in that province. Data from the last census shows that Quebec is more francophone than ever and that the future of francophones in Quebec have never been so promising. We can only be thrilled about the vitality of the French language in Quebec because, as francophones outside Quebec, we also benefit from this strengthening of the francophone community in our country. What affects Quebecers affects us as well.

[*English*]

My community has been called on to face special challenges. The linguistic and cultural uncertainty experienced by Quebecers is felt by us even more intensely. We believe in solidarity among the country's francophones and we have always counted on Quebec's influence within the country to ensure francophone commu-

*Supply*

nities from coast to coast to coast the cultural vitality needed for their development. That is why we oppose Quebec secession.

[*Translation*]

The history of our country has been marked from the start with a French presence that has influenced our collective journey. Our language is part of our Constitution. The Official Languages Act recognizes our country's linguistic duality and prescribes the use of both official languages in every institution of the Canadian Parliament and government. As for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it ensures the growth of the French language and culture, along with the many initiatives implemented by the Canadian government to this end.

We owe this official recognition to generations of francophones from coast to coast who asserted their rights. That does not mean that justice was always easily achieved. As is the case with any minority, the historical journey of francophones outside Quebec had its dark moments. We still have to assert our language rights today.

All these struggles have created between members of my community ties of solidarity that make us strong and proud. And we have confidence in our future and in that of our country as a whole. The Canada in which I live is no longer the one that existed under Regulation 17 in Ontario.

[*English*]

Canada's francophones are proud of what this country has become. They have helped Canada to become what it is today, a country distinguished by its openness and its tolerance. These great human values are the essence of Canadian ideals. Francophones and anglophones have learned to live together and to grow in mutual respect. Naturally there have been some obstacles along the way but no one can dispute that Canadians have achieved a degree of maturity to which Quebecers have greatly contributed. We have achieved this because we have worked together, not divided.

[*Translation*]

Nobody can ask me to be indifferent to the political debate in Quebec. By separating from Canada, Quebec would take away a vital part of ourselves. Nobody wants to deny the right of Quebecers to express their choice to separate from Canada if they were to do it some day with full knowledge of the facts.

• (1600)

It is essential that they fully understand the consequences of the action they are contemplating. One of these consequences has to do with the fate of the francophone minorities in the other provinces.

It is obvious that, by staying in Canada, Quebec is in that much better a position to promote the French fact in all regions of the country. Quebec plays a vital role in our linguistic and cultural

development, as we too, for our part, help consolidate the Canadian French-speaking community.

The best proof that Canada has never held Quebec back is that its language and culture have flourished, to say nothing of Canada's promotion of the Quebec culture internationally, so that it is now associated with Canadians.

[*English*]

French language and culture are essential elements of the Canadian entity. They strengthen the unique character of Canada. While this vitality is due, as I have said before, to the determination shown by francophone communities across the country, it is also true that the recognition of the French fact in this country has also played an important role.

Together francophones in every region of Canada have succeeded in affirming the bilingual character of this country and have helped to give it an identity that is expressed in a genuine openness to the world.

Canadian federalism has greatly contributed to the French fact's vitality throughout the country. Canada can reap the benefits of its participation in the francophonie. Quebec also benefits from its ties with this country with the different countries of the Commonwealth.

Yes, francophones in Quebec and Canada have made a remarkable contribution to building our country. That contribution stems from a vitality specific to each of our communities. In every region francophones are inspired by the same ideal, to make live and flourish an identity enriched by their contribution to our collective heritage.

Need I say more about Quebec's exceptional contribution in this respect. Quebec should never feel this country is foreign to it because, on the contrary, it has an exceptional place within it. Canada would not be Canada without Quebec. I also think it is right to say that Quebec would not be Quebec without Canada. We francophones in other provinces need our fellow citizens of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Our ancestors had a great dream: to help francophone communities survive in a country whose spaces were as far-reaching as its ideals. Together, we have built a land of tolerance, in which each of us can choose our own way of being Canadian without apology. Canadians know that diversity is a strength, not a weakness. It is in large measure to the maturity with which they live out this diversity that they owe their international reputation.

No one is thinking of forcing Quebecers to stay within Canada. If I may, however, I will tell them frankly what I think: You would

be making an irreparable mistake if you were to leave Canada. Why renounce a part of what you are, of what we all are? The loss would be everyone's. Canadians themselves would be irremediably diminished, and francophones outside Quebec doubly so.

Together, as francophones from western Canada, the Prairies, the territories, Manitoba, Acadia and Quebec, we have shown that those who, through their sacrifices, their hopes and their efforts, fulfilled the promise that the Fathers of Confederation saw in Canada, were right.

Together, we have made this country a wonderful success.

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate the member opposite for the speech he gave as a francophone outside Quebec. We in the Bloc are always moved when we discuss this issue with our colleagues opposite.

• (1605)

The previous speaker's question was just as emotional: "Why would Quebeckers want to leave Canada, a country as beautiful and great as our ambitions? We can be Canadian any way we want." That is what he said in his speech. We do not have anything against francophones outside Quebec. We love them too. But the hon. member forgot to mention that Canada was founded by two peoples, the two founding nations as they are called in Canadian history books. These two peoples each had their own territory, one was called Upper Canada, the other one, Lower Canada, and they have become Quebec and Ontario.

That was the beginning of the famous 1867 Confederation. After that, more people joined Canada, and the last province to join was Newfoundland. I hold no grudge against them, but they had two referendums and joined Canada after the third one. This decision was made by Newfoundlanders. I do not think my father ever told me Quebeckers were consulted in 1949 on the admission of a new province. The question that begs to be asked today is this: Why should the rest of Canada be consulted today if Quebec wants to separate and go back to the situation before it entered into an association with Upper Canada, which is now Ontario?

Why should Quebec want to separate from Canada? That was the member's heartfelt cry. Maybe because we do not feel a lot of respect, maybe because we want things we cannot get within Canada.

My question to the member opposite is this: Why did his government choose Plan B, which focuses on repression? "If you do this, you will get a slap on the wrist." In more polite terms, the reference to the Supreme Court tells us: "We are going to ask a few questions, and the way they are asked, it all means the same

### *Supply*

thing." For some of us, the questions as phrased call for a certain kind of answer.

Let me ask the hon. member why his government or the people in his party are not looking for ways to keep Quebec in Canada. During the last referendum, the Prime Minister made promises in Verdun. What are they? Are they reason enough for Quebeckers to stay? Instead of wasting their energy looking for legal tricks to force us to stay in Canada, they should look for real solutions. If they do not have any, Quebeckers will stay on the same track, and I can assure my hon. colleague I will make an excellent neighbour.

**Mr. Réginald Bélaïr:** Madam Speaker, I hope the hon. member is speaking in the name of his colleagues from the Bloc when he says he recognizes at least that there are many affinities between French-speaking Quebeckers and francophones outside Quebec because we must admit to ourselves and to all Canadians that we, francophones outside Quebec, come from the province of Quebec, one way or another.

In 1925, my father, who incidentally was from Boucherville, settled in northern Ontario, so I am a francophone immigrant. Consequently, I have no doubt that we have a lot of affinities. The message I conveyed in my maiden speech is that I do not understand why Quebec would want to separate from Canada since, in my humble opinion, it has benefited just as much as the other provinces from being a part of Canada.

• (1610)

I am happy and proud to say that I am living proof that it is possible to live in Canada, to exercise one's rights, to keep one's mother tongue, one's culture and even to blossom. This is why I say to Quebeckers: "Make no mistake about it, the best solution for you is still to stay in Canada. Think seriously about the consequences".

I wish I had more time to speak.

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to participate in this debate, which the Bloc Québécois launched today to bring this House to recognize that only the people of Quebec should decide their own future.

It is also with some emotion that I heard my colleague who has just spoken and who is, if I may say so, a francophone outside Quebec.

I would like to tell him that what the people of Quebec want is the collective ability to establish their own priorities, to develop their potential, and to fight poverty, as it competes annually with Newfoundland for the title of poorest province. Many Quebeckers are tired of seeing the Quebec government fight with the federal government over a budget surplus to which Quebec has contributed more than the other provinces, because the Employment Insurance

*Supply*

Act was especially hard on Quebec and the maritimes and the reduction in transfers hurt Quebec more than other provinces.

Now that the deficit has been wrestled to the ground, the federal government wants to use the money to give scholarships, for example. But the political life in Quebec is marked by these endless fights. If only this had started six months ago and could be resolved within two years. But this is not the case. The truth is that the people of Quebec, who are concentrated in what we call the State of Quebec, must usually fight with less powerful weapons.

Finally, what we want to say today is that the people of Quebec themselves are the driving force behind this democracy. That is a basic fact: only the people of Quebec can decide for themselves. If there is one thing that we can declare in this House, it is that. The right of one people to make its own decisions takes precedence over a Supreme Court that was created by another people for its own ends. Always we may respect its intentions, we cannot let another people decide what shape democracy will take in Quebec.

That is the bottom line. We must go to the bottom of things. Liberal and Reform members say that if Quebeckers can make the decision, then municipalities will have to ask themselves questions. The members across the way and beside us do not want to recognize the right of the Quebec people, but they are ready to give that same right to municipalities which are administrative creations of provincial governments.

When I hear the hon. member and others speak about the Canadian dream, I can only see a theoretical Canada where the two languages and the two cultures can flourish.

• (1615)

That is not how things are in real life. The truth is closer to what happened in Nagano, the truth is that we had to fight some battles for Quebec artists to be able to pursue their careers, because many of them receive financial assistance to promote their art throughout Europe. The truth is we had to face huge cuts in higher education and we will have to fight because they are trying to go over our heads by setting up two grants systems. And I could go on.

The debate tonight is part of our history, of our evolution. Quebeckers and their longing for sovereignty have been around for a long time. It is a result of history, but not only of history. Our project does not dwell on the past. It is forward-looking. It is a result of a socio-economic and democratic project that will no longer suffer any obstruction. As I said before, poverty also affects a lot of people in Quebec. In education, the needs are great and there are many of us—people of my generation and others—who are fed up with debates that lead nowhere.

As I said before, there is a theoretical Canada, the Canada which is said to be the best country in the world, but where the political leaders do not care enough about the best country in the world to

wonder what it would take to keep the other founding nation part of the country. The other nation, not just a province. What do they offer us? They tell us we should stay in the best country in the world as a province just like the others and that we should be very pleased to remain in this country and also that we should be very careful if we are serious about leaving because they will not let us go so easily.

This Canada only exists in theory. The truth is that if Canadians were so concerned about this great country of theirs they would be worried. They would finally agree that Quebeckers are a people. They would take a look at other federations, not uninalational federations, but multinational federations, and get concerned. But we are faced with the terrible situation of a people governed by a government which does not want to face the problems, because it is committed to saying that it is the best country in the world, a government whose political leader is incapable of looking at what could be done, and who knows only how to refuse negotiation of a future partnership, and to use threats.

What the Bloc Québécois has said on numerous occasions is that, with its present leadership, Canada is headed—and rapidly—toward a dead end. It is amazing to see how few people outside of Quebec will say so. I must say that I am very proud that Claude Ryan has acted consistently with what he has done for most of his life. Although I have often disagreed with him, he has taken courageous steps in the past, and this is one more.

The same thing goes for Daniel Johnson, Jr. In 1965, his father wrote *Égalité ou indépendance*. In it he said that if there were no equality between the two nations, French Canada and English Canada, it would be understandable if the French Canadians in Quebec were to wish to realize their full potential there, and he was not opposed to that. Daniel Johnson, Jr. sometimes remembers that point. He has stated that the question must be decided in Quebec.

For us, this was a fundamental debate.

• (1620)

It is up to the Quebec people to determine its future and we deeply regret that the federal government has dragged the supreme court into it, because the way the question is worded is very tricky and neither Quebec nor Canada can get out of it easily, on the contrary.

This desire of Quebeckers, which we have now expressed a number of times in our history, will be forcefully expressed again, and you will have helped us in the end.

[English]

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite if she would care to comment on this. She mentioned that a lot of what we are very proud of in Canada is in theory only. However, I can think of two of

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the most important votes that I as a member have voted on. One was the Newfoundland school question and the other was the Quebec school question. Those votes were a clear demonstration that this country and its constitution are willing to keep time with current events as they unfold and also to make room for an emerging nation.

I would ask the member opposite how she could make those comments in the face of legislation which has already been passed.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, I cannot respond for Newfoundland, but I can for Quebec and say we wanted to carry out this reform a very long time ago. Had it passed this time in the House of Commons—I deeply believe so, and I am not speaking for my colleagues—Newfoundland too had a problem, and Quebec could have posed its problem in the same process.

However, you have to understand one thing. It is a small part of the problems we experience as a different people. When we see how Canada is changing and how Quebec is changing, we are forced to admit that they are not changing differently, they are growing apart. It is quite legitimate for you to change in one direction, as it is for us to change in another.

We are tired of having to fight over every little thing when the matter of jobs is so important as are the issues of fighting poverty, education and economic development.

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as there is not much time left, I shall be brief.

Could the hon. member for Mercier tell us, first of all, how Quebec would go about giving back to the rest of Canada its share of the national debt? Also, how would a new Quebec government give money back for all that was investment in infrastructure, anything provided by the federal government in Quebec, including occupational training?

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, this is a very interesting question.

I will tell you that the sovereignists in Quebec have been giving a great deal of thought to what would happen “after” for quite some time. The Bloc Québécois had been instrumental in defining such terms and conditions. Discussions were held, as they were by the Bourassa government in Quebec, at the commission on sovereignty. We have looked at negotiating strategies.

During the 1995 referendum campaign, a booklet was distributed to every Quebec household and this booklet said that, following a victory of the yes side in the referendum, the National Assembly

would make an offer of partnership; this would naturally entail negotiating assets because part of these assets are ours.

• (1625)

These matters would be addressed as part of negotiations carried out afterwards, but nothing stops us from looking at various scenarios together before then. In fact, we would feel it is quite normal to start now.

To do so, one must recognize and agree that this offer of partnership made after achieving sovereignty may provide the basis for settling disputes. Bear in mind that our goal is to maintain an economic zone. The various treaties that will have to be signed may require that ministers meet on a regular basis, as some sort of political body.

Basically, what we want is to be able to pursue our dreams without bothering the rest of Canada and for the rest of Canada to stop interfering with this pursuit so that we can work in partnership and like each other better.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would never have thought that I would speak about the very foundation of democracy in our society that I considered a democratic one until today.

Today, I would be ashamed if I were a Quebecker and an elected Liberal member of this government. I will therefore bring to the attention of Liberal members elected by Quebeckers the consensus that was achieved in Quebec.

Despite their allegiance to federalism, their fellow citizens never denied the right to decide for themselves the future of Quebec, their Quebec. I invite these members to respect their constituents and the consensus of the people and of the major political stakeholders, including those of the Liberal Party of Quebec, and to support the motion moved in this House by the 44 Bloc Québécois members. I address them—you—directly as a part of the Quebec society.

The decision of the Quebec government to respond to the possible choice of the people of Quebec in favour of sovereignty is a political decision, not a legal one. A court of justice will never be able to replace the will of a people. A court will never be able to impose on a whole nation a road it did not choose to take.

In fact, public remarks made by former leaders of the no side fully demonstrate that there is a strong consensus in Quebec. I remind this House once again of the statements made by Mr. Ryan and Mr. Johnson, because I think that, as the day gets closer, it is better to recall the essential things.

Mr. Ryan said: “I support a most elementary principle, namely the primacy of democracy over any other consideration in an issue as fundamental as determining the future of a nation”. He even

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stated that it would be a tremendous victory for democracy if the Supreme Court clearly confirmed that the right to self-determination is fundamental and must be respected by all means.

As for Daniel Johnson, leader of the opposition in Quebec and leader of the no committee in the 1995 referendum, he said that the Supreme Court should not deny Quebec's right to self-determination. And I quote: "Quebeckers will decide what will become of them, and it is they who must determine the referendum question".

The wisest thing the court could do is to give politicians the responsibility of finding democratic answers to the questions that were submitted to it. Quebec politicians have demonstrated their ability to steer the debate on Quebec's political future with the utmost respect for democracy.

On many occasions, Canadian politicians have shown respect for the approach taken by the people of Quebec. But after the close results of the 1995 referendum, the rules have changed. The old rules were no longer applicable and valid. That is when the federal government decided to set its plan B in motion, that is the hard line strategy.

It seems clear to me that the future of seven million people cannot be decided by nine judges of the Supreme Court of Canada.

• (1630)

This misuse of the court by the Prime Minister and his associates shows that they seek victory at any cost, regardless of democratic principles. Plan B reflects a unitarian vision of federalism, in which the historic equality of the two founding nations is scorned.

The referral asking the Supreme Court to rule on Quebec's right to secede is illegitimate since the federal government's real objective is not, as claimed, the respect of the rule of law. The government is using that pretence to try to have the Supreme Court judges take part in lowdown dirty tricks. This referral is an attempt to fraud democracy. It is an attempt to put our democratic institutions under state supervision. This referral denies the existence of the people of Quebec.

There is still time for the court to avoid undermining the Quebec democratic and political process. In order to do so, Supreme Court justices must refuse to answer the questions submitted by the federal government. I am referring in particular to the judges from Quebec, Chief Justice Antonio Lamer, and Justices L'Heureux-Dubé and Gonthier. We urge them to refuse to play the game of a federal government running out of arguments and strategies to stop the sovereignist project.

If I rise in this House to ask Supreme Court judges not to answer these questions, it is because the referral to the Supreme Court is a basic demonstration of the inability of Canadian federalism to meet Quebeckers' historic demands.

Let us talk about history, the official one and the other one. Historically, Quebec's gains were made within the political sphere, in the respect of democracy. Let us remember the nationalization of electricity, the Caisse de dépôt, the creation of the local community service centres, the powers relating to culture, language and immigration. These development tools were not given to Quebec by the Supreme Court of Canada. We got them by occupying the political space, in the respect of democratic rules. The result is that we have now become a modern democracy.

The other history concerns the heart of Quebeckers. It has to do with the very fabric of the people of Quebec.

I am a native of the lower St. Lawrence region and my family, the Lizottes, owns the same land since the 17th century. Like other families, over the years, it has welcomed the unfortunate survivors of the great famine that struck Ireland and Scotland. We are tolerant, generous and open. My great-grandfather was a seagoing captain. At the time, the motherland was constantly in contact with our founding people.

I grew up in this environment, and I learned to understand and to protect my people. This is where my political commitment comes from. With a pride reminiscent of that of my ancestors, I am asking Supreme Court judges to refuse to answer the three questions, and to let Quebeckers decide their future themselves.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take the floor for questions and comments on the speech by my colleague for Louis-Hébert. She dealt with the substance of the matter. It is quite important to point out that this debate has been requested by sovereignist members, who have come to Ottawa in order to make sure decisions on Quebec's future would be made democratically.

We were given a mandate in 1993, and it has been renewed in 1997, after the referendum. People tell us we lost the referendum and we should accept these democratic results. We do accept them, but we think we can go on trying to convince Quebeckers because we have been able to raise the level of support from 40% in 1980 to 49.4% in 1995.

• (1635)

Our approach is a democratic one, and I am very proud that we are the ones who raised this issue.

I appreciated the call to Liberal members, especially newcomers, those that have nothing to do with the Trudeau generation, who did not take part in the process that gave us the Canadian constitution, a constitution for the judges. When the constitution was unilaterally patriated, it was to create a society ruled by the judges, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau society. The result is an ever greater involvement of the judiciary.

My question to the hon. member for Louis-Hébert is this. If the Liberal majority in the federal Parliament votes down our motion, would that not be an even greater rupture than the unilateral patriation of the constitution? Once more, Quebecers would realize that the country in which they want to live would not make such undemocratic decisions.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Madam Speaker, I think my colleague has raised a very important point. If we do not have the agreement of our colleagues in the House today, we will probably be facing an even greater impasse than the one we faced when the Constitution was unilaterally patriated in 1982.

Talking about working towards rapprochement and understanding is one thing, but I think that if members oppose the most basic step of allowing a people to define themselves and be able to say what they wish to become, if they ignore this issue, I really wonder how this could ever be put behind us later on. I see some very sad times ahead.

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will give you a small lesson in geography. The riding of Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok is the nose-shaped part of Quebec that extends into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. I will take this opportunity to echo my colleague from the Lower St. Lawrence region, who said that her family still has its parcel of land from the 1700s.

Back to the Gaspé in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. All the inhabitants of Upper and Lower Canada, all those who live in the western part of my riding, passed by us on their way up the St. Lawrence and now the members opposite are telling us what to do, that we can no longer decide for ourselves. I will not stand for it and, on that note, I give the floor back to my colleague.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Madam Speaker, I will continue the heartfelt words of my hon. colleague. It is true—

**An hon. member:** It's frustration.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** No, not frustration. It is true that we have everything we need in hand, and have proven it with all of the decisions, all the organization of our political structure in Quebec, everything we need to continue to determine our own future without waiting for someone else to do it for us.

**Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in response to the Bloc Québécois motion, I wish to reaffirm the position of the Government of Canada, which acknowledges the right of Quebecers to decide their future. It is precisely because it believes in that right that the Government of Canada has introduced certain initiatives to ensure that the debate for the possible secession of

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Quebec is held in an atmosphere of clarity and transparency. It is only then that the right of Quebecers to determine their future takes on its full meaning.

• (1640)

[English]

It is clear that Quebecers cannot be kept in Canada against their clearly and democratically expressed will, but they must not lose Canada without having renounced it clearly. A clear question, a legal, orderly process acceptable to all, an enlightened decision made by citizens who have all the information they need and a clearly expressed will, these are the essential components for Quebecers to be able to decide their future. To settle for less would be to deny Quebecers the exercise of their democratic rights that clarity and transparency are paramount for the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

Some information that has now been made public reveals the true intentions of the Government of Quebec at the time of the 1995 referendum, and the approach it had in mind, even after a weak yes on a nebulous question.

The unilateral declaration of independence, plan O or the big game plan of Jacques Parizeau, as well as the famous political and economic partnership suggested by the referendum question but described now by Mr. Bouchard as just the bare bones, or a summary, clearly demonstrate that the process for taking a decision as serious as separation from Canada must be clear and transparent. The process proposed by the PQ government to achieve sovereignty was irresponsible and unrealistic, and the negative consequences of a vote in favour of secession were not disclosed.

Not only must the process be transparent, but the consequences of a vote in favour of Quebec's separation must be clearly explained to people. The fact that the government was prepared to risk losing over \$17 billion in people's savings for the unrealistic purpose of limiting panic on the markets after a victory of the yes side—this after assuring people that the consequences of such a victory would not be alarming—clearly shows that the right of Quebecers to decide their future must be exercised with full knowledge of the facts. The decision to break up a country must be taken with full knowledge of the consequences.

Quebecers must be allowed to decide, but they must also know exactly what they may have to give up. The confusion generated by secessionists regarding the consequences of Quebec's separation convinced the Canadian government to ensure the clarity and transparency of the process. Do I have to remind the House that, according to a CROP poll taken in July 1997, 44% of Quebecers

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who voted yes thought Quebec would still be part of Canada after a yes victory?

The President of the Queen's Privy Council and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs reaffirmed the importance, for Quebecers, to have all the information required to properly exercise their right to decide their future. In a letter dated February 6, addressed to Mr. Ryan and dealing with the reference to the supreme court, the minister wrote "Through this reference, the Government of Canada seeks clarification of an important issue, that of the legal aspects of a unilateral secession. We believe Quebecers and other Canadians are entitled to that information. Above all, the decision whether or not to secede should not be made on the basis of myths and false theories".

[English]

We could add that the governments of Quebec and Canada alike have a duty to take necessary measures to inform citizens of all the aspects of a possible secession by Quebec. I repeat, only under those conditions does Quebec's right to decide its future take on all its meaning.

The Government of Canada has and will always have the responsibility to respect that duty, to provide information that is incumbent on every government.

[Translation]

The current Quebec government said on a number of occasions that, should the yes side win a referendum, even with a small majority, it could separate Quebec from the rest of Canada by unilaterally declaring its independence, adding that neither the Constitution nor the courts have a role to play in a secession. The Government of Canada is of the opinion that such a statement has no legal foundation.

• (1645)

In fact we rather agree with Lucien Bouchard's statement in his book *Mot à Mot*, and I quote:

Quebeckers, whatever their stripe, did not and do not agree with living outside the Constitution of Canada, when we live in a society based on the rule of law. And Canadians have to understand this.

Secession within the law would already cause huge problems. While it is true that unilateral secession has no basis in law, it would raise problems that are even more difficult to overcome, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs indicated in his letter to Mr. Ryan.

In it he said that one of the consequences of such legal instability could fly back in the face of the secessionist government, and I quote:

Many Quebecers would claim the right to not lose Canada in the confusion, without a recognized legal framework. The Government of Quebec would have a hard time

obliging its citizens to comply with its laws, since it would have moved itself outside the legal framework. We Quebecers would not want our society plunged into such instability.

No person and no government would benefit from such instability, which would, in turn, create economic uncertainty and threaten peace in society.

The action taken by the Government of Canada for clarification purposes in no way questions the legitimacy of a referendum. The aim is not to prevent Quebecers from expressing their opinion on their political future, but rather to clarify certain matters of law to enable Quebecers and other Canadians to better understand the scope of the unilateral action proposed by the current Government of Quebec.

[English]

Among other things the principle of the rule of law protects the democratic rights of the population. It ensures that over and above the political choices of the day all democratic principles underlying society and guaranteeing its existence within an orderly and peaceful context are respected.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs went further in his letter to Mr. Ryan, stating that the law is necessary in order for political action to take place democratically and not in anarchy.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada undertook to explain clearly what was at stake in a possible third referendum on Quebec's independence and, in particular, the consequences of unilateral secession.

I agree with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs when he says that, as a Quebecker, he wants to be sure that neither he nor his fellow citizens will lose their identity or their full rights as Canadians in the confusion, with no legal framework to decide our disputes, in a dangerously unclear state that is democratically unacceptable.

I cannot support the motion introduced by the Bloc Québécois because this party refuses to recognize the rule of law, as we saw with its refusal to agree to the amendment moved earlier today by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, Education; the hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington, Trade; the hon. member for Frontenac—Mégantic, Dairy Products.

**Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. parliamentary secretary. As always I was impressed with the logic and concise nature of the



arguments he put forward against the motion before us today. Among the many good points he made, he made it quite clear that we must at all times in this very civilized country rule ourselves in accordance with the rule of law.

• (1650)

It would seem to me that an avowed separatist would want to pursue a strategy to achieve his or her objectives which are in accordance with the laws of the land. After all, in the case of a favourable vote in accordance with a good clear question, he or she would want the international community to recognize that decision.

Could the parliamentary secretary elaborate a bit more on the importance of the rule of law in any civilized society, particularly as we might unfortunately at some time face another referendum in Quebec on the question of separation? Why is it so important to remind all Canadians and all Quebecers that we must at all times conduct ourselves in accordance with the rule of law?

**Mr. Paul DeVillers:** Madam Speaker, the member emphasizes the point that the government is trying to make sure that Quebec or any other province is not denied the right to determine its own position within Confederation or, for that matter, outside Confederation.

The rule of law is important. This needs to be done in an orderly fashion. I would like to quote from the former justice minister and current health minister when he was in the process of this reference to the supreme court. He made reference to the rule of law by saying:

The rule of law is not an obstacle to change. It permits change to take place in an orderly way. It allows Canadians to alter and adjust institutions that govern our country in a fashion that reflects our values of consensus, dialogue and accommodation.

The government is hoping to have clarification. It is not a question of attempting to deny the right of Quebec or any other province to determine their own future. We trying to guarantee that it is done in an orderly fashion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I know the parliamentary secretary was sincere in what he said, but I think he abandoned originality and emphasized sincerity, because it was a speech straight from the Privy Council, prepared by speech writers obviously hired for that very purpose.

I have three comments and one question. When our colleague, the parliamentary secretary, says that we do not know the consequences of sovereignty, if he says something like that at this point, then he has not followed the debate, because all Quebecers know that, on the day Quebec becomes sovereign, through democratic means, no other means having ever been considered, there will be three consequences: Quebec will keep all its taxes; Quebec will decide on its international politics, and there will be a single

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parliament, the National Assembly, that will pass laws having force over its territory. So, the next time the parliamentary secretary is asked about the consequences of sovereignty, he can give as a reply what all Quebecers know.

What is at issue in the parliamentary secretary's discourse is whether he admits that, unlike Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Quebecers form a nation and that, because they form a nation, they have the right to decide their future democratically. And does he admit that that is basically what the last two referendums were about? Once his government took part, it recognized Quebecers as a nation.

I would like to hear what my hon. colleague has to say about this.

**Mr. Paul DeVillers:** Madam Speaker, the documents the government just submitted to the supreme court mention there would be many people in both Canada and Quebec; however, as I said in response to the member's question, the questions the government put to the supreme court are aimed at clarifying what the consequences would be.

• (1655)

Even the speech my honourable colleague opposite has just criticized mentions there are questions, claims regarding sovereignty that need answering. The Parizeau government set \$17 billion aside to try to calm the financial markets.

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have had a motion before us I would like to reread to be sure that I understand its terms and that there is no confusion.

That this House recognize the consensus in Quebec that it is for Quebecers to decide freely their own future.

I have some reservations I would like to express. Despite these reservations, I was almost prepared to support the motion. Some would consider my reservations fundamental. Often it is simply a matter of semantics. Are Quebecers a people, when the definition in the principle of the founding peoples included much more than Quebec? In spite of this potentially contentious difference, this was not reason enough for me not to support the motion.

It mentions a consensus. The word consensus has become a buzz word. It is being used, abused and interpreted. Is there really a consensus in Quebec? This too is contentious, and I am far from convinced there is one. In spite of this I might have supported the motion.

We moved an amendment. It said "while respecting the rule of law and the principle of democracy for all". This amendment was not accepted. So I have to say no. Democratic values are being promoted abroad. In Quebec, inclusively—

**Mr. Yvan Bernier:** Madam Speaker, I would like you to remind my colleague opposite that the Chair ruled on the amendment in

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question this morning and that a parliamentarian should not question a ruling by the Chair.

**Mr. Paul DeVillers:** Madam Speaker, I want to remind the House that, this morning, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs proposed an amendment. The Chair ruled that amendment out of order. The minister then asked the unanimous consent of the House for his amendment to be accepted, but the House refused to give unanimous consent. I am not questioning the Chair's ruling, but these are the facts.

**Mr. Jacques Saada:** Madam Speaker, our society, both in Canada and in Quebec, has a tradition of promoting democratic values, and I do not mean only at home. I am speaking here of our influence around the world. The role that Quebec and Canada play abroad is marked by this desire to promote democratic values throughout the world.

How is it that what is good for others is not good enough for us? How can we refuse that any debate be based on a fundamental and inescapable premise, which is respect for democracy for all? If that term is not included in this motion, then I cannot support it.

• (1700)

The supreme court was put down in just about every speech made by members of the Bloc Québécois today, but this was not the first time. I am not trying to make the point the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs made this morning but, if the supreme court has so little credibility, why is it that, less than two weeks ago, Serge Ménard, a Quebec minister, the former justice minister as I recall, was quoted in *Le Devoir* as stating that, following a separatist victory in a referendum, should Quebec declare its independence or sovereignty, he would be prepared to repatriate the three supreme court judges who are Civil Code experts.

There is a contradiction in there, a double standard. The same argument is twisted around.

The amendment providing that the rule of law be respected was defeated. As far as I know, correct me if I am wrong, there are only two alternatives with the rule of law. Either you have it or you do not and face anarchy or dictatorship. The rule of law is fundamental, so much so in fact that, regardless of political affiliations, it has been a fundamental basis of our lives for centuries.

Not only as a Quebecker, a francophone and a federalist, but also as a human being who advocates stability for the people, I find it deeply disturbing when an amendment concerning respect for the rule of law is defeated. There is a fundamental contradiction.

Granted—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Order, please. On a point of order, the hon. member for Richelieu.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Madam Speaker, you heard what the previous speaker just said. He just challenged the Chair's ruling, and that is unacceptable. It goes against the democratic process established in this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie was not taking issue with the motion, but with the decision made by the House. It was the decision of the House, not the ruling made by the Chair. It is the House, not the Chair, that did not accept the amendment.

Is the hon. member for Richelieu rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Madam Speaker, first there was a ruling made by the Chair, and then the House did not give its consent. So, to come back to this decision is a direct challenge to the Chair. The decision made by the Chair is being challenged. Members should never challenge a ruling made by the Chair.

**Mr. Jacques Saada:** Madam Speaker, first, I am pleased to see that some members are listening to what I have to say. Second, I want to condemn all attempts, for dubious technical reasons, to stop me from addressing the issue. I will not stand to be muzzled.

I want to make it clear that I recognize the freedom of Quebeckers to decide their own future, but with freedom come some responsibilities. The first is to ensure the security and stability of the people of Quebec, these Quebeckers, and I am one of them, who have already expressed their opinion twice on this issue.

I have confidence in the choice Quebeckers will make if the question is clear and shows respect for the rule of law and guarantees democracy for everyone. I am confident, but I am not sure my opponents are ready to put as much faith in their fellow citizens.

• (1705)

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have several questions to ask my colleague.

First, he raised the consensus issue, that is what is an adequate consensus. Does the fact that the leader of the no side in 1980, Mr. Ryan, finds that the federal policy in this area is unacceptable, that the leader of the committee in 1995, Mr. Daniel Johnson, the current leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec, finds it unacceptable, not seem to be the beginning of an interesting consensus in Quebec?

Second, when Liberals say “a clear question”, that is an insult to Quebeckers. If the question had not been clear, do you think that 93% of the people would have answered it? His whole political organization worked to have people vote on the no side. That means that you are contradicting yourselves.

Is there not a clear message in there? Is it not an insult to the intelligence of Quebeckers to tell them that the question was not clear and that there was no possibility to decide properly? Quebeckers came to a decision in 1980, came to a decision in 1992 on the Charlottetown accord, came to a decision in 1995. They know full well the political issue that is at stake. It is an insult to their intelligence to show such an attitude.

Third, what we reproach the supreme court for is not the fact that it is a tribunal. It is the federal government that uses the supreme court as a tool, with three loaded questions, to ensure beforehand that the answers will be the ones it wants to obtain.

That is a tactic one usually resorts to when one knows once are losing. Instead of trying to win on the skating rink, they are trying to change the rules of the game. It was the same thing this morning with the amendment.

There is an important distinction to be made. This morning, the minister was not able to move his amendment because it was out of order. It is not my fault if he still does not know how things should be done. If he does not know our procedure, and if there were difficulties within the majority in Parliament, it is not my problem.

But it should never be said that this amendment has been rejected by people on this side. It was not accepted because it was out of order.

**Mr. Paul DeVillers:** Madam Speaker, this morning, the minister was following the practice of this House. Anything can be done with unanimous consent. It happens all the time, and it is not exceptional. The hon. member is impugning the minister's motives, but he could perfectly well do what he did under the rules of the House.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is the second time a ruling of the Chair has been challenged. The hon. member is telling us the House could have reversed the Chair's ruling on procedural acceptability. That is not so. Once again, the integrity of members on this side has been questioned, just as the Chair's integrity has been.

This situation should be clarified, and the Chair should tell these members they should be talking to the motion before the House and not to an amendment that has been ruled out of order by the Chair.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** This matter has been debated long enough. I have already made a decision and we will go back to where we were in questions and comments.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to see that we did touch a nerve with the majority on the other side. To get back to the wording of the motion, the motion on which we will vote is very clear and simple.

### *Supply*

When the member, as a member from Quebec, will return to his riding, when he will have to make a decision before his fellow citizens, before all Quebeckers, will he say that he voted against what should have been in the resolution, rather than what is actually in it? He will have to bear this responsibility before all Quebeckers, like all the other members from Quebec.

I am very anxious to hear his answer to this question. Is he able, in all good conscience, to say that he has Quebeckers' interests' heart when he denies their right to decide their own future?

• (1710)

**Mr. Jacques Saada:** Madam Speaker, I am much more concerned about Quebeckers than about the separatist government of Quebec. I hear talk of a consensus, when—

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** That is an opinion.

**Mr. Jacques Saada:** Democracy is all about letting people speak when it is their turn. There is talk of consensus. Has somebody forgotten to mention the fact that Mr. Ryan, whose intellectual contribution to this debate I always welcome, was very definite on the need for a clear question and solid rules of interpretation? There is no mention of that, because it does not serve their purpose.

The insult was trying to get Quebeckers to swallow the affront of an unclear question, an unclear interpretation and no plans from Mr. Parizeau. That was the insult.

Now what I find totally hilarious is the arrogance I see. If the members opposite are so sure of winning, why do they fight the principle of a clear question with clear rules of interpretation and a clear context? Why are they trying to fool the people if they are so sure? René Lévesque must be rolling over in his grave.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I pleased to rise this afternoon to add my voice to the debate on this motion.

[*Translation*]

I thank you for allowing me to speak on a subject so important for everyone as self-determination.

[*English*]

Surely the issue of people determining their own future is one of importance for all Canadians and one I strongly support in principle. It is the particular application of this principle that we must now take time to explore.

When a member of a family decides on a plan of action that will have significant impact on other members of the family, it is of course essential that such impact be weighed carefully. I appreciate the opportunity given us here today to develop that exploration.

*Supply*

Having had the opportunity to explore issues affecting aboriginal peoples, I am particularly concerned about this motion in general and the notion of consensus in particular.

What about the aboriginal peoples of Quebec? Much of northern Quebec is the traditional land of the Cree and Inuit. Roughly 15,000 square kilometres of the province's north are exclusively dedicated to aboriginal peoples. Quebec's aboriginal peoples include Inuit, Cree, Micmac, Malecites, Algonquin, Huron, Montagnais, Abenakis, Attikameks, Naskapis and Mohawk people.

These people need to know what plans the hon. member and his party have in store for the traditional peoples of these lands. The wording of the motion is very general and ambiguous. What plans are there for negotiations and discussions with these peoples before and during this "decision of their own future?"

The Quebec boundaries extension act of 1912 stated that the province would recognize the rights of Indians to the same extent as the Government of Canada had recognized such rights. It also provided that the trusteeship of Indians in the territory and management of lands reserved for their use would remain within the Government of Canada. Does the Bloc still plan on upholding the principles outlined here or is it planning to try to deny the rights of aboriginal peoples in northern Quebec?

What about the position taken by the Cree people in Quebec? Their position during the last referendum was that they had the right to maintain their territory in Canada. This cuts to the heart of one of the difficulties with this motion. While it supports the right of self-determination for Quebecers, surely the same must be true for aboriginal peoples within Quebec.

To support self-determination for Quebec in general but then to deny that same provision for the aboriginal peoples living within the boundaries of Quebec is not only contradictory but sets back the tone of relations with aboriginal peoples to a time to which surely none of the members in this House would wish to return.

The motion refers to the ambiguous concept of consensus.

• (1715)

How does the hon. member reconcile this with the notion of self-government? The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated:

The right of self-determination is vested in all aboriginal peoples of Canada including First Nations, Inuit and Metis. It is founded on emerging norms of international laws and basic principles of public morality. Self-determination entitles aboriginal peoples to negotiate the terms of their relationship with Canada and to establish governmental structures that they consider appropriate for their needs.

How does this notion take into account self-determination for aboriginals?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Call in the members.

• (1745)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 70)

## YEAS

## Members

Alarie	Asselin
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Borotsik
Bigras	Brison
Brien	Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Charest	Dalphond-Guiral
Crête	Debien
de Savoye	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Doyle	Dumas
Duceppe	Gagnon
Fourmier	Girard-Bujold
Gauthier	Guay
Godin (Châteauguay)	Harvey
Guimond	Jones
Herron	Lalonde
Keddy (South Shore)	Lebel
Laurin	Loubier
Lefebvre	Marceau
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Ménard
Matthews	Muise
Mercier	Picard (Drummond)
Perron	Power
Plamondon	Rocheleau
Price	St-Hilaire
Sauvageau	Turp
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	
Wayne —54	

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Anders	Anderson
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bailey	Baker
Bakopanos	Beaumier
Bélaïr	Bellemare
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Charbonneau
Chatters	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Coderre
Cohen	Collenette
Copps	Cullen
Cummins	Davies
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Drouin	Duhamel
Duncan	Earle
Easter	Eggleton
Elley	Epp
Finestone	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Gilmour	Godfrey
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Goodale
Gouk	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Guarnieri
Hanger	Harb
Hardy	Harris
Hart	Harvard
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hoeppner	Hubbard
Ianno	Jackson
Jaffer	Jennings
Johnston	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Laliberte	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Lowther	Lunn
MacAulay	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Manning	Marchi
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Mayfield	McCormick
McDonough	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McNally	McTeague
McWhinney	Meredith
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mills (Red Deer)	Minna
Mitchell	Morrison
Murray	Myers
Nault	Normand
Nystrom	Obhrai
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Pankiw
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Penson
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Kent—Essex)	Pillitteri
Proctor	Proud

## Supply

Provenzano	Ramsay
Redman	Reed
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Schmidt	Scott (Fredericton)
Scott (Skeena)	Serré
Shepherd	Solberg
Solomon	Speller
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Stinson	St-Julien
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vancielief	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Wilfert	Williams
Wood—201	

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Bertrand	Canuel
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis)
Longfield	Marleau
O'Brien (Labrador)	Pratt
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Venne

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

• (1750 )

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

• (1755 )

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 71)

## YEAS

## Members

Alarie	Asselin
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Blaikie	Borotsik
Brien	Brison
Charest	Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Crête	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	de Savoye
Debien	Doyle
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Duceppe
Dumas	Earle
Fournier	Gagnon
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	

*Supply*

Godin (Châteauguay)	Guay
Guimond	Hardy
Harvey	Herron
Jones	Keddy (South Shore)
Laliberte	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Lefebvre	Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McDonough	Ménard
Mercier	Muise
Nystrom	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Power	Price
Proctor	Rocheleau
Sauvageau	Solomon
St-Hilaire	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Wasylycia-Leis
Wayne—67	

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Anders	Anderson
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Bailey
Baker	Bakopanos
Beaumier	Bélaïr
Bellemare	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Charbonneau
Chatters	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Coderre
Cohen	Collenette
Copps	Cullen
Cummins	De Villers
Dhaliwal	Dion
Discepola	Drouin
Duhamel	Duncan
Easter	Eggleton
Elley	Epp
Finestone	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Forsyth	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Gilmour	Godfrey
Goodale	Gouk
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grewal	Grey (Edmonton North)
Guarnieri	Harb
Harris	Hart
Harvard	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Hoepfner
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jaffer
Jennings	Johnston
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Lowther	Lunn
MacAulay	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Manning	Marchi
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Mayfield
McCormick	McGuire

McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McNally	McTeague
McWhinney	Meredith
Miffin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mills (Red Deer)	Minna
Mitchell	Morrison
Murray	Myers
Nault	Normand
Obhrai	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Pankiw	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Penson	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Kent—Essex)
Pillitteri	Proud
Provenzano	Ramsay
Redman	Reed
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Schmidt	Scott (Fredericton)
Scott (Skeena)	Serré
Shepherd	Solberg
Speller	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Stinson
St-Julien	Strahl
Szabo	Telegdi
Thibeault	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Volpe	Wappel
Whelan	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Wilfert	Williams
Wood—187	

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Bertrand	Canuel
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis)
Longfield	Marleau
O'Brien (Labrador)	Pratt
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Venne

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

• (1800 )

**Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I feel that my abilities as a parliamentarian have been obstructed and threatened due to a gesture by the member for Langley—Abbotsford.

The member showed me and several of my colleagues, in a gesture of anger during the vote, the middle finger of his right hand. Perhaps the member would like to apologize for this extremely rude and unparliamentary action.

**The Speaker:** It is difficult for the Speaker to check *Hansard* because such a gesture would not be recorded. I did not see it.

I would hope that hon. members would refrain from making gestures which are offensive to other members. I would rule that it

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is not a question of privilege, but I would encourage all hon. members to treat each other with the utmost courtesy at all times.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FINAL OFFER ARBITRATION IN RESPECT OF WEST COAST PORTS OPERATIONS ACT

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.)** moved that Bill C-233, an act to provide for the settlement of labour disputes affecting west coast ports by final offer arbitration, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on my private member's Bill C-233 which provides a process to prevent costly strikes and lockouts at west coast ports.

As new MPs in 1994 one of the first emergencies we were forced to deal with emanated from a work stoppage at west coast ports. The Reform Party has always understood that when labour disputes occur in the transportation sector or at the ports, it is the users, the innocent third parties who pay the costs. Since we arrived here four years ago there have been three occasions when work stoppages in these sectors alone required back to work legislation.

In February 1994 the dispute between the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union shut down west coast ports for almost two weeks. One year later, in March 1995, parliament was called on to bring an end to a dispute between the foremen from this very same union and the Maritime Employers Association. No sooner had this group been ordered back to work than we were called upon to pass another bill legislating an end to a work stoppage, this time in the railway sector.

On each occasion the Reform Party pressed the government to act quickly to protect the livelihood of the users. Rather than deal with each work disruption on an ad hoc basis, we believe it would make more sense to deal with all potential disputes ahead of time by establishing a process called final offer selection arbitration.

• (1805)

This government, however, does not see the need for a permanent solution. For some perverse reason it passes up every opportunity to solve the problem once and for all by giving both sides the tools to settle their disputes. The government prefers instead to take a piecemeal approach to labour issues. Nowhere is this more

obvious than when the labour bill currently awaiting second reading is examined.

The Canada Labour Code has jurisdiction over only 10% of the country's workforce, yet a work disruption in any federally regulated work place has immediate, far-reaching and long lasting effects on the entire nation.

Because of the unique nature of the federal system alternate sources are often not available. It is in the interest of all Canadians that we have reliable access to essential services to keep employment within our borders and to establish and maintain a reputation worldwide as exporters of goods.

Our reputation as reliable exporters and shippers is dealt a severe blow every time work stoppages occur in the vital transportation and port sectors. Like a boxer, the more frequent and prolonged the blows the longer it takes to get back up until eventually the match is lost.

As a trading nation we cannot afford to lose ground. Today's global customers require a stable, dependable supply of goods. In a proper functioning labour environment, employers and employees both have to weigh the costs if they resort to a strike or lockout.

Employees will have to forgo wages, live on a meagre strike pay and face possible personal financial hardship. Employers, on the other hand, stand to forfeit lost sales and revenues. These are normally powerful enough incentives for a negotiated settlement.

In key economic sectors, however, this normal safeguard does not apply. The knowledge that work stoppage will not be permitted to last for any length of time must be factored into the negotiating process. If they cannot achieve their goals at the bargaining table all too often negotiating parties will give up and allow the federal government and its arbitrators to settle the dispute for them. Unfortunately the real victims of this process are not the employers and employees, but Canadian farmers, producers, importers and exporters.

Good labour relations cannot be legislated. Final offer selection arbitration, however, gives the parties the tools to resolve their differences. It does not favour one side or the other.

Here is how it works. If and only if the union and employer cannot make an agreement by the conclusion of the previous contract, the union and the employer would provide the minister with the name of a person or persons they jointly recommend as an arbitrator or an arbitration panel. The union and employer would be required to submit to the arbitrator or panel a list of the matters still under dispute.

For disputed areas, each party would be required to submit a final offer for settlement. The arbitrator selects either the final offer submitted by the trade union or the final offer submitted by the employer; all of one position or all of the other. The arbitrator's decision would be binding on both parties.

*Private Members' Business*

A permanent and fair resolution process must be put in place, removed from the whims of government. Back to work legislation has become too predictable and management and unions count on it. Permanent legislation would provide both sides with predictable rules and a timetable by which to negotiate.

The risk to Canadian jobs should be minimized. Not only a significant number of jobs would be lost in the export sector if these disputes could not be resolved, but jobs at the ports will be at severe risk when alternative means to ship goods are utilized. The use of more reliable U.S. west coast ports would result in the loss of cargo and British Columbia jobs in the ports.

The cost interruption of government business should not occur. While there is need for regulation by various levels of government, it is unnecessary to put emergency measures in place each time labour and management are unable to reach a satisfactory agreement. Resolving the differences of these two groups can be achieved without interrupting the regular flow of government proceedings.

• (1810)

We are not talking about ending the collective bargaining process. We are talking about making it work better. Every time back to work legislation is used it usurps the collective bargaining process.

Final offer selection arbitration is not a new concept. As a matter of fact, it was used by the government to settle the 1994 longshoremen's dispute. At that time the minister of human resources development said:

The imposition of the final offer selection procedure should encourage the two sides to demonstrate a strong sense of rationality in deciding on the positions they place before the arbitrator.

That is what we have been saying all along.

Even the Mulroney government saw the benefits of final offer. It included it in the 1987 National Transportation Act as a mechanism to solve pricing disagreements between shippers and railways. One transportation writer described it as a very useful precedent for all rail shippers, in that it confirms that an inexpensive and expedited recourse is available when manufacturers or producers are dissatisfied with their freight rates.

The problem is that no government has yet been willing to enshrine final offer selection arbitration in the Canada Labour Code as a permanent dispute settlement mechanism. The best solution the government could manage is the half measure in Bill C-19, the amendments to the labour code, which would force grain handlers and longshoremen to cross the picket lines of their colleagues to ensure that the grain already in the ports is loaded on to ships.

By the time parliament intervened in 1994 in the dispute between the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association and the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union the work stoppage is estimated to have run up \$125 million in direct costs, \$250 million in indirect costs, and \$500 million worth of grain sales had been threatened. During the best of times this is a very severe hit on the national economy. In a recession it is devastating.

At the moment, despite the problems with the Canadian dollar and the recent jump in the unemployment rate, analysts describe the economy as strong. Yet a prolonged strike or lockout in the railway sector could wreak havoc with this recovery.

Grain represents 30% of the port of Vancouver's business. There is no doubt about its importance. I would be the first to agree that grain farmers have been forced to endure more than their fair share of losses due to labour disputes beyond their control.

The minister was in Vancouver last month begging farmers to support his bill but he is missing the point. Farmers do not want to be pawns in other people's labour disputes. They have enough obstacles to contend with from the weather to the wheat board.

Once again the threat of a rail strike hovers over us. In March 1995 when parliament legislated an end to the railways dispute, the legislation included provisions mandating two year contracts with an expiry date of December 31, 1997. A nationwide rail strike this spring is a very real possibility. Contract talks involving 6,500 CN Rail workers collapsed over the weekend despite the presence of a federal conciliator, and a strike vote is not unlikely.

The provision which the government is proposing as a solution to the problems of farmers will be useless if there is a rail strike. Final offer selection arbitration as described in the bill would give farmers, producers, importers and all exporters that use west coast ports the assurance that their goods would reach consumers unimpeded.

Final offer selection arbitration is not discriminatory. It does not single out one commodity over another like the Liberals are attempting to do with their proposed amendment to the Canada Labour Code. It is fair to importers that are suffering because of the dismal value of the Canadian dollar. It is fair to grain farmers who, thanks to the Canadian Wheat Board, have enough problems trying to sell their grain. They deserve to be spared the ongoing threat and uncertainty of strikes and lockouts. It is fair to all producers and exporters who use the west coast ports to ship their goods to market.

• (1815)

The time has come to include final offer selection arbitration as a permanent dispute settlement mechanism in the Canada Labour Code.



**Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in today's debate on Bill C-233.

I read my hon. colleague's bill with some interest and I am surprised by the lack of balance in the bill. I know my colleague tries very hard to achieve good solutions. However, it puzzles me that the member opposite has proposed such a rigid and mechanical approach to labour relations, especially at a time when rapid economic change both in Canada and around the world requires imaginative responses to difficult problems.

Free and fair collective bargaining is a cornerstone of industrial relations in Canada. Members will ask is the system perfect. My answer would be no, but what system is?

Our history and experience have demonstrated that collective bargaining has served the interests of labour and management well and, by extension, it has served the interests of Canadians well. The best solution in any dispute is the one arrived at by the parties themselves in the give and take process of collective bargaining. That is where this government feels that the responsibility should rightfully remain.

We pride ourselves as a free and democratic society and in such as society it is not the government's job to intervene and impose solutions on people. However, there are times when the rights and freedoms of different groups must be weighed against the interests of the nation and the well-being of its citizens as a whole.

No one disagrees with that but in labour relations in the federal jurisdictions we already possess the tools required to ensure that a balance exists between the national interest and the rights of the parties involved in a labour dispute.

My hon. colleague across the way is nodding and giving me a thumbs up.

Let me explain what I mean. Right now, if there is a labour dispute at a port, part I of the Canada Labour Code gives the minister and the government a variety of tools to help the parties. The goal is to assist the parties in their negotiations so that an agreement can be reached and a contract signed.

First, a conciliation officer is made available to assist the parties in their negotiations. Should the parties fail to reach agreement at this stage of the process further assistance can be rendered by a conciliation commissioner if deemed appropriate. At any time a mediator can be appointed to assist in the resolution of issues in dispute.

As members can see, there is no shortage of assistance available to help the parties reach a settlement.

The preamble to the Canada Labour Code states:

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—Canadian workers, trade unions and employers recognize and support freedom of association and free collective bargaining as the basis of effective industrial relations for the determination of good working conditions and sound labour-management relations.

It means that in Canada we recognize that labour unions have made lives better for millions of their members. It means that labour unions have an important role to play in the economy. They also have an important role to play as a safeguard for workers rights.

When the Sims task force looked at part I of the code, it concluded that "free collective bargaining continues to serve our social and economic needs".

In other words, the benefits of free collective bargaining usually outweigh the inconvenience caused by any strikes. When I say usually, I mean there will always be times when a strike causes too much damage for the economy. I think this is what the member for Wetaskiwin had in mind when he drafted his bill. His party mainly represents rural ridings where agricultural interests are dominant and important. If the ports are closed, produce does not head for its destinations abroad.

• (1820 )

Ports play a crucial role in the distribution of goods into and out of this country, and a lengthy work stoppage cannot only create economic hardship but also it can jeopardize the country's reputation as a reliable trading partner in the international scene.

I am not going to argue this point, particularly in light of the legislation interventions which have been made in the past. There are times when the national interest demands an end to work stoppage and back to work legislation becomes an unfortunate necessity. That legislation normally includes a number of provisions, including a process to resolve the issues in dispute.

Final offer arbitration is one of the many mechanisms which may be chosen. Final offer arbitration can be a useful tool if used to settle a single, definitive issue such as the amount of a wage increase. But the implementation of this process across a broad range of issues is not appropriate.

The key weakness of final offer arbitration is that the arbitrator picks one side's position on all issues in its entirety over the other side. Suppose you have a labour dispute where the union wants an end to outsourcing, 50 cents more an hour and a dental plan. Management offers 25 cents, no dental plan and no end to outsourcing.

Some feel that final offer arbitration will encourage compromise, but it could well do the reverse. If you know that final offer arbitration will force someone to win everything and someone to lose everything, and if you know that final offer arbitration is based on final offers, you have a very good reason to stand pat and to take your chances.

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Moreover, with final offer arbitration you cannot split the difference, 35 cents more an hour, keep the dental plan but allow management to continue outsourcing. That may be the best solution but with this process it can never happen. Either one side gets everything it wants or the other side does. End of argument. The more complicated the dispute, the worse it gets.

How, for example, would you use final offer arbitration to solve disputes in a court over manning provisions, rules of dispatch, grievance procedures or overtime? When you try to use final offer arbitration for complicated labour disputes, inevitably one side is left very bitter, and this bitterness keeps on poisoning the workplace after. It is very serious.

Instead of the sense of satisfaction that comes from settling differences through collective bargaining, you may instead have a legacy of simmering anger that manifests itself down the road.

There are better solutions. Bill C-19 currently before this House modernizes part 1 of the Canada Labour Code and improves the collective bargaining process for federally regulated industries. It balances the rights and the responsibilities of employers, unions and employees and it reflects Canada's changing labour relations environment. It will improve flexibility and encourage settlement of disputes.

I see my hon. colleague saying "well", but perhaps that is a move forward and I feel that is progress too.

We have tried to strike a balance and I do not feel that Bill C-233 advances our interest at all. Instead of seeking a balance, it eliminates the balance completely. I urge all members of this House to vote against Bill C-233.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as I understand Bill C-233, the Minister of Labour would have the authority, without coming back to the House of Commons for any debate, to suspend the right to strike or lockout in the west coast ports or, where a strike or lockout has occurred, to direct the parties back to work. Then any outstanding differences would be settled by final offer selection and the findings of the arbitrator would be binding without any recourse to appeal.

• (1825)

That much seems straightforward. The bill makes the argument that the movement of goods to market through our west coast ports is so critical to the nation's well-being that workers in that sector should not have the right to withhold their services if negotiations break down.

Stripped down to its basics, that is the essence of the bill. I am happy to rise today to speak against it on behalf of the New Democratic Party and on behalf of working people everywhere for whom free collective bargaining is their only avenue of recourse if

they ever hope to elevate their standards of wages and working conditions.

Elements of the right wing in this country have tried to take away workers' right to strike for years. It is an ongoing battle. This is only one in a series of attacks on worker rights that we have seen from the Reform Party. I do not know what it is about fair wages and worker rights that so offends the members of the Reform Party, but bill after bill and motion after motion submitted by them seeks to strip away the most basic fundamental rights and freedoms that we as Canadians have put in place in the interests of fairness and justice for working men and women in this country.

Since ancient times people without power in the traditional sense have been using the tactic of withholding their services as a bargaining tool to achieve their objectives without resorting to violence. In ancient Greece the playwright Lysistrata tells us that the women in that community were so sick of their husbands warmongering and pillaging expeditions that they withheld their services from their mates until the men would listen to reason. The author tells us that before long the front of the men's togas look like tents pitched in the desert. Before long the collective action taken by the women began to have the desired effect. The men were willing to sit down and accept the counsel of their partners and things gradually returned to normal relations much to the relief of all concerned. That may be the first recorded strike in known history.

My point is that the right to withhold services is a legitimate and peaceful means of protest. It is one of our most basic rights and freedoms as working people. The New Democratic Party caucus is opposed to any legislation that would erode that fundamental right.

We heard a great deal about final offer selection during the recent postal strike. The Reform Party critic at that time was arguing that all future negotiations between Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers should be settled by final offer selection. It seems they want everything settled by final offer selection. They have such confidence in the process.

I do not want to burst anyone's bubble but there is nothing magic about final offer selection or any type of binding third party arbitration. There is certainly nothing new about it. The fact is final offer selection is of very limited value to labour relations practitioners, as was very capably explained by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour. It has great limitations in what it can do to resolve a round of bargaining that has reached impasse.

Negotiators already have the option to use final offer selection in any round of bargaining they see fit. As such it becomes another tool in the tool chest for negotiators to use. But we do not need legislation to voluntarily stipulate ourselves to some form of binding arbitration because that option already exists.

It is interesting to note that final offer selection has its origins in major league baseball where it is still used largely today. It is hardly in an industrial setting but it is useful to look at their experience in major league sports.

The only fair and useful way to use final offer selection is if the items in dispute are very simple and straightforward, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out. For instance, if all that is left on the table are the monetary issues, the money matters, then there is some value in putting your final offer forward and the selector will choose either one or the other.

It is generally agreed that FOS process is heavily biased toward the employer when dealing with any matters other than money. For example, it would be very unlikely for workers to achieve any type of non-monetary gains such as changes to work rules, the introduction of new benefits, a language that might recognize family leave or any clause that would be difficult for the arbitrator to weight against a cash offer from the employer.

Arbitrators, like judges, are very much creatures of past practice and precedence. They are reluctant to break new ground with their rulings. They feel, quite correctly, that new and innovative approaches to industrial relations should be arrived at through negotiations, not through any kind of imposed settlement.

• (1830)

Therefore in a case involving complicated non-monetary issues, the arbitrator in all likelihood would rule in favour of the employer. The employees would never achieve clauses that were important to them and having lost the right to strike they would not be able to apply further pressure in the form of withholding their services.

I have tried to explain what I do not like about final offer selection and I would like to spend the last few minutes I have explaining what I specifically do not like about Bill C-233.

In the province of Manitoba where I am from we actually had final offer selection legislation for a number of years. As a labour relations practitioner, as a union representative I had the occasion to not only follow that legislation very carefully but to actually use it in my own collective bargaining.

The actual fact is in Manitoba FOS was used very sparingly. In fact the Manitoba labour relations board received only 97 applications in all the time that it was legislation in that province. Of those 97 applications only seven were ever ruled on by an FOS selector or arbitrator. Four went to the union package and three were in favour of the company in those rulings. In the vast majority of cases, 72 in all, the application was withdrawn because the parties returned to the bargaining table and found a satisfactory resolution by more conventional means.

### *Private Members' Business*

This illustrates my first criticism of Bill C-233, that nowhere in the proposed legislation are the parties encouraged to continue meeting to resolve their differences after the FOS process had begun. As I say, in Manitoba this led to a satisfactory resolve in a large majority of the cases.

Also in Manitoba either the employer or the union could make application to the minister of labour if they wished to use the FOS process. The minister would then order a supervised vote of the employees in the bargaining unit to determine if it was their wish to conclude this round of bargaining by final offer selection.

Bill C-233 never asks the parties. It is the minister involved who would impose his or her will on the two parties involved in the negotiations.

Also the Manitoba legislation stipulated that the parties could only apply for FOS between two windows: either between 30 and 60 days prior to the expiry of a collective agreement, or after a strike had gone on for 60 days or more. This was crafted with a specific idea in mind, that it is far better for the two parties to use their normal avenues of free collective bargaining as much as possible without third party interference.

So only if the two parties agreed to FOS 30 days or 60 days before the expiry date, or only if the two parties had already been on strike for over 60 days would the legislation even be relevant.

We in the New Democratic Party are very critical of any labour legislation that imposes binding time limits, such as clause 9(3) of Bill C-233. It not only has binding time limits, but it has severe penalties if anybody misses those time limits. We believe that this flies in the face of the deemed fairness provisions that most labour relations practitioners are striving to achieve. In that sense we are critical of both the tone and the content of clause 9(3).

In summary, Bill C-233 is an intrusive and heavy handed proposal that has little or no merit in the labour relations environment of a 1990s democracy. It is poorly crafted and it is riddled with serious flaws and omissions. Even if it were better written, members of this House should speak against it because it does nothing to further the cause of harmonious labour relations in this country. It would further erode workers rights by stripping away that most basic and fundamental right which is the right to withhold your service as a peaceful bargaining tactic.

Final offer selection is a little used bargaining strategy because it is of little value and it is of questionable merit. It is available and free to use for those who choose to use it, but it is certainly not necessary to impose a heavy handed bill such as Bill C-233.

**Mr. Jim Gouk (West Kootenay—Okanagan, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on Bill C-233 in support of my colleague from Wetaskiwin. He has put a great deal of thought and a great deal of time into this problem, not only for the west coast

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ports but for other matters which may later be addressed by this as well.

• (1835)

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour said that she was very puzzled by this. I will try to clear up some of those things that seem to puzzle her.

She said that final offer arbitration is very one sided and results in one side being very bitter about the settlement. I suggest that she ask the Canadian Union of Postal Workers what it thought of her government's settlement which used a different method. She should ask if the postal workers are bitter.

She may be even more puzzled by something that is in keeping with the comments of the NDP member who just spoke. He spoke about how this is a right wing plot by the Reform Party. He also mentioned that final offer arbitration was used for a number of years in Manitoba. But he did not mention that it was put in by the NDP government which is kind of to the left. It is not right wing like Reform.

This method was taken out by the Conservative Party. That party sits to the right of the Reform Party here in this House. The NDP members who sit on the far left of the House are saying that this is a terrible right wing plot, but it was put in by them and it was taken out by the Conservative Party whose members sit on the righthand side of the Reform Party. If the parliamentary secretary was not really puzzled before, that must really get her spinning.

A number of misconceptions need to be cleared up. The NDP member has used this one before, as have many others. It is the old sabre rattle about how Reform is trying to take away the rights of workers to collective bargaining with bills like Bill C-233.

For someone who says he has been involved in labour negotiations for a number of years, to steal the words of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, I am really puzzled as to what he thinks collective bargaining is. Strikes and lockouts are not collective bargaining. Strikes and lockouts are the result of the failure of collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining involves three things. It involves negotiation. It involves conciliation. And it involves mediation. When those things fail, the company locks out the workers, or the workers withdraw their services from the company. That is not collective bargaining. It is a failure of collective bargaining.

The strike or lockout is a dispute settlement mechanism. It is a form of coercion used by one party against the other to drive them back to one of the three real parts of collective bargaining: negotiate, conciliate, mediate. That is collective bargaining. We have no intention of taking collective bargaining away from anyone.

Both members who spoke in opposition to the bill suggested final offer arbitration rarely needs to be used. Consider Canada Post which was mentioned by both members. There was a strike in 1987 and the government legislated the workers back to work. The next strike was in 1991 and the government legislated them back to work. The next time up was 1997 and the government legislated them back to work. There is a bit of a pattern here, is there not?

The early 1970s saw the first ever strike of air traffic controllers. The government legislated them back to work. The second time around the workers took a strike vote. They had not yet gone on strike but the government legislated them back before they went out and imposed a settlement on them. That does not make for a happy side. And the parliamentary secretary to the minister was worried that final offer arbitration would make one side bitter. I was an air traffic controller in those days and I can tell her that the government's methods made one side very bitter.

Then a ports strike crippled the country in 1994. The government legislated them back to work. We had a rail strike in 1995 and the government legislated them back to work. There is a long history of the government intervening in labour disruptions in this country.

Then the problem comes in. We have already heard figures mentioned about the cost of the ports strike. The more recent Canada Post strike cost Canada Post in loss of revenues, workers in loss of wages. The NDP is so concerned about the rights of workers. Lots of workers suffered financial devastation themselves through loss of wages. The union lost a tremendous amount of money paying out the strike pay and the cost of the negotiations that were going on with this process.

• (1840)

Charities and mail dependent business collectively lost somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion in the last postal strike because the government failed to act on a prompt basis. And it failed to have a method in place like the one proposed by my colleague in Bill C-233 to deal with the problem in the west coast ports.

At the port of Vancouver in my province of British Columbia, we used to have among other things, grain, a tremendous number of shipments of potash. A lot of the potash from Saskatchewan does not go to Vancouver any more. It goes to Portland, Oregon. Portland, Oregon said to ship it there instead, that they would build the facilities and they would guarantee it would be delivered on time.

We are losing our ability to trade internationally because the government has failed to put in place some method of settlement that is fair to both sides. How can it possibly be one sided when each side has the exact same power as the other, no more and no less?

The member from the NDP said that this is terrible because it will not allow the parties to reach a settlement. They could both go with the same settlement. They would say that they did not mean it

to go that far. All they would have to do is to go to the arbitrator making the decision with their common presentation and they would have a settlement.

What this in fact does is it puts out a message to both the employer and the employees that if one side's demands are outrageous and the other side's demands are not, they will lose. That is the way it should be. That is reasonable and proper.

Under the current system, workers lose wages and the company loses revenue. The workers and the company collectively lose business which means jobs and this devastates the national economy.

In the case of the port we talked about the impact going all the way back to the prairie grain farmers. It affected me in my riding 400 miles inland from the port in British Columbia. In my riding I have a mill and a smelter that almost got shut down because all the ore was locked up in the port.

This is something that cannot go on. If the government thinks that we can have a system that allows people to willy-nilly go on strike, which has a devastating impact on the national economy and of people totally unconnected to the job, then it has to rethink its priorities.

Let us talk about a corner store. The workers in that corner store say "Give us a dollar or we are on strike" and the owner says "No, I am only giving you 50 cents". They go on strike. What is the impact? It is an economic tug of war between the employer and the employees.

Who else is hurt? Some of the neighbours are inconvenienced because they will have to go to a different store. The families of those workers are going to be harmed but it is the impact directly related to their families' jobs. There may be a little economic spin-off in the immediate area if it happens to be a big store. Primarily it is right there located within that worksite.

In the case of the Vancouver port, there can be an impact felt 2,000 miles away by people totally unrelated to the port, thousands of different people in all kinds of different industries, such as farming or other businesses across the country. The government does not only have the right to act, it has a duty and a requirement to act.

This bill tries to address a real problem that the government itself has already recognized by intervening time after time after time when these types of situations have come up in the national interest.

Now is the time for the government to recognize the old system is not working in the interests of Canadians and to say that it is time for a little evolution to take place in collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining will still exist. All we will be doing is putting in a more effective final dispute settlement mechanism. If

the government cannot see that, it is time it moved aside and allowed someone else to do it.

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I was listening very closely to some of the comments from the parliamentary secretary and those made by the labour critic from the New Democratic Party. I think it is necessary to correct some misconceptions they have about this process.

The parliamentary secretary said that in her opinion fair and free collective bargaining has always been the best way to arrive at a settlement, or words to that effect.

• (1845 )

Certainly we agree. We are not advocating a heavy-handed approach here at all. It is most important to note that the process applies equally to the employer and to the employee. It is a tool that can be used equally by them.

I have said many times before in the House that final offer selection would take the place of very heavy-handed back to work legislation. I see it as a real step forward.

Back to work legislation has become sort of a crutch whereby management and labour do not feel compelled to earnestly bargain, to get right down to cases and to settle the disputes themselves. Of course any dispute that can be settled between the parties is absolutely the best way to go.

We are offering final offer selection as a final step that would take the place of having to go through the trauma, so to speak, of a strike or a lockout and then having parliament legislate them back to work.

This tool can be used equally by both parties. If it were in legislation both parties would realize it was the final step and would bargain accordingly. They would get right down to the last parts of the case.

My colleague in the NDP actually made the case for final offer selection in Manitoba. He said that knowing the legislation was there 93 of 97 cases resolved themselves because the parties came to an agreement. That is exactly how we want it to happen. For those 4% to 5% that cannot come to an agreement, someone has to make the agreement for them.

My colleague in the Reform Party from British Columbia made an excellent point. When the local grocer has a work disruption, whether it is a strike or lockout, certainly it affects a few families that like to deal at the particular store. It also affects the employees and the owner of the store. However people in the city do not starve because they have alternative places to buy their groceries.

Canadians, particularly in the western part of Canada, do not have an alternate west coast port to use. It is the only game in town and the people who run the west coast port are very much aware of it. It is no coincidence that work disruptions take place at a time of

*Adjournment Debate*

year when western farmers are trying to market their crops through the port.

The parliamentary secretary says that this process will not work. There are many precedents in Canadian history to show that it does work. In the case of legislating parties back to work, all that accomplishes is to reluctantly have the parties go back to the job. It does not resolve any of the outstanding issues. Those outstanding issues are yet to be resolved and in many cases are done through the exact method we are suggesting here.

It is most unfortunate the bill is not a votable motion. I would have been very pleased to have seen how the House would have voted on it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** There being no further members rising for debate and the motion not being designated as a votable item, the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the order paper.

Would there be unanimous consent, since it is 10 minutes before the hour we were to adjourn tonight, for the House to proceed to the adjournment motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

### EDUCATION

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on October 22, I asked the Minister of Human Resources Development whether the Liberal government was going to restore hope to young Canadians by making access to post-secondary education a priority.

His response was that he was going to give students as many options as possible. The only options he appears to be offering our young people are exorbitant fees and a future fraught with insecurity.

This government has not done enough for our young people. Over the past four years, all Canadians have suffered from the Liberals cuts. Among those most heavily affected by these unfeeling Liberal measures were young Canadians, with an average debt load of \$25,000 at the end of their post-secondary education. As if these unbelievable debts were not enough, they find themselves jobless, with an unemployment rate as high as 16.5%.

Since the government introduced its youth employment strategy, there are 48,300 more young people unemployed. Clearly the Liberals have missed the boat as far as young Canadians are concerned.

The situation is so critical that 78% of young Quebeckers believe that poverty has increased in our society. The majority of them even think that the worse is yet to come. This government has taken away from our young people the most important thing they need to succeed: hope.

Moreover, the problem of inequality in our society is growing every day. A minority of people benefit from the new global economy, whereas most of us live in insecurity. This insecurity is most deeply felt by our young people. High unemployment, an education system accessible only to the rich, a lack of hope and a deep feeling of insecurity, that is what the Liberals have given our young people.

Young Canadians are our future. An investment in our young people would mean a bright future for all Canadians. That is why we need to put more money into the post-secondary education system. More money for post-secondary education means a better education for our young people and a system that would be accessible to all.

Last week, I met with students in New Brunswick. They are deeply concerned about the exodus of our young people in Atlantic Canada who go west because they cannot find jobs in their region. The enormous debt load is also one of their main concerns, as it is for everybody.

This government must start listening to young Canadians and respond to their expectations and concerns. Government programs, such as the millennium scholarship fund, must be there to help those who need them. But that is not enough. The government must help all young Canadians by increasing transfers to the provinces, to ensure that tuition fees stay at a reasonable level.

The actions of the Liberal government have demonstrated that it is more concerned with corporate interests than with the future of our young people. We need a government that will make young Canadians its priority, that will invest in their future by investing in our post-secondary education system.

The Liberal government must start working for all Canadians to build a secure future for our young people and for the whole country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with my hon. friend that the millennium scholarship fund announced by the prime minister will become a cornerstone. It will assist those students who not only are most in need but also qualify for post-secondary education.

I should point out to my hon. friend that the Government of Canada does not set tuition fees. The whole educational process is the purview of the provinces.

• (1855)

We play a major role in helping students with costs and in facilitating access to post-secondary education through the health and social transfer.

In the 1997 budget the government increased federal support for higher education and skills by improving interest relief and tax measures such as the period of interest relief and by pursuing with interested provinces an income related repayment scheme.

We introduced special opportunity grants for students with permanent disabilities, high need part time students and female doctoral students in certain fields of study. With all the financial pressure that has been on the government over the years we recognized the need for post-secondary education support.

The 1997 Speech from the Throne announced the government's commitment to help youth access education and to reduce barriers to post-secondary education through further changes to the Canada student loans program. It increased assistance for students with dependants—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The hon. member's time has expired.

#### TRADE

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Asian crisis underscores the extent to which the economies of the world are interconnected. It dramatically points out the extent to which globalization of the World Trade Organization and world trade in general is now in place.

Canada has felt the effects of the Asian crisis. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada recently stated that the fallout from Asia would no doubt have a dampening effect on Canadian output.

I am pleased, however, to see other more positive developments that will hopefully will work to mitigate this effect. Growth in Canada's major trading partners outside Asia have been stronger than expected. With low inflation, falling government deficits and declining unemployment, Canada is now in much better shape to withstand such shocks as the Asian crisis. This is certainly the case more so today than it was during the Mexican peso crisis of two years ago.

My concern, however, is the impact the Asian crisis could have on Canadian firms doing business in that part of the world. Some international economists have warned that the recent crisis in the Asian markets could have a negative impact on foreign companies doing business there.

#### Adjournment Debate

What can Canada do to mitigate any negative impact? Are we continuing to get countries in the Asia-Pacific to open their countries to Canadian companies? I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade to respond.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I say to my hon. friend that it has never been more important to encourage these economies to become more open and, if I may use the word proudly, liberal in their trading practices. I am pleased to say we are now getting signals from Asia that the countries are moving to further modernize their economies and overcome these effects.

The problem of the financial downturn for Asia was partly the lack of transparency in business practices and in government regulation. At a time of dynamic economic growth across Asia and in an environment of readily available loans, a pattern of imprudent borrowing and lending has developed with a concentration of investment in overheated property markets. This did nothing to contribute to the productive base of the affected countries.

A more transparent system of controls, accounting and financial statements could have alerted national authorities, overseas lenders and international financial institutions earlier to the true underlying picture and perhaps could have prevented the crisis from developing. Given the current realities of globalization, Canada can promote the return to stable economic growth, enhanced trade and future prosperity by encouraging increased transparency and liberalization. Moreover, we lessen in the future the probability of financial shocks of this nature.

By supporting trade liberalization we improve the climate for Canadian firms seeking to do business in Asia. This is what Canada, its G-7 partners, the IMF and other international financial institutions are striving to achieve—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I am afraid I have to interrupt again.

• (1900)

[Translation]

#### MILK PRODUCTION

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on November 24, 1997, I asked the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food if he intended to protect Canadian dairy farmers against the import of increasing amounts of the cream and sugar mixture commonly known as butter oil.

At the time, the secretary of state for Agriculture and Agri-Food stood up to thank me, of course, for my question and say he was doing his best. That was on November 24, one month before Christmas.

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Today, nearly two months after Christmas, many weeks have gone by and it is clear that butter oil imports to Canada are doubling every year. To preserve our so-called supply-managed industries, that is to say dairy, eggs and poultry, when the WTO agreements, formerly known as GATT, were signed in December 1993, tariffs were set so high that they would discourage any country from exporting supply-managed items to Canada, including dairy products.

A number of exporters affiliated with Unilever met with Revenue Canada senior officials to discuss the tariff schedule and numbers. With the blessing of Revenue Canada, they were told: "Put in only 49% butter, melt it, add 51% sugar, and you will pay a 7% entry tariff instead of 284%".

That is how things are done under this Liberal government and our farmers, our dairy producers, have seen their milk quotas drop by 3% last year. That is a 3% decrease in net profits.

Very recently, the Dairy Farmers of Canada held their annual convention in Vancouver, where the minister took the trouble to meet with them at the end of their meeting. The poor guy said he was disappointed by the position taken by the Dairy Farmers of Canada, and he asked the revenue department to set up some kind of tribunal, a so-called advisory tribunal, to review the tariff on butter oil. What a disgrace.

In one, two or three years from now, this advisory body will probably submit its report to the revenue department, which will review it under the leadership of the revenue minister, but without too much pressure from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. We will end up with another agreement we will have to sign since, in 1999, in 18 months' time, we will have to embark upon a new negotiation process to renew this WTA agreement.

I have always been told that, in law, one cannot do indirectly what one cannot do directly. Dairy products were subject to a quota—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I am sorry, but the hon. member's time has expired. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

[English]

**Mr. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I appreciate the fact that he shares the concerns of the dairy industry as we all do on this side of the House.

I want to make very clear that the government recognizes the dairy industry's concerns about increasing imports of butteroil-sugar blends. However, while there have been efforts to address the concerns of the dairy farmers of Canada, it has not been possible to find a solution that would not—and I would emphasize the word not—would not contravene Canadian law and our international rights and obligations.

• (1905)

Butteroil-sugar blends are part of a larger issue of imports of dairy blends outside tariff rate quotas. The government shares the DFC's concerns about the impact of these blends on dairy producers.

Therefore the government has referred the broader issue to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, CITT, for a thorough examination of ways we could address these concerns in a manner consistent with our international rights and obligations.

The government is very disappointed that dairy farmers have indicated they do not intend to make their arguments to the CITT. We hope this decision will be reconsidered. The CITT is to report the results of its study to the government by July 1, 1998.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.06 p.m.)







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