



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 092 • 1st SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 4, 2001

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 4, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(0955)

[*English*]

PETITIONS

VIA RAIL

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present another petition on behalf of the thousands of citizens of Peterborough who are in favour of the restoration of the VIA Rail service between Toronto and Peterborough. They believe that this will reduce greenhouse emissions, reduce accidents on the highways and greatly improve the efficiency and business environment of the Greater Toronto area including Peterborough.

* * *

●(1005)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52, I request leave to move a motion for the adjournment of the House on Thursday, October 4, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration.

The softwood lumber trade action started by the U.S. against Canada is costing thousands of jobs and is threatening one of our most important industries. In British Columbia alone there is an estimated 15,000 forest workers laid off as of today.

The estimates run as high as 30,000 in British Columbia by the end of the year and nationally we are looking at 40,000 to 50,000 unemployed forest workers. This is a very serious situation indeed.

I do not think I need to go into further detail at this time but there is certainly much to discuss that would be usefully done in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully and earnestly ask that you grant this request.

The Speaker: The Chair has carefully considered the matter and wishes to take a little more time to consider the request of the hon. member. I must say that my initial inclination is to grant the request. I am leaning that way but I will consider the matter for a while yet. I will get back to the House before two o'clock with an answer. I will communicate to the hon. member as to when I will come back to make that decision.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Democratic Representative caucus would concur with the motion by the member for Vancouver Island North.

The Speaker: I am sure there are members on every side that would concur but that is not the point of the application. It is a question of whether the Speaker concurs. It is one of the few opportunities where it is my decision that will really end the matter. I appreciate the hon. member's intervention. I am sure all hon. members do.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all the parties, as well as the member for Fraser Valley, concerning the taking of the division on Bill C-217 scheduled at the conclusion of private members' business later today, and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on Bill C-217 all questions necessary to dispose of the motion for second reading be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, October 16 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

●(1010)

The Speaker: Does the hon. the chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MODERNIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROCEDURES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That the Report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons, presented on Friday, June 1, 2001, be concurred in, provided that the proposed amendment therein to Standing Order 52 (13) be amended by deleting the words "of his or her party" and that the recommendations of the Report, as amended, come into force on the Monday following the adoption of this Order.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to take part in today's debate to adopt the report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of Procedures of the House of Commons.

First, I would like to acknowledge the excellent co-operation of opposition House leaders, namely the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, the House leader for the Alliance Party; the hon. member for Roberval, the House leader for the Bloc Québécois; the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, the House leader for the New Democrats; the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, the House leader for the Progressive Conservative representative coalition; as well as the hon. members for Fraser Valley and Longueuil.

I would also like to recognize the Deputy Speaker, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, for the excellent guidance and leadership which he demonstrated as chair of the special committee.

Also a word of tribute to all members who took part in the debate in the House and to my own colleagues who attended the caucus committee meetings of the Liberal caucus to contribute their views. Presumably the same thing occurred in other caucuses, and I want to congratulate all members for their participation.

Needless to say, the members of our committee had a specific agenda, one which was collective. The agenda was to improve our procedural rules of this great institution so that members, both present and future, could do better what they were sent here to do: represent their constituents and defend their parties' policies, whether government or opposition; a delicate balance. That is why we adopted at the outset that our report would only have those items on which we all agreed to unanimously. Every clause in the report is unanimous. The report is unanimous. If it was not unanimous, it was not in the report at all. That is the system we established, and that is one of the reasons why it worked. I credit everyone who contributed to that process.

I am encouraged by the outcome of the deliberations. The report proposes substantive recommendations which focus on the need to improve procedural tools, members need to promote good governments and modernize the functioning of the institution.

However, this is not the be all and end all of reports. This is the first phase. I would like colleagues to consider having a second phase of modernizations in which we could inspire ourselves from the work done by other parliaments.

[Translation]

Let us examine some of the recommendations. For example, we have recommended increased ministerial responsibility. I will give a few examples of this.

There will be a 30 minute debate on the use of time allocation and closure motions. Time allocation is necessary, of course, when debating legislation, so that the government can put through its legislative program. The opposition parties are, I am sure, aware of that necessity but they object when the government makes use of it. There will be what might be termed a formal protest in which members could express their grievances and explain why, in their opinion, time allocation was hasty, unnecessary or whatever, depending on the circumstances.

As for the main estimates, there will now be a measure by which the Leader of the Opposition can refer two of the estimates to the committee of the whole. In the past there has been criticism in this area. I recall comments by the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in this connection.

In his opinion, certain ministers did not appear enough before committees to defend their budgetary estimates. If this occurs in the future, the Leader of the Opposition could require them to debate their budgetary estimates in the House before the cameras. This would be an incentive for ministers to appear in committee, knowing that otherwise they will be brought to the floor of the House. I think this is a good measure and I agree with those who wanted it.

With respect to the workings of the House, a certain number of existing rules have been modified and new rules have been recommended. For example, votes held at the end of the day, which require a 15 minute bell, and sometimes a 30 minute bell if the vote is unexpected, are not always necessary. If, for example, votes were held immediately following oral question period, when parliamentarians are already in the House, clearly we would not need to wait for 15 minutes since everyone would already be present. Therefore there will be a rule whereby votes may be held immediately following oral question period, as many parliamentarians have suggested. I thank them. This will now be part of the standing orders, when we return from the Thanksgiving break, a week from now.

Regarding the timetable for government bills, there will now be a mechanism, to be tested for a six month period only because it is controversial in the eyes of the opposition, which will make it possible to establish a timetable for a bill. If the bill takes more time in the House, it will automatically be given less in committee. If the bill goes through the House more quickly, it will allow for a more in-depth study in committee. We could thus, if we so decide, establish a timetable similar to what exists in the British parliament. This measure will be tested for six months.

Government Orders

●(1015)

[English]

There are written questions on the order paper, a matter which again is a source of contention. I have had to deal with that in the many years I spent in opposition, too many if I could editorialize.

Members want to have their questions answered. If ministers pass the deadline for answering them, the matter would now be referred to a standing committee in which a report would be required in addition to permitting an additional question for every one that remained unanswered. If a member was entitled to have four questions on the order paper and the minister did not answer any of them, at the end of the deadline the member could add a fifth one.

One does not stall the process of answering questions by allowing the order paper to be overloaded. That will not be possible anymore in the unlikely event that any minister, or particularly their officials, are inclined to do that at the present time.

On the ratification of the appointment of officers of parliament, the rules right now are a hodgepodge. The appointment of certain officers of parliament require a resolution of the House. Others require a study by a committee and the House. Others require a debate. Some are non-debatable and so on. On others the House is not consulted at all. Now there will be a uniform method.

An officer of parliament would now be appointed by a vote of the House in every case and there would not be a debate. It would simply be a non-debatable motion, but the House would always pronounce itself whether it be the appointment of a clerk, or the auditor general or any other officer of parliament. The system will be made uniform for all appointments.

Notice of opposition day motions was a bone of contention for government members in the past. They always felt that they found out the subject matter for debate at the last minute. The opposition group or party proposing the motion obviously knew what it would propose, so it had a head start and the government could not react because the minister was not in town to answer or had little time to prepare.

Now, one hour prior to opening on the sitting day prior to an opposition day, the government and Speaker would have to know what the subject would be. I believe that will be a good system. It will permit the government to hopefully provide better answers, although I thought the answers were already pretty good, to debates initiated on opposition days.

Members would be given a greater opportunity to participate in parliamentary debate and to be heard under the new mechanism. I thank everyone for agreeing with this.

Then there is the issue of candidacy for speakership, something that is of interest to every MP, particularly new MPs in parliament. When they are called upon to vote for a speaker they may never have met or seen the candidates. Now, candidates would be able to speak for five minutes in the House to announce to their colleagues their candidacy, if they wish to do so. It is not obligatory for someone to do so but this opportunity would be given. We were informed that this procedure which exists in the U.K. House.

●(1020)

[Translation]

On the topic of ministerial statements, the members of the committee agree to recommend strongly that the government make greater use of ministers' statements.

We will therefore change the order of the House to allow a minister to make a statement on a bill he or she will then introduce. At the moment the order is reversed and this is not allowed.

I come now to the broadcasting of committee proceedings. If ever there was a good time to speak of this it is today. With the situation, national security and the unspeakable events that occurred in the United States on September 11, I think one committee room equipped for television is not enough. From now on there will be two.

I think that if this does not prove to be enough we can have a third, but at least we will double parliament's ability to televise committee hearings. This is more than double, if we count it, because it is exponential.

One committee monopolized the room almost all the time. This arrangement will make the room more accessible than it was in the past.

Take note debates will now be conducted in committee of the whole. This will enable fewer members to join together to hold in the House of Commons a somewhat more intimate debate, rather than speak some 50 metres away, which is often the case in evening debates.

We have in fact used this approach informally for several months now. Here again this is something I noted in the British parliament and suggested to my colleagues. Informally, we tried it on several occasions, and I think we are happy with it.

As regards private members' business, we know how important it is to members. We are aware of the impact of any change. In this regard, the House leaders agreed that we should hear from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs rather than deal with this ourselves because, after all, none of us, by definition, is a backbencher, but we do listen to comments.

[English]

In conclusion, the changes today would fulfill in part a commitment made by the government in the Speech from the Throne earlier this year to modernize the rules of the House. They would also fulfill an unwritten commitment, if I can call it that, that all of us have had for a long time: to improve the rules and the functioning of this place.

The changes are part of the ongoing work of the House on parliamentary reform. They are based on all party and all member agreement and they reflect our goodwill and desire to make the institution work.

Government Orders

I will repeat something I said at the beginning. This is only the first phase. During the first phase I went to the U.K. with the then opposition House leader and we learned a lot from what it did. We should repeat the same exercise and learn what other parliaments do. We should have a second phase of modernization once we have had a few months to test how this round works. We could then adjust it if necessary with the consent of everyone, and hopefully proceed to the second phase.

I offer my sincere thanks to all hon. members for their co-operation. Although the rules are imperfect, having been made by humans, I am convinced they would make parliament work better.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will start this morning by thanking all members of the committee for the work they have done on the modernization of parliament. I specifically thank the clerks, Audrey O'Brien and Diane Diotte, for the great job they did in assisting the committee through all the work, as well as our researcher, James Robertson. They did a commendable job.

I also thank the Deputy Speaker, the member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, who acted as chair for the committee which had to come up with a unanimous report. It is not always easy to be a chair and deal with all the political parties in this type of debate. I congratulate members for the work they did. I thank them on behalf of all parliamentarians and all Canadians.

Democratizing government and improving its accountability are bedrock Alliance principles. When the 37th parliament began the Liberal government was not interested in reforming parliament in a meaningful way. It started off on the wrong foot. The only reform pursued by the government was the restriction of the ability of members to submit amendments at report stage. The scheme was so unpopular it required the use of closure to ram it through.

Despite that start the House established a modernization committee. I commend the government House leader for agreeing to the parliamentary reforms in the report. Most of the proposals tend to favour the opposition. I think the government House leader recognizes that over time the opposition has lost a great deal of procedural ground.

As a result parliament has been on the brink of becoming dysfunctional. The government's powers are sweeping. If the opposition is to provide the necessary checks and balances it must be accorded certain rights. An opposing view is crucial to the functioning of parliament.

Stanley Knowles, who was a fierce defender of the rights of the opposition, said:

—you do not have full political democracy let alone the economic as well as political democracy unless you include a full and unquestioned recognition of the rights and functions of the opposition to the government of the day. Only in this way can you protect the rights of minorities. Only in this way can you make sure that the force of public opinion will be brought to bear on the legislative process.

Another respected parliamentarian, former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, believed that:

If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution His Majesty's Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions...The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends.

Our goal should be to work toward establishing equality of strength between the government and the opposition. While the report is moving in the right direction we still have a long way to go. I am pleased the government House leader talked about digesting the report for a while and looking forward to making further changes in the future.

Many of the ideas and concepts in the modernization committee's report came from the Alliance Party's parliamentary reform package, building trust, that it launched at the beginning of parliament. We approved allowing candidates for speaker to make speeches prior to their election. This would let all members see and hear the candidates in the Chamber before there is a vote.

Another change pertains to the use of written questions and the reference of unanswered questions to a standing committee. This would increase the opposition's long term ability to hold the government accountable for its actions, something we have not been able to do in the history of this parliament. It is an important change.

There is a requirement for the minister sponsoring any bill whose passage involves closure or time allocation to justify the use of closure in a 30 minute question and answer session. This would make the government pay a political price each time it invoked closure.

It would ensure Canadians received an explanation from the minister. They would be entitled to an explanation not from the minister's parliamentary secretary or the government House leader but from the minister responsible. The minister would need to explain why the bill needed to have closure in the House. It is an important move.

The approval of the House of the appointment of the clerk of the House and officers of parliament would recognize that they report to parliament and not to cabinet or the Prime Minister. That is a positive move.

Requiring that annual reports of officers of parliament be referred to and considered by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs would ensure that elected parliamentarians gave them careful and timely consideration.

The televising of committees should be expanded. Committees are where most of the real work of parliament happens. Up to now few have been televised. The proposal would have them videotaped and made available to CPAC and the press gallery.

In this time of crisis due to terrorism and the prospect of going to war it will be especially important that all major committee hearings over the next few weeks are televised across the nation. People should be able to see the head of CSIS, the head of our defence forces and the ministers in charge being questioned by all members of the House. That will be very important. It is a crucial part of the report.

Government Orders

● (1025)

The committee recommended an improvement to the way the estimates are considered. Each year the Leader of the Opposition, in consultation with opposition House leaders, would be empowered to refer the estimates of two departments to committee of the whole. Ministers would be required to defend their estimates in the House for up to five hours. This would improve and highlight the accountability process of the estimates.

This is done in provincial legislatures now. When I was minister of the environment in British Columbia I would sometimes be questioned in the house by the opposition for hours and days on the estimates in my department. That would happen here with only two ministers but it is a good start. It would bring accountability to each minister.

Witnesses in committee would be reminded that they are required to tell the truth when appearing before a committee. They would be informed by the chairman of the consequences if they do not. That is important.

I would be remiss not to mention the report's unfortunate omissions. We have a lot more work to do. I am pleased that the government House leader agrees with that. The committee did not consider tackling the issue of free votes.

The McGrath committee studied the confidence convention and concluded that only explicit motions of confidence or matters central to the government's platform should be treated as confidence. All references to confidence were expunged from the standing orders that regulate the functioning of parliament.

Despite these reforms most votes of parliament still take place along strict party lines. Recently the opposition adjourned the House on a Thursday afternoon. Some members wondered if that could be considered a matter of confidence. This is a clear sign that members need to be reminded about the confidence convention.

The hon. member for Calgary Southwest described this point in a speech he delivered in the House in April 1998. He said:

There is a myth in the House that lurking out there somewhere is the fiery dragon of the confidence convention, the erroneous belief studiously cultivated by the government that if a government bill or motion is defeated, or an opposition bill, motion or amendment is passed, this obliges the government to resign. This myth is used to coerce government members, especially backbenchers, to vote for government bills and motions with which they and their constituents disagree and to vote against opposition bills, motions and amendments with which they substantially agree. The reality is that the fiery dragon of the confidence convention in its traditional form is dead. The sooner the House officially recognizes that fact, the better for all.

We did not recommend changing any rules because there are no relevant rules to change. We wanted to reaffirm what the rules are. We could adopt a motion that says the House shall not consider the vote on any motion to be a question of confidence in the government unless the motion is directly related to the government's budget or the motion is explicitly worded as a question of confidence.

We were hoping the committee would recommend wording to clarify ministerial responsibility. We have a lot of documents written by the PCO and academics, but the House has never made a statement of its own. It is ironic because ministers are responsible to the House.

The U.K. passed a resolution regarding ministerial accountability. It can be found on page 63 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May. We should come up with our own wording. The statement should include the usual constitutional references and some additional statements to address recent issues.

The House should urge the Prime Minister to make important announcements in the House and not at Liberal fundraisers. The ethics counsellor still reports to the Prime Minister instead of to the House regarding the ethics of cabinet ministers.

The election of standing committee chairmen and vice-chairmen by secret ballot were not included in the report. It would have brought more autonomy to committees. The election of the Speaker by secret ballot was designed to take the choice away from the Prime Minister and give it to the entire House. Since committees are creatures of the House and the independence of chairmen is as important to members when they are in committee as when they are in the House, the secret ballot procedure used to select the Speaker should be applied to the election of standing committee chairmen and vice-chairmen.

Removing parliamentary secretaries from committees was another proposal the government felt it could not live with. This would have strengthened the independence of committees. Committees will continue to be impeded by the interference of cabinet through parliamentary secretaries.

There was progress on closure and time allocation. While the committee recommended a 30 minute question period before a motion of time allocation or closure is moved, it could have gone further. It could have recommended that the Speaker be granted more authority to deny a motion from being put if he felt the rights of the minority were being infringed.

The committee also failed to come up with an agreement on adding a question and comment period to a minister's speech on second and third reading stages of a bill. We will therefore have to continue the practice of allowing ministers to drone on for 40 minutes without an opportunity to challenge what they are saying. The most interesting and informative aspect of debate is the question and comment period. The bill would deny us that on most important speeches.

● (1030)

Regrettably there is no progress on private members' business, just the expression that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs should deal with it.

Government Orders

Our supply motion last June was designed to commit the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to come up with a workable proposal allowing for all items to be votable by November 1. The recent survey by the subcommittee on private members' business indicated that over 70% of the members were unhappy with how the system works. An overwhelming majority wanted all items in the House to be votable. We hope that will happen by November 1.

The committee did not see fit to come up with a workable procedure to deal with omnibus bills. The way we presently deal with omnibus bills is described on page 619 of Marleau and Montpetit. It suggests that historically disputes over omnibus bills are brought about by political interaction. It describes on page 618 how the opposition paralyzed the House for 14 days in 1982. Surely there is a better way to resolve disputes of this kind.

Our most recent example of Bill C-15 was handled in a similar although less severe way. Apart from the begging of all opposition parties, the official opposition had to threaten the smooth and timely manner that legislation is processed through the House. There must be a better way.

The Speaker could be given the authority to divide a bill if in his opinion the omnibus nature of a bill prevents members from casting their votes responsibly and intelligibly on behalf of their constituents. I do not see why committees cannot be given the authority to divide a bill without having to seek the authority of the House.

There may also be a simpler solution. The government could negotiate with the opposition what principles are to be lumped together in an omnibus bill before tabling the legislation. This would eliminate unnecessary procedural battles in the House.

I thank all my colleagues and the House leaders in this institution for the changes that took place. They are not perfect but we are certainly moving forward.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. From now on, the hon. members who take the floor will have 20 minutes to deliver their speeches, which will be followed by a period of 10 minutes for questions and comments, unless these members indicate to the Chair that they want to split their time.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by explaining to those who are listening to us that it is extremely important, in a debate like this one, in a job like the one done by House leaders, to be objective and non-partisan.

The reason is quite simple. To amend the rules of debate in parliament is not a partisan exercise and it must never become one. On the contrary, it is a highly democratic exercise whose objective must be to improve the quality of the discussions in a this Chamber and to allow members to play a meaningful role in the management of public business and in debates on bills.

It is always from this perspective that the business of the House is conducted. In this regard, I must salute the efforts of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons who, unlike his predecessor from the same government, never wanted to make any

change that was not fully supported by the House leaders of each party.

Any change to the rules of debate in parliament should get the unanimous support of the political parties concerned, because it has to do with the balance of powers held by the various members, by the opposition parties and to the government party in parliament.

The changes we are making today are extremely limited. As the House leader of the Canadian Alliance pointed out earlier, much remains to be done. Many of us could, and indeed do with all our heart, wish for amendments to the standing orders but what we must understand is that what I hope we are seeing here is the beginning of an ongoing process.

To this process, we have all brought our objectivity, our experience and our desire for quality debate in parliament and, as I said earlier, the result, however modest, reflects not just consensus but unanimity.

I have some advice for the government should it ever wish to change the rules under which parliament operates, as it has done in the past, without the agreement of all parties.

Whenever a government proceeds in this manner, it uses its majority to unbalance, as it were, the debates we hold in the House of Commons. Even if the intention is sometimes worthwhile, even if the purpose of the change is good and desirable, this should never, in my opinion, be something decided upon by only one, two or three parties. There must be unanimity.

In this regard, I pay tribute to the government House leader, who had the courage and drive to follow through to the end. I also wish to thank the colleagues from other parties who set aside all partisan considerations in the interests of the quality of the debates we hold in this parliament.

Why do I place such emphasis on this? Let me explain. What one must understand is that whenever changes are made to the ways things are done, the manner of debating, or the rules of procedure in a parliament based on the British model, as ours is, not only does this affect the balance within that institution but it also affects what is done in other parliaments.

Those listening are entitled to know that, naturally, we are not insensitive to what has gone on in the British parliament, in the Australian parliament, or in other similar parliaments.

Government Orders

●(1040)

Over time, parliamentarians have made changes to their procedures, in good faith and often by consensus. No one should accuse us of wanting to reinvent the wheel just because we want to make changes. These must be based on experience, precedent and rulings, in order to avoid actions being taken with totally unexpected consequences.

We must, therefore, be extremely prudent, but we also need to compare what is being done elsewhere. Debates held in the parliament of a country like Canada cannot be compared to debates held at the municipal level, no matter how large the municipality, or in other types of deliberative assemblies. Although we can occasionally take inspiration from good initiatives elsewhere, we cannot model ourselves on anything other than parliaments with the same task as our own.

That is why, every time we make changes here, it has an impact on provincial legislatures such as the Quebec national assembly, the Ontario legislature and the like. It has impact on the British parliament, or other types of parliaments, because it is a generally accepted practice for parliamentarians anxious to improve the quality of their debates to look at what others are doing.

Seen in this light, our changes, no matter how modest, are a step in the right direction. Some of them will allow MPs to play a more significant role in the way things are done. Some will open up interesting perspectives, so that we can continue what we have started.

I must tell my colleagues in other parties that, in my opinion, what we are doing today, and the report we are approving, is not the end of the process but the beginning. We could not consider we had completed our mission as House leaders by bringing in these changes to the way parliament operates.

Many other improvements are needed as well but they can all be introduced over time as the thoughts of each House leader and political party evolve. We do not need an adversarial debate to explain to the government that it is necessary to be more open, to allow the opposition to play a more significant role. Nor can the government convince the opposition in an adversarial debate that we have to accept the process operating more smoothly, more rapidly and more efficiently.

Everyone wants to hang on to their privileges. The opposition wants to be able to stop unfortunate government incidents. The government wants to be able to govern and make legislative decisions it considers fair. The secret behind the job we have done and will continue to do is to keep at all cost the balance we currently have while promoting the role of the members and the opposition parties.

Unfortunately, at this point in time, the role of the executive is increasingly important. This is what the analysts and the experts in political science are saying: in our system, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister appoint all the ministers who sit here and draw on the parliamentary majority. They pretty well hold all the power.

The only way the opposition gets to be heard is to utilize parliamentary means to make the government pay the political price of certain decisions we do not consider desirable. If the government is within its right, public opinion will be the judge. The role of parliament is therefore to alert public opinion to some of the government's decisions. Sometimes the political cost forces the government to back down, to be a little more conciliatory, even if all powers, in absolute terms, are in the hands of the executive.

●(1045)

Certain tools have to stay in the House of Commons for reasonable use by the opposition to put a halt to undesirable government activities. This is what parliament is all about.

A person does not need a lot of love for parliament to recognize that a functioning parliament is an assurance of democracy. Regardless of the difficult times we may face as a society, when parliament can guarantee healthy and balanced debate between the various factions of the opposition, the left, the right, the centre and the centre left and the government, the public recognizes that the system works. Parliamentarians recognize that their voters are being properly served.

In a democracy where parliament is nothing more than a pretence at democracy, we can expect the public to be discontent and totally disdainful of an assembly where nothing happens other than members making promises in speeches but powerless to change or influence the decisions of the executive.

Therefore, it is extremely important that our work, which is well underway and which has led to non-partisan co-operation between parliamentary leaders and political parties, can continue. We must go further and benefit from other people's experience. We must improve the role of a member of parliament and we must achieve an even better balance between the opposition and the government to ensure that our debates can be conducted in the most serene way possible, for the greater benefit of the people who elect us—or members of other political parties—here every four years.

It is in this spirit that we must work. It is in this spirit that we have worked and it is in this spirit that, personally, I have always defended our participation in the parliamentary leaders committee. There are two improvements that I find extraordinarily interesting and that I want to briefly discuss.

The first one has to do with a member asking questions to a minister after hours. There is now a better balance in the exchange between the minister who provides a reply and the member, since the latter can now respond. A kind of balance has been achieved and I think it benefits the opposition, which is an excellent thing.

There is also the fact that an opposition day motion cannot be amended without the agreement of the party that presented it. Under the parliamentary system, such an amendment could change the nature of the debate, since it could significantly change the nature of the issue debated. The proposed change is a good one.

Government Orders

Also, when the government resorts to closure, the minister who sponsors the bill will have to face a series of questions during a certain period of time in the House of Commons. This will allow us to better understand the reasons why the minister is using closure to pass his bill. It will also give the opposition a better opportunity to explain why it is opposed to a bill.

Each time a change is made to the rules of the House to enhance the members' role and to hold those who are elected to this Chamber accountable, we cast a vote of confidence in all those who cast their votes on election day. As my role or the office I hold becomes more meaningful, so does the decision made by my fellow citizens to elect me. By enhancing the role of members and parliamentarians, we are paying tribute to the citizens who send us here.

• (1050)

I would like to conclude by saying that this is but a beginning. We must continue to work together. We must look to what others are doing elsewhere in order to find the best possible approach. Beyond partisan politics and beyond any political options, it is in everyone's interest that the debates that take place in this parliament—as the ones that take place in the national assembly in Quebec City and in the British parliament—be constructive, positive, and earn it the confidence of the citizens that elect the members.

With this end in view, I affirm that this is a first step, and we will continue the work. I offer my co-operation, and my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois also offer their co-operation. We need to do more in this regard.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I find it passing strange that as we debate something which has to do with increasing the relevance of parliament what quorum we have has to be provided by the opposition, if in fact we have quorum. In fact we do not, so before I proceed any further I would call quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): There is no quorum. The bells shall ring for a maximum of 15 minutes. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1055)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Quorum has been reached. Debate shall continue.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I did that for a couple of reasons: first, because I am tired of seeing either no one or one or two members on the government side, and second, it relates to one of the recommendations in the modernization committee report which we are now debating, and that is the recommendation to have committees sit at times other than when the House is sitting, in the way that the House used to be run when I first arrived here 22 years ago.

What we now have with this telescoping of the timing of the work of committees and the sitting of the House into the same period of time is a situation that is rendering this place increasingly irrelevant and increasingly meaningless in terms of the sense one has when one is participating in a debate on the floor of the House.

We should at least have the feeling, Mr. Speaker, and we should in fact have the reality that we are actually speaking to somebody, not

just to you, with all due regard to the intensity with which you listen to what we have to say. The fact of the matter is that if there is no one on the government side to talk to, to even hear our—

An hon. member: Out of order.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: There is nothing out of order about referring to the government in the collective sense, I would remind the hon. member.

If there is no one on the government side to talk to, then what is the point? What is the point of the opposition speaking? Who are we speaking to?

I think one of the recommendations in the modernization committee report, which is that the whips come up with a plan to have committees meet at times other than when the House is sitting is in fact one of the best recommendations in this committee report, because we cannot continue like this. We cannot do our job properly if we have to be in two or three places at the same time. While I am here I am not at the justice committee, of which I am also a member and which is sitting right now, hearing witnesses on Bill C-15. I cannot be in both places at once.

That may happen from time to time but it should not be a regular occurrence. It should not be something that members have to deal with all the time, constantly having to choose between the Chamber and committee. I would certainly urge that after the passage of this report the whips get busy right away. It may mean that committees would have to sit, God forbid, on Mondays or on Thursday evenings or on Fridays. Committees always sat on those days when I first came here. They sat Monday through Friday. We did not get a week back in the riding after every three or four weeks either.

As far as I am concerned, the whole place has become kind of wimpy as far as work schedules are concerned. We should be making better use of our time and not trying to telescope the work of the House and the committees into this smaller and smaller period, which is getting to be about two and a half days now. It just makes for a lack of quality time, shall we say, here in the House of Commons and in committee. I am very much concerned about it. One of the reasons I called quorum was to make that point.

I want to read to the House something from the committee report and highlight a few things. Let me read what the report says under "Ministerial Statements".

I hear a cellphone, and that is another thing I do not like, having cellphones in the House of Commons. We should have a rule against it. We should not have to listen to cellphones going off when—

• (1100)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): There is a rule which states very clearly that cellphones are not allowed in the House, and this is the third one I have heard this morning. I urge colleagues to please abide by this rule because it can be very annoying for the member speaking. It is as simple as that: common sense.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Are we all so self-important that we cannot shut off our cellphones when we come in here and pay attention to the business of the House for the duration of time that we are here? It just makes me sick.

Government Orders

As I was saying with respect to ministerial statements, the report states:

First, it is important that more ministerial statements and announcements be made in the House of Commons. In particular, topical developments, or foreseeable policy decisions, should be made first—or, at least, concurrently—in the chamber. Ministers, and their departments, need to be encouraged to make use of the forum provided by the House of Commons. Not only will this enhance the pre-eminence of Parliament, but it will also reiterate the legislative underpinning for governmental decisions. While we recognize that not all announcements will be made in Parliament, it is important that more of them be made in this setting.

It is ironic that we should be debating and adopting the recommendations of the modernization committee report that I just read, on a day and in a setting where we have had major policy announcements repeatedly made on topical developments.

What could be more topical than the events of September 11? Major policy announcements have repeatedly been made, not in the House but at Liberal fundraising dinners.

I say to the government House leader that there is something deeply ironic, if not hypocritical, about adopting this policy in the context of a time when we have seen major policy announcements made, not in the House but at Liberal fundraising dinners. I do not hold him responsible for the behaviour of his Prime Minister or of the government entirely, and I hope that in his heart of hearts he would agree with me

The Prime Minister should have reported to the House first after his meeting with George Bush as recommended by the modernization committee report. He should have reported to the House first, not after or in the course of fragmented responses to questions in question period.

However he did not. He is in violation of the spirit of the report for not doing so, as is the Minister of Transport for whom I otherwise have a great deal of respect. After a take note debate in the House, which made the airline issue the property of the House of Commons, the Minister of Transport did not come into the House and say that this is what we debated last night and this is what he will do about the problem. No, the announcement was made in the press gallery.

How many times does this kind of abuse have to happen before the Canadian public gets the message? Maybe Canadians already got the message that parliament does not matter. It does not matter to the government so why should it matter to them?

I would hope against hope that the adoption of the report would mean a sea of change in the way the government relates to parliament through the increased use of ministerial and prime ministerial statements. That would have been the statesmanlike thing to do. The prime ministerial thing to do would have been to use the House of Commons in that context.

Question period, even at its best which it seldom is, is too adversarial a context for delivering the kind of comprehensive policy statements we would have expected of the Prime Minister in the context of what happened in New York City on September 11.

There are many good things in the report and I will not have time to elaborate on them all. I have already alluded to the recommendations having to do with ministerial statements and with the timing of committees.

The procedure that is recommended with respect to closure or time allocation is a good one. We will see how it works. I hope it will act as a brake on the government when it comes to time allocation.

● (1105)

When time allocation occurs I hope the government will provide an opportunity for ministers to justify what they are doing, or at least allow members of the opposition an opportunity to question the appropriate minister. I am looking forward to seeing how it works.

As was said by the Alliance House leader, I would have preferred that the Speaker had been given some power independent of the House to rule on whether motions of time allocation were in order, but that was not to be. We could only do what was unanimously agreed upon.

I want to enter a reservation on another item which may turn out to be all right. It has to do with candidates for Speaker making speeches to the House. The original McGrath committee, of which I was a member, made a recommendation about how a Speaker should be elected. It was felt at that time that it would be unseemly for members to campaign for the speakership.

This was not a view shared by Alliance members when they came here as Reformers. It is something they have managed to create a consensus about, that there should be some opportunity for candidates for the speakership to speak to members. I hope this will not lead to full scale campaigning. I will wait to see whether or not the initial reservations of the McGrath committee are borne out in this regard.

The recommendation with respect to estimates is a good one. We are going back to a former way of dealing with the estimates before my time. It was in 1969 that the estimates were taken out of the House and sent to committee in the way they are now.

This was not something that was done by all party agreement. It was part of a package of so-called parliamentary reform imposed through closure by the government at that time. The process may have worked for a while, but it has not led to the kind of scrutiny of the estimates and accountability in terms of spending that Canadians expect of their parliament.

I am glad to see we will return some of the estimates to the floor of the House of Commons. As the Alliance House leader indicated, this is something which is done regularly in many provincial legislatures where ministers are accountable. Ministers have to answer for their spending in a way that federal cabinet ministers do not have to do.

I will comment on what the Alliance House leader said with respect to the confidence convention. The whole issue about free votes has been a preoccupation of his party since it got here. The Alliance House leader pointed out that the confidence convention did not exist procedurally. However it used to exist procedurally.

There was the language of confidence in the standing orders prior to the adoption of the McGrath committee report in 1985. Members were able to hide behind procedural language which said, for instance, that because opposition day motions were motions of supply they were in fact confidence motions. Therefore people had to treat them as confidence motions.

Government Orders

That is all gone. All the language of confidence has been removed from the standing orders. The Alliance House leader is noticing that in spite of that we have not had any significant change in the culture of confidence. We have changed the procedure and the standing orders but we have not changed the culture of confidence.

I hear what the Alliance House leader is arguing for. At one point I would have hoped this would not be necessary. Maybe we do need a motion in the House which lays out that only certain things are matters of confidence unless they are deemed to be matters of confidence in the wording of the legislation itself.

• (1110)

This happens informally from time to time. A couple of times the current Prime Minister has said something is a matter of confidence. It is a way of signalling to his backbenchers that he will not tolerate any dissent on the matter.

This is something that should be regularized. If it were regularized the possibility would exist for government backbenchers to rein in their government when they feel it was going in the wrong direction.

A piece of legislation could then be defeated without defeating the government. That is what this is all about. However that was not accomplished in this report. It waits for another day and will probably wait a long time. I do not see the current Prime Minister or the current culture of the Liberal Party as being terribly open to this kind of parliamentary development.

The government House leader said that parliamentary reform was an ongoing thing. I do not regard this committee report as reform. It is well named when it is called modernization. Reform to me suggests a redistribution of power between the government and the opposition and between the Prime Minister and his backbenchers.

There is not much reform here; there might be a bit. I am trying to make the government House leader feel better, but there is not much that I would call reform. That does not mean that what is in the report is not worth doing. However let us not go overboard and call it something that it is not.

We still wait for the day when members of parliament will have more independence from the government, particularly in committee. At the risk of alienating the member for Fraser Valley because he sometimes complains that I mention the McGrath committee too much, we recommended then that committee members not be pulled off committees by the government when they had the audacity to have independent thought, to think that the government was not perfect, or to amend legislation in ways that had not already been suggested to them by the parliamentary secretary.

That raises another matter and another recommendation in the McGrath committee which stated that parliamentary secretaries not be on committees. Government members do not and should not need a coach in committees. Presumably government members are able to exercise some kind of rational, intelligent function and make decisions themselves without having to take their cue from a parliamentary secretary.

Had these kinds of things been included in this report then I would call it parliamentary reform. I do not call this parliamentary reform.

Nevertheless I welcome it and I hope that we will be able to make the best of what little we have before us.

• (1115)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the bill today. I am sure the House leader of the NDP, who has long been an advocate of parliamentary reform, will be in the House of course to listen to my speech since he called us all in a few minutes ago to be part of that. I am sure he will not be leaving momentarily to do anything else.

A lot of people have put a lot of work into bringing this forward and they should be congratulated. Although these are tiny steps in an effort to modernize parliament, they are good in the sense that something has been done. I thank the members who sat on the committee for their work. I know it is not easy to bring consensus on these kind of things, and they have been able to do that.

I hope that maybe I had a small part in this as well. In January of this year I brought forward a document called, "Building Trust". At the time, when I was House leader, we made 12 specific proposals that we thought would at least help parliament be more responsive and help to build trust between constituents, Canadians and the House of Commons. The immediate reaction from the government House leader was that these were half-baked and preposterous ideas, and that they could not be done. I do not know if he was right or not but exactly half of the recommendations that I brought forward at that time are included in the report. So maybe they were half-baked in the sense that only half of them were accepted.

It is interesting that after the initial knee-jerk reaction of nothing can change, it always has to stay the same, we did make some progress with the report and the baby steps of change perhaps have started once again. Perhaps under a different administration, and I think that is what it will take, the important steps necessary for true parliamentary reform will take place. It is very important that change does take place.

In *Maclean's* magazine last year it did a poll amongst business people and concluded that 7% of business people believe that members of parliament have a significant impact on the actions of the government. Only 7% think that what we do here makes a difference in the laws of the land. When people want things changed do they go to their member of parliament? Knowledgeable business people frequently do not bother. They go to NGOs, business advocacy groups and to lobbying firms. They find that is more effective than talking to members of parliament because members of parliament are shut out too often from the important work of parliament.

I will read a quote from 1968 in which a person lamented:

So this is your Member of Parliament; whipped by the discipline of the party machines; starved for information by the mandarin class; dwarfed by the Cabinet and by bigness generally in industry, labour and communications; ignored in an age of summitry and the leadership cult.

That was said by John Turner.

If that was a problem in 1968, I can assure Mr. Turner that the problem is at least as severe now, perhaps worse.

Government Orders

Members of parliament are often the last to know about important government decisions and important government legislation. Time and again, in the last parliament and again in this parliament, we see members of parliament coming forward with points of privilege asking why it is that some industry leader or some advocacy group got a copy of a piece of legislation before it was tabled in the House. Why is it that ministers go to press conferences and make announcements or ministerial statements without bothering to even consult or tell the House or even announce it simultaneously in the House? We just read about it in the newspapers. The Speaker frequently gets up and says doing that is not good practice and urges the government not to continue to do it, but of course it just continues to do it.

It is important, for real parliamentary change, to enhance the role of members of parliament. Enhancing the role of members of parliament would not only allow us to recruit good candidates in years to come but good people who are willing to give of themselves in public service which would make this place more efficient, more effective and more relevant.

• (1120)

It would build trust again between our constituents and parliament, a trust that I think has been broken. It would also allow for better laws, regulations and communication between constituents, Canadians and the House.

It may be a pipe dream, but many of us, from Mr. McGrath on down, continue to believe it is a battle worth fighting for. The changes we are talking about today are small steps. I am under no illusion that they will break the log-jam of control that is currently exerted by the Prime Minister's office and through the bureaucracy to the privy council.

A few positive things have been done. I specifically refer to a recommendation I made in January which was adopted by the committee on the issue of closure. When the government wants to bring in closure it is obliged now to at least get the minister into the House of Commons to talk about why it had to do it. Is it time sensitive? Have there been hours, days and weeks of debate? Have there been obstruction tactics on the opposition side? He or she has to at least come into the House to explain.

Again that is a small step forward. Maybe the government will be a little more reluctant to use closure. It has used closure at a record pace, a pace that sets it in a class all its own, although not a good class. It has certainly used it time and again and just after a couple of hours of debate it shuts it down and we are forced to move on. The legislation is basically rammed through here like sausages through a factory, and that is unfortunate. This committee report will at least get the ministers to come forward, and that is a good thing.

Another thing I hope will be good is that candidates for speaker in the next parliament will be able to explain to parliamentarians what it is they hope to accomplish: their style, their modus operandi, the things they consider important, the things on which they want to do more. They will be able to explain their position and we will be able to vote on that position by secret ballot. It is important to know what we are voting on and who we are voting to support. I believe that is another small step forward.

The appointment of important positions like the clerk of the House and officers of parliament should be approved by parliament. That is also a step forward and something that I recommended in January. I anticipate no problems with that. In fact we have been blessed with good clerks and good officers of parliament, but people should know and perceive that those positions are non-partisan, that they have the support of everyone in the House. Canadians need to know that those important technical officer type positions are not partisan appointments in the sense of favouring one party or one government over another.

There are some other things that could have been put in the report, but one that is actually in the report is the greater use of ministerial statements. I have to agree again, as I so often do, with the House leader of the New Democratic Party on this particular issue. He points out how this fall we started off with what I think is a disgraceful example of not including parliamentarians in the important business of the day. That is why we feel the frustration bubbling.

People are concerned about terrorism right now. It is obviously dominating all our thoughts and prayers, but it is also dominating the business of the House, or at least it should be. However, instead of the government telling us in the House about the important announcements, decisions and tactics that it may be employing or initiating, or about the consultations that are going on, these things are told to Liberal fundraisers or told on *Larry King Live*. Decisions are announced at press conferences maybe coming out of a cabinet meeting but nary an important decision or announcement is made in the House of Commons.

• (1125)

I think to myself how much I would have appreciated it, and still would frankly because it has not happened, had the Prime Minister stood up on September 17 and said that parliamentarians would be included in this most important war of the 21st century. During the gulf war, for example, he invited the leaders of all parties to sit down with him for some private briefings about matters of the day so they would not have to stand in the House of Commons searching for answers. Members should know when things are happening and that security briefings are being given to the Prime Minister. We should not have to read about those things in the paper. We do not need to know the contents but we should know something about them because parliament is included.

I would have loved if the Prime Minister had said that he asked his House leader to take housekeeping legislation off the table and to immediately bring in an anti-terrorism bill that the House could debate and pass post-haste.

Would it not have been good to get parliamentarians involved right away on the issue of the day? Instead we have debated, for example, gopher control on the prairies. While that may be of some importance to farmers, it is not what is gripping the nation. We should have put housekeeping stuff aside and seized on the security issue until it was solved. It would have been good for parliament and Canadians would have seen that parliamentarians are as concerned as they are with security issues.

Government Orders

I would have loved if the Prime Minister had stood up and said that he had struck a special all-party committee to deal with the relationship we were going to have with the new home security secretary of the United States of America. That person is coordinating the entire security activities of the most powerful nation in the world and we have no relationship to him. We do not know what he is doing. We do not have a clue as to what our response could be. Maybe we could even help him in his very important business of making the United States safe, but by inference the world safe and certainly North America safe. We will have no influence on that because we have no means of talking to him, no committee, no structure other than what might be happening at the bureaucratic level. We do not even know what that is because we are not included in that.

We do not ask for any briefings or any publication of anything that could affect national security or any investigations of terrorists, but certainly it is the business of the House to make Canadians secure. We should be talking about the modernization of our military, about long term military procurement contracts, how that will be done and budgeting for that. We should be talking about the perimeter security issues of the country in a way that dominates the House and dominates the committees.

Instead we run the risk, I see it already in committees, of just following the regular course of events, regular business that happened to be on the plate last June as if nothing has happened.

I would say a lot has happened. While the business of the world must go on as far as the regular budgetary process and so on, right now parliamentarians feel frozen out of the process. We have a system now where instead of a budget that is brought in in a timely fashion—and that should be another piece of modernization, something where we can at least know when the next budget is going to come down—we are left here every day wondering what impact the recession and the world situation will have on the budget of the federal government. No one knows if or when we will have a federal budget. If it does happen the finance committee has an obligation to be part of that, to have consultations and to travel the country. Instead committee members do not even know if it will happen so they cannot even start the process of talking to people.

It is not right. It is something again where parliamentarians are sidelined. That is why only 7% of business people think it is worth talking to their member of parliament, and that is unfortunate.

● (1130)

Most parliamentarians I have met are willing, able and thirsting for a way to impact the business of the House on behalf of their constituents and Canadians but too often they find out that they are just an afterthought.

While the modernization report tinkers with a few things, and they are good things which I approve of, it does not get to the core of the issue which is respect for the role of the members of parliament to represent their constituents here and be an advocate for those positions. There is just not enough opportunity to do it. I do not think the report strikes at the essence of it, which is that there is too much power given to too few people who make all the real decisions.

A year ago Gordon Gibson wrote an article in his newspaper column lamenting about how it would not take too much to change things. This was just before the last federal election. He said all it would take to change things at that time was only six Liberal members of parliament. Many have complained about how irrelevant they are, how they are trained seals who have to vote as they are told, that they do not have real impact in committees and that the committees are a sham. However, at that time it would have taken only six Liberal members of parliament to stand up with the opposition to change the way we do business in here.

For example, the Canadian Alliance brought forward a motion about free votes. If six Liberal members had stood up and said that they thought that the defeat of a government motion should not mean the defeat of the government unless followed by an explicit vote of non-confidence, history would have been changed. True modernization would have happened in the House of Commons. The stranglehold that the Prime Minister's office holds on this place would have been broken. Instead, too often there is lip service about the need to change but too much cache put in the fact that allegiance to the party or the leader is paramount. I can speak with some personal testimony that while loyalty to the leader is a good thing, blind loyalty is not.

If true change is going to take place in the House of Commons, people are going to have to stand up and be counted. When they will not stand up and be counted even when they know things are not right, when they do nothing, then they are aiding and abetting the problem they are complaining about. Instead of standing and demanding things of the Prime Minister and the circle of people around him, they quietly go into the night. Then when an election comes around they wonder why they cannot get quality candidates. They wonder why they do not have any impact. They wonder why businesses just write them off as a joke. Only 7% of businesses even think they have any impact. Why even go to anyone?

That is a shame. What a difference it would make if we could say, "I know some members of parliament and you had better have your ducks in a row because when you go before committee and they give you a grilling and you cannot answer their questions, they will change that legislation and you will be behind the eight ball one way or another". Instead we all know what happens. Legislation comes forward. The minister meets with people behind the scenes. They cook it all up ahead of time. They get it into committee and have some hearings. Then whatever the Prime Minister has decided just goes through that committee like sausages and it comes out just the way they wanted it to. That is a shame.

It is no wonder that MPs go to committees and in frustration walk away. They do not become experts in their field. There is often no point to it because they feel all their work is for naught. There have been committees where people have spent six months on a bill. They have become clause by clause experts on it, but then at the last minute when the clauses are actually voted on, the government whip has come in and changed the membership of the committee. All of those people who have become experts are taken off the committee and trained seals are put in their place for voting. All of the amendments are tossed out and that bill goes through the committee in a day.

Government Orders

•(1135)

No wonder people on both sides of the House get frustrated. It is going to take a few more people on the Liberal side since they have 100% of the power in here, to stand up and say that this is not just frustrating but it is unacceptable. Things like free votes in this place would be a great step forward.

I would urge the government, and the government House leader in particular, to consider looking at what other jurisdictions are doing. It is not absurd to have important international treaties negotiated by the government on behalf of Canada approved in the House of Commons. It is done in Australia and New Zealand. It is certainly done in the United States of America. Nothing can go through there unless the senate has given its approval. The president negotiates and the senate gives final approval. Why is it those sorts of things are considered taboo in this place?

What about looking at British Columbia as an example? Premier Gordon Campbell took office with a mandate to have fixed election dates. He was not constitutionally obligated to do that, but what a novel idea. Within 90 days of the election he said elections would be held the third Thursday in November every four years. People can count on it and put it in their diaries. If they want to take a holiday they can book it before or after because that is when the election is going to be. There is broad support in Canada for that kind of thing, yet for some reason those sorts of things are considered taboo.

The modernization committee steps are small ones. They are not going to break the ice jam. They are not going to change the culture of this place.

I urge members of parliament to consider that steps that enhance the role of members of parliament are what will enhance our reputations back home both with businesses and individuals. Canadians will thank us if real parliamentary reform and modernization brings about an important and increased role for members of parliament.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which is not irrelevant to the debate.

Discussions have taken place between all parties with respect to adding names to the associate membership list of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent for the following motion: that a list of associate members to procedure and House affairs be now tabled; that the names of members on the said list be printed in *Hansard* as if read into the record; and that the said list be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the member have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, this is a critically important matter to this parliament. Many members have described this parliament as dysfunctional. The member for Toronto—Danforth has stated in the past that parliament does not

work, that it is broken and is like a car motor that is working on two cylinders.

I agree with the member for Fraser Valley that this is a great first step. I want to compliment him on the document entitled "Building Trust" which he presented after the recent federal election. It deals with trying to make parliament more functional.

The concern the House leader for the NDP and I have is that it is fine to put all of this on paper but is it actually going to change anything.

The events of September 11 were very important and critical to every Canadian. Announcements were made by the Prime Minister at events outside the House. The Prime Minister does not brief parliamentarians.

I would like the member to comment on the things in this report. Are they going to change things? Are we going to see a drastic change in the attitude from cabinet to make parliament more functional? I have concerns. It is great to put it on paper, but to actually change things or make that significant a difference, we will need to see a great willingness on the part of members on the other side to change their attitude.

•(1140)

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it is true that all organizations take on the culture of their leadership. It does not matter whether it is one's own home or business or in this case the Parliament of Canada.

The culture that has been developed here over the last several years is not one that rewards initiative, outspokenness, newness or new creative ideas. It just does not reward that. In fact it penalizes that.

I will quote what Gordon Gibson said in an article about the powers that are already in this place and vested with the Prime Minister:

The Prime Minister of Canada has the powers of a despot, to a degree unmatched anywhere else in the developed world. He or she appoints the head of state, and the heads of the military and national police. The PM appoints the political and the permanent heads of all government departments, plus the governor of the Bank of Canada and all senators. He or she appoints all of the judges of the supreme court who interpret the constitution, plus all other important judges, and the heads and most members of all significant boards, commissions and crown corporations.

The PM writes or approves all legislation, directs or approves all tax and expenditure decisions, approves or controls chairs of committees and the actions of committees and even the office space and the boondoggle-type travel of MPs. He or she calls elections at a time of unilateral choosing, and then has a veto (by law) over whether this or that MP can run again. Some countries have what they call "iron triangles" of power. We have a fully closed circle.

The problem is the culture. The culture is that if one speaks out, to quote the chair of our caucus, it is like that whack a gopher game at the fair. If someone puts his head up to say that he would like some change, the Prime Minister smacks that gopher right into the basement. If a little while later another brave soul peeks his head out and says that he would like to have more independence on committee, he is driven into the twilight zone. That is the problem. The culture is to do as one is told, take the orders and do not rock the boat. That is the problem.

Government Orders

The culture is never going to change under the Prime Minister. I have a great deal of respect for him for some things. He has been here for 40 years. However in a sense his strength is also his weakness. He is so cautious and worried about what might happen that change is unthinkable.

That culture has been developed over many years. People in the organization over there understand the culture. They do not rock the boat. They do not speak out aggressively. They do not buck the big guy. And if they do, he can refuse to sign their nomination papers. They will not get an important job or they will be taken away from an important job. There are important committees just begging for people like that, such as the Library of Parliament and a couple of others that meet once a year.

That is the truth and that is the problem. It is a cultural problem. It is going to take a change of government to break that. Until people start to believe that what they do here matters and they get the gumption to stand up and say it is important that they speak out, then nothing will change. That is unfortunate. It affects the type of people who can be recruited into this place. People sometimes wonder why we cannot get people with a big long pedigree of involvement in community service or extensive business background or NGO experience. Those people look on and say, "What is the point? I am more influential over here in my organization than I would be as a member of parliament".

Those of us who fight for parliamentary reform fight because we want members of parliament to matter. We want them to count. I think of the former leader of the Reform Party who has basically said that he is going to retire at the end of this calendar year. Why? He is a person dedicated to reform and I do not just mean big R reform, I am talking about changes, someone who breaks the mould, who steps outside the status quo.

• (1145)

He has basically said that he can have more influence championing his position as the head of a university department and that he could have more influence on the course of action in the House of Commons by being a provocative speaker for the Fraser Institute. He has said that he could have a bigger impact if he were free to speak his mind, and free from the constraints of this place, as a regular editorial writer in national publications.

What a loss for this place that a man of that calibre feels so constrained by the petty games that go on in this place that he would take his interest and his love for this place and for parliamentary reform and democratic representative government, his passion for that subject, and say that frankly he has to move on. What a loss that he would say he has given 10 years of his life to it and it is time to ply his trade in other circles because he has concluded, like too many other good men and women, that it is more effective to be outside pressuring in instead of inside fomenting change from here.

That happens because of a culture, and the culture is that the leader is always right. Second rule? Look at the first rule. That is the problem and it will never change until we get somebody sitting in the Prime Minister's Office who says that he or she wants to involve members of parliament, that he or she has enough respect for this place that important decisions, announcements, legislation and so on are made here, not at Liberal fundraisers, not on *Larry King Live*,

not at a press conference where there is the possibility of winning votes at a special conference of some NGO group, or not as happened a few years ago when a minister, and, Mr. Speaker, you will remember my point of privilege, went over to China and announced the creation of a Canada-China friendship group. He had no authority to do that. Those groups are creations of parliament and he announced, as a minister in another land, that parliament had approved something of which we had never even been apprised.

Until we break that culture, we will continue down the path that says it is my way or the highway, and important decisions, important innovative ideas and representing one's constituents will take third, fourth or fifth row seats behind loyalty to the leader and to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fraser Valley for his speech but I will remind him, and he probably knows this, that it was not just the Liberal government that invented that type of culture. Previous Conservative governments also had that culture.

One thing I would like to reiterate in the House, and my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands was on our committee when we did this, is that the 1998 east coast fisheries report was a unanimous report by all members of the committee, including the parliamentary secretary. The nine Liberals and five political parties agreed to every single word in that document. It cost us over \$180,000. My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands can easily say that people were out there pouring out their heartfelt emotions to us. We had a unanimous report and brought it to the House. Nine Liberals signed the document and then stood in the House on a vote of concurrence and voted against their own report.

I would like the member's comments on that.

• (1150)

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it is a good example. I remember that report well, because there were also unanimous recommendations for the west coast for ditch maintenance and other things that were important in my own riding. I made submissions and I was pleased that it was a unanimous report.

However, it is not just the fact that the report was rejected after they had already voted to approve it. That happens all the time. It was like the ethics counsellor. They put it in their literature but when they are given a chance to vote on it they reject it.

What is important is the demotivation that takes place when members of parliament are asked to spend months of their lives and all of their political capital to come up with a unanimous report and then are told that their unanimous report does not even matter. That is what is wrong.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have again taken place among all parties with respect to adding names to the list of associate members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, should you seek it, I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That a list of associate members to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be now tabled, the names of members on the said list printed in *Hansard* as if read into the record and that the said list be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. member have consent to table the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Editor's Note: List referred to above is as follows:]

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Jim Abbott | Gary Lunn |
| Diane Ablonczy | James Lunney |
| Rob Anders | Peter MacKay |
| David Anderson | John Maloney |
| André Bachand | Preston Manning |
| Roy Bailey | Inky Mark |
| Sue Barnes | Keith Martin |
| Michel Bellehumeur | Philip Mayfield |
| Leon Benoit | Grant McNally |
| Stéphan Bergeron | Réal Ménard |
| Bill Blaikie | Val Meredith |
| Rick Borotsik | Rob Merrifield |
| Garry Breitkreuz | Bob Mills |
| Scott Brison | Dennis Mills |
| Andy Burton | James Moore |
| Chuck Cadman | Lorne Nystrom |
| Bill Casey | Deepak Obhrai |
| Rick Casson | Brian Pallister |
| Dave Chatters | Jim Pankiw |
| Joe Clark | Charlie Penson |
| John Cummins | Joe Peschisolido |
| Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral | Marcel Proulx |
| Stockwell Day | James Rajotte |
| Norman Doyle | Scott Reid |
| John Duncan | Gerry Ritz |
| Reed Elley | Werner Schmidt |
| Ken Epp | Carol Skelton |
| Brian Fitzpatrick | Monte Solberg |

Government Orders

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Paul Forseth | Kevin Sorenson |
| Peter Goldring | Larry Spencer |
| Jim Gouk | Caroline St-Hilaire |
| Gurmant Grewal | Darrel Stinson |
| Deborah Grey | Chuck Strahl |
| Art Hanger | Paul Szabo |
| John Harvard | Greg Thompson |
| Loyola Hearn | Myron Thompson |
| John Herron | Vic Toews |
| Grant Hill | Maurice Vellacott |
| Howard Hilstrom | Elsie Wayne |
| Betty Hinton | Randy White |
| Rahim Jaffer | Ted White |
| Dale Johnston | Bryon Wilfert |
| Gerald Keddy | John Williams |
| Jason Kenney | Lynne Yelich |

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

MODERNIZATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PROCEDURES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier with considerable interest to the speech of the government House leader. Like an orchestra conductor, he conducted all the leaders of all the parties. He was proud, clearly, of this unanimous report.

I should acknowledge the objectives I consider worthy in this report. What we want most of all is the modernization of the expression of democracy. A society necessarily changes, as do the people representing it. People change. We do not do things today the way we did 5, 10 or 30 years ago. We might even say we will never again do things the way we did before the unfortunate events of September 11. This is a clear illustration that society changes and that democracy must change.

I recognize the efforts of the government House leader and his role in the achievement of objectives that are solid and creditable. I also acknowledge the concern to incorporate changes in the rules of procedure that govern us as representatives democratically elected by the people. I recognize the merits of a consensual process.

As I understand it, the government House leader has agreed with the House leaders of all parties that changes to the Standing Orders would require not a majority but unanimous agreement, a consensus. I think this is to his very great credit and I congratulate him on achieving consensus on certain matters.

Government Orders

But this orchestra leader, the government House leader, who was conducting a symphony—in which we were able to pick out the House leaders of all parties—was unfortunately conducting Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. The government House leader would have to agree that his symphony is unfinished. Why? Because there are a few things missing from the report. If we question all 301 members of the House, excluding the Speaker, it will become apparent that there is consensus on what those things are.

I do not wish to hold up adoption of this report, because the member for Roberval, the Bloc Québécois House leader, has very clearly set out my party's position. I would not want members to interpret my remarks as being inconsistent with those of my party leader. But it must be admitted that there are a few things missing. Certain undertakings given did not make it into this report.

As an example, I would like to mention the Speech from the Throne. The governor general, or the Prime Minister speaking through her, told us:

In this new session of Parliament, the Government will make further proposals to improve procedures in the House and Senate.

There is a reference to “further”, to certain small improvements. We could say that the government delivered only partially on this commitment made in the speech. The throne speech goes on to say:

Among other measures, voting procedures will be modernized in the House of Commons.

● (1155)

Why am I saying that the symphony that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was boasting about is an unfinished symphony? Because, among other things, the report is silent on the recorded division process that has been used in this House since 1867, since the first parliament. This archaic system, which consists in getting up to vote when a clerk calls our name, is totally obsolete in 2001.

The Prime Minister uses every possible opportunity, even when visiting dignitaries are next to him during a press conference, to boast about Canada being “the very best country in the world”, or something to that effect. He says that in front of heads of state. I can just imagine what these people think. It does make a visiting head of state feel very good to hear that he is in the very best country in the world. Does this mean that his own country is lagging way behind? So much for diplomacy.

Why do we still have this archaic roll call vote in Canada, which claims to be a modern democracy? Why can we not record our vote like they do in the United States, where they use a card about the size of a credit or health card to record their vote at a station? Some of my colleagues and myself have friends in the United States. We could go to specific stations and insert our card to record our vote.

I would like to clarify something. We discussed it within our caucus and we do not agree with the idea of voting from our riding offices, our cars, or by using our cellular phones. This is not the idea.

I am reminded that we are not allowed to use props in this House. I apologize for what I did earlier.

So, we could have stations where members of parliament would insert their card for identification purposes and where they could say

yes or no, as is done in modern democracies, such as the United States.

While acting as a representative for my party at the Association des parlementaires de la Francophonie, we took part in a conference on developing democratic rules and we had the opportunity to see how they are being dealt with on a day-to-day basis in new, emerging democracies. I remember visiting Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1997. It is known as a new democracy. When Bulgaria cut the umbilical cord from the Eastern Bloc countries, it became a new democracy. I believe it was January 1, 1991, if my memory serves me well. So, we visited Bulgaria's National Assembly in Sofia. They have an electronic voting system. I think there is a significant difference in the average annual revenues of Canada and Bulgaria. It is an emerging democracy. The country had to put in place new institutions. However, when Bulgarians set up a democratically elected parliament in 1991, one of the mechanisms they chose was an electronic voting system.

There are numerous countries in Africa that I have not had the opportunity to visit. We spoke with colleagues from all of the parties while on parliamentary missions and in meetings of various international fora, such as the Commonwealth and the Francophonie. Some emerging democracies in Africa have electronic voting systems in both their parliament and their national assembly.

So, this is the first reason why I am describing this symphony as an unfinished symphony. The report is incomplete. The second reason, and I will speak fairly quickly on this point, is nonetheless quite important.

● (1200)

During certain discussions in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Bloc Québécois suggested a different approach to parliamentary proceedings, particularly on Fridays.

Mr. Speaker, you have sat here as a member. You have been a member since 1988. You yourself have seen the parody of democracy that takes place here on Fridays. It is a joke.

The opposition parties do a responsible job, starting very early in the morning—the Bloc Québécois starts at 7.30 a.m.—so that we can prepare a decent question period, with questions which are coherent and which address the problems concerning Quebecers, and often even the problems concerning Canadians as well.

We make an effort and we do a good job of getting questions ready. However during oral question period on Fridays, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., and this is also true for 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. during the business of the House, and from 12 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. until the House adjourns, we find ourselves looking at a House that is literally empty.

Government Orders

I am not suggesting that members are all on the golf course or away at their cottage. That is not what I am trying to say. I am trying to say that members are often either on the road, headed for their riding or, on Fridays, actually in their riding offices.

It is too bad that is not mentioned in this report, but the Bloc Québécois suggested that the whole issue of Fridays be given a second look. The government could say that it is easy for us, that all we do is criticize. Our answer to that is that yesterday, three Bloc Québécois members outlined specific measures for helping the economy to recover in the wake of the events of September 11. These were specific, doable measures. That is something concrete.

We in the Bloc Québécois are not content to criticize for the sake of criticizing. We have constructive suggestions. One suggestion for improving parliamentary proceedings on Fridays was to look at what is done in the Quebec national assembly.

Is it because the idea comes from Quebec that it is not worthy trying or modifying? I trust that is not the case. There is a system in operation for Fridays in the Quebec national assembly. The three parties in the assembly can be asked for references on it: the Parti Québécois, the Liberals, and even the Action démocratique. Friday is question day. A minister is in attendance and is subjected to a barrage of questions by MNAs of all parties to answer for his actions.

This system merits serious examination but unfortunately the report does not mention it. One of the suggestions might have been—a suggestion I repeat here—to see what is being done in the Quebec national assembly when it comes to questions.

Our productivity would be increased if we did so, instead of debating to empty seats on Fridays, asking questions of parliamentary secretaries who do not have the slightest clue about the issues we raise and look as if they had just landed from another galaxy when asked questions, as if we were saying to them “Earth calling. Welcome to our planet”. That is how efficient Friday oral question periods are.

To those who are listening at present, I suggest they put this to the test tomorrow between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. They will see the quality of the answers given, and who is giving them”. Regularly, out of the entire cabinet of 24 or 25 ministers, there are 16, 18 or 19 missing.

Can we do an efficient job as parliamentarians? Quebec's system for questions should be given serious consideration.

As my second last point, I would simply like to state that I subscribe to the comments by the House leader of the Canadian Alliance to the effect that this opportunity—changing the standing orders—ought to have been taken advantage of to seriously examine the entire matter of electing the chairs and deputy chairs of each committee.

●(1205)

One can tell that the orders, the directions, are coming from the top. I have witnessed this in the standing committee on transportation, where the candidate was imposed by the PMO, or by the office of the whip, who gets all the dirty work to do. We had imposed upon us an MP who was totally incompetent, ignorant, and undemocratic in his management. The decision had, however, been made that this

would be the MP who would chair the committee, while the committee membership included fine candidates and, by consensus, the opposition parties and government could have agreed on one to fill the job.

A serious look needs to be taken at the Canadian Alliance proposal concerning the appointment of committee chairs and vice-chairs.

In closing, this report is the work of the parliamentary leaders only. If our Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is a real, efficient and meaningful committee, I trust that we, its members, will be able to address certain matters and submit reports for system improvements, which will also be adopted by the government.

I have referred to certain matters that were not addressed, but if I had more time there are a whole lot I would like to suggest.

Our expectation is for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, of which I am a member, to do a proper job, instead of the government leader, in consultation with his fellow leaders, proposing amendments or changes.

I believe that something needed to be done, that certain matters needed to be looked at seriously, but that does not prevent the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs from being allowed to do its job effectively for the rest of this session.

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as all the leaders mentioned this morning, this is but a beginning. This is the beginning of a dialogue, the beginning of co-operation between the leaders in order to enable the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to improve certain procedures.

I want to congratulate the hon. member for Roberval in particular, the Bloc Québécois's House leader, who did an excellent job representing the party on the committee and who argued the case for some of our requests to improve the system.

We have managed to lay the groundwork, to pour the foundation, and we hope that the government will not wait years before further improving the system, or building the roof.

That being said, the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans as far as Saint-Tite-des-Caps, just made an excellent speech, in which he touched on an element that interests me.

He spoke of electronic voting, and of voting stations that use a magnetic card. I think that we could—at least, that is the purpose of my question—take a step forward. We know that today, new technology, with computers and other electronic systems, allows us to do many things, and I think that it would be easy to vote from our seat. The best station is right here, in our seats in the House of Commons.

We were elected by the voters in our ridings to represent them here, in the House of Commons. With an electronic voting system, members could vote for or against a bill from their seats in the House, without having to stand up all the time.

Government Orders

Does my colleague not think that, for members, the prospect of being able to vote for or against a bill from their seats in the House of Commons is an excellent improvement?

• (1210)

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I do not know about the number of stations there will be in the House. I do not know how they should be arranged architecturally.

Are we talking about individual stations in front of each desk? Would this be a centralized arrangement, as I have seen in the States? As the bells sound, for 15 or 30 minutes, we come along with our magnetic cards, our vote is taken, we return to our seats for the result. I do not know about the mechanics of it.

I am sure that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs can look into having 300 individual stations or one or two central ones. We are more interested in the mechanics.

I think the member for Charlevoix joins me in wanting primarily to have the principle debated and passed.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans and to congratulate the members of the Bloc Québécois, who have proposed ways to improve proceedings and the work done here in the House.

Perhaps my reaction will appear naive. However, I just realized—and I am a newer member—that important decisions are being made in this House that affect Canadians and Quebecers, and we do not even have a quorum.

I find this situation appalling for the simple reason that the House of Commons and all within it and all the work done here is paid for by our constituents' taxes.

I say this in all naivety. Women in Canada and Quebec—I am speaking of the living conditions of women, since I am the critic for the status of women—need to be heard, to be lent an ear. If they knew that, today, in this House, we frequently had no quorum, they would begin to wonder. Sometimes when a vote is called, members swarm in like flies.

It makes no sense. It is totally ridiculous. I wanted to say that. Perhaps I should not have mentioned it. I just want people to know that changes are needed, and they are paying for changes to be made.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, when I go back to my riding on Fridays, by plane or by car, I think about what I will do during the weekend. I miss my family and my constituents, whom I am proud to represent. When I am feeling so-so—I do not want to use the word down—when I become bitter, I think about things such as those that the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville just mentioned.

We make speeches, we work, we have assistants and researchers who work hard to prepare speeches that are interesting, good, well researched and not just empty words. But unfortunately, these speeches are delivered in front of empty benches, in front of 177 empty benches or so. Right now, for example, there are two government members out of 177 who are listening to us. This gets to be discouraging. This is a depressing part of our job.

But we love our work and we try to do it as best we can. We are human beings with qualities and flaws. I think each one of us here will admit to not being perfect. We can all do better. But unfortunately, the reality is such that we experience situations such as the ones referred to by the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville, who was elected here on November 27, 2000.

I would like to tell her that if Canadians and Quebecers, to some extent, have lost confidence in politicians and in the parliamentary system as we know it today, it is perhaps because of situations such as these, because of speeches delivered in front of empty benches.

There are people who come to see us in the gallery. There are people up there. Are these people going to be favourably impressed after seeing 175 empty benches out of 177? Are those who are listening to us proud of this situation? These people will go back thinking that this is not a very good example of democracy at work. I appreciate the hon. member's comments.

• (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: Admittedly, I am replacing my hon. colleague in the Speaker's chair. But, on the strength of all my experience in the House, I wish to remind all members that we must avoid mentioning the individual or collective absence of members in the House.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most important issues in this parliament that is not dealt with often enough. I note that you, Mr. Speaker, chaired the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons. I commend you for your efforts. However, I will speak somewhat critically not about what is in the report but what is not in it.

My colleagues, including the hon. member for Fraser Valley, spoke very eloquently about some of the positive changes. He also spoke about some of the shortcomings of that report.

It is important to note that the first order of business today is the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons motion on the report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons. It is ironic that we are talking about the modernization of this parliament. Yes, there are some positive steps. However, I was elected in 1997. I have looked at some of the things that have been said and some of the things that have happened since being elected, and the fact that we increasingly hear from our constituents how dysfunctional this place has become. It is true.

I have concerns that this report does not deal with some of those issues. I will quote a few members. The Liberal member of parliament for Toronto—Danforth said, "Parliament doesn't work. It's broken. It's like a car motor that's working on two cylinders."

The member for Lac-Saint-Louis, again another government member, said, "Being in the backbench, we are typecast as if we are all stupid. We're just supposed to be voting machines."

Government Orders

These are quotes from Liberal government members.

The current Minister of Finance said last year “We have been discussing the role of Parliament in enshrining the values of the nation and its response to change.” This is very telling. He went on to say “This is an empty debate unless it recognizes the role of the parliamentarians themselves. MPs must have the opportunity to truly represent both their consciences and constituencies.”

These words speak volumes. There are things that are not dealt with in this report and I will try to address some of them. I will read from the document entitled “Building Trust” which the member for Fraser Valley wrote in January 2001 and which has been widely circulated. I applaud him as he put forward some very constructive changes.

One change the hon. member talked about was free votes in the House of Commons. I will read a quote from the Leader of the Reform Party of Canada, the hon. member for Calgary Southwest. He said:

There is a myth in the House that lurking out there somewhere is the fiery dragon of the confidence convention, the erroneous belief studiously cultivated by the government that if a government or motion is defeated, or an opposition bill, motion or amendment is passed, this obliges the government to resign. This myth is used to coerce government members, especially backbenchers, to vote for government bills and motions with which they and their constituents disagree and to vote against opposition bills, motions and amendments with which they substantially agree. The reality is that the fiery dragon of the confidence convention in its traditional form is dead. The sooner the House officially recognizes that fact, the better for all.

This is not dealt with in this report. I would submit that if there is a government bill and there are government members who want to vote against it, it is probably a bad bill. It probably needs more work. It probably needs more amendments.

The wrath of the Prime Minister should not come down upon these members, as we have seen many times in the House. They are threatened with not having their nomination papers signed or the possibility of not being candidates for the Liberal Party in the next election. We have seen examples of that. Members literally have left here in tears because they had to vote against their constituents and their conscience. This a practice that has evolved over years and it has to change.

• (1220)

A government should not be defeated if a government bill is defeated. I would submit the only time there should ever be a confidence vote is on a throne speech or a budget bill, and that is it. Unfortunately, at the Prime Minister's own whim he can declare a confidence motion and the trained seals stand up and vote against their consciences.

I can give some examples, and I believe this is a serious matter. With respect to the ethics counsellor becoming a true officer of parliament, I will quote what the government said:

A Liberal government will appoint an independent Ethics Counsellor to advise both public officials and lobbyists in the day-to-day application of the Code of Conduct for Public Officials. The Ethics Counsellor will be appointed after consultation with the leaders of all parties in the House of Commons and will report directly to Parliament.

That comes right from the Liberal red book 1 campaign in the 1993 election. Of course the Liberals had an opportunity to vote on that. This was in their campaign promises. As we are fully aware,

this was an opposition supply day motion, which was written word for word from the government promise, and the government members stood up one by one and voted against it. That is wrong.

If we are going to really empower parliamentarians, we have to bring a change of culture. As the member for Fraser Valley so eloquently stated, it is the culture that has to change. There are 301 members of parliament elected to the House, coming from five political parties at the moment. There is a lot of talent and expertise in so many areas on all sides of the House which is so often ignored. We could be a much stronger country, if these free votes and debates were allowed.

One NDP member asked a question a few moments ago. I was part of the fisheries committee when I was first elected in 1997 under the chairmanship of the member for Gander—Grand Falls. He did an excellent job chairing that committee. The fisheries committee wrote 13 reports. Eight of those reports were written unanimously by five political parties.

We sat down for hours of painstaking debate, making compromises, asking what was in the best interest of the country and the citizens in these fishing communities and how could we help them. We went to those communities and listened to those people. Sometimes we sat up until 2.00 o'clock or 3.00 o'clock in the morning in community halls listening to their concerns. Then those members sat down and wrote a detailed report with very positive, substantial recommendations. It was a unanimous report that would have made a difference in these people's lives and would have improved the commercial fishing industry.

When the report left the committee room and came into the Chamber, the opportunity to vote arrived. Guess what happened? Government members stood up one by one, including the people who wrote and put their signatures to it as a unanimous report, and voted against the report. That is not good for democracy. It is a scam. It is not good for the country. That is what needs to change.

Again, I submit that if there are members on that side or this side who want to freely vote for or against something because they believe it is in the best interest of the country and their constituents, they should do so. If they believe the bill is not right and needs further amendments to make it right, then they should put them forward.

Look at the immigration bill now before the Senate. That is another example. It desperately needs more work. The government opposed numerous amendments from the opposition members which would have strengthened the bill.

• (1225)

When that bill was before the House, we were told that it was critical that it be fast-tracked through the House of Commons because it was needed to deal with the boatloads of people arriving on the shores of British Columbia claiming refugee status and changes to the immigration system were needed.

Government Orders

Now that very same bill is before the Senate and the government is saying that the legislation needs to be put through to deal with terrorists. This is the same piece of legislation. It needs to be strengthened and the government needs to listen to some of the proposed amendments. It is critical that we deal with that. It has not been dealt with.

It is the culture that has to change. I encourage the government to take the opportunity with the acceptance of this modernization bill, as it is called, to modernize the culture rather than modernizing parliament. Let us bring back what Canadians really want.

There are so many other issues with which we need to deal. We often hear of the importance of having an elected Senate to bring back accountability and integrity. I fully support the need to reform the Senate, but the members of the House need to look in the mirror. The House is more dysfunctional than the Senate.

When we talk of modernizing parliament, we should talk about empowering all 301 parliamentarians from all parties to bring these ideas forward and make a difference. Some of the best work done in parliament is at the committee level. There we have committees of 16 or 17 members of parliament from all parties who bring in witnesses and have a great opportunity for debate.

I appreciate there are some changes coming with respect to the televising of these committees. I have to admit that I personally have some concern with that recommendation. As opposed to concentrating on the important work that is accomplished now, it may actually give rise to a desire to grandstand before the television cameras. I feel that committees are very effective. One of the highlights of my parliamentary career is my involvement with committees and the work that we have been able to accomplish. Therefore, I do have some concerns there.

Although, I believe committees do some incredible work, but the reports they write almost always sit on a minister's shelf collecting dust and never see the light of day. There are millions of dollars every year spent in committees. They go out and talk to Canadians, they research and study these reports and listen to witnesses, yet the report never sees the light of day. Everyone in the House knows that. There are numerous hard examples.

If we are going to modernize parliament, we need to look at how we can change the culture in the House. How do we empower parliamentarians from all parties? How do we remove the partisan chip that is there?

I appreciate that the government has a mandate to govern and that cabinet has to bring forward this legislation. I understand that, I accept it and I support that. However, that does not mean that it has to gag its own backbenchers and all the opposition members. Nor does it mean that it has to ram through closure to get a bill through.

There is a reason why this is happening. It is because there is an outcry from Canadians that this is not the direction in which they want to go. When it comes from government members and they are completely ignored, when they are forced to vote with the government or face the wrath of the Prime Minister that they may not be candidates for that party in the next federal election, that is wrong. That is what needs to change.

I appreciate there are some positive steps in this document toward modernizing parliament, I feel it is important to stand up and state that we must be willing to change the culture when parliamentarians bring forward these excellent private members' bills.

● (1230)

What does the government do? It does not make them votable. The committee has the power to deem which private members' bills are votable. There are many good ones that have never seen the light of day. The government votes against the ones that do. Once in a while it rewrites them into its own legislation. Why does it not allow us to pass these bills?

I would encourage a change in the culture, but I am not convinced it can happen under the leadership we have now. I hope we will see steps in that direction with this report. Whether the government is willing to change the culture and make a difference in parliament will remain to be seen in the years ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no further members rising to debate the modernization motion, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, October 3, 2001, the motion is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1235)

TRANSPORTATION APPEAL TRIBUNAL OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from October 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-34, an act to establish the Transportation Appeal Tribunal of Canada and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party as we give second reading to Bill C-34. It is always a privilege to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the NDP and of my constituents in the Churchill riding.

Bill C-34 would establish the transportation appeal tribunal of Canada. The independent quasi-judicial body would be made up of people with expertise in the transportation industry and would be an expansion of the Civil Aviation Tribunal. The mandate of the Civil Aviation Tribunal was provided for by part IV of the Aeronautics Act.

The Civil Aviation Tribunal has been extremely successful and has been recognized as a model for the enforcement of the Aeronautics Act. It makes sense that such a tribunal be available to other areas in the transportation industry.

At the request of interested parties the Civil Aviation Tribunal holds review and appeal hearings with respect to certain administrative actions taken by the Minister of Transport. Extending the tribunal to other transportation areas is a move that I believe would be welcomed. The creation of the transportation appeal tribunal of Canada would provide the marine and rail industries and the aviation sector with an impartial appeal and review system.

Government Orders

The transportation appeal tribunal would replace the internal review process that currently exists. In the current system, enforcement decisions made by inspectors are subject to review only by senior officials or the minister. It would be preferable to have a separate and impartial body to hear appeals.

If anyone does not think the Department of Transport needs a separate and impartial body to oversee its decisions, we should look no further than at what the department is doing to hours of service regulations for the trucking industry. The bureaucrats responsible for that file are trying to get Canada to adopt an 84 hour work week for truckers. In certain weeks truckers would have to work 96 hours.

I will not get into the mountain of evidence from scientific experts in the area of fatigue and sleep deprivation indicating the sheer madness of the proposal. That can be done another time. My point is that the minister can do this with no accountability. He can do it through an order in council on the advice of his bureaucrats .

Truck driver hours of service regulations would not be covered by the legislation. Nor should they be. However the issue serves as a useful example of how it can be useful at times to have an impartial outside agency in place to review ministerial decisions.

All this is to say that the New Democratic Party supports the general principle behind the bill. We welcome greater scrutiny and oversight into ministerial decisions. Bill C-34, by providing for an independent quasi-judicial body to review decisions in the transportation industry, is a step in the right direction.

Having an independent and effective review and appeal process for the transportation industry quite frankly makes sense. The tribunal, in helping deal with appeals and reviews of administrative and enforcement actions, would prevent action from being taken in court. In short, the tribunal would simplify and streamline the whole appeal and review process.

We will need to look more closely at some of the finer details of the bill. It is important that the tribunal have members with expertise in all areas of the transportation industry. It is perhaps worth considering having separate tribunals to deal with individual appeals and reviews in each sector.

It may not be appropriate for someone without knowledge of the rail industry to rule on issues concerning rail. However I am sure this and other questions could be discussed at committee. The NDP is prepared to support the bill in principle at second reading.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to Bill C-34 on behalf of the coalition. It is interesting that the government is introducing the legislation. There are many important issues concerning transportation in the country. This is not one of them. Airline security, the state of Canada's airlines, and commercial transportation at the borders are all far more important to the average Canadian than the housekeeping bill the government has put before us today.

As is frequently heard from all parties in the House, September 11 has changed everything. It has changed the way the world operates. If there is any doubt, particularly from a transportation point of view, I need only point to the events of yesterday when a passenger slit the throat of a Greyhound bus driver in Tennessee. This caused an accident in which six people were killed. It was a tragic event.

Greyhound's response was to immediately shut down its whole U. S. transportation network. That is the kind of response we are seeing when something like this happens. Prior to September 11 it would have been treated as an isolated incident and dealt with by local authorities.

In the wake of September 11 with these kinds of situations happening it is interesting that the Liberal government feels we need to debate a housekeeping bill to create the transportation appeal tribunal of Canada. The purpose of Bill C-34 is to create the transportation appeal tribunal of Canada, an independent quasi-judicial body which would act as a mechanism for administrative and enforcement actions taken under various transportation acts governing the marine, rail and aviation sectors.

The new appeal tribunal would replace the Civil Aviation Tribunal which was established in 1986. The Civil Aviation Tribunal is a functioning body. It has been in existence since 1986. The changes being introduced by the legislation would expand it into a transportation tribunal as opposed to mere aviation tribunal. It would carry out the same basic functions as the Civil Aviation Tribunal but its responsibilities would be expanded to the marine and rail transportation networks.

Reviews of decisions affecting the marine and rail sectors are currently conducted by senior departmental officials and the minister. I think Canadians feel it is wise to move these kinds of reviews to an independent body as is done in the aviation industry. They feel it is better to get these kinds of appeals out of bureaucratic hands. There is no question that would be good.

The real issue with this housekeeping bill is that the Liberal government has had plenty of time during its nine years in office to have made the necessary changes. The aviation tribunal has been around since 1986. Why has the government chosen this time to bring the legislation on to the floor of the House?

It is quite clear that this is not a main concern to many Canadians. We did a computer search of Canada's major newspapers for the last three months. We turned up exactly zero articles that mentioned the Civil Aviation Tribunal or the proposed transportation appeal tribunal. It is not on the agenda of the ordinary Canadian or for that matter any political party. It has not been on anyone's agenda.

● (1240)

As a former member of the transportation committee I can say that the committee never dealt with any issues regarding the tribunal although the processes were mentioned in passing and whatnot. If people and government committees have not been talking about the need for it, why does the government see it as the most important transportation issue for the House to be addressing?

Government Orders

This housekeeping bill concerns the makeup and legislative authority of this new tribunal. The Civil Aviation Tribunal currently consists of a chair, a vice-chair and six other full time members in Ottawa. There are 26 part time members around the country who are supposed to be chosen on their knowledge and experience in aeronautics.

Bill C-34 states that the new tribunal, which would bring in marine and rail component industries, would consist of members who collectively have expertise in transportation sectors in respect of which the federal government has jurisdiction. One has to assume that the makeup would be of individuals who have knowledge of the marine, rail and aviation industries. We do not know how many additional members would be appointed or what the expansion of the budget would be.

Last year the budget of the Civil Aviation Tribunal was \$1.2 million. To the ordinary Canadian that may sound like a lot of money, but to a government agency it is a very small amount. Unlike many other government agencies, the tribunal did not use its full budget. It only used \$1.12 million.

This is not an issue of a grand haven for patronage appointments. It is not a tribunal that will expand to a size that Canadians should be concerned about. It is a housekeeping issue of changing the parameters of how the tribunal operates to include other modes of transportation outside aviation.

I urge individuals who have concerns about where the tribunal is going, its makeup or its mandate, to contact a transportation critic member or a member of the transportation committee to raise their concerns because it has not been a topic of high interest to people in the transportation industries or to members of the transport committee. To date we have not heard from anybody with concerns.

The coalition will be supporting this housekeeping legislation. We are concerned that this has been considered a priority of the government and has been put on the House agenda before other very important transportation issues. We urge the government to move quickly on the transportation concerns that have been identified as a result of the tragic events of September 11.

The U.S. congress passed legislation for airlines just 10 days after the terrorist attacks. The American senate is holding hearings about its concerns regarding the Canada-U.S. border.

While the U.S. congress is talking about the important issues confronting its country and the world, we are talking about housekeeping changes that could have been done any time in the last nine years.

The coalition's concern is that the greatest failing of the government is not what is in the bill but that the bill is what it feels is its priority on transportation issues.

• (1245)

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I can only echo the comments of my colleague when she stated that the government has been slow to respond to issues of importance. She has indicated that this housekeeping bill could have been passed any time in the last nine years.

The government is continuing with a legislative program as though nothing has happened, at a time when we are facing a changed reality not only in Canada but in the world due to the events of September 11.

It is making some movement in some areas. However it has been very slow. It has not been comprehensive. It has not included all members. It has not activated our committee process in a meaningful way to address legislation that would take a look at issues such as border security and the perimeter of North America.

It has not taken any bold initiatives in bringing forward anti-terrorism legislation immediately. It has not brought a budget to the House to discuss with the people of Canada what the priorities of the government will be and how it will address issues such as border security, immigration and increased resources to find individuals who are under deportation order or are illegally in Canada.

We have not seen any concrete leadership in those areas. We have seen it in the United States and my colleague referred to that. We have seen the house of representatives and the senate committees getting to work the very next day after this event and changing the entire legislative agenda in the United States. It is changing the agenda of other legislatures across the world, yet it seems to have merely a ripple impact in the House of Commons.

I have stood on a number of occasions since September 11 and congratulated the government when it has done a good thing. I have also indicated that it is not doing enough.

We can tell when someone cares about an issue by the time, the effort and the resources they put into something. We implore the government to take this a little more seriously, to set the tone, to change the direction in this place, to bring us together in a less partisan way and to put us all to work. We are itching to make some concrete changes in these areas which in many ways have accumulated due to the neglect of resourcing from the government for the last eight years. I would like my colleague to comment on those concerns.

• (1250)

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising some of those serious issues. The most serious issue facing Canada right now is the need for perimeter security which encapsulates Canada and the United States.

The threat to Canada right now is that there might be a security wall built along the Canada-U.S. border that prohibits the flow of goods and services as we experienced in the past and which we require for the growth and the stability of our economy.

That should be a major issue that the House addresses in a very serious way from security, transportation and foreign affairs points of view. When the United States decides it is creating this secure control we must ensure that Canada is within that wall, that we are part of what the United States considers the perimeter.

I am very concerned that from a transportation issue perspective we are not asking how to move goods and services more efficiently and quickly across that border. How will we prevent 4, 6, 12 and 16 hour tie ups for our trucks trying to get goods and services across the border into the United States? Our economy depends on that ability.

It depends on our ability to move deliveries from Canada to the United States just in time. If Canadian companies and manufacturers cannot meet that requirement, the American companies that depend on our manufactured goods will find an American company that can provide those goods.

That is a critical point that transportation and other agencies need to be addressing. How do we ensure that Canadians continue to participate in the economic growth and development of the North American continent? If we are not careful and if we do not start addressing those issues, our economy will be left out.

Canadians will suffer even greater unemployment and downturns in the economy. Those are the issues we should be discussing in the House and in committee. Those are the issues that are important to every Canadian, not the addition of marine and rail sectors to an aviation tribunal. That is not important to Canadians and it should not be the most important issue for the government and the House of Commons.

•(1255)

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up with two other comments. One of them deals with airport security. Some individuals have told me they are still concerned about workers at the airports not going through metal detectors but coming to work with uniforms and security or clearance badges. I have not heard the minister address that concern. It is something that has to be looked at.

We have seen that the individuals who perpetrated the crimes of September 11 will go to any means to conceal their actions and participate in devious methods to gain access to secure areas.

I want to talk about something that I had hoped the immigration minister would have talked about: interdiction, sending individuals abroad. We have had an interdiction program in Canada. Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers worked with forces from other countries to expand our security perimeter not just to North America but to other areas where individuals who boarded planes to come to North America might gain access to our country.

This was a very good pilot project. I have not heard the minister talk about extending it. This would be the time to effectuate the program. It is an issue that I raised in committee a number of years ago. My colleague was also on the immigration committee in previous years. I would like to hear her comments about both airport security and the idea of interdiction abroad.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his insight into some of the issues the government should have before the House for debate. I report to my hon. colleague and to the House that the transport committee has started its work. We will be looking at the issues of airport and airline security. The committee will continue to work on that to make sure everything that can be considered will be put before the government for consideration.

Private Members' Business

The immigration interdiction program was a great pilot project. It had some very good results. This too is another area in which the government should be making sure that these kinds of issues are dealt with.

Canadians feel that these are important issues. They want to know that their government and legislators are dealing with the issues that have been brought to our attention as a result of September 11 and not that we are just sitting in the House of Commons.

They want to know that we are busy working on making our country, immigration system, airlines, rail lines and buses more secure. They want to know that this is the agenda of the government and the House of Commons, not minor housekeeping issues that can be dealt with later.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada: Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent for the House to proceed directly to Private Members' Business.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1300)

[*English*]

BLOOD SAMPLES ACT

The House resumed from May 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-217, an act to provide for the taking of samples of blood for the benefit of persons administering and enforcing the law and good Samaritans and to amend the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if there is someone who wants to debate the bill. If not, perhaps I, as the sponsor of the bill, could be given a couple of minutes to summarize it before we ask the question, as is commonly done. There may be someone who would like to speak to it.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to private member's Bill C-217 brought forward by the member for Fraser Valley. The bill would allow collection of blood samples so that we could protect our emergency workers. If there were to be a concern that in the line of duty there was a question of a communicable disease from contact with someone, a sample could be obtained so that the emergency workers would actually know what they would be dealing with. At present there is no legislation in the country that protects our police officers, firemen and emergency personnel in this situation.

We have to set priorities for who we are going to protect. Following the incident on September 11, which is so often referred to now in the House, we see just how heroic these frontline officers are who protect us each and every day. There were hundreds of firemen who immediately entered the World Trade Center towers to help people. Probably many of them knew exactly what they were going into when they entered the towers, that is, trying to fight a fire some 100 floors above ground.

It is remarkable that the instinct of these workers is to go in and protect people. We, as parliamentarians, should be giving the same type of dedication to them. We should not hesitate at all when a bill like this comes before the House. Emergency workers and police officers in the country have been asking us to pass legislation so that they would be protected in such circumstances. We should rise to the occasion as they did, as we witnessed on September 11. They did not hesitate or flinch. Their instinct was to do their job and protect people. We should not flinch either. We have an opportunity to show emergency workers in our country that we want to protect them and give them every advantage.

I applaud the member for Fraser Valley who brought the issue before the House. This goes to one of my earlier speeches where I talked about a bill coming before the House and how if it is a good bill it should pass, just like that. There should be no politics. We have just had a debate on the modernization of parliament and now we will have an opportunity to see if it actually means anything. All the members of the House will have an opportunity. Are they serious about changing the culture of parliament? That is what this is about: changing the culture.

Here is a perfect example. Members will have an opportunity to do what is right, not to flinch or worry about politics, about whether it is a bill from the government or cabinet, but to look at the bill and say that emergency workers deserve our protection. When they are out there on the front line, in the line of duty, they at least have a right to know if people they are in contact with have a serious virus or serious diseases such as hepatitis B or AIDS, which could have a huge impact on the frontline officers and their families. They need this information. It is absolutely critical.

● (1305)

If I can use the terminology, Mr. Speaker, this is a no-brainer. This one is automatic. This is one where parliamentarians should stand up unanimously to support this bill.

I will conclude by saying that I hope every parliamentarian will not flinch just as all the emergency workers who went into the World Trade Center towers did not flinch. We have an opportunity to show

the emergency workers of the country how much we care for the work they do and how much we support them.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I would very much attach myself to the remarks of my learned colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. He has in a very eloquent way put into perspective for Canadians and for the House the importance of this bill.

He stated in a very poignant and emotional way that while others were fleeing those World Trade Center buildings that were under attack, while others were running for their lives to escape that atrocity, emergency workers, police officers and firefighters were running in. They were going into the buildings and many of them did so at a horrific cost, the cost of their own lives.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the bill brought forward by the member for Fraser Valley, my colleague in the coalition, is aimed specifically at allowing those firefighters, emergency care workers or anyone else who acts in a magnanimous way to at least be afforded the right to know what terrible consequences might flow from those actions. It helps those persons who put their own health and safety secondary to their attempts to assist people in dire straits, whether it be someone who has fallen ill on the sidewalk or victims of catastrophe. It helps those persons who put their lives at risk.

Let me be clear on what we are talking about. What I am talking about is the contracting of a deadly illness or life altering virus that the person who has acted so selflessly may have contracted in the process of rendering assistance. That also applies to citizens. If we are to encourage the values we all hold so dear in Canadian society, such as encouraging people to help their neighbours, encouraging people to help those in dire straits or those in need, I think it certainly bears enshrining in law the ability to later assist those individuals in finding out if in fact they have contracted a life altering illness.

There are so many practical and pragmatic elements to the bill. To reiterate the comments of my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, the bill would allow those individuals some certainty and peace of mind as to the ensuing consequences of their actions. It would allow them to find out, for example, whether they have to undergo agonizing treatments in many instances, whether they have to embark on a process of prevention by taking chemical cocktails that are intended to fight off or in some ways stave off the effects of the illnesses that may have been contracted, whether it be hepatitis C, AIDS or any other illness that might be contracted through exchange of bodily fluids.

It could be the act of a civilian coming upon an accident scene where blood has been spilled. We have to speak in these graphic terms. If that person, in his or her efforts to save an individual in need or to somehow try to revive an individual, contracts an illness the bill would simply provide a legal avenue that can be pursued to determine whether an illness has been contracted.

Private Members' Business

I very much commend my learned colleague for bringing forward this issue. I think he has done so with the assistance of many Canadians across the country, many who work in emergency services and those who would be directly affected by this. If nothing else, what happened on September 11 put into a profound perspective for everyone the incredibly valuable and important service that is provided by emergency service workers.

As previously stated, I hope all members of the House will neither flinch nor hesitate in supporting this legislation so that it might be put forward immediately.

• (1310)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I echo the compliments to the members from the PC/DRC who put forward the bill in both the last parliament and this parliament. It is a bill that is intended to protect those individuals who, in the line of duty, in the line of protecting individuals, who seek to serve and protect others, are inadvertently potentially infected by a disease that could make them sick or at the very worst could be fatal. In particular we are talking about HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, the three primary viruses prevalent in our society and unfortunately on the increase. The bill is designed to focus on those people who are doing good Samaritan acts or also acts in the service of others, particularly those people who are firefighters and police officers.

The bill has been on the legislative table for quite some time. As such, the member for Fraser Valley, like many others in the House, has done a lot of work in trying to get co-operation.

If the bill were bad, if the bill were somehow going to trample on the rights of others, we would not see the support we see for it from dozens of groups, and I will name just a few today, including the Canadian Police Association, the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police, the Toronto Police Service, the RCMP veterans society, the Central Saanich Police Association and so on. Additionally there are dozens of police organizations, firefighting organizations and hospital organizations that support the bill.

The purpose of bill is to enable an individual who has been accidentally infected to have the blood of the person who accidentally infected him or her, or occasionally deliberately, as police officers have found in the line of duty, taken and examined. The information would be shared by the physicians treating the person and the physician or the medical personnel treating the individual who is accidentally infected. This information, as medical information, would be treated with the utmost respect and as such would not be shared with the general public. That was a concern of those individuals who in fact composed the bill.

Some say that the bill tramples on the rights of the individual who is sick and whose blood accidentally infects emergency personnel. The fact of the matter is that we have a legal precedent which says that it does not actually infringe upon the rights of individuals. That overarching philosophy imbued within our legislative codes is the good Samaritan bill, whereby if we found somebody sick on the side of the road we would be obliged to some degree, to the extent of our abilities, to help that person. If in the course of trying to help that person something happens where that person is injured or we are injured, we are protected by the overarching belief within our legal

system that we were trying with the goodness of our heart and to the best of our ability to help that particular individual who was hurt. Therefore we are protected. The fact that we are protected also means that we are protected from other eventualities that could happen when we are trying to help that other person who is sick. That is what the bill is all about.

The bill, as the member for Fraser Valley has put it so articulately in the past, is meant to protect the good Samaritan, just as that good Samaritan is trying to protect the individual who is hurt. I define a good Samaritan as not only the member of the public who is trying to help somebody but also as the firefighters, the police officers and indeed the medical personnel who try constantly to help individuals in the line of duty.

We do not often speak about how prevalent this is, but we know at it is. There are people like Isobel Anderson, a constable here in Ottawa who has done a tremendous job of putting this on the board, and dozens of personnel who in the line of public service are accidentally infected by blood products. They go through all kinds of trauma. They go through emotional trauma and trauma with their families. They go through a great deal of uncertainty that by and large is not necessary.

• (1315)

The bill would remove that uncertainty to a large degree. It would give them much greater peace of mind, not absolute, but it would greatly diminish the consternation and psychological trauma they would endure if they were potentially infected.

As a physician I have worked in emergency medicine. I have treated many colleagues who have been accidentally infected. In the course of our duties in the emergency department we are continually confronted by blood sprayed out in all manner of ways when treating patients who are very sick. There are cases where unfortunately, people are infected. It does not happen very often but it can happen in the line of duty.

There are individuals who seek to deliberately infect police officers, firefighters and emergency room personnel. This is an assault of the most vile nature. As such, the emergency response personnel need to be protected. They must be protected in that particular environment.

I wanted to address a couple of issues because I am a strong supporter of the bill. A number of people have said that this bill is an effort to root out those people who have these diseases, that it is an effort to stigmatize those individuals. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There is not a man nor a woman in the House today who does not want to see a cure and a prevention for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. All of us recognize the scourge and the incredible heartbreak exerted on the individuals who are infected with these diseases. Our hearts go out to them.

Private Members' Business

Reciprocally, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of those people who are trying to help those individuals who have been infected and unfortunately, encounter blood borne product. On balance, the legislative framework within our country today, the good Samaritan laws clearly articulate that it is within the realm of fairness and of our legal system to protect those individuals who put their lives on the line in the service of others.

I encourage the House to adopt the bill, put it into legislation. The bill will give a great deal of comfort to the police officers, firefighters and emergency personnel who day in and day out put their lives on the line.

Given the number of groups in those three professions across the country that have supported the bill from the outset, those individuals and groups that have made eloquent interventions in support of the bill, it is important that the government listen to them. They are on the front lines. They are the ones who put their lives on the line and they deserve to be supported.

• (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Fraser Valley, let me say by way of an explanation that while the right of reply is of course applicable on non-votable items which do not enjoy the same length of debate, the member for Fraser Valley who was seeking the floor could certainly turn to his peers by way of unanimous consent.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we are on a bit of a different schedule today and private members' business is not normally debated at this time. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House for three or four minutes to summarize the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: From past experience we have put a definite limit. In this case I will take the liberty of saying a maximum period of four minutes.

The House has heard the terms of the proposal giving the hon. member for Fraser Valley four minutes of debate, closing the debate on his motion. Does the House give its consent for his proposal?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for its indulgence. It may be quicker than four minutes.

I would like to thank the several people who brought the bill to this stage. The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, who is a medical doctor, has done so much to promote this cause. Both he and I had very similar bills in the private members' hopper at the same time. It was the luck of the draw that mine was picked. It could just as well have been his bill we are voting on today. He certainly deserves at least half of the credit for what has gone on here, both for his expertise in drafting his bill, which again was very similar to mine, and for being a champion for this cause. I want to thank him personally for that.

I would also like to thank Isobel Anderson, who is a member of an Ontario police force. She is someone who has done a lot of service in highlighting the problem. She had a needle stick injury that put her and her family at risk. She pointed out the emotional trauma she went through and how unnecessary it was. The street person who could have infected her gave a blood sample to the medical practitioner in exchange for a hamburger. Her life was changed

because a person accepted that exchange. It is just not fair and it is not right that someone's life goes on hold because someone else wants something to eat or is willing to trade that information for something as mundane as a hamburger. She pointed that out. She has done a great service on behalf of all of the people who work in emergency services by showing that laws needed to be changed.

I would like to thank a young man from my riding who, as a good Samaritan helped to arrest and hold someone who had stolen something from the Canadian Tire store where he worked. This 18 year old young man exemplified the best of our community's ideals. He put himself at risk to enforce the laws of the land and to do what is right. He went through six months of treatment with chemical cocktails because the person who was apprehended would not give a blood sample. That young man gave of himself for all of us. I want to thank him and his family for what they have been through.

I am pleased to report that now, after three years, that young man has no sign of any long term infection. He was fortunate, even considering the trauma he went through. Now he is a married man and is getting on with his life, but his life was on hold for a long time because our laws were inadequate.

The last time this bill was before the House it was passed unanimously and was sent to committee. While I do not claim that the bill is perfect, I think it should be sent to committee. At committee we will have to wrestle with balancing the rights of different individuals to make sure their charter rights are protected and so on. We can do that at committee. I urge members of parliament to pass the bill again, preferably unanimously, so that it will be sent to committee where we can wrestle with some of those intricacies. The justice committee is a good place to do that and it is infinitely qualified to do it.

Finally, all members of parliament will be getting an information packet with frequently asked questions and the detailed support from the dozens and dozens of national organizations that have supported the bill. I ask them to look at that in the days to come.

• (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill C-217 are deemed put and a recorded division is deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, October 16, 2001 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Saada: Mr. Speaker, I suggest we suspend proceedings until statements by members.

* * *

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the proposal by the deputy government whip. Does the House give its consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.27 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

• (1400)

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Earlier this day the chair received submissions from the hon. member for Vancouver Island North concerning a request for an emergency debate pursuant to Standing Order 52. I wish to advise the House that the Chair has decided to accept that request and grant it. Accordingly, there will be a debate this evening under the terms of Standing Order 52 at 8 o'clock on the subject of softwood lumber.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

DANA CANADA INCORPORATED

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to congratulate Dana Canada Incorporated for announcing the creation of 125 new jobs in the town of St. Marys, Ontario.

Dana Canada will be building a 140,000 square foot addition to its current automotive parts plant. This will be the second expansion for the growing St. Marys operation, with a 90,000 square foot addition to the truck parts manufacturing plant having been added last year. Dana Canada's new addition will be completed next summer and will house a new line of parts for the Ford Motor Company.

The addition of 125 new jobs is good news for the people of St. Marys, many of whom have been affected by layoffs resulting from two plant closings in nearby Stratford.

Congratulations to Dana Canada Incorporated for taking the initiative to provide these new jobs to the people of St. Marys. Best wishes to all new and present employees of Dana.

* * *

SALMON FISHERY

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the fruit growing town of Oliver has endured attacks by weather, insects and U.S. apple dumping policies with little help from the federal government. Now it is under attack by the government itself.

Oliver provides farm irrigation through the operation of a canal. It has been in use since the 1920s. Now the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has decided to enhance the salmon fishery in the Okanagan River by having an elaborate fish screen placed over the mouth of the canal and is demanding that Oliver pay the \$400,000

S. O. 31

cost, this despite the fact that the canal has operated and presumably the fishery has survived for over 80 years without one. The cost may not be much for a government that squanders more than that per day on subsidizing VIA Rail, but it is devastating to a small community.

When I spoke to the minister about this, I mentioned that it was not fair that DFO decided to enhance the salmon fishery and stick the town of Oliver for the cost. His response was "DFO makes lots of decisions. Obviously we cannot be expected to pay for all those decisions, we would be broke".

If DFO wants it, it should be prepared to pay for it instead of downloading it on a small British Columbia town.

* * *

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the town of Richmond Hill in my riding of Oak Ridges for being awarded a four bloom rating out of a possible five for its 2001 Communities in Bloom program. The results were announced on September 22 at a national awards ceremony hosted by the greater Saint John, New Brunswick area which honoured competing municipalities from each province and territory across Canada.

Richmond Hill achieved high scores in community involvement, environmental efforts and a special mention for its efforts in the area of heritage restoration. With its four bloom rating, the town is eligible to compete on the national stage next year.

The judges noted that they were impressed with the strong support from many groups of Richmond Hill volunteers and commented "a beautiful city is being created with highly landscaped commercial areas, treed boulevards, an abundance of trees, play fields and open spaces, naturalized water drainage and urban forest areas".

Mr. Speaker, I could not be happier to agree.

* * *

[Translation]

LITERACY

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I presented a cheque for \$14,000 to an organization in my riding of Laval West the name of which is "Au jardin de la famille de Fabreville".

This funding, which is part of federal-provincial literacy initiatives, will allow the organization to pursue its objective of facilitating participants' social, economic and cultural integration.

It is especially important to encourage all Canadians to take up the challenge of literacy. I am proud that the Government of Canada has made a commitment to take specific measures to support literacy and organizations such as Au Jardin de la famille de Fabreville.

S. O. 31

• (1405)

[English]

OKTOBERFEST

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this coming weekend, Kitchener invites the world to share in the great German tradition of Oktoberfest. The nine day festival is the largest Bavarian celebration in North America and boasts Canada's greatest Thanksgiving Day parade.

The 33rd annual Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest celebrates our local German Canadian heritage with over 20 *festhallen* and 45 family and cultural events. Through the gaiety of this spirit of *gemuetlichkeit*, the local economy is stimulated and over 70 charities and not for profit organizations raise funds to benefit the residents of Kitchener-Waterloo.

Kitchener is firmly rooted in its German heritage. Oktoberfest is an opportunity to commemorate the traditions and culture of our nation's three million German Canadians.

I would also like to congratulate the hundreds of volunteers who commit their time and energy to the success of Kitchener-Waterloo's Oktoberfest. Kitchener is the place to be for the next two weeks. I invite all Canadians to don their lederhosen and head out to Oktoberfest.

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STRATHCONA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, two grade six students from Strathcona Christian Academy in my riding have penned a prayer. They gave it to me and asked me to ask members of parliament to pray this prayer with them:

Dear Father, please be with America, and all the grieving Americans who lost friends and loved ones. We pray that those who are in charge will make wise decisions. Also, be with the younger children, because they don't really understand what is going on right now in the world, and for those children who lost parents and grandparents. Thank you that it was not worse than it already is. In your Name we pray, Amen.

I would like to thank Alexis Foster and Sarah McConnell for the inspiration they have given to us through this prayer.

* * *

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week is Mental Illness Awareness Week. This is an opportunity for Canadians to raise awareness about mental illness, to give hope to those who suffer from such disorders, and to recognize the many groups and individuals who have helped to bring about changes through research and through public awareness projects.

During the past decade there have been many scientific advances that have led to new medications for severe mental illness.

A new perception of mental illness is emerging, thanks to public information programs that eradicate the myths and stigma that once prevented people from seeking treatment. Today individuals with these disorders have a real chance at reclaiming full and productive lives.

All Canadians can make a difference in promoting mental health awareness by providing hope to the courageous individuals who struggle with these illnesses.

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[Translation]

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ) Mr. Speaker, October 5 is World Teachers' Day. Let us reflect on the vital role teachers play in our society.

Teaching is about more than passing on knowledge. It is also about listening, understanding, explaining, guiding, encouraging, developing, training, educating, and instilling values, principles and ideals.

Teaching is also about helping to shape an identity.

Teaching is a profession that carries with it some very weighty responsibilities and, too often, we neglect to point this out. We forget to thank the people who are there for students, who support their initiatives and who guide their steps.

Today, the Bloc Quebecois pays tribute to these women and men who play a role in developing our society's most important resource, our young people.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join with my colleagues and recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week sponsored by the Canadian Psychiatric Association.

The focus for this year's campaign is "Making a difference—Shed light, Give hope, Take action". These are words that evoke a great deal of meaning to those who live with or suffer some form of mental illness.

Through information workshops held throughout the week the Canadian Psychiatric Association hopes to shed light on this largely misunderstood disease, to give hope and to ask the public to take action.

Mental illness affects a dramatic number of Canadians. One in five will likely experience a bout of mental illness some time in their lives serious enough to impair daily function. A great deal of research is continuing in this area through the Canadian Institute on Health Research and other research institutes.

I acknowledge the work of the advisory board of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction and recognize in particular a member of that board, Mr. Phil Upshall, who volunteers his—

• (1410)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, many of our fellow citizens and their families face the challenges of mental illness. I am told that 50% of emergency room admissions are related to mental illness. Fourteen billion health care dollars each year go toward the treatment of mental illness.

Mental illness is not just a health issue. Problems in the workplace and family setting are also factors. We need to strongly affirm the personal dignity and worth of every individual, including those with mental illness. These fellow citizens need to be assured of their valued and active roles in our communities.

Disability payments alone will not provide needed integration into the larger society. We also need more mental illness research to find new and better ways to relieve those affected by mental illness. We need to be aware of ways to promote good mental health in ourselves and in others around us.

I trust that each of us will set aside a little time during the upcoming Mental Illness Awareness Week to reflect on these important considerations.

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FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to inform the House that from October 7 to October 13 Canada will once again observe Fire Prevention Week.

Before elaborating on activities of this year's events I should like to take a moment to express my deepest sorrow and remember those members of the fire service and their families who were touched by the tragic events in the United States on September 11.

Each year we move closer to our fire prevention goal through public awareness, promotion of fire safety measures and escape planning. The tragic events of recent weeks have reminded us how important safety procedures are to us.

Fire Prevention Canada with the support of the labour program is launching an exciting series of animated public service announcements targeting fire prevention and safety in the home. These public service announcements are scheduled for broadcast on national networks and local affiliates across Canada in the next few weeks.

I hope members will support and participate in promoting fire safety awareness this week and throughout the year.

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NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the tragic events of September 11 traffic at the Windsor border crossing, the busiest in Canada, has been dramatically reduced because of necessary security measures.

The slowdown has resulted in thousands of jobs being lost. Workers have been laid off at automotive companies, in feeder plants and throughout the whole service sector. It has been quite devastating on our community.

S. O. 31

The people of Windsor are acutely aware of the need for the increased security. However they do not want open borders. They do not want to be at risk for the possible influx of crime from the American side of the border.

We know from prior experience that if we work together with our neighbours to the south there are technologies and additional resources that can be put into place to allow for security and the free flow of goods and people.

I called on the revenue minister to raise these concerns with U.S. officials and to encourage them to take immediate steps to increase—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

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[*Translation*]

MÉDECINS DU MONDE CANADA

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my congratulations and encouragement today to three Quebec physicians from Médecins du Monde Canada, Drs. Réjean Thomas, Glidor Delev and Amir Khadir, who, along with engineer and project manager Jean-Philippe Tizi, will be taking part, starting October 6, in a huge humanitarian project in Iran, which shares a border with Afghanistan and faces an influx of some 400,000 refugees from that country.

Médecins du monde Canada condemns the September 11 terrorist attacks, but while maintaining the political neutrality that enables it to intervene in the hot spots of the world, this non-profit organization dreads a military retaliation against Afghanistan and the consequences of such action on civilian populations.

A public awareness campaign has been launched, involving private donors and various levels of government. I call upon everyone to support the humanitarian actions of Médecins du monde, an association of international solidarity, dedicated to providing care to the most vulnerable populations in situations of crisis and marginality, anywhere in the world.

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● (1415)

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 5 is World Teachers' Day. All levels of government should focus attention on the essential work done by educators in modeling and building the future.

Teachers are at the centre of the present and future of our society; they are, in fact, at the crossroads between the two.

Oral Questions

Teachers are, however, expected to transmit values that sometimes appear to have been rejected by society as a whole: effort, discipline, respect of authority.

In a context of increasingly cosmopolitan communities and the reality of cultural globalization, teachers must shape responsible and competent citizens.

The emphasis of this international event is on teacher training, and this year's theme is "Qualified Teachers for Quality Education".

Teaching requires a total commitment. Can our societies and our governments make that same commitment to teachers?

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[English]

NATIONAL LIBRARY

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, many of our most treasured historical documents continue to be exposed to irrevocable damage. The National Library of Canada is tasked with preserving Canada's published heritage so that it is available for present and future generations. Yet over \$2 million of irreplaceable information has already been lost since the Liberals took over in 1993.

Works like the original hand drawn maps of Champlain, pages from the original Guttenberg Bible and the first newspaper ever published in Canada are threatened daily by leaky roofs, exploding pipes and a climate so humid that it routinely sets off the fire alarm.

When asked about her plans to protect the 20 million items representing our shared history, the heritage minister said that the government was still deciding on whether or not this was a priority. I find it amazing that the minister can find half a billion dollars for new culture spending but is still mulling over whether she will take action to find safe storage for priceless documents.

The current repair costs already exceed the budget. Collections are being stored under tents of plastic and the rains are going to come. Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage commit today to saving what remains of these irreplaceable documents before it is too late?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is day 23 and still no lead from the government at all in terms of calling for a non-partisan federal provincial initiative on perimeter security which would protect our citizens and cross-border trade.

The president of the Canadian manufacturers and exporters says we need to do this. A number of premiers of various political stripes say we need to do this. Most Canadians say we need to do this.

It is time to put aside partisan politics and immediately convene a federal-provincial initiative on perimeter security. Why will the Prime Minister not do this?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed time to put aside partisan politics. That includes fearmongering about security in our country. It includes implying that somehow or other Canada was responsible for the events that occurred on September 11. It includes working constructively across the border with our partner, the government of the United States, on cross-border issues.

That is exactly what we have been doing in consultations between myself and Mr. Ridge, between the solicitor general and the attorney general of the United States.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister is here this gentleman sounds non-partisan. As soon as the Prime Minister is not here, he slides right into the Prime Minister's mould and starts looking and sounding like him.

[Translation]

With Quebec's exports to the United States down 15% since September 11, the business community supports the Canadian Alliance's idea of holding a federal-provincial summit on the North American security perimeter.

The president of the Alliance des manufacturiers et exportateurs du Québec, Paul-Arthur Huot, stated that he believed it was a very good idea, and that the government must show leadership on this issue.

My question is simple: Will the government show leadership on this issue by holding a summit?

• (1420)

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, allow me, once again, to congratulate the customs officers who have done a remarkable job and who have been working round the clock since September 11. We have reason to be proud of them.

Second, both prior to September 11 and since then, I have had the opportunity to meet with the business community to discuss the approach we need to take towards customs. Business people are fully aware that there are two requirements: to ensure the smooth flow of trade and also to ensure the safety of Canadians.

It is my view that Bill S-23 strikes the right balance.

[English]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, provinces are having to set up their own security forces because the federal government is not doing anything. Now we have 22 U.S. senators who are calling for tripling of the border guards, who are calling for more extensive searching at the border and who are calling for sharing of the files with the FBI.

This will severely slow down cross-border trade. It will impair Canadian business. All this could be avoided if the government would simply set aside partisan politics, avoid wasteful interprovincial-federal duplication and put together a federal-provincial summit on this issue.

What is the government—

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, if the hon. member were to look at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency website, he would see that the traffic at Canada's borders is pretty much back to normal.

Second, if he were to look at Bill S-23, he would see that we have a balanced approach to make sure that with technology we will be able to keep the borders open for trade and at the same time protect Canadians. Above all that, we have to keep working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, premiers are calling for action on our border. Employers and investors are calling for action on our border. U.S. senators are calling for action. In fact yesterday one held up an orange traffic cone to show the level of security at some border points at night. Americans will not be satisfied if the government continues to ignore the problem.

Will the Prime Minister take action today by convening a federal-provincial summit on the border?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the border issue one must be quite proud of what we did with Canada customs.

First, we started to reform the system a year and a half ago. Second, with regard to what is called the perimeter, that is to say the airports and the seaports, we made a major announcement last June. Third, the way to manage the volume we face with trade and to protect Canadians is to use more technology.

However the problem is that while the government was taking care of Canadian interests the opposition members were doing nothing. They were not interested in customs.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is concerned for the safety of our customs officials at the border, something the government has refused to address.

The people in the community are asking for action. The official with BMO Nesbitt Burns says that Canada needs to make sure the border issue does not escalate into something that will devastate Canadian factories.

Will the Prime Minister immediately call for a federal-provincial summit to ensure secure borders and prosperity for Canadian workers?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Simply put, Mr. Speaker, Canada customs handled the situation in the proper manner. We put in place the reform. As soon as we have the full enactment of Bill S-23, we will speed up the implementation of that reform.

Oral Questions

We must keep working in co-operation with our neighbours. We did it in the past when we signed the Canada customs shared border agreement in 1995. We will keep working with the United States to provide Canadians with one of the best customs systems in the world.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is proposing a \$5 billion plan to stimulate the economy without incurring any deficit, and I insist on that aspect.

While others, including the United States, are taking concrete action, this government is satisfied with what it has already done, not realizing that the economic situation has changed drastically. President Bush is proposing a plan of at least \$60 billion. And the Canadian government will enjoy huge surpluses in spite of the slowdown.

What is the Minister of Finance waiting for to act and to propose a plan in order to meet the economic challenge that is facing us?

• (1425)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois leader talks about the plan proposed by President Bush, a plan which is not yet in effect and which is being discussed by the United States Congress.

The hon. member must know that this plan deals primarily with rebuilding the Pentagon and the city of New York. Fortunately, we do not have that problem.

The hon. member also talked about speeding up the tax reduction program. We already did that. Finally, he referred to the program to help the unemployed, but the Minister of Human Resources Development—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in other words, last year, all the measures adopted in the mini budget were in anticipation of the current situation. This simply does not make sense.

There is more that needs to be done. Indeed, measures are being taken in the area of security, defence and air transportation.

Should we not have a global plan? Could the minister tell specifically what is not good in the plan that we are proposing? What does he object to in our proposals?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the Bloc Québécois' forecasts are wrong.

Some hon. members: Oh, Oh!

Hon. Paul Martin: Absolutely! There is not one economist in Canada who accepts the Bloc Québécois' forecasts.

Second, we are already far ahead of the Americans. Our employment insurance program is already in place and our plan to speed up the tax reduction process is already in effect.

Oral Questions

Like the Bloc Québécois, the Americans are playing catch up compared to what our government has already done.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the past five years, the Bloc Québécois has made forecasts accurate to within 2% or 3%. His forecasts were out by 150%. He knows nothing.

Will the Minister of Finance recognize that, by restricting himself to case by case interventions rather than tabling a coherent plan to support the economy and jobs, he risks raising costs for everyone and being more ineffective? Is he aware of that?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is referring to an error I made. The error was to reduce our national debt by \$17 billion last year. The error was to reduce our national debt by \$35 billion over four years.

That is the error we made. Because of that, we have \$2.5 billion year after year to lower taxes and invest in the future of Canadians.

If these are errors, we will keep making them, because improving public finances will help Canada.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, his colleague responsible for security, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a commitment to table a security plan and a bill when the House resumed.

Could the Minister of Finance also not assume his responsibilities, get to work and promise to table a statement, a plan for the economy? There is no time to waste.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly that the government intends to present an economic update or a budget. The options are open.

I accept the reference to my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will present his plan, as will the Minister of Justice, the Solicitor General of Canada, the Minister of Revenue, the Minister of Human Resources Development, and the whole government.

We have a comprehensive plan, and the member will see it. But he will have to listen and stop getting in a state.

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[English]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. In recent days when the minister was asked about what the government was prepared to do to help with the airline situation, the minister only referred to what could be done within the context of existing programs.

Is the minister prepared to consider new arrangements that would make it possible for senior and higher paid employees to have severance packages so that younger employees could stay with the company, keep working and be able to support their younger families? That is what people are looking for in this situation.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are happy that we have an employment insurance program in place that can work now for

Canadians who through no fault of their own find themselves without employment.

I am happy to report to the hon. member that this morning union representatives and Air Canada and Air Transat met with government officials at the same table. They talked about the programs that exist under employment insurance and then broke off into separate tables to talk specifically about applications.

I am quite convinced that, with flexibility and goodwill, we will find ways and means to help Canadians at this time.

• (1430)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer my question about whether she is willing to consider new arrangements that would make it possible for the senior employees to take a severance package.

Perhaps she could also address the following question. I notice that President Bush has talked about extending unemployment insurance benefits in the United States at this time due to the crisis.

Is the minister prepared at this time to do what was recommended unanimously by a committee of the House and at the very least extend eligibility for employment insurance benefits by reducing the number of hours as was recommended by the committee?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all indications are that the employment insurance program is there and will work effectively for Canadians, no matter what sector they are working in and no matter where they are in Canada.

As a result of the changes that we have already made, the program is more ready than ever to assist Canadians in these difficult times.

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has refused to give this parliament intelligence information about Osama bin Laden, yet Prime Minister Blair of the United Kingdom tells his parliament and publishes that information on the prime minister's website. I have it here. He also has provided full confidential briefings to opposition leaders of all parties in his parliament.

Why does the Prime Minister of Canada not extend to this parliament the same trust and courtesy on such important matters as the prime minister of Great Britain extends to the U.K. parliament? Why does the government hold secret information which Canadians should know?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a former prime minister should be fully aware that we have a very efficient security intelligence agency and one of the best police forces in the world. We are one of the safest countries to live in the world because we do not disclose security secrets on the floor of the House of Commons or anywhere else publicly.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, what a double standard. While the British parliament provides that information, the Canadian parliament does not. They probably do not even tell their own Prime Minister because it is clear he does not know what is going on.

We have learned that CIDA is investigating its funding to determine if there are any links to terrorists. Is the Export Development Corporation conducting a similar investigation? Is that happening with other agencies or departments of the Government of Canada? Will the results of those investigations be made available here to this freely elected Parliament of Canada?

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely not one shred of evidence with respect to the article that was in the paper today alleging that CIDA moneys were spent incorrectly. We tracked every single dollar and made sure that the funds received by IDRF were absolutely used for the forum for which they were intended.

There was not one shred of evidence that CIDA dollars went to anything. It is totally unconscionable, based on unsubstantiated information and is unacceptable.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Americans are very concerned about Canada's lax refugee policies. In fact for over 10 years the government has failed to determine a list of safe third countries under the Immigration Act.

A memorandum on a joint responsibility agreement with the U.S. was signed over six years ago but still has not been implemented.

Why will the government not finally determine a safe list of third countries from which we do not accept claimants?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me share with the member opposite and all members in the House what senior commissioner for the INS, Mr. Ziglar, had to say about his relationship with Canada. He said "Our relationship with Canadians is a very productive, very friendly and very co-operative relationship. It is because of that relationship with Canadians, in terms of intelligence sharing and information sharing, that they have been extremely helpful to the United States in our abilities to detect and apprehend criminal aliens on our northern border".

This country works very co-operatively with the United States. The member should know—

•(1435)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we all know the minister did not answer the question.

Under the principle of country of first safe haven, why has the minister not negotiated a bilateral agreement with the United States for us not to accept any refugees from them and they do not accept

any from us? It would be an immediate big relief on resources on both sides to help keep our borders open.

Why has the minister not negotiated such a good neighbourly agreement with the United States so we both could feel much more secure?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear in my answer.

In the existing immigration bill and in Bill C-11 the ability to negotiate a bilateral safe third agreement is there. A number of years ago there were discussions but given the fact that more than 40% of refugee claimants in Canada come to Canada through the United States, the United States was not interested in pursuing that agreement.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last June, when the economy was in fine shape, hon. members unanimously adopted a report recommending that the Minister of Human Resources Development make some significant changes to the EI program. What was urgent last summer is all the more urgent now.

I am asking the minister whether she intends to accept the committee's arguments, follow up on the Bloc Québécois proposals, and put in place the unanimous recommendations she has had on her desk for five months now.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last June the House adopted changes to the employment insurance program that have made it more useful and available to Canadians than it would have been back then.

I would remind the hon. member that he and his party voted against those changes that accorded better access for women and better access for men and women in seasonal industries.

Why is it so much more urgent now than it was back in June?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said she had no reason to believe that special measures were necessary. Today, she is repeating the same blasted thing.

Some hon. members: Oh, Oh!

Mr. Paul Crête: She is the only one who seems not to be aware that there has been a fundamental change in the situation. Even President Bush has just suggested adding 13 weeks to the American unemployment insurance program.

Is the minister going to finally get going, realize the urgency of the situation, and announce special measures to deal with the crisis?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no matter what the timeframe, if men and women in Canada find themselves through no fault of their own without employment, we believe the employment insurance program should be there to help them. We are glad we are continuing to improve it to make it more accessible.

We have nothing to learn from that party on the importance of employment insurance. We are glad it is there.

My priority is to ensure that my officials are working with Canadians who need those benefits so they get them in a timely fashion.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we read in the media this morning that the minister welcomes Ontario's initiative to enforce deportation orders but in committee today her own colleague dismissed the idea as grand-standing.

We are left wondering what the government's real position is.

Will the minister commit unequivocally to working with Ontario and any other province that comes forward to pick up the slack in the deportation of people illegally in Canada?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when someone is in Canada illegally it can mean they have overstayed a visitor's visa. It can mean that they are a failed refugee claimant with a deportation order.

What I hear the member opposite doing, which concerns me, is equating refugees with criminals. When I think of refugees I think of Hungarians, of Vietnamese, of Kosovars and others who have come to us and who are in need of our protection.

It is simply wrong to broad-brush all of those who are in Canada who have deportation orders.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister was not listening. A provincial government is now enforcing federal immigration laws. Provinces are now forced to ensure the safety of their residents because the federal government did not act.

If, as the minister has said, her government welcomes and supports the creation of a special police enforcement unit by Ontario, will she announce today that the federal government is willing to commit both funds and personnel to this new initiative?

● (1440)

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. For many years, in fact as long as I think most Canadians would know, departments of government, different levels of government and police forces have worked together.

I have to tell the member opposite that there is a 24-hour, seven day a week warrant centre. All police forces across the country and different levels of government work together to check anyone who is apprehended to see if there is an outstanding warrant. We have

worked together and we will continue to work together to make sure that those people who should leave Canada leave Canada as soon as possible.

* * *

*[Translation]***FOREIGN TRADE**

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the foreign trade of Quebec and of Canada has been greatly affected by the September 11 attacks, which have resulted in security taking priority over the flow of goods at the Canada-U.S. border. According to the Manufacturiers exportateurs du Québec, exports by Quebec companies to the United States have dropped 15% since the attacks. On an annual basis, this represents a shortfall of \$8 billion.

Would it not be wise for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to give serious thought to creating a North American security perimeter with his NAFTA partners in order to ensure the uninterrupted flow of goods and people, with due regard for security imperatives?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in committee this morning, we must work directly on existing problems and on those which are perceived to exist between the two governments.

Until now, our problems have not been the same as those of the United States, but I myself indicated to Governor Ridge, who has just been appointed, to my colleague, the solicitor general, and to the U.S. attorney general, that we are prepared to work with them, step by step, to find the best solutions to the border situation.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in this context, would the minister agree to call a meeting of his NAFTA partners, the United States and Mexico, to discuss an agreement to establish a security perimeter which would strike a fair balance between trade and security imperatives, our humanitarian commitments and respect for civil liberties?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member may be making matters more complicated than necessary. There are already problems between the United States and Mexico with respect to the border between those two countries. We do not need to complicate the situation at the Canada-U.S. border by dragging in the situation at the border to the south of the United States.

* * *

*[English]***TERRORISM**

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, unlike this government, the United Kingdom did not wait to be asked to commit military support. It volunteered. Unbelievably, yesterday the Prime Minister accused Prime Minister Blair of raising the level of fear and rhetoric and he derided him as Tory Blair.

Canadians agree with Mr. Blair when he says that whatever the dangers of the action we take, the dangers of inaction are far greater.

Oral Questions

Why does the Prime Minister not comprehend the wisdom of those words?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we volunteered any of our capabilities, either in a military context or any other context, right from the very beginning.

In fact, we were asked on September 11 to take airplanes out of U. S. airspace into Canada. We were asked on September 12 to put additional aircraft into NORAD. We have done both of those. We were asked on September 12, 13 and beyond that to help in terms of additional intelligence gathering and analysis. We have done that.

We have also offered many other ways of supporting this campaign against terrorism. We have been up to the plate and volunteered.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, rather than criticizing Prime Minister Blair, our Prime Minister should consider emulating him. The United States has asked NATO for help and the United Kingdom is already there.

The Australians and Germans have indicated they are ready to go but all this government seems to be talking about is backfilling in the Balkans while American and British troops redeploy to Afghanistan's front line.

Why should Canada's commitment be limited to holding the coats of Americans and Brits while they do the fighting for freedom?

• (1445)

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. At NATO a number of capabilities have been asked for and we have indicated agreement with them.

On top of that, we have been in touch on a daily basis with the United States in terms of what we can provide and in terms of a bilateral agreement with it.

We have been there. As the ambassador of the United States to Canada said, Canada has been there and Canada has come to the plate whenever it has been asked. We will continue to be there.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent years, the government has defended the safe use of chrysotile asbestos nationally and internationally.

In this regard, I would like to ask my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services if he intends to promote the safe use of chrysotile asbestos in federal buildings?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has recognized that today's asbestos products can be used perfectly safely.

As my hon. colleague mentioned, the government has defended the safe use of chrysotile asbestos nationally and internationally.

I have asked my officials to start work on a policy on the safe use of chrysotile asbestos in all federal buildings.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that President Bush has announced a comprehensive package of at least \$60 billion to stimulate the American economy. This is money in addition to money already committed to the war on terrorism, disaster relief and to the airline industry.

The minister knows also that all four opposition parties are in agreement that we need a budget now, in the fall, before parliament.

Will there be a budget and, as we enter a recession around the globe, will the minister commit himself to a package of about \$5 billion to \$7 billion on infrastructure and jobs to stimulate the economy in areas such as rapid rail, housing, agriculture, the environment and training?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to deal with the basic premise of the hon. member's question.

If we take a look at what President Bush is talking about, the bulk of the money will go toward reconstruction in New York City and at the Pentagon, which is very important and which was a disaster from which we fortunately were spared.

If we look at the rest of the program, he is talking about accelerating his tax plan. We have already accelerated our tax plan and in our tax plan there is far greater stimulus than even that being promised by President Bush, or indeed the congress.

The third part of it is in fact what he will be doing for the unemployed Americans—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only person the EI fund is working for is the Minister of Finance so he can divert the almost \$40 billion into other expenditures and not to unemployed workers.

As a former airline employee, it saddens me to know that thousands of my colleagues are facing layoffs along with many other employees of other industries as well.

What the NDP is asking is for the minister to commit to the unanimous recommendation of the human resources development committee to reduce the number of eligible hours from 900 to 700 so that thousands of employees can have access to EI funds and so that thousands of small businesses can rely—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our monitoring assessment report indicates that the vast majority of Canadians who are eligible for employment insurance will have access to the program dollars.

We have made changes to ensure employment insurance is there for Canadians when they need it. For many, unfortunately, that time is now.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect a certain level of competence from the head of our security forces.

The events of September 11 have certainly magnified the need for foreign intelligence gathering. The solicitor general confidently last month stated that we already operate abroad, yet CSIS only has overseas liaison officers. It does not engage in foreign espionage.

The solicitor general has once again muddled the facts and seems oblivious to his own department's responsibilities and capabilities.

Does the solicitor general know if a foreign spy service will be created and will new money be allocated from the treasury for its creation?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, the Minister of Finance has indicated quite clearly that whatever funding is required would be provided for security intelligence and the RCMP.

Also, as my hon. colleague must and should know, CSIS has the authority to collect information that affects security inside or outside the country.

* * *

• (1450)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, we have been informed that due to a shortage of spare parts at Cold Lake, Alberta, some CF-18 aircraft from 410 squadron were stripped of essential parts that are needed and used to keep the aircraft of 416 and 441 squadrons in the air.

How can the minister justify this type of mechanical cannibalism when we are having this horrible terrorist situation? When can we expect a new federal budget that will put money in the budget for the military and give it the resources it needs so we can play a full—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put \$3 billion of additional money into defence. We have made it quite clear that we will provide the Canadian forces with the resources they need to be able to do the job.

With respect to the CF-18s, defence white paper 94 calls for between 40 and 60. We have 80 of them that are operational. We have additional ones that are not needed at this point in time. We use additional parts from time to time to make sure we get all the operational CF-18s ready to go when needed.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, media reports indicate that there was an air marshal on Air Canada flight 792 which returned to Los Angeles under U.S. military jet escort last week. After an altercation between a belligerent passenger and a flight attendant, a witness stated that an air marshal wearing casual clothes walked from the front of the plane and took control of the situation.

My question is for the minister. Have any on duty Canadian law enforcement officers travelled in plain clothes on Canadian commercial flights since September 11 as air marshals?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when we are trying to build confidence in air travel all the hon. member is doing is using speculative reports in the media to heighten attention. I say shame on him.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not building confidence in Canadians in flying if he does not answer simple questions about whether or not there are air marshals on planes. He should answer the question.

There is something else the government can do. If the government wants to show confidence in the commercial airline industry, here is a suggestion. Will the Prime Minister park his Challenger jet and fly commercial skies as other Canadians do as a sign of faith that security works?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is new to the House, but it is a well accepted principle that the Prime Minister uses the executive fleet for security reasons, as advised by the RCMP.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TERRORISM

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the fight that they have begun against international terrorism, the Americans stated yesterday what they expect from their NATO partners, and Canada will have to make a contribution.

Can the Minister of National Defence confirm that he is about to take over from the Americans responsibility for the protection of North America's airspace under the NORAD agreements?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were eight requests. We can meet a number of them now or have been meeting a number of them. For example we have been enhancing intelligence sharing and co-operation. Again the American ambassador says that our intelligence sharing was very good, but since September 11 it has been extraordinary.

We could go on with a number of these where we are already meeting or are prepared to meet it. We are prepared to consider other ones that are on here as well. We are also dealing directly with the United States with respect to other capabilities we can offer.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that I asked him a question on the protection of North America's airspace, not on intelligence sharing.

I have a second question for the minister. Will he provide Canada's F-18's to protect North America's airspace? It is also said that Canadian troops are about to take over from Americans troops on their observation mission in the Balkans.

Could the minister tell us about the costs generated by the protection of North America's airspace and the increased Canadian participation in the Balkans to relieve Americans troops?

[English]

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said many times over the past week or two that we put additional aircraft into the Norad system. We have done that right from the time it was requested by the United States.

With respect to the issue of backfilling on selected NATO assets in the Balkans or other places, that is being looked at. More detail is needed on it. We have made no decision in that regard.

•(1455)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister has stated that he will seize the assets of those who raise funds for terrorist organizations.

Last year the minister was the guest of honour at a dinner sponsored by the front organization for the Tamil tigers. Will he now excuse himself from any decision regarding naming FACT as an organization which raises funds for terrorist organizations?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been answered many times in the House. I think it is irresponsible for any member, particularly at this time, to try to link terrorism with ethnic communities. It is inappropriate.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me quote what the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship and the Attorney General of Canada said in a Supreme Court of Canada document:

—the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (“FACT”) are examples of political and benevolent front organizations which support the LTTE—

That is what the government said. Will the Minister of Finance excuse himself when naming this organization as a terrorist organization?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on any organization. It is truly unfortunate that my hon. colleague is linking organizations to the particular terrorism problem. Linking the two communities is inappropriate.

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*[Translation]***INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER**

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 11, Canada joined with 33 other member countries of the Organization of American States to adopt the inter-American democratic charter in Lima, Peru.

Will the Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa tell the House how the adoption of this charter will back up Canada's efforts to promote democracy in the Americas?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this charter will enable us to protect and preserve democracy throughout the hemisphere. It will also enhance the ability of the OAS to combat threats to democracies.

The U.S. secretary of state himself witnessed a vicious attack on his own democracy. He is aware of the importance of the charter and decided to remain in Lima to ensure that it was adopted.

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*[English]***TERRORISM**

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada is vulnerable to a terrorist strike on our energy infrastructure. The Minister of Natural Resources says that our power facilities and distribution network are secure.

In reality, Canada's energy network includes hundreds of thousands of kilometres of vulnerable natural gas and power lines in the most remote areas of the country. What has the minister done to assure Canadians our energy infrastructure is secure?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite literally within just a few moments after the unfortunate events on the morning of September 11, Canadian regulatory agencies swung into extraordinary action.

Both the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and the National Energy Board have taken the appropriate steps in consultation with the RCMP and CSIS to make sure that security is on a heightened basis.

They are continuing their dialogue with all the security authorities and with the office of critical infrastructure under the Department of National Defence to make sure that our critical infrastructure is indeed secure.

Oral Questions

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government talks a great deal about providing increased security measures for our energy infrastructure. Yet it has been unable to give Canadians one example. Real leadership would provide action, not just empty rhetoric.

How can Canadians believe the government is doing anything to protect our energy infrastructure? What specific action has the government taken to protect our energy infrastructure?

• (1500)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the things I mentioned earlier, I should also point out that our officials and authorities have been in touch with the International Energy Agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the government of the United States of America.

I have personally spoken with Secretary Abraham to make sure that all actions are co-ordinated nationally and internationally. I am sure the hon. gentleman would not want me to detail security arrangements on the floor of the House of Commons for any terrorist to read.

* * *

[Translation]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to some sources, the Minister of Transport contacted ONEX to try to involve it in a possible plan to bail out Air Canada.

Could the minister confirm this and tell us whether or not he contacted ONEX with this in mind?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. There has been some concern expressed that the standing committees of the House may not be sufficiently involved in a response to the terrible events of September 11.

Could the chair of the defence committee advise as to what the committee has done or intends to do to provide input into the response to the terrorist attacks on the United States?

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that last Tuesday the defence committee unanimously adopted a motion to produce a report on Canada's operational readiness as it relates to counterterrorism.

The committee will hear from a wide range of witnesses in such areas as special forces, intelligence gathering, emergency preparedness and the defence against nuclear, biological and chemical attacks.

The report will form part of the prebudget deliberations. Our first witness this afternoon will be the hon. Minister of National Defence. I will take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, the World Bank said that developing countries would be hard hit by the aftermath of the events on September 11. It is estimated that approximately 10 million more people will sink into poverty next year and that another 20,000 to 40,000 children will die as a result of the deteriorating situation.

Does the government plan to substantially increase CIDA's budget in response to this new information and thus combat one of the breeding grounds for terrorism, which is poverty?

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have announced \$6 million for relief in the area. I am constantly in touch with our team on the ground to assess the situation. We have just recently converted \$447 million of debt to social programs for Pakistan which will be about \$16 million a year.

Of course we are monitoring it on a daily basis. We will be increasing our funding as the need arises. I am in contact with my officials on the ground at all times.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I notice the health minister's spin doctors were very busy yesterday after it was revealed that he is not even a full member of the new cabinet security committee, and he says there are 165 field hospitals ready to go.

Since there are not enough doctors and nurses to staff our existing hospitals, from where will these emergency hospitals get staff?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will have to take the hon. member's question as notice and bring it to the attention of my colleague, the Minister of Health.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Vasyl Rohoviy, Vice-Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Business of the House

● (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations earlier today regarding the debate under Standing Order 52. However I have not circulated the motion because events have been evolving quite quickly. I invite other House leaders to follow attentively to ensure we are doing exactly what was agreed to. I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, Special Order or usual practice, during the present sitting:

1. The debate ordered for this day, pursuant to Standing Order 52, shall commence immediately and, when no Member rises to speak thereon, or after three hours, whichever is earlier, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day, and that the debate take place in committee of the whole provided that the Speaker may act as chair from time to time;

2. The first representative from each party may speak for no more than ten minutes, with a five minute question and comment period, and no subsequent member may speak for more than ten minutes;

3. The Chair shall not receive any dilatory motions, quorum calls or requests for unanimous consent;

4. When no member wishes to speak or after three hours, whichever is earlier, the committee shall rise and the House shall adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I take it there will be adjournment proceedings immediately upon adjournment as is the practice traditionally. Is that the case?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, immediately after the business statement we will be proceeding to the adjournment debate, that is the debate under Standing Order 52.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, regarding what we traditionally refer to as the late show, will there be adjournment proceedings at the conclusion of the emergency debate or not?

Hon. Don Boudria: No, Mr. Speaker, there will not.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the government House leader to proceed with his motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest if I may that immediately upon adjournment, as is the practice in the House traditionally, there be an opportunity for the adjournment proceedings and debate.

Hon. Don Boudria: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would agree to that. After a visual consultation with my colleagues I think there is unanimous consent to do that at the conclusion of the debate under Standing Order 52, notwithstanding our usual practices and standing orders because this is unusual in that sense.

The Speaker: What is unusual is that the motion under emergency debate is a motion to adjourn the House. One would have thought that once it was carried perhaps the House would adjourn. However, if there is unanimous consent, perhaps we can

have another adjournment debate after the first one and have a second go at it. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is the motion proposed by the government House leader agreed to?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1510)

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my usual Thursday question. Could the government House leader bring us up to date on what we will be doing for the rest of the week and when we come back from Thanksgiving break?

Could he tell us if the anti-terrorism legislation will be ready when we return? If so, what areas will it be covering? Could he give the House an assurance that between now and when we return on October 15 there will be no leaks about what is in the legislation other than what he will advise us of today?

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to inform the House of the business statement. As announced and unanimously adopted by the House, we will now proceed with the emergency debate under Standing Order 52 concerning softwood lumber.

Tomorrow we will consider Bill C-35, the foreign missions bill. Should that legislation be completed tomorrow I do not propose to call any other legislation or government bill.

Next week the House does not sit.

On Monday, October 15, we shall have an allotted day. I have consulted with opposition House leaders about a bill we propose to introduce that day and debate on the following day. The bill will introduce measures to implement the United Nations conventions; amend the criminal code, the Official Secrets Act and the Canada Evidence Act; and propose other measures to improve security and protect Canadians. We hope to commence consideration of the bill on Tuesday, October 16.

I take this opportunity to inform the House that we are making arrangements to give the relevant critics an advance briefing of the contents of the bill on the morning of October 16 prior to its introduction. I intend to discuss this with House leaders at the earliest opportunity. I will arrange to do so early on the morning in question so critics can have an advance copy of the bill. Obviously we intend to make quantities of the bill available on introduction.

We intend to seek the consent of the House to have introduction of government bills at 11 o'clock that morning rather than 3 p.m. We want to give hon. members additional time to familiarize themselves with the bill because by exception we would be dealing with it on the floor of the House the next day.

Hon. members have been very co-operative in this regard. I take this opportunity to thank all House leaders for the co-operation they have demonstrated in the face of these important events. I thank them for their co-operation in advancing other legislation and the consideration they have thus far given my suggestions in that regard.

S. O. 52

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of the second adjournment debate is as follows: the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, National Defence.

Pursuant to Standing Order 52 and to the order made earlier this day, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely softwood lumber.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

● (1515)

[*English*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

The Chairman: House in committee of the whole to consider a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely softwood lumber.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That this Committee take note of the softwood lumber industry.

He said: Mr. Chairman, does the minister not speak ahead of me? I ask because we have had three days of meetings in Washington this week and I understand there may be late breaking developments. I do not want to find that whatever I might say is pre-empted by more recent events. That is the only reason I ask if the minister would like to precede me. I am pleased that the minister and others in the House are interested in hearing what I have to say.

We have had two other debates in the House since we came back on September 17. One was about the airline situation, an obvious area of priority. The other was about the situation on the prairies, another obvious area of concern.

Anyone who suggests softwood lumber is not a major concern in Canada would be incorrect. As of today in British Columbia alone somewhere in the order of 15,000 workers have been laid off. Estimates are that 30,000 may be laid off by the end of the year. On a national basis 40,000 to 50,000 people could be laid off at either end. Obviously this is an unhealthy situation for workers, their families, their communities and their employers.

If free trade in lumber between Canada and the U.S. cannot triumph over protectionist U.S. legislation, Canada and the U.S. will both be losers. The Government of Canada must take this situation with the utmost seriousness. So far its track record is not good.

I will offer some solutions, but a bit of background is in order first. Until March of this year, the same month the quota driven and detrimental five year softwood arrangement expired, the government had no publicly enunciated direction on softwood. When it finally adopted the free trade position the Canadian Alliance had been promoting for months, we were encouraged by its action.

At a time when there is every reason for optimism about achieving free trade in lumber there needs to be strong representation from the Prime Minister. There is no sign that this is happening in a real sense.

We have had several optimistic signs from the U.S. administration. On September 20, U.S. trade representative Robert Zoellick wrote an important piece in the *Washington Post* called "Countering Terror with Trade". I will quote a couple of statements from the article:

Our nation has drawn together in shock, mourning and defiance. Now we must thrust forward the values that define us against our adversary: openness, peaceful exchange, democracy, the rule of law, compassion and tolerance. Economic strength—at home and abroad—is the foundation of America's hard and soft power. To that end, U.S. leadership in promoting the international economic and trading system is vital. Trade is about more than economic efficiency. It promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle.

Zoellick went on to say:

Congress, working with the Bush administration, has an opportunity to shape history by raising the flag of American economic leadership.

With the stroke of a pen the Bush administration removed tariffs on some of the products of its trading partners to solidify the coalition against terrorism. Indonesia had duties removed from plywood exports to the tune of about \$200 million per year. This demonstrates what is possible.

● (1520)

On Monday of this week the American Consumers For Affordable Homes, who represent 95% of lumber consumption in the United States, wrote to President Bush and asked him to reverse the commerce department's preliminary countervail duty of 19.3%.

The American Consumers For Affordable Homes organization has consistently promoted free trade in lumber. It represents many more jobs in the U.S. and represents the consumer interests as opposed to the U.S. lumber lobby.

With these series of events and with senior Bush administration officials and U.S. federal reserve chairman Alan Greenspan all promoting free trade and suggesting that U.S. protectionist legislation is counterproductive, the stage is set for a push by the Prime Minister to break through and appeal directly to President Bush to set aside the CVD determination imposing a 19.3% duty on Canadian lumber.

The American consumer group pointed out to the president this week the importance of a strong housing sector in a fragile economy and that U.S. gross domestic product growth could be reduced by 15% to 30% because of the 19.3% tariff.

What is concerning me today is that we are hearing, as a consequence of talks going on in Washington, that there may be an arrangement whereby these talks have actually turned into negotiations which have strayed from the free trade path and have now taken us into an area where we may have direct negotiation between the U.S. trade representative and our provincial jurisdictions. If this is the case, and I am waiting to hear from the minister on whether it is, then I want to put a warning shot out there that this is betraying free trade and the strong coalition that has been built up over the last two years on both sides of the border to pursue free trade in lumber. If that is the case then I can only say that I am disappointed that this government can lose its vision and its principles.

We entered into a very bad deal in 1996 when we got into the five year softwood lumber agreement. If we agree today to these kinds of balkanized negotiations I can only say that would be a total abandonment of the consumer interest, local governments and the greater Canadian interest.

This will only lead to a situation where the U.S. lumber lobby will have divided and conquered. It will only lead to a lack of accountability where the federal government can say that it has washed its hands of responsibility for these bilateral trade negotiations. This is a federal area of jurisdiction and it will place us further from free trade in lumber than we have been in a long time and I do not know how we would ever get back there.

What is clear is that if we appeal at the highest levels, as other countries have done, if this is the number one priority of the Prime Minister and he talks directly to President Bush, the Bush administration is sympathetic if we can get the right priority placed on this file.

The government and almost everyone else who is involved in this circumstance agrees that if we stay the course, go to the World Trade Organization and to NAFTA panels, we will win.

• (1525)

I just want to make it clear that any deal with the U.S. beyond free trade will cause us permanent long term damage. It is already clear from the likes of Senator Baucus from Montana and others in government who are part of the U.S. lumber lobby coalition that any negotiated deal would have to include restrictions on Canadian lumber.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, I would just like to ask the hon. member a question.

The question that comes up all the time and one we hear at home is whether we should be linking other commodities. I think most people are aware that it is generally bad economic policy to start linking one commodity to another. There is no question about that. It is a very slippery, dangerous road to go down.

Having said that, the United States is looking for \$30 billion to \$50 billion in oil and gas. Does the member think there could be some significance to our Prime Minister getting directly involved with that? Could it have an impact on the positive outcome of this dispute in the long term?

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Chairman, when it comes to linkage, I think what is clear to everyone is that what is linked is our two economies. Any restrictions on softwood lumber are detrimental to both economies. The consumer movement in the U.S. recognizes it, the Bush administration recognizes it and obviously Canadians recognize it.

A vastly greater number of jobs in the U.S. are related to the lumber consuming business rather than to the lumber producing industry. Both of our economies are somewhat fragile, particularly after the events of September 11. As housing starts are a big part of that, it is crucial that lumber flow freely in order to maintain those levels of housing starts.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the member for Vancouver Island North

what his position and the position of the Alliance is with respect to the issue of raw log exports.

Many Canadians, certainly British Columbians, are deeply concerned about the level of raw log exports and are calling for more value added in the British Columbia forest industry. I wonder if the Alliance member would agree that we must resist any suggestion of increased export of raw logs from crown lands and in fact should be doing whatever we can to end the export of raw logs and ensure that we process those logs and create jobs in Canada.

• (1530)

Mr. John Duncan: Mr. Chairman, on the issue of raw log exports, I think the member was referring specifically to British Columbia which is the one jurisdiction we have where this is a contentious topic.

What I have endorsed is British Columbia, with federal authority, imposing a border tax equivalent to the 19.3% countervailing tariff imposed by the U.S. It would level the playing field in terms of whether the exports are lumber or logs. Some of the industry in British Columbia has determined that this is a good idea also.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I was a bit surprised at the last remark by the Alliance member.

Do we not in this House all think that, on the essence of the question, we are fundamentally right, that there is no market where there is no competition and where Canada's international agreements are not honoured? Should we not instead be looking for a solution that would eliminate this type of tariff?

It seems to me, from his position, that the member is quitting before any steps can be taken toward really settling the matter and eventually being successful.

I would like him to give me some reassurance, and ascertain that some form of consensus still exists so that we can claim a victory in the end. On the essence of the matter, I have no doubt we are right. We must show appropriate solidarity with our workers and industry and arrive at a long term solution that does not penalize them.

If we go back to paying this kind of rates, we will not have gained any ground in the present battle.

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I agree with the member. We would not want to impose these in the long term. I was simply suggesting that as long as a lumber tariff there, which I would like to see gone, it is only appropriate to have a similar tariff on logs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your allowing me to rise in the House today to debate a matter of considerable concern to me.

S. O. 52

[English]

I am a bit surprised that the Alliance has decided to consider this to be an emergency debate but has not found the opportunity to ask any question on this file for the past three weeks.

For anyone to say that this has not been a top priority for the government is absolutely wrong. On the advice given to us by the member from Vancouver Island we have been working on it. The Prime Minister has raised it with the president.

I hear a member saying something but it is my opportunity to speak. Yesterday the party opposite told the whole House that the government had not met its targets. It was completely wrong again because it does not do its homework. The Alliance members have a hard time.

The Chairman: I would interrupt for a moment. I understand that this is a very important debate and that is why we are having an emergency debate. I am not taking sides on this issue but I caution members on both sides of the discussion to make their comments through the Chair otherwise we might just get away from the topic and get into something else very different and not as beneficial.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this, but I want to be quite clear. The Government of Canada has been working very hard on this file and for a very long time. If we let the softwood lumber agreement die last March it was not that we had not foreseen its end. It was that after narrow consultations with industry from all over the country, narrow consultations with the provinces and the advice of opposition parties there was a consensus of not renewing that agreement, of letting it die precisely to see what American producers would then do.

We have been bitterly disappointed with the attitude of the American producers. We have been extremely disappointed that the Bush administration has listened narrowly to the U.S. producers' protectionist demands and has given them everything they have been asking for. We find the 19.3% tariff absolutely indecent. We have found, of course, that in regard to the inclusion of re-manufacturers, these shops trying to enter value into the softwood lumber, their inclusion in this litigation is wrong. We also find it amazing that they found the critical conditions to put that countervailing duty retroactive.

We have been saying these things loud and clear. I was in Washington on September 10 and met with both trade representative Zoellick and secretary of commerce Evans. We made our position very clear: we do want free trade and we do not believe that we have been subsidizing our softwood lumber industry.

We reminded them that in 1994 we had a similar dispute. Panel after panel and court decision after court decision, the softwood lumber producers lost their case. A billion dollars in taxes that had been collected by the Americans was given back to the Canadian producers. We won in 1994.

We intend to work very hard. Saying that we have not done a thing is just so wrong. The member for Vancouver Island North himself has quoted all the successful things we have done, precisely because of the very hard work and leadership that our team Canada, non-partisan, above parties, from all provinces, the east and west of the country, has been able to do in the United States. A team of

members of the House and Senators obtained great success in Washington. We obtained a letter from a hundred congressmen, both senators and representatives of the house, who wrote to President Bush siding with Canada. That has never been seen before.

We have, and the member has quoted it, support from the consumers, from the coalition for affordable homes in the United States and the Home Depot people. We have it because we have been doing our work, providing the leadership that is necessary, promoting our cause in Washington and across the United States. We had gone through legal action to the WTO before the actual cases that the Americans have put as pre-emptive strikes in order to gain some enlightenment from the WTO and to gain some time. We had gone there months before the end of the softwood lumber agreement, precisely in order to gain some time.

What we have been doing is with respect to an extraordinary team Canada that has been really working hard on this front. I am very pleased that the industry from British Columbia and Quebec and the provincial governments are participating very well and very strongly in the discussions in which we are involved. Yes, we are pursuing the WTO and we will pursue every legal venue that we can to challenge the American allegations. This is our duty, this is our right and we will win. We know it will take some time and that is where I fail to understand where the Alliance is on that.

The Alliance says the only thing they want me as minister to negotiate is free trade. This is precisely what we want, this is precisely what we are engaged in and this is precisely why we are having all these legal challenges. At the same time Alliance members say it is urgent because people are losing their employment, so they want us do something other than the legal challenges. That is what I think the position of the Alliance is although it was pretty vague and I am not sure I understood.

• (1535)

We are having sets of parallel discussions, some that just finished at 2.30 today. For three days we have been meeting in Washington. Provincial governments are there. Our international trade experts are there. It is the third such three day meeting we have had and we are finding common ground, comparing forestry management practices on both sides, finding common ground to make sure that we can have a better dialogue and hopefully find an alternative to litigation. However, that has to be done on solid grounds. That has to be done on grounds that will help our industry.

A member suggested an export tax. He says Americans want to slash the 19% tax and asks why do we not do so. It would be as bad for our industry whether I do it or the Americans do it. We want to access the American market at the level where we should be accessing it. We won in 1994. They had to give back \$1 billion in tax they had collected. Since then all the provinces have increased their stumpage fees. Therefore, how could we win in 1994, then increase the stumpage fees and not win this time? It is so clear. The Americans know very well that their case is a bad one and that they will lose before the WTO.

In order to gain time, because we know that for many enterprises and many businesses time is of the essence, and unfortunately legal courses and challenges take time, we have set up these discussions with the Americans. I want to thank the provincial governments for participating so well in them. We are really making progress on that front.

The Prime Minister has raised it with President Bush and we are pursuing every venue possible to find more allies in the United States. I do believe that our team Canada approach has provided the right and the best possible eventual outcome for us. However, it is not the time to cave in. It is not the time to move to any quick fix that some U.S. senators might be trying to push us into because they realize that they have a bad case. I ask members to please let us resist their request for a quick fix, thus harming ourselves, rather than having them harm us for a while but losing eventually.

• (1540)

[Translation]

With respect to softwood lumber, enormous progress has been made in the past five, six or eight years. We have built Team Canada, in which Quebec's industry works closely B.C.'s industry and provincial governments have had long discussions to compare forestry practices.

We know that we do not subsidize our wood. We won in 1994, and since then we have increased our stumpage fees in Quebec and elsewhere. If we won in 1994, and increased our stumpage fees since, how could we lose our case this time? Except that, as we know, time is of the essence, and the courts often take time to decide.

At the moment, we are making considerable progress in our discussions. I think we could eventually open a dialogue with the Americans on a basis much more constructive and solid than the previous U.S. bias with respect to the situation in the Canadian softwood industry.

[English]

The Chairman: The Chair takes note of the interest in asking the minister questions. I would hope that with your co-operation I will be able to accommodate as many of you as possible and also that the minister will respond as succinctly as possible.

I will begin with the sponsor of the motion, the hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of quick comments. First, the official opposition is very aware of the events of September 11. Although we did not ask questions on this file we certainly made statements in the House.

I would also like to point out that the minister is accepting into his rhetoric some revisionist history in terms of the consumer groups in the U.S. and how they were actually the main architects, long before the minister even started working with them on some of the congressional support we got in the U.S.

I would also like to point out that Indonesia seems to have more leverage than Canada when it comes to forest products. That should be of some concern to all of us.

S. O. 52

My question is, have there been some specific developments from the three days of talks in Washington which the minister could announce today? Is that yet to come or is it just that the talks have concluded and there is nothing of note for us to take home?

• (1545)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, this was the third such meeting we have had. I understand that some common ground has been further developed in the set of meetings that finished this afternoon, so much so that the participants on both sides, including the provinces, have agreed to a further set of meetings in two weeks' time precisely to continue the solid work done so far. The discussions are continuing, which I think is a very healthy outcome of the parallel track in which we have engaged.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I have just one simple question. I have received information to the effect that during the discussions over the last three days, there was talk of temporary measures before a return to full free trade.

I would like a very clear answer. Is the government in the process of negotiating temporary measures to reach a settlement with the United States, which would have the effect of restricting access to the American market, as was the case in 1996?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, my answer is very direct and very simple: no, our government is not in the process of negotiating with the U.S. government.

[English]

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I have two questions for the minister. The first is with respect to the issue of enforcement of the Fisheries Act, which is federal legislation. As the minister will know, under NAFTA there is a joint independent environmental panel which has come to the conclusion that there are serious problems in the enforcement by the Government of Canada of the Fisheries Act, problems that have resulted from some of the forestry practices and their impact on salmon bearing streams. That is a preliminary finding by the environmental tribunal under NAFTA. I will ask the minister what action the federal government is taking to respond to this very serious concern.

Second, I will ask the minister the same question that I asked the member for Vancouver Island North. That is with respect to an assurance from the government that whatever agreement is ultimately signed, it will not involve any increased export of raw logs from crown lands or undermine Canada's ability to manage its forests or wood industry in the interests of Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, I will have to look into the answer to the first question. I do not know exactly what the member is referring to and I would not want to speculate on something which I have not been focusing on seriously. The member deserves a better answer than I could volunteer this afternoon so I will get back to him on that issue.

S. O. 52

On the issue of log exports, I heard the question to the member for Vancouver Island North. As we know, British Columbia has a policy of log export controls. That policy is actually implemented by my department. We have gone to the WTO to find out its answer on whether U.S. legislation which sees that log export control as a subsidy in a sense is right. The member will know that the WTO panel has given Canada the answer that we already knew was right, which is that our log export controls are not a subsidy. This has undermined a key element of the United States case against Canada. This was a pre-emptive strike that we took some time ago.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Chairman, my question is for the minister. We are all well aware that the U.S. commerce department brought in a countervail of 19.3% on August 10. What we should remember is that it originally asked for 39.9%, which would have completely crippled the industry, not just cost us 30,000 jobs in B.C. and more jobs in Alberta, Quebec and Ontario.

The issue for me is that we were willing to pay the countervail and we are there now. Did the minister consider at the time pre-empting the countervail with an export tax? If not, why not?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, there is absolutely no consensus in our country to go to an export tax. Not one provincial government supports it. It is not the proper thing to do, I think, because we are challenging the American countervailing duties. Doing harm to our own industry is not in my view at all the sort of leadership we like to offer.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, this is the first time in my political career that I have witnessed a federal minister stand up and defend the rights of forestry workers in all of the provinces and in Quebec. I am not afraid of saying it.

There are nonetheless causes for concern. The question I am asking is not my own but comes from Ms. France Gagnon, of Barraute, chief executive officer of Précibois. Here is what she said:

As with previous softwood lumber disputes, it was critical that countervailing duties be applied to the primary mill rate. The American decision to impose countervailing duties on the final mill rate means that the non-subsidized primary sector is hit first, and hit hardest. It is a duty that could decimate an entire industry.

We are talking about an entire industry in the Abitibi and in Quebec.

Will the minister be able to exclude the value-added sector from the trade war immediately?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Mr. Chairman, I am absolutely in agreement with the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik and I greatly appreciate the question from France Gagnon. She is absolutely right.

I have had the opportunity to tell that directly to U.S. secretary of commerce Donald Evans in Washington on September 10. I found it unacceptable to include, along with all the rest of the softwood lumber industry, the lumber remanufacturers, who are adding value to this commodity. They are not part of the case and ought to have been exempted.

This has been stated very clearly and I trust that Statistics Canada will be able to provide them with figures that demonstrate very clearly just how much they ought never to have been included in the American petition.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I do not believe we have been able to discuss the softwood industry much in recent weeks. It is understandable that all hon. members were reeling from the shock of the events of September 11.

I believe it is worthwhile holding an emergency debate, as suggested by the Canadian Alliance, on the softwood lumber industry, since this week there have been three days of meetings held in Washington between American officials and Canadian federal and provincial officials.

What is also interesting to note is that the consensus that gradually developed this past winter and spring to demand for compliance to the free trade agreement immediately seems to have held up over the intervening weeks and months.

That consensus was not built up overnight. Discussions are still being held within the industry in Quebec and at the Canadian Manufacturers Association. The choice offered to us was either to follow the legal approach to the end, something that had never been attempted, or to enter into negotiations with the Americans, and in that context to repeat what happened in 1986 and 1996.

The wise choice that the Quebec industry made, as did the other industries and the governments across Canada apparently, was to use the legal approach all the way. There are very good reasons for this. First, in the United States—this has already been mentioned, but we do not insist enough on this in Canada and in Quebec—we have allies among American consumers and builders. We have a broad range of allies.

I had the opportunity, along with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques and the hon. member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis to travel to Washington as part of a non-partisan delegation of parliamentarians. I was surprised to see that the U.S. black people's chamber of commerce supports the Canadian position, as do a number of other consumers associations.

We do have allies, even among U.S. parliamentarians. The Minister for International Trade mentioned it. This summer, about 100 parliamentarians from both the Senate and the Congress wrote President Bush to ask him to maintain free trade in the lumber sector, because it was in the best interests of consumers in the various states that they represent.

It is also important to recall that we are now engaged in a negotiation process on a free trade area of the Americas. There is something contradictory in the Americans asking for protectionist measures in the lumber industry when all the nations of the Americas are talking about greater trade liberalization. In this regard, I think that President Bush does have—as the Canadian Alliance member pointed out—a responsibility.

We certainly realize that, following the September 11 events, this may not be at the top of his priorities. However, at some point in time, if he is the free trader he claims to be, he will have to take steps to put a stop to the procedures and harassment by the American lumber industry, particularly since we are now trying to further develop harmonious relations between all the countries. In my opinion, a prerequisite to such relations is to settle trade wars that have no real basis.

Another element, which strikes me as important and enters into the arguments relating to pursuing the legal battle, is the existence of the World Trade Organization. The rules it is in the process of developing—a process not yet complete—did not exist at the time of the last problems, which occurred around 1995-96. Now, with the WTO in place, and involved in this matter, U.S. legislation is now being challenged by the Canadian government, and rightly so, moreover.

From the political point of view, the situation is completely different from what it was in 1996. On the economic level—as the minister has said—the stumpage fees in Quebec have increased substantially in recent years. I also want to point out that a study commissioned by the government of Quebec on stumpage fees in private woodlots reached a very interesting conclusion.

• (1555)

As we know, Quebec has a price setting mechanism. I believe it is along the same lines as the one applied in the other provinces—Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia in particular—which take into consideration the stumpage fees for private woodlots to set the ones for crown lands.

We are often told that since 90% of forests are under public administration in Quebec, the private sector could not be taken into account because it was too heavily influenced by the strong presence of public forest management.

What is interesting is that the study in question reaches the same conclusion, from which I shall read an excerpt, because it seems to me to offer additional proof that there is no subsidy involved in setting softwood lumber prices in Quebec:

Empirical data indicate that there is a single price for wood originating in Quebec, New Brunswick or northeastern U.S., once adjustments are made for the quality and for shipping costs.

What we see is that the price of wood in Quebec is the same as throughout eastern North America. The paradox is that the Atlantic provinces, including New Brunswick, were excluded from the American process, more so because their forests are managed privately rather than publicly. But we can see that price setting comes down to the same thing.

This study clearly shows that prices based on stumpage fees accurately reflect market prices. This is further proof that there are no subsidies.

We are right in economic terms. Our environment, in political terms, is favourable. And yet we face a whole series of legal proceedings and harassment from part of the industry in the United States.

S. O. 52

The Minister for International Trade and the federal government will have to take steps to help the industry and those working in it. They will have to ensure the consensus remains, because, obviously, with the latest layoffs in British Columbia, among others, the pressure is tremendous, as we can understand.

The Minister for International Trade and the federal government will have to use their imagination in coming to the aid of the industry to help it get through these turbulent times and through the legal process and come out a winner.

I think the minister mentioned the possibility of the EDC's providing guarantee for the exporters, which corresponds to the interim countervailing duties of 19.3%.

Since the minister spoke of it around the end of August, I think it was August 24, we have heard nothing more. I think this avenue should be explored, and it seems to me it could help the industry get through the period better.

There is also the whole issue of employment insurance. I know that my colleague, the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, will elaborate on that. We also have a situation, with the economic downturn, that would allow the federal government to implement measures, particularly with regard to employment insurance, that would help industry as a whole, including the lumber industry, which is suffering the consequences of countervailing duties, and it will only get worse.

Last, and this is very important, the federal government and the Minister for International Trade must play a leadership role. They have done that. I humbly submit that the Bloc Québécois has supported the government in its initiatives and has even guided it in some instances to ensure that it was headed in the right direction. This must continue.

In this context, it seems important that, following the meetings between the provinces, there be a summit where the provinces, the industry and the federal government get together to assess the situation before the end of October.

I hope we will get through this dispute and that our interests, which are totally legitimate, will be defended in a context where we cannot let the might makes right principle prevail, because that would be contrary to all the work that has been accomplished by Canadians and Quebecers over the last 60 years.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Chairman, I listened intently to the hon. member's comments and I have a couple of comments and a question.

I think this is an extremely important issue for Quebec because it supplies 25% of all of Canada's lumber exports. Certainly my province of Nova Scotia supplies 7%. Timber is an extremely important industry in Atlantic Canada but at the same time, on a national scale, our part of the pie is not quite as large as Quebec's.

S. O. 52

What has always amazed me is our local Maritime Lumber Bureau has always done its homework. We have sent delegations to Washington on an annual basis for many years. We were largely responsible for having Atlantic Canada excluded from the original softwood lumber deal based on our traditions with U.S. trade practices and on our stumpage practices.

The issue I am most afraid of at this time is the anti-dumping legislation that has been imposed. We know we are having a hearing on that on October 15, but how does the member feel the government has reacted to that? I think the government has simply allowed this to proceed almost like a runaway railroad car that is just on the track and moving forward. We have done nothing to counteract the anti-dumping charges, which are much more significant than the countervailing ones.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Chairman, I definitely do not want to criticize the Atlantic provinces for having done their homework, so as to be excluded from procedures undertaken by the U.S.

In my opinion, what the Americans should be criticized for is the main reason that made them go after Quebec and British Columbia in particular, namely the fact that our forests are managed differently than U.S. forests and that, in their eyes, public management, which incidentally gives excellent results, is tantamount to subsidies.

I was able to see this for myself when we met U.S. officials in Washington. In their mind, it was a simple equation: private forests means subsidies. To which Canada and Quebec reply that managing our forests differently does not mean that we do so in an unfair way. I think we must be clear on this.

As for the anti-dumping issue, we know that it is businesses themselves that are directly involved. But I think that the federal and provincial governments have a responsibility to support businesses at a political and technical level.

I know that a lot has been done. I met with Tembec officials, among others, who are targeted by this anti-dumping procedure and they told me that they received very substantial technical support from both the Quebec and federal governments. I think that we should continue in that direction.

In my opinion, the whole anti-dumping process is a measure to increase pressure on the Canadian industry. A settlement based on a return to free trade would put an end to all these procedures.

I am not psychic, but I hope this is what will happen, because it is an extremely dangerous and arbitrary process. The investigation is focused on a few companies but the rights will be imposed on the whole industry.

We will have to keep a very close eye on this situation.

• (1605)

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier about the Liberal minister responsible for 2 x 4s, who is here today, I appreciate the efforts of the hon. member for Joliette. I want to emphasize that. We are here to protect workers and producers in the forest industry, which is a major part of the economic base of Abitibi-Témiscamingue. I would like to ask this question.

Is the study he referred to earlier the one made by Del Degan, Massé et Associés, in co-operation with the Groupe de recherche en économique et politique agricole of Laval University?

This study has proven beyond any doubt that the timber royalties system in Quebec is in line with all the rules on trade between Canada and the United States and that it cannot be considered an indirect subsidy for our forest workers and producers.

Is that the study the hon. member was talking about?

The Deputy Chairman: I will not ask the hon. member to answer by yes or no, but would he please keep his answer very short.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: It is the same study, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party in today's debate on the softwood lumber industry. It is about time we had this debate because this issue has been dragging for far too long and I am sure my colleagues here in the opposition feel the same way.

I recognize that since our return on September 17 the House has been charged with a number of issues related to the terrorist attacks. I would like to acknowledge the co-operation of all parties to ensure that this debate took place before we take our Thanksgiving week break.

My NDP colleagues and I began raising this issue in the House of Commons last March when it became clear that we were heading into yet another softwood lumber dispute with the United States. At that time I was thinking, here we go again. Why do we always end up in these situations vis-à-vis the United States?

Having recently been appointed the NDP industry critic, I started looking into the matter back in March. Since then I have had the opportunity to meet with many people involved in the industry, from the unions that represent the workers in the industry to the representatives of the lumber companies that operate in the different regions of our country. That is an important thing to note. The softwood lumber industry is a national industry, but the way it is managed and runs differs from region to region. That is why it is important to listen to people from all the regions to get the proper national perspective.

In addition to my one on one meetings, I also had the opportunity to take part in some very good committee meetings on the subject. I have learned a lot about the softwood lumber industry over the past months. I have come a long way toward answering that question I was asking myself back in March, why do we keep ending up in these lumber wars with the U.S.?

S. O. 52

The bottom line is that the U.S. is prepared to do almost anything to keep Canadian lumber from capturing more than 30% of the U.S. market. Anytime we do that, and it happens because we have a stronger, more competitive industry than it does, the powerful American lumber companies and U.S. lumber unions take their clout to Washington and the U.S. government starts these trade wars.

Each time the Americans start one of these wars, it ends up getting resolved by a temporary agreement or treaty. The last time was in 1996 when Canada and the U.S. signed a five year softwood lumber agreement, a five year ceasefire. The treaty expired in March 2001 and the U.S. went into its protectionist mode by imposing the 19% tariff on most Canadian lumber. Because of these tariffs, 15,000 lumber workers have lost their jobs since April. We have to stop this situation now.

A lot of people wonder how the U.S. can get away with putting these tariffs on Canadian lumber when we are supposed to have free trade. The North American Free Trade Agreement is supposed to guarantee the free movement of goods and trade between our two countries. This shows how weak and ineffective the NAFTA regime is. Whenever we in the NDP criticize NAFTA for these kinds of shortcomings our political opponents put on their smokescreens and say "You New Democrats just oppose open trade". Well it is not true. We want open trade with our friends and neighbours in the United States.

The problem is that NAFTA is not good enough. It is supposed to protect us from unilateral protectionist actions by the U.S. and it does not. To prove it, look no further than the softwood lumber industry and the 19% tariff that the U.S. is now putting on Canadian softwood lumber.

I am not the only one who thinks this way. Allow me to quote the president and chief executive officer of the Maritime Lumber Bureau, Ms. Diana Blenkhorn, who told the House of Commons Sub-committee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment that, "The history of NAFTA to date, relative to softwood lumber, shows it has not done the job, quite frankly".

Here is a quote from the same meeting with Mr. David Emerson, co-chair of the Canadian Lumber Trade Alliance. Mr. Emerson told the committee: "We do not have any faith in the trade litigation framework that exists today because it has been designed by the Americans, for American producers, to be as punitive as it possibly can be".

NAFTA has not done the job. That is why we have never reached a final, permanent resolution to this issue. Instead we have gone from short term agreement to short term agreement with periods of trade wars and tariffs in between. The last thing we need now is another short term band-aid solution. What we need is a long term solution to provide stability for the industry and the people who rely on forestry for their employment.

Again, I am not the only one who thinks we need a long term solution to break out of this cycle of trade wars. All the business leaders and unions representing forest workers that I have heard from are saying the same thing. I would like to quote Mr. Haggard, president of the Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada Union. This is Canada's largest forest union.

● (1610)

Mr. Haggard told the committee that his union and the forest workers he represents were prepared to live with the short term pain of the current tariffs for up to two years if the federal government used the time to craft a real long term solution so that this would be the last time we have to go through this process.

The unions and business agreed that the solution was open trade with the U.S. The forest industry and unions told us they were prepared to ride out the storm a little longer if we could secure a permanent end to the bullying U.S. protectionist measures rather than another short term band-aid solution.

However the problem is that the Liberal government is not doing that. It should be standing up for Canadian jobs and industry, and instead it knuckles under to the U.S. There is so much it could be doing to help Canadian forest workers and to protect jobs but it is not doing any of it.

Where is the income assistance plan for the 15,000 people who have been laid off? We in the NDP called for that two months ago and we have not heard a peep from the Liberal government. Where are the measures to stop the export of raw logs to the U.S.? Exporting raw logs rather than processing them in Canada is like the export of jobs. We have been calling on the Liberal government for years to help keep these jobs in Canada.

It should be working with industry to develop our processing capacity so that we could export more finished wood products instead of raw logs and keep the processing jobs in Canada where they belong.

We need the federal government to stand up for Canada's right to manage our forests in an environmentally sustainable way. In our federal system conserving and managing forests is a provincial responsibility. In Manitoba most forestry takes place on provincial crown land and each year the province sets quotas for the lumber companies. In that way the provincial government is able to balance the needs of industry with the imperative that we sustain our forests and our environment.

However the maritime provinces manage their forests differently than Manitoba. In New Brunswick, for example, most of the forests are privately owned and not on crown land.

I prefer Manitoba's way of doing it because it is more environmentally friendly, but I recognize this is a decentralized federation. Each province is different and has the right to chart its own course in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

The U.S. has been saying that it likes the way some provinces manage their forests but not others. It wants to force us to change the way we manage our forests to the least environmentally sustainable model. It calls the crown land model used by Manitoba and other provinces to protect the environment an unfair subsidy.

S. O. 52

This is unacceptable and the federal government needs to stand up to the U.S. and say that it is not a subsidy. It is environmental management and the U.S. has no business interfering in our federal-provincial division of powers.

The NDP wants to see open trade with the U.S. without compromising our right to manage and preserve our forests for future generations. We need sustainable forest management to maintain jobs now and in the future so that there will always be enough trees for future generations to harvest. We need fair and open access to the U.S. market through effective and balanced trade deals, not unbalanced trade deals like the one we have now.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I listened carefully to my colleague from Churchill who said that she has no confidence in the present system with the Americans to solve the problem. I would tend to agree with her because it is not the first time that we have a situation where we are forced to go to court to see justice done.

This is, however, the system we are dealing with now. Even though we are looking forward to a sustainable solution, as the member said earlier, in the meantime, we have an industry that is being penalized at a time when there is high unemployment and when we know that the immediate future is quite gloomy.

I would have liked to ask the question either to the minister or to my colleague, but I will ask the member for Churchill. Until we solve the problem for good, in my riding of Champlain—as in the Abitibi, which my colleague mentioned, and I know the situation is the same everywhere in Quebec—we are especially penalized since the forest industry is a base industry in our area.

Until the problem is solved, people will be unemployed. Would it not be possible, for instance, to use the unemployment insurance program or some other program to compensate the industry, to help it survive and to reduce the pressure on the unemployed? It is actually the workers who are paying for a problem that has cropped up between two governments. Does the member think that the government should take temporary measures to help the workers now?

[*English*]

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman, without question. We have been calling on the government for some time to utilize the EI program. It was intended to be there for drops in employment and when there are massive layoffs so that we can keep our economy stabilized and provide support for workers.

The EI was not intended as a cash cow for the finance minister but that is what it has been used for. We must make sure the EI program is there to provide support for unemployed workers including forestry workers

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague from Churchill for her very thoughtful comments. As members know I am from the province of British Columbia. British Columbia was particularly hard hit by the punitive tariffs of 19.3%. It has been estimated that as many as 15,000 jobs may have been lost since the tariffs were imposed. We want to voice

our very strong solidarity with the workers and communities that were affected.

I note that IWA-Canada has launched a national campaign, which we strongly support, to protect Canadian jobs and communities in the face of these bullying U.S. protectionist tactics.

On Wednesday this week the Interfor mill in Squamish announced that it was shutting down. That is another 170 workers out of a job. There are no transitional measures whatsoever for these folks.

The Minister of Human Resources Development indicated today that the employment insurance system was working just fine. It is not working for the airline industry and it is not working for these workers either.

Does my colleague agree it is critically important we make it clear to the U.S. government that access for Canadian manufactured wood products entering the U.S. market has to be a prerequisite to any future trade agreements between our two countries?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: I certainly agree with my colleague, Mr. Chairman. I will touch on the unemployment issue just to reinforce again the need for the EI fund to be used for what it was intended. Only one in five unemployed workers in Canada is able to access employment insurance in spite of this year's \$17 billion surplus in the EI fund. It is irresponsible of the government for not using that money for what it was intended.

With regard to future trade agreements, it is without question that those are the types of issues that the New Democratic Party feels are missing from these trade agreements. Those types of rules must be put in place to benefit our workers, industry and environment. It is better overall for sustainability when we have an enhanced use of our resources. I agree with the hon. member that we must do that.

• (1620)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, I commend the member for Vancouver Island North for bringing forward this emergency debate. The issue has taken a human toll. It truly is an emergency that needs to be dealt with and that is why it was appropriate for him to bring this debate forward.

The Canadian softwood lumber industry exports about \$11 billion a year to the United States. Almost half of that comes from British Columbia. The current countervail duty of 20% imposed by the United States amounts to \$1 billion a year out of the British Columbia economy and \$2 billion a year out of the Canadian economy.

Those are pretty big numbers for people to comprehend, but let us talk about the human toll. We have lost well over 15,000 jobs in British Columbia. The potential job loss across Canada is 25,000 and that number is expected to double by the end of the year. That will be 50,000 jobs in Canada alone.

It is critical that we have this discussion and move the ball forward to find a solution. Throughout the interior of British Columbia and on Vancouver Island we have many single industry communities that rely solely on the forest industry. These communities cannot survive and will become ghost towns if the issue is not resolved quickly.

S. O. 52

The human toll will be enormous. It goes much deeper than just people losing their jobs. The 50,000 lost jobs can be exponentially increased to hundreds of thousands of Canadians that would be affected: workers, families and their children. Economic hardship is incredibly difficult for families.

The situation is in crisis proportion and it is an emergency that needs to be dealt with. We have been to the WTO and various international tribunals on three separate occasions. We have won every time but we need to do more.

Canada has a strong case. We are fighting this through every process. I applaud the minister for the pre-emptive strikes in regard to the raw log exports. That argument has been successfully taken away from the Americans. However the issue is so serious that our Prime Minister has to become directly involved with the president of the United States.

The current United States administration claims that it is a free trader: Robert Zoellick, the U.S. trade representative, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans and President Bush.

Now is the time when our Prime Minister should be holding their feet to the fire. We have every right to be going at them quite aggressively on this issue. Our Minister for International Trade and our Prime Minister had conversations with U.S. representatives. Our Prime Minister spoke with President Bush. He has even raised other issues such as energy, which was probably the appropriate place.

It is bad economic policy to start linking various commodities. We would go down a slippery slope if we were to look at the kind of overall trade we have with the United States.

•(1625)

Definitely we need to do more. The human toll is enormous, absolutely phenomenal. We have to be more aggressive on this issue and look for solutions.

The events that happened on September 11 have shaken all of us. They have affected our lives, how we feel and what we do. They have affected this dispute as well. It was not appropriate to discuss this issue in the weeks following the attacks. We needed to deal with the aftermath. We needed to support our friends to the south, to be there shoulder to shoulder. However I think this issue should be brought back to the table.

I thank the Minister for International Trade for being present for this debate. I also commend the member for Vancouver Island North who brought the debate forward. It was questioned earlier whether it should have been an emergency debate. It is an emergency. This is a crisis. Look at the job losses and the communities that are affected. Throughout British Columbia it is enormous.

There are a few hurdles in front of us as well. The protectionist forces in the United States will go to great lengths to lobby their government. We need to take them on.

The anti-dumping issue is coming up on October 15. We are expecting some kind of decision on the anti-dumping issue and if they come forward with that, it will be catastrophic against our industry.

Some \$2 billion has been sucked out of our economy, but more important than the money, it has affected thousands of jobs, some 50,000 jobs. That is what hits home. It is creating a turmoil for hundreds of thousands of Canadians and their families.

I encourage the minister to do more at the head of state level and the ministerial level. The Prime Minister and the president, and the minister and his counterpart must be creative in finding solutions. We cannot back down. We know we are right, as he has stated before. We have been to the international tribunals.

If it takes a year or 18 months for the issue to wind its way through the international tribunals, I am afraid there will be nothing left to recover in some of our industries and the remote communities in Quebec, Atlantic Canada and British Columbia. That simply will not be good enough. Our government will be faced with a much greater crisis.

There are things we can do in getting involved at that level. The Americans are looking for help in oil and gas. I emphasize that it is not good public economic policy to make these direct links, but they are desperately looking for help in those areas. We should give it to them, but at the same time we should expect them to honour free trade and be the free traders they claim to be.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the comments by my colleague who also is from Vancouver Island.

I want to pick up on something the minister said earlier. Perhaps the member would have a comment on it. It had to do with 1994. We heard the minister talking about how we went to dispute resolution at that time and we won. The Americans were obliged to pay us back \$1 billion. That was great.

This is not 1994. British Columbia has been through a terrible economic turmoil since that time, particularly in the forest industry. We still had a very substantial Asian market in the early 1990s but when the Asian flu hit and knocked the socks out of our western forestry exports to the Asian market, suddenly the American market became much more important.

In my riding mills have gone down. A lot of the mills that were there in 1994 have not made the cut. There has been a devastating effect. It has created a new sense of urgency. There are hundreds of mill workers in my riding.

Would my colleague comment on the effects of the Asian flu and what it has done to the B.C. economy?

•(1630)

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Chairman, the member talked about the decision of an international tribunal in 1994.

The real challenge that faces this dispute is that we are fighting U. S. domestic law. That is the problem.

As the minister of course will know, with the Byrd amendment, basically all the countervail duties being collected under this new U. S. domestic law is paid to the U.S. forestry industry. Talking about subsidies, the Canadian industry which is in tough shape is directly subsidizing the U.S. industry. That is why we have to be aggressive and stop this.

S. O. 52

Our industry cannot survive a year, two years. We have to get aggressive on this and find solutions. I sense there is a willingness by some of our counterparts in the U.S., but it is time for us to get tough on this issue. We have to move forward and find a solution.

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I think my colleague has made a good point but I would note that fortunately, President Bush has suspended the Byrd amendment. It is very important that we clarify that.

The member mentioned head of state consultations. Maybe he is not aware that when the Prime Minister met President Bush on September 24 on the terrible attacks that took place, even then he had an opportunity when it was appropriate to raise softwood lumber.

What more does the member think the Prime Minister and the Minister for International Trade could possibly do? They continue to raise the issue at their appropriate high levels, given the reality that the tone has changed somewhat in light of the atrocious attacks on the United States.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Chairman, I acknowledge that it was absolutely appropriate to change the tone.

I know that the minister had discussions in recent days with his counterparts in the U.S. I know that the Prime Minister has met the president of the United States on numerous occasions. I am also aware that the Minister for International Trade within the next two weeks will be meeting face to face with the U.S. trade representative Robert Zoellick. I am sure this will be the first issue that comes out of his mouth.

Why is this an emergency debate? I want to bring it back to the human element. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians and their families are affected. This is tearing them apart. It is going to devastate communities. That is why this is an emergency debate. That is why it is appropriate. The situation is critical.

The minister knows that the Prime Minister is talking to President Bush. The parliamentary secretary knows. We have read about it in the papers. But all that the people in these industries know is that they got their pink slips and they have no jobs. Their lunch pails are empty. They are not bringing anything home to their families. They want a solution. That is all they care about. They want to see something happen.

I know we have a tough road ahead of us, but we sense there is a willingness by some of the people in the United States to resolve the issue. If ever there were a time for our government to ratchet it up, that time is now. I do not think we should concede anything. This is about the families. It is about the jobs. It is time that we put the pressure on again. I look forward to the government doing that.

The Chairman: I want to remind everyone that the conclusion of this first round also concludes the question and comment period following the speeches.

•(1635)

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, as has already been alluded to, much of our attention over the last few weeks quite rightly has been absorbed by the tragic events of September 11. That goes without saying. The

aftershocks that have followed those events have impacted our economy in a very serious way. They have contributed to large scale layoffs in the airline industry, just as one example.

[*Translation*]

These last weeks, there has been more and more bad news. Thousands of job cuts have been announced, particularly in the Montreal area, with the closing of the GM plant, massive layoffs at Air Canada, many job losses in British Columbia, bad news for the aviation industry, and so on.

[*English*]

It is important to recall that before September 11 the Canadian economy was already facing a huge and looming crisis due to the government's inaction in settling the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber dispute.

There has been a great deal of concern expressed in the House, and quite rightly, about the loss of some 5,000 jobs at Air Canada. We should be concerned about that. However, we have seen far less concern from the government on the loss of jobs for some 30,000 people who have been laid off due to the United States' imposition of the 19.3% softwood lumber tariff. The effect of this has been huge.

On October 15 we expect another ruling on the alleged dumping of Canadian softwood. That could impose even more devastating tariffs and devastating results on the industry. Some people have said that in the minds of many Canadians, the lumber industry seems to be treated as an afterthought by the government. They wonder if it is because it is not located in the industrial heartland of central Canada. Many people are asking what the problem is.

It is a great opportunity for the government to show with action and not just words that it really does care about this industry. These kinds of questions are being asked by Canadians. It is a great opportunity for the government to show its concern with action.

Lumber is Canada's largest industrial sector. It is bigger than automobiles. Canadians especially in rural communities rely heavily on the lumber industry. They expect the federal government to give this number one industry a number one priority when it comes to trading relationships.

Frankly one of the reasons we are in this crisis is that the government was asleep at the switch on this file. Members of the Canadian Alliance and before that the Reform Party stood right here in the House literally for years warning that something had to be done before the agreement expired last April 1. Nothing was done. We can check *Hansard*. Time and time again the warnings went out. We knew that the softwood lumber agreement was temporary. The federal government knew it was a temporary agreement. The government had five years to lay the groundwork for when the agreement would come to an end and it did not happen.

The groundwork needed to be laid so that based on the principles of free and fair trade, this issue could be settled as the agreement ended. The government delayed taking any position on the agreement until it was too late. While we were calling for the government to openly push for free trade in lumber, it was not focused on the issue at all. That is a matter of history and it is a matter of fact.

Rather than spending four or five years building a coalition for free trade with the United States by getting down there and talking to consumer groups and home builders and senators, the government in the time before April 1 did nothing to explain the Canadian case in great detail especially to elected representatives on the U.S. side.

Last spring I was in the United States and met with Vice-President Cheney on this issue. Later the same day I met with U.S. Senator Larry Craig of Idaho. He was one of the leaders in petitioning the president of the United States to go along with this countervail, this tariff against Canadian lumber. Vice-President Cheney has a reputation for being up on all the issues and I believe he is. To my amazement, he and Senator Craig seemed to lack an understanding of many of the pertinent details relating to Canadian lumber.

When I explained to them the details of our having won this case three times before, by the types of questions they were asking they seemed to be interested. Obviously Senator Craig, being a senator, listens to his constituents who are appealing to him to impose some kind of tariff.

The lack of preparation by the federal government was evident. It simply was not done. I would have expected the government and our embassy to have been down there not just days and weeks but months and years before the agreement came to an end preparing and putting in place rules based on free and fair trade for the future. It appears they have been sitting on their hands. Some industry groups have come together to try to deal with this issue.

What should we be doing as MPs? Certainly constantly raising the issue here is important, but we could do more. Members of parliament in a non-partisan way should put together a group and go to the United States. They should talk to those key senators, talk to the representatives and make sure they understand the issue. They should talk to the consumer groups down there.

• (1640)

It is never too late for us to pursue the work that should have been done beforehand and push this issue on a parallel side, in a non-partisan way, with members of parliament from all sides of the House. We have to.

Obviously, this issue could go all the way to the World Trade Organization. However, it would be far better if we could convince the United States administration and the U.S. congress to drop this case, not by cutting some kind of a side deal that will lead to ongoing export tax but in fact by dealing with it. It can be done. It is possible. I would suggest that this post-September 11 environment in which we now live may actually give us a new opportunity to pursue this.

In a meeting I had with the U.S. ambassador a few days after the awful events of September 11, we talked about this particular issue. I said that we would in very appropriately and dignified way handle the issue, that we would not let it go. Obviously while our American friends were going through this terrible time, we would not politically pound away at something. I shared with him the issue of jobs and livelihood for 30,000 people, and it will be in the tens of thousands more, being absolutely critical. We talked about that.

The minister is saying that we will plod on, work our way toward WTO and hope to win that one, and believes we will. However, the

S. O. 52

devastation in the industry and among families will be huge. We recently saw the Bush administration, virtually with the stroke of a pen, remove a tariff on some products from other trading partners to build coalitions.

In that context of debate, Indonesia had duties removed from plywood exports to the tune of something like \$200 million a year. I am sincerely glad for the people of Indonesia and their industry. What about Canada? Where are we on this particular file? We need to be there.

The government is not prepared to go to the United States, and I do not mean through the meetings that are being set up now with the industry groups, and take the initiative in a way that is visible and dignified but forceful, even at this particular time. It is not prepared to put together a non-partisan team so that the United States will know that this is not political, that we are concerned about our constituents and that believe we are standing on the principles of free and fair trade.

A non-partisan delegation recently went to New York City to send a message of sharing grief and condolences, not just for the Americans but also for Canadians. We need to and we can put together a non-partisan delegation the same way.

[Translation]

This non-partisan delegation of representatives of the people in Washington will allow us to clearly establish our country's commitment to free trade, particularly in the softwood lumber industry. Quebec and British Columbia are the two provinces most affected by losses in the softwood lumber industry. Thousands of families are waiting for us to act quickly to defend their interests with our American friends and allies.

[English]

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I badly wish there were questions and comments because I have two or three very serious questions for the leader of the official opposition. I hope I will have an opportunity to take them up with him. Perhaps he will attend the trade subcommittee which will deal with these issues and we will have a chance for a fuller exchange there.

I am disappointed to hear the Leader of the Opposition reach into his bag of tricks and pull out the old regional fears of playing B.C. against Ontario and against the other provinces. The country deserves better at this time. The federal government cares about all regions of this country.

I would like to invite the Leader of the Opposition to come to Northern Ontario, to those communities which are very dependent on softwood lumber. I would like him to come with us to Quebec where he will realize that 25% of the softwood lumber exports come from the province of Quebec. B.C. is critical in this issue, but this is not just important to B.C. This is a national issue. It is important to all regions of Canada.

S. O. 52

I hear hon. members opposite say of course, but they would not have drawn that conclusion from the partisan regionally divisive comments that we just sadly heard from the Leader of the Opposition. It really was regrettable.

The Leader of the Opposition is somehow very badly misinformed. He talks about non-partisan groups going to the United States. I participated in a non-partisan effort to go to the United States, Washington specifically, in June with colleagues from all parties of the House of Commons. I believe his party participated. It was certainly invited to participate. I understand the critic could not attend.

A second group went in July. I heard the critic say that he participated in that. I am glad he was there. Would he then inform his leader that the government has encouraged several non-partisan visits to the United States, efforts to build consensus and to look at the root causes.

The leader spoke about consumer groups that have appeared somehow magically in the U.S. and the business groups that support our position.

I would ask, Mr. Chairman, for a little indulgence from the other side. I did not once interrupt the leader of the opposition.

• (1645)

The Chairman: Order, please. Let us take a pause for a moment. I know sometimes when we get into a round of debate where we no longer have questions and comments we are not able to get some of that steam out of the air. Given the importance of the subject matter, with so many members here from both sides of the House to participate, and given the very limited time, I do not want to interrupt any more than absolutely necessary.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition says I incite them. They are easily incited.

I listened very carefully to the hon. member's comments. With all due respect, I just do not think he is correct in the statements that he made. Those statements need to be challenged by the government and they will be challenged.

This is the most serious trade dispute that exists bilaterally between our two nations. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are directly at stake. Some 300 Canadian communities from coast to coast to coast, including B.C., but not just in B.C., have 50% at least of their livelihood depending on the softwood lumber industry.

Of some 100 million jobs in all regions of Canada, including central Canada and B.C. and the Atlantic, one is six jobs of them indirectly or directly related to the softwood lumber industry.

What has the government done? It has repeatedly and consistently challenged the false accusations of the American industry and the American government that have been made about our softwood lumber industry. This is the fourth time that we face this challenge now from the United States. In the three previous cases these allegations were not substantiated.

The reality is this. This is an issue of U.S. protectionism and the fact that the Americans are very unhappy with the Canadian industry

having gained a 34% market share in the United States. That is really what this is all about.

Through the efforts of the Canadian government, led by the Minister for International Trade, with the close co-operation of the Canadian embassy in Washington, we have for many months now been building alliances in the United States, exactly as the Leader of the Opposition suggests, belatedly. Action has been going on for a long time to recruit some 150 members of the U.S. congress who support our position to inform and work with major companies like Home Depot. They support our position to recruit consumer groups that understand that they could be paying up to \$4,000 more on a new home. Why? To simply protect less competitive U.S. lumber operations.

Those efforts did not just come out of thin air. The Government of Canada has taken the lead in helping make sure that groundwork was done. The Leader of the Opposition put forward some good suggestions. It is just that they are late and they have already been going on for some time.

We have a good consensus of the industry in Canada, the provinces and territories, that what we want is free trade in softwood lumber.

As the minister pointed out, there was no sort of a willy-nilly decision that we just woke up and the softwood lumber agreement is over. There was a conscious decision after very wide consultations that this agreement would be allowed to run out. Why? Because what we desire is free trade in softwood lumber.

If the United States had not taken the action that it has taken, we would be in a situation where softwood lumber prevails. Unfortunately, the Americans again for the fourth time in 20 years have taken this protectionist action. Of course we have been and will continue to challenge that at every opportunity.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly raised this issue with President Bush, as I said. The Minister for International Trade has repeatedly raised the issue with Secretary Evans and with trade representative Zoellick. We are challenging these allegations of the United States at the WTO. We have requested a panel where five specific challenges will be launched about the American allegations.

We know that the United States congress is split on the issue. There are a few protectionist senators who are leading the charge against this and are now being mischievous, some sending letters to Canadian parliamentarians suggesting that we now self-impose a tax that will help them out of a situation that they know they will lose. They will lose this trade action again.

What is the unfortunate reality in this? My colleague, the Minister for International Trade, I and our government knows this very well. Unfortunately, this kind of a decision does not come really quickly. Unfortunately, there is pain to be borne unfairly by Canadian companies, producers and workers because the United States is not living up to what it claims to be, which is free traders.

●(1650)

Discussions went on in Toronto last week and are going on in Washington this week. Progress is being made to find the root causes of this so we can come to a solution outside of litigation. As long as those efforts are bearing fruit then they ought to proceed.

At the same time we are moving on several other fronts, whether it be ministers and government leaders talking to American leaders or whether it be Canadian officials taking the necessary steps for the WTO challenges.

The reality is that Canada is right in this issue. Our case has stood up every time it has been challenged and it will stand up again.

I applaud the Minister for International Trade for the wide consultation. A number of members on the other side of the House have indicated that there has been very wide consultation. That has continued and will continue. As long as there is a consensus in the industry for us to continue down this path then the government will continue to vigorously defend our interests in softwood lumber.

The solution really is free trade. It is not regionalism. It is not the unfortunate comments that I heard from the Leader of the Opposition to play B.C. against Ontario or Quebec. Those are not the sentiments that we need at this time. We need a united effort. The Canadian people will accept nothing else.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I rise today because it is not just that. All the political parties and provincial governments are getting involved.

I am first and foremost a former forestry worker in the Abitibi and the economy of the Abitibi—Témiscamingue region is largely based on lumber and mining.

As I said earlier, we too make the rounds of our vast regions. In Quebec's great Abitibi—Témiscamingue region, resolutions are being passed all over the place. People are getting involved.

On September 12, for instance, the Témiscamingue RCM proposed a resolution at a meeting where county councillors and mayors were present. The meeting was chaired by Philippe Barette, the mayor of Témiscamingue and reeve of the RCM.

These people say in their resolution, which they sent directly to the minister and to the federal government, that they are opposed to the imposition by the United States of countervailing duties on Canadian lumber. They ask that the government:

—energetically oppose the imposition of countervailing duties by the United States on Canadian lumber and ensure that resource regions are treated justly and fairly.

It is the same thing with the town of Senneterre. We see what is happening in resource and northern regions. It is important to say it and not just make fine speeches about what we do in the House of Commons. There are small municipalities that take the time to pass resolutions. I have one here from the town of Senneterre, a municipality administered by mayor Gérard Lafontaine and the councillors. They say:

Whereas the United States is unfairly invoking a sudden and massive increase in Canadian exports, and also subsidies to the industry to justify their action—

S. O. 52

This an excerpt from a resolution passed on September 14. These are all resolutions that were adopted recently.

I want to go back to the case of Précibois in Barraute, a company that employs forestry workers. France Gagnon clearly indicated to the Quebec and Canadian governments that the value added sector must immediately be excluded from this trade war because it affects our forestry workers, either at the plant or in the bush.

Processing industries operate under unique conditions that were not taken into account by the United States. The decision made on September 4 by the United States trade department to impose countervailing duties of 19.3% on softwood lumber, based on our declared value rather than on first processing value, is contrary to American practice in previous disputes and will have serious consequences for our secondary producers and wholesalers in Canada. The Canadian government believes this decision is not based on any law nor any fact, and is urging the United States to cancel it.

One must read the papers. At present, people are afraid of retroactive measures. If, in the coming weeks or the coming months, a long term fixed rule is adopted, with one time countervailing duties applied retroactively for several months, during the summer, that will hurt, in the Abitibi and Quebec especially.

Nobody cuts wood on Wellington Street in Ottawa, or on Sainte-Catherine Street, in Montreal, or on Grande-Allée in Quebec City. That activity goes on in resource regions, especially if it is permanent. The Abitibi—Témiscamingue will be out of breath. I believe in Liberal minister's competence, I know he is working hard to get a victory for us and we will have that victory with the governments.

The government of Quebec decided to do everything it could to demonstrate, as it successfully did in 1991, that the forestry regime in Quebec does not in any way subsidize the softwood lumber industry. That is why Quebec is doing so well in its battle, with the help of every political party at the provincial and federal levels. However let me be clear on one thing. According to a study, referred to earlier, which was carried out in Quebec:

In Quebec, the price of timber stands on private lands is used as a benchmark to estimate the stumpage fees paid to the crown for trees taken out of a timber berth. The purpose of the study was to confirm the suitability and the legitimacy of this estimate in the context of free trade.

●(1655)

Consultants were asked to answer three basic questions: Are timber stands on Quebec private forests competitive? Are they representative of the world market for timber stands? And finally, are they properly assessed?

According to the study, the answer to all three questions was an unqualified yes. Therefore, the study confirms our claims and supports the answers we provided to the United States department of commerce last June.

I think it is important to stress that this recent study, which was very well done, confirms, clarifies and reinforces Quebec's position on this issue.

S. O. 52

Under the current as well as the previous governments, Quebec has always been in favour of free trade, and we believe that we can benefit from easier access to the America market and still fully comply with the NAFTA and international trade rules.

The position, which is now supported by this study, is very clear: our timber market from private lands is competitive and representative. It is that market that determines fairly the level of stumpage fees for timber from public lands.

That means that free market rules are fully respected. We disagree with any measure that would limit trade, such as the introduction of quotas and countervailing duties, which would hurt Quebec's forest industry.

That is the most important thing. We must think about the industry, about workers, about families. Our forests are located mostly in our resource regions. I understand that there are certain disputes. I have to mention the James Bay situation. The James Bay Cree have vested rights in that area under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, and they defend those rights.

I hope that, one day, the Cree from James Bay will be able to sit with people from the forest industry to try to find a solution to the logging issue in the northern part of the James Bay area.

In closing, I must say that I trust the minister, to whom I referred earlier as the Liberal minister responsible for 2 x 4s. We will win this battle together, with the opposition parties and the government, and one day we will be able to refer to this Liberal minister as the minister responsible for 4 x 4s.

• (1700)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member of the Canadian Alliance for calling for this debate, and the Chair for allowing it this evening.

Softwood lumber is something we have been following closely for some months, because it requires constant attention.

For those in our audience who might not necessarily be very familiar with the issue, the American market for Canadian and Quebec softwood lumber is a very vital one for us.

The Americans have imposed a countervailing duty of 19.3% as the result of a preliminary decision by the American department of industry; this would be somewhat retroactive if maintained. The Bloc Québécois has intervened on several occasions in order to seek massive support in the House for the return to free trade in softwood lumber. Why? Because softwood lumber producers in Quebec and in Canada have developed a highly competitive product capable of going for a better price in the U.S. market than many U.S. products. This is, moreover, acknowledged by U.S. consumers, who want to see quality lumber from Canada available in their country, because it would bring their house prices down.

We are fighting a major battle. It is vital we convince the Americans, at all levels, of the relevance of our position. I think that, in this regard, we must as members of the opposition serve as watchdog to ensure the government is not transforming the information and discussion sessions into negotiation sessions.

The Minister for International Trade has confirmed this was not the case. We accept his word and hope things continue this way. A lot of effort was put into winning the battle in the preceding months.

I myself went to Washington with a non-partisan delegation of members, including the member for Joliette and the member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis. We went to meet American representatives. I met someone from Louisiana who thought Canadian softwood lumber competed with his softwood lumber production in Louisiana. We had a discussion and in the end he understood that the softwood lumber produced in Louisiana did not compete with that produced in Canada.

This sort of intervention, on a small scale, between individuals, means that today the Americans have a better understanding of the facts. There is still a way to go and we must make sure we carry on.

In that sense, the visit of the Bloc Québécois leader in my riding in late August has shown that both producers and workers want to keep fighting until we reach our ultimate goal, to restore free trade.

Obviously there is a short term negative impact. For example, the price of lumber tends to drop in Canada. With a 19% tariff, we have oversupply on the Canadian market and that tends to put pressure on the price. Our producers will have to live with that. Also their benefits have dropped and ultimately jobs are lost.

Speaking of which, we will need to show solidarity if we are to stand fast to the end, until we get a final decision. One of the things we should do, and I urge the government to do it, is make sure that during that difficult period there is a special effort to diversify regional economies and to adjust the employment insurance plan.

The people who will be laid off a little sooner because there are fewer jobs in Quebec cutting, processing and shipping wood to the United States because of countervailing duties deserve a chance at EI benefits for a reasonable number of weeks.

For example, in all regions where forestry is a major industry, people could be allowed to qualify with 420 hours of work, rather than something higher if the rate of unemployment is not very high. There is therefore work to be done with respect to the EI plan.

Efforts could also be made to diversify forestry products. A particular effort is required in the next few years because, every time we export softwood lumber which has been processed, it is not affected by countervailing duties. This takes the pressure off and would give us an argument in our discussions with the Americans.

S. O. 52

•(1705)

It is important that there be this kind of debate. It is important that we make it clear that we are behind the position Canada is now defending, provided that it defends it all the way.

The worst thing would be to return to an agreement like the one we had before, which expired on March 31.

We have come too far to go back to a position like that. Let us hope that there will be an outcome which sees the end of countervailing duties and that the Americans will also recognize that free trade is the way of the future.

The free trade agreement signed with the Americans concerned a number of areas. Why not respect it? It would be to everyone's benefit.

Talks are now underway. They are not negotiations but if they lead to a long term free trade solution, so much the better. That is what we must hope for.

Many people showed maturity in this area. The Quebec government mandated Pierre-Marc Johnson, a former Quebec premier, to ensure that the Quebec position was well championed. We also contributed to the study that my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik referred to earlier, a very serious study, which showed that in fact Quebec was not giving any hidden subsidy to the softwood lumber industry, that we can compete on the North American market and that we are looking forward to an open market.

I hope that all of these positions, those adopted by Quebec, the other provinces and the federal government, bring us closer to a sustainable solution, a solution that will ensure that we will not have to deal with the present situation again in five or ten years.

Let us not forget that the five year agreement that came to an end on March 31 had a somewhat negative impact on productivity. American businesses took advantage of this period to catch up somewhat in terms of productivity, while the best would have won had the market remained fully open.

This is what we are prepared to live with on the competition level. We are ready to live with the Americans and the producers of North America. We believe we are able to take on the challenge and take our share of the market.

This is evidenced by the fact that, during the five years of the agreement allowing countervailing duties, those Canadian provinces that were not included had an advantage that I would describe as unfair in some respects.

If we could come back to full free trade, then there would be a level playing field. My riding is adjacent to the maritimes. In the last five or six years, exports have increased considerably throughout Canada, but particularly in the maritimes. Indeed, we had to predict the part of the duty that we had to make up for.

We must follow the situation very closely. Now that the international situation is stabilizing somewhat, that the terrible events of September 11, which we will never be able to put right, are behind us, we are trying to see if we can make up for the negative effects they have had on the economy.

In a region like mine, entire villages are economically dependent on the lumber industry. I am talking about villages that members do not necessarily know, small communities of 500, 1,000 or 1,500 in the Témiscouata region. I am also talking about small towns. All these communities depend on the lumber industry and we must find a satisfactory solution for their sake.

The workers who live in these communities that have achieved a good productivity level in co-operation with local industries deserve that we go to the end of the negotiation process. That is what I want. I want us to continue to apply pressure and to make compromises. Some interesting and promising meetings are going on right now and we want them to continue.

I was told that there was going to be other meetings in Vancouver and in Montreal. Let us give those meetings a chance to produce some interesting results. But let us not change our fundamental position. We want free trade again, not a compromise that would repeat the agreement that expired on March 31 of this year.

Right now, any tendency to soften our position would amount to recognizing our weakness and that would be unacceptable.

Let us continue to pursue this issue with the Americans and to argue our point, and we will find a solution. That solution will benefit both the lumber producers and the consumers who need that lumber to build houses and buildings throughout North America.

•(1710)

[*English*]

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I am delighted to participate in the debate this afternoon. I am sure some of my colleagues will be wondering why a member of parliament from Parkdale—High Park, a Toronto urban riding, is interested in these issues because obviously I do not have any softwood lumber industries in my riding.

However I would like to advise my colleagues that as a lawyer who practised law for 18 years I have a very special interest in international trade law issues. I also had the opportunity to be a chair of the House Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investments. I was a member of the committee that travelled across Canada a few years ago consulting Canadians from coast to coast on our position with respect to the WTO and where we should go from there. I must say that at that time, certainly in British Columbia but all across Canada, the issue of the softwood lumber agreement was prominent well before its expiry came up.

I would like to use my time to actually talk about the concrete steps that the Government of Canada is taking before the World Trade Organization to defend the rights of our softwood lumber industry and to guarantee the protection under law that it deserves.

While this is the fourth round of trade action taken by the U.S. industry in 20 years, the U.S. industry allegations do not merit a worthy response since they have not been sustained time and time again.

S. O. 52

I would like to outline Canada's challenge to the five U.S. measures before the WTO in defence of our softwood industry and of one related measure that directly impacts on our lumber producers.

On August 9, 2001, the United States department of commerce made a preliminary determination that Canada's softwood lumber industry was subsidized by federal and provincial programs and furthermore, that our exports to the U.S. exceeded a 15% increase in exports to warrant a "massive importations" or critical circumstances determination.

Although these findings by the U.S. were only preliminary, they were made in a politically charged environment due to intensive lobbying by protectionist U.S. lumber interests. As a result, the U.S. department of commerce will impose a 19.3% duty on Canadian lumber exports to the United States.

To add insult to injury, as the Minister for International Trade stated earlier, the U.S. department of commerce will impose duties on our lumber, not only on what is first milled but also on its increased value when it enters the United States. In essence, the United States will reap duties on the higher remanufactured lumber rather than the so-called mill rate value. This is contrary to any previous decision we have ever seen before.

This decision follows an earlier preliminary determination by another United States body. The United States international trade commission found that although our industry is not injuring United States producers, our industry "may" injure U.S. producers in the future.

Although the U.S. allegations of subsidy have never been sustained in previous cases and our export monitoring data from Statistics Canada found that our exports from this year compared to a similar period last year increased by only 11.3% and not the 15% increase as the U.S. alleges, regrettably, the U.S. department of commerce is intent on finding against our industry, whatever the circumstances may be.

While these rulings have no basis in fact or law, we nonetheless must respond accordingly.

In response to the U.S. trade action, the Government of Canada has taken the following steps before the World Trade Organization.

Under the first measure, Canada requested that a WTO panel be established to hear our complaint that the U.S. treatment of our log exports restraints or controls is contrary to U.S. obligations under the subsidies and countervailing measures agreement, which is also known as the SCM.

As the Minister for International Trade noted at the beginning of this debate, the WTO panel in its final report on June 29 found that our export restraints do not provide a financial contribution and thus do not confer countervailable subsidies. This ruling is very positive for Canada and actually undermines the U.S. claims that log export controls confer subsidies in the current countervailing duty investigation.

●(1715)

Under the second measure before the WTO, Canada also requested a WTO panel to hear Canada's complaint that when the dispute settlement body has ruled that the U.S. anti-dumping or countervailing duty order is inconsistent with United States international obligations the U.S. must refund all duties collected. Those members who were in the House earlier will have heard that the Minister for International Trade said that in 1996 in fact the Americans had to pay back over \$1 billion to our producers.

Our third action follows the U.S. department of commerce preliminary determination of subsidy in its countervailing duty investigation and the imposition of a 19.31% duty for Canadian softwood lumber imports entering the United States. Canada finds this ruling inconsistent with United States WTO obligations on a number of grounds.

First, the United States treated stumpage as a financial contribution on the basis that it is a provision of a so-called good. Rather, stumpage is a licence or right of access to cut timber, which is not covered by the financial contribution definition found within the subsidies and countervailing measures agreement. Second, the United States also wrongly determined that stumpage is a benefit and it based its findings on U.S. prices rather than on the prevailing market conditions in Canada. All of these actions are inconsistent with the subsidies and countervailing measures agreement and accordingly we will challenge these findings.

Our fourth action before the WTO concerns the U.S. department of commerce critical circumstances decision that resulted in the 19.31% duty now being applied retroactively to Canadian shipments made on or after May 19, 2001. This determination was based upon an alleged subsidy that was found to be de minimis, or less than 1% subsidy rate. This application of an alleged subsidy of less than 1% to justify the retroactive application of a preliminary duty rate of 19.31% is also inconsistent with the subsidies and countervailing measures agreement.

The fifth action we are taking before the WTO concerns the entitlement of Canadian exporters to seek a review of their circumstances when trade action is taken before them. Exporters subject to countervailing duty action are entitled to individual expedited reviews following an investigation in order to calculate company specific duty rates.

However, once again the U.S. regulations do not provide for individual expedited company reviews where subsidy rates are determined on a countrywide basis. Once again, this practice is inconsistent with the subsidies and countervailing measures agreement in that it denies exporters to such a review and the determination of an individual duty rate.

Canada is challenging these measures as WTO inconsistent and has requested accelerated consultations to discuss this matter. Those of my colleagues who were here earlier would have heard the Minister for International Trade talk about those consultations that are going on, up to today until 2.30, I believe, and they will continue to go on.

S. O. 52

Canada is also challenging the United States on another measure. The sixth measure relates to softwood lumber and it includes a review of a certain piece of U.S. legislation known as the Byrd amendment. This amendment requires U.S. customs to distribute Canadian duties assessed to affected U.S. producers directly. This amendment creates a clear incentive for U.S. industry to file and support cases against Canadian firms exporting to the United States. In challenging this measure, Canada is joined by over a dozen other countries that also find the U.S. actions WTO inconsistent.

To conclude, I think it is important to remember that this is the fourth time that the United States industry has taken action against our softwood lumber industry in the last 20 years. Our actions and indeed, we are saying, U.S. actions must be based on a rules based system whereby everyone is treated fairly, impartially and without the ability to pick and choose which rules they want to abide by.

I want to assure members of the House that we will continue to take action that best defends our industry and that best supports the international agreements that we are all party to.

• (1720)

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I am somewhat pleased to rise on debate today. I wish I did not have to. I come from a riding that has been hit very hard by this. Contrary to what the parliamentary secretary and the minister have inferred, we know that this is a far bigger issue than just British Columbia. We know it affects many people across the country.

However, after all, I am a member of parliament from British Columbia and I have been elected to represent my constituents. I think my hon. colleagues in the House need to know that people are phoning me to tell me about the hardships they are now enduring because they have been laid off.

We had nine major mills in my riding. We now have eight. One has closed completely, four are in a stage of lay off and are not producing at the moment. The other four are not by any means at capacity in terms of production. The people calling me are feeling, and I have to say this, that their government has failed them on this issue. That is about as blunt as I can be about it. They are the people who are directly affected by this. They are the people having to go on social assistance or EI and who may not have a job when this thing is settled. Their mills may not re-open. They are the people who are having to turn to help from family, churches, food banks and every other kind of support system that we have in the country when a major industry like the softwood lumber industry goes into such a serious position.

It is not unusual, then, for us to be standing and fighting on behalf of our constituents who find themselves in such a terrible state. I make no apologies for it at all.

It is on this basis that we believe the government has failed Canadians on this issue. This is a huge part of our economy, as has already been stated in the House during this debate. In 1995 it employed 100,000 people. It contributed \$14.5 billion to our economy. Those are big statistics and mean that this industry has a significant contribution to make to the total economic well-being of the country.

I live in a riding that is a major producer of softwood lumber. It covers approximately 3,837 square kilometres. Any people going to my riding would agree, I am sure, that there they would be able to see some of the most beautiful tree covered mountain scenery to be found in the world. Anyone standing at the top of the mountains to look out over the riding would get an understanding of how dependent we are upon this industry.

There are approximately 115,000 people in my riding. Of those people, over 20%, or almost 23,000 of them, depend upon forestry as their primary income. That is 23,000 individuals plus their families. By the time the economists extrapolate the family members, the circulation of the dollars through the local community and so on, it is certainly crystal clear that forestry is a major industry in my riding. Until recently it has been the number one economic stimulator in the riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Therefore I cannot just stand idly by and watch in silence as the government allows our forestry sector to be stalled due to the whims of a few American lumber barons, primarily in the American southeast.

The minister accused us of not having said anything about this in the House during the last three weeks. It is quite clear that international events have overtaken us in the House. It is still appalling for us to even think of the terrorist acts that took place and the loss of life. What we have done today is simply make sure that this issue does not go off the radar screen. It is at this point that we felt it was timely to bring it up. It ought not to slide.

The U.S. trade representative, Mr. Zoellick, stated that U.S. needs to join in with more free trade agreements around the world, that the U.S. needs to "advance the causes of openness, development and growth". He acknowledges that NAFTA has led to gains for the average American family of approximately \$1,300 to \$2,000 annually in income.

I believe that it is time, then, for our government to stand up to the American tactics and clearly say to them that it is time for them to act on their own words, if that is what they believe. Simply put, softwood lumber should be a freely traded commodity.

• (1725)

The devastating effect of the recently imposed 19.3% tariff on our softwood lumber exports has really negative consequences. In B.C. alone there are already an estimated 15,000 forest workers laid off. Without any changes it is estimated that this number will double to 30,000 by the end of the year. This, then, is a very serious issue and I hope the minister can see beyond the rhetoric, beyond all of the meetings and everything else that he has done and see that these are real people who are in a really desperate situation.

What can we do? I have several thoughts. Some of them have already been shared in the House. The first thing that must be done is to send a clear and consistent message. So many times Canadians have watched the evening news and have heard different government representatives make wildly diverse statements around this issue. That simply cannot continue. We need to hear clearly and unequivocally from our government what it is doing.

S. O. 52

Part of the problem and the reason why we are having this debate today is that the government has failed to communicate to us as legislators and certainly to the ordinary British Columbians who are losing their jobs exactly what it is doing.

Therefore I would ask the minister and his department to make sure that he clearly shares with Canadians what he is doing. Somehow he has to get those communication tools working better so that Canadians understand that the government, the party in power, is doing something about this.

The second point is to negotiate from a position of strength. A weak bargaining position is tantamount to a losing position. Simply put, the Americans not only want our natural gas and other energy sectors, they need them. If we have something that the Americans want, let us make sure that we get something that we want, namely free trade in the softwood lumber sector. There should be no shame or any kind of hesitation for us to bargain hard with the Americans in terms of energy. In spite of three senior cabinet ministers at some point offering their support to the linking of free trade and softwood lumber to the energy sector, the Prime Minister has flip-flopped on this issue several times. He did it not too long ago on a trip to Alberta. Simply put, if the Americans want our energy they must allow free trade for our softwood lumber.

Third, the government must make a strong representation to the U.S. trade representative on behalf of all Canadian companies, stating our concerns and our position unequivocally. To date we have not seen the government helping this to take place in Canada. I urge the government to stand up and act in the interests of all Canadians whether they be in British Columbia, Quebec or any other place in the country.

Fourth, the government must work quickly to remove those parts of the forestry industry that should not be included in the U.S. 19.3% tariff, specifically in the case of a number of producers in British Columbia, from where I come, in the cedar industry. The stakes are high and more jobs are at risk if those things do not happen.

This is a very serious issue for us. We want to have the government continue to act boldly and decisively on our behalf. We want it to communicate with Canadians clearly what its position is. We want the government to get tough with our American friends. They can be nice, but they can be tough. We need to be able to say that at the end of day we truly have free trade in this commodity as well as any other.

• (1730)

Mr. Stephen Owen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise once more to address the immensely important issue of our softwood lumber trade with the United States.

The restrictions in the United States creates an immense impact on the industry and on all Canadians. They are of particular interest and concern to British Columbia. Softwood lumber is more than a \$10 billion export industry and almost half of that lumber comes from British Columbia. As we have heard, 15,000 jobs have already been compromised in British Columbia and many more across the country. One million jobs across Canada are related to the forest

products industry in some way. These countervailing duties are also having an impact on federal and provincial revenues.

We have to look at the motivation for the countervail action in the United States. The motivation by the American industry is simply protectionism. It wants protection for its industries. What is our motivation? Our motivation is free trade which has been our motivation all along. It is why we did not seek to renegotiate the softwood lumber agreement when it expired at the end of April. We have been working toward free trade.

In addition to the many important aspects that have been raised in this special debate this afternoon, let me briefly mention what I would see as the four key approaches of the government together with other governments and industry in Canada.

The first approach would be strength in unity. Since I have been in the House, the Minister for International Trade has been speaking publicly on a weekly basis and working across the country to ensure that we do not separate interests across Canada by province or by industry against industry. Unity and the strength that comes from unity has been the byword and the underlying fundamental strength of this approach, and it is holding and it is working. In fact if it does not work and we do not hold together then we will fail against this challenge. This unity is provincial governments to provincial governments, all provinces to the federal government and governments with industry. That is immensely important.

Industry has not had a difficult time. It is facing different circumstances across the country but also within any one province it has differences but it is holding together and it is supporting this strength in unity toward free trade.

Our second approach is to pursue every legal avenue and every available forum to challenge these countervail duties and these false allegations.

The first issue is around subsidy. As we have heard over and over again, Canada has won this challenge many times over the last 20 years in independent international tribunals. There is no subsidy.

In 1994, after winning this issue again, \$1 billion in improperly collected countervail duties was returned to Canada and Canadian industries. Here we go again. There is no subsidy. Our differences in forest practices and the way we manage our forests in the two countries has led to some confusion perhaps but the rulings are absolutely clear. Our stumpage system and crown management system on public lands and public forests is based on sound forest management practices that protect the environment and create a sustainable flow in managed forests so that this is a sustainable industry into the future.

Subsidies, no way. It has been proven over and over again. What is the 19.3% interim countervailing duty based on? In this same time the price of lumber in the U.S. market has gone up 15%. How could there be a 19.3% entry. Moreover, it is calculated on a quarter to quarter basis rather than on an annual basis against the same quarter for the previous year which would have been the accurate calculation. The calculation is done by using the first milled price, which the calculation should be based on, yet the 19.3% countervailing duty is being imposed against the entry price which includes the added value from Canadian manufacturers crossing the border.

•(1735)

This is patently unreasonable, unfair and contrary to international trade rules.

We have looked at U.S. laws but U.S. laws keep changing. However time and again we have been told that this is clearly against international trade rules. The Byrd amendment that people have talked about has, thank goodness, been suspended by the president in response to the concerns expressed by Canadians, by our minister, by our Prime Minister, by our interparliamentary engagements, including members of the opposition to the president. We are being listened to.

What about the claim that Canada's log export restrictions are subsidies? The WTO has already ruled that those restrictions are not subsidies.

The U.S. law changed since the last ruling to prohibit the reimbursement of Canadian companies for improperly claimed subsidies. As we have heard, this is being challenged by Canada at the WTO and we will fight that to the end.

We will also fight in the U.S. courts. When the department of commerce makes its final conclusions on this matter, if it continues to support this false claim of subsidy and harm, then we will challenge it in the U.S. courts. We have judicial review there. The prime allegations in a judicial review are patently unreasonable decisions by public authorities, and that is clear from all of the evidence that has come together. We have submitted hundreds of thousands of pages of documents showing this patently unreasonable action. We will win the day in the end but what does it do in the interim?

The third approach is to have discussion with the U.S. involving federal and provincial governments. The third series of these promising discussions wound up in New York this afternoon. They were held in Toronto two weeks ago and they have been held in Washington over the last three days. They have been promising enough that all parties are being advised by Canadian industry to continue in Vancouver in the next short while and later in Montreal. These discussions are going somewhere. They are working on common ground and leading to a better understanding of the differences in forest practices and market conditions in both countries.

That leads to our final approach, which is building relationships with our natural allies in the United States. It involves parliamentarians. We have heard from over 115 congressmen, member representatives as well as senators, who have come behind the Canadian position to support our just claims for free trade. We are making progress with home suppliers and homebuilders who are seeing their costs rise simply because a few lumber companies in the U.S. are looking for protectionism in the trade of lumber products.

We are also speaking to the American consumer more and more effectively. We are strengthening unity and litigating on every point to win our just claims of free trade at the end of the day. In the interim we are working on discussions between all levels of government, with parliamentarians and government officials in the U.S., and with the solid support of Canadian industry.

S. O. 52

Finally, in our communications and dialogue, we are speaking directly to a whole range of allies, the most important of which is the American consumer and voter in the United States, to ensure their government lives up to its obligations to all Canadians to ensure free trade in softwood lumber.

•(1740)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I thank the member for Vancouver Island North for the leadership he has provided on the issue of softwood lumber. It is clear that on this side of the House we have consistently urged the government to be proactive as we have been urging this government to take action.

I am very pleased to represent the softwood lumber producers of not only my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and eastern Ontario but of all Ontario in this debate. Rural Ontario has been without a voice in Ottawa since 1993. In fact, rural Canada has been under assault by this government since it was elected.

Jobs have been disappearing at an alarming rate in rural Ontario. The need to keep jobs in the lumber industry to maintain our way of life is paramount.

The government needs to re-orient its priorities and jump at the first sign of trouble in the same way that it jumps when the presidents of large corporations, like Canada Steamship Lines and Bombardier, call when looking for government assistance. The big difference is that, unlike the friends of the government who are big multinational corporations looking for handouts, the softwood lumber industry in my riding is characterized by small operations, many family owned, and by people who are not looking for handouts, just fair treatment.

The Liberal government's softwood lumber policy is causing significant unemployment in my riding. Worried softwood lumber producers call my office on a regular basis with the hope that a resolution regarding this crisis can be found. Families with their principal breadwinner unemployed wonder how they are going to survive the winter.

In rural areas jobs are hard to come by. Ben Hokum and Son Ltd. in Killaloe, Murray Brothers in Madawaska, Gulick Forest Products Ltd. and Thomas J. Newman Ltd. in Palmer Rapids, and Bell Lumber in Renfrew are just a few of the businesses in my riding affected by this softwood lumber dispute.

It is clear this softwood lumber crisis could have been avoided. We all knew the softwood lumber agreement would expire when it did last March. If the minister had been paying the slightest attention he would have known that the American lumber industry was pushing for countervailing duties. The government talks now of building alliances with American consumers and other interested groups to fight the countervailing duty imposed on the industry. This should have been done long before we hit this crisis.

The government has a lousy record when dealing with a crisis. Whether it be Canada's response to the terrorist attack of September 11 or the current crisis with softwood lumber, the government lunges leaderless in every direction and the people pay the price with unemployment lines.

S. O. 52

Softwood lumber is big business in Ontario, exporting \$2 billion worth of goods annually and employing 20,000 people directly, many of whom work in eastern Ontario. The gross regional income of the central and eastern Ontario economy is \$5 billion annually in the forestry industry alone. The region employs 133,000 people. In the Ottawa valley the forest industry supports nearly 4,500 jobs. That translates into 2,055 direct jobs, which is 19.3% of regional goods producing sector employment, over 1,000 indirect regional jobs and another 1,295 indirect provincial jobs.

Primary wood manufacturing is over 10 times the provincial average. In actual dollars and cents our forest industry output is \$294 million annually. I can identify over 100 forest product companies that make their home in Renfrew county.

What is even more important in this debate over softwood lumber is how it is affecting our trading relationship with the United States. For value added products, the United States market is number one in Ontario.

• (1745)

More than half of all forest products in Ontario is exported. Members will understand why we on this side of the House use the term crisis when we refer to the state of the Canadian softwood lumber industry. Those products have the largest export market in the United States. Exports from Ontario have increased by more than 100% since 1991.

The United States construction industry is worth nearly \$700 billion U.S. every year. It will continue to be the focus of Canadian wood product shipments. It is imperative that the government respect the special trading relationship we have had in the past and prioritize the need to resolve this trade dispute.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I am pleased to speak to this emergency debate on softwood lumber and the trade dispute between Canada and the United States. This is an issue that is very near and dear to my heart and to my riding of Skeena in northwestern British Columbia.

My riding is heavily dependent on the forest industry. This is not a partisan or regional issue. British Columbia accounts for 50% of Canada's annual export of softwood lumber to the U.S. at an approximate value of \$5 billion. One would imagine an industry that generates this much income would be the top priority of any government to look after and to fight for.

The Liberal government has shunted the issue year after year. We are standing in the House of Commons once again pleading for some action on the part of the government to help the logging and sawmilling industries. Tens of thousands of employees across Canada go to work every day uncertain if it will be their last day of employment at a particular manufacturing plant or sawmill.

On August 10 the U.S. commerce department announced a 19.3% penalty on Canadian lumber to counter what was ruled as subsidies given to the Canadian lumber producers by the government. This is a ridiculous and unconscionable level. This has been challenged three times in the past and Canada has won every time. It is unfortunate that it was allowed to get to this level before the government reacted in an attempt to try to resolve it.

The government's minister of fisheries quite rightly urged the government to step in and help B.C. He suggested that the federal government should assist the industry by posting a customs bond to cover the new tariff. He was shot down by his own government. I find that very unfortunate.

This is not just an opposition issue; it goes right across Canada. How many government members are from ridings that depend on lumber export? Tens of thousands and possibly hundreds of thousands of jobs are involved. It is a huge issue for people across the country.

On April 5 Liberal members from the Atlantic provinces stood in the House and asked their minister for continued free trade of softwood lumber to the U.S. They were given the same no answer that was given to opposition members. The parliamentary secretary to the minister as reported in *Hansard* said:

We will continue to fight for free access for Atlantic softwood lumber, but in the context of free access for all Canadian softwood lumber because that is supposed to be the agreement. Alan Greenspan, chair of the federal reserve, yesterday cautioned against protectionism on softwood lumber and everything else.

We totally agree with that but that was six months ago. We are now into October and we still have no resolution of the issue. Free access is required, demanded and needed. We urge the government to achieve that immediately.

The government had no problem stepping into the trade dispute with Brazil over aircraft. If the lumber industry had closer ties to the Prime Minister's Office it may have been afforded the same consideration as Bombardier. I do not know but possibly.

The U.S. Byrd amendment has been suspended. It was a ridiculous amendment that put our lumber producers in the position of subsidizing their competition. It was absolutely ludicrous. It should never have been in place, but that is out of our control.

Canada is not the only country that is challenging the legislation. We have challenged it in the past and we will win. However time goes on. In the meantime the industry and families are suffering. People are losing their homes. It is a very difficult situation.

A growing number of Canadian lumber producers are being bought or have been bought out by companies owned and operated in the U.S. The countervail issue has depressed Canadian forest company stocks while U.S. companies grow and possibly are in a better position to take over these Canadian companies with 50 cent dollars.

Who knows what the ultimate result of that will be in the future? That trend is out there. U.S. consumer groups such as Home Depot and the coalition for affordable housing are on side with Canadian producers as they see the cost of lumber rising. There is a great deal of support out there for our industry. We need to continue to build on that support. The government needs to continue working on it and push as hard as it possibly can.

S. O. 52

● (1750)

Senator Baucus has asked for an anti-dumping case that would put an export tax on top of the CVD. It would mean a double tax when markets are soft. This is not acceptable or sustainable by the industry. We need to work toward more open borders to be able to trade our goods back and forth.

This also raises the issue of the perimeter safety network that has been talked about and pushes the issue a bit harder. We need to consider that in terms of free trade to make sure our borders remain open to our goods without undue delays.

There is also the option for stumpage changes. This would mean that Canadian provinces would have to change the way they sell their standing timber. This could be impractical or even impossible. It is hard to say. However these things are being worked on.

British Columbia is looking at putting in a market based stumpage system down the road that may possibly help the situation.

There is a company in my riding called Skeena Cellulose that was in serious trouble prior to the softwood lumber tariff. The wood profile in that part of British Columbia is 70% to 80% pulpwood. The small volume of saw logs and lumber that is produced has to be produced economically to subsidize the cost of logging the pulp logs which have to be removed as well. This countervail duty makes it that much more difficult.

I sent a letter to the Prime Minister and the minister in August requesting some responses as to where the situation might be. I have yet to receive a reply. I would appreciate a reply, as would people in my riding in northern British Columbia, as to the status of the ongoing talks as soon as possible.

I go back to a statement I made in the House on April 3. The government was about to host the summit of the Americas where the topic of discussion was the free trade area of the Americas. Today there is talk about a free trade agreement between Costa Rica and Canada.

I worry as to what will come of it when we have not even sorted out a dispute that is hanging over our heads with our closest trading partner and friends in the United States. I look forward to a quick resolution of this terrible situation on behalf of not only the people of Skeena but the people of Canada.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I take my place in the debate as senior federal minister responsible for the province of British Columbia because of the importance of the forestry industry to the economy of my home province. The forestry sector's contribution to provincial tax revenues is nearly equivalent to the provincial government's entire expenditure on all education costs from kindergarten to grade 12.

Forestry activity affects 14% of the workforce in British Columbia. Fourteen per cent of British Columbians are employed directly or indirectly in the forest industry. The industry is worth some \$17 billion to British Columbia's gross domestic product.

Excluding the GVRD, the forestry industry dominates the economies of more than half the communities of British Columbia, possibly even two-thirds. In many such communities forestry

accounts for 50% of the economy. In the greater Vancouver area alone forestry makes a substantial contribution in terms of 120,000 direct and indirect jobs. It is a critical issue throughout the province.

In British Columbia we have 850 mills, many of which are closed. We have 47% of the total Canadian exports of softwood lumber. Some 16,000 people have been directly laid off since the United States imposed a 19.31% duty on softwood lumber on August 9. The importance of softwood lumber to British Columbia cannot be exaggerated.

I will deal briefly with the previous speeches and move on to what has been done. I was deeply disappointed by the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. He represents a British Columbia constituency. If he wishes to come from Alberta to British Columbia and represent the people of the province he should take his responsibilities as a British Columbia elected official seriously. I was deeply offended by statements which set one region against another by suggesting if this had happened in the heartland of Canada the government would have acted instead of doing nothing.

The comments of the hon. member who preceded the last member were similar. Indeed the previous speaker made the comment that if there were closer ties with the Prime Minister's Office something would have been done. The effort to smear hon. members of the House and suggest the issue is being ignored because of its regional importance in British Columbia is despicable.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has not asked a question in the House on softwood lumber since April 23 of this year. Yet he spent the entire time since we returned to the House in September on a wild spy chase. He has gone into every part of the country desperately trying to find a connection between security in the United States and possible errors of Canadian officials. He spends his time doing that while the softwood lumber problem has become worse because of the actions of the United States.

He should be ashamed of that type of approach. As a British Columbia member he should be ashamed. It is clear why so many of his members have decided his leadership is something they can no longer tolerate.

Canada should take a united front on the softwood lumber issue. I congratulate the premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell. I congratulate the minister of forestry for British Columbia, Mike de Jong. I congratulate the industry in British Columbia. I congratulate the Minister for International Trade who has done a splendid job representing Canada on this file.

● (1755)

The type of performance we have had from the official opposition is simply not good enough. It has been pounced on with glee by our opponents in the American softwood lumber industry as an example of how we in Canada do not have a united front and how we can continue to be horsed around by the types of actions that have taken place over the last few months.

S. O. 52

I believe the hon. member for Vancouver Island North who proposed the motion is sincere in his concern for the industry, unlike the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Let us look at the opposition leader's performance on the issue. He has not asked a question about it in the House since April. Yet he comes in here and criticizes my colleague the hon. Minister for International Trade.

The minister has been working on this file day after day, week after week and weekend after weekend in contrast to the absolute absence of activity by the Leader of the Opposition. The opposition leader's critical remarks suggesting this is somehow a regional issue are thoroughly improper.

That is my view of the approach taken by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I do not know how long he will remain here or how long the members who have spoken will continue supporting him. However if he keeps this up the people of British Columbia will reject him firmly and clearly.

As to the approach taken by the Canadian government, we will continue to fight this U.S. trade action wherever we can. We are willing to discuss with the United States, not negotiate but discuss, any aspect of the issue it wishes to discuss with us. We want a long term and durable solution that avoids litigation.

We will continue to mobilize U.S. consumer groups to increase advocacy efforts in the United States. We will continue to defend our industry wherever we can. We will fight in every legal venue available although our preference is not to get involved in litigation.

The Prime Minister has kept on this file time after time not just with President Bush but with his predecessor President Clinton. The Minister for International Trade has done exactly the same thing with his counterparts in both the Bush and Clinton administrations. Thanks to their efforts the U.S. is fully aware of our concerns.

We have every reason to believe the imposition of the 19.3% duty on Canadian softwood lumber is unfair, punitive and wrong. Furthermore, it fails to meet the standards of the World Trade Organization the United States alleges it adheres to.

The decision to impose duties on the entered value and not the first mill value is contrary to longstanding U.S. practices and adds yet another unfair burden on our Canadian producers. We will continue to press on behalf of our remanufacturers at every forum and in every way to get back to the first mill value.

We categorically reject as having no basis in fact or law the decisions of the U.S. department of commerce that Canadian softwood lumber exports to the United States are subsidized by provincial and federal programs. We have gone into the issue time after time. We have won every time, but the United States in a protectionist move has changed or varied the rules so it could come back at us yet again.

We will be challenging the United States contention regarding stampage and every other practice of our provincial governments. We will be doing so in the United States and before the WTO.

Some have suggested there should be short term bridging solutions such as an export charge. There is no consensus for such a measure among provinces and industry because it would not get to the root of the problem.

● (1800)

Canada and the United States need a long term solution. That is exactly what my colleague, the Minister for International Trade, supported by me at every turn as the minister responsible for British Columbia, will work to get.

● (1805)

Mr. John Duncan: Madam Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I do believe that the minister used a profanity in describing my request for a debate tonight. I may stand corrected, but I do believe he used a profanity. Others may not think that he did. I will take his word that he did not use a profanity.

Hon. David Anderson: Madam Chairman, it is strange that this member should rise, as I recollect he is the only one of his party that I praised in what I said and with some reason. I appreciate the fact he has brought forward the motion.

I am happy to have the record checked, but certainly nobody I have spoken to in this room has heard profanity. Maybe this is the type of problem the Alliance has: they keep seeing these imaginary conspiracies in central Canada and hearing imaginary words.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Time has run out for the minister for debate. To put this on the record, I cannot look at the blues and we cannot check what the hon. member said before 6.15. As he said to the hon. member, and while I as the Chair did not hear profanity, nor did the clerks, if tomorrow we check the record of the debate and if that is the case, I am sure the hon. minister would come back.

We will resume debate because we have to end debate at 6.15.

Hon. David Anderson: Madam Chairman, perhaps the words were the sincerity of the hon. member. If that is the phrase in question, I am happy to say I stand by it. I think he is a sincere member. I do not know of any other words, nor has anybody I have spoken with or seen in the room suggested that any other word was used, but if there were any words used that were inappropriate, I of course would immediately retract them.

Mr. John Duncan: Just to clarify, Madam Chairman, I will talk to the member privately. I do not want to say the word that several of us thought the hon. member may have said in case he did not say it. It would be inappropriate for me to say it. I will talk to the hon. member privately.

Hon. David Anderson: Madam Chairman, there was only one member from that party in the room other than the hon. member. I wonder where these several are.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: I would like to remind the hon. minister that we are televised. We will resume debate.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, the umbrage and bombast from the minister on the other side is certainly inappropriate and highly offensive. For him to use this occasion on a very serious debate to attack the Leader of the Opposition is rather outrageous. In fact the patronage of his party has been well known.

He might stay for just a minute to hear that in my riding in British Columbia, we had arts and culture week in March. People wanted to know why, when \$76 per head is the national per capita given for arts and culture, Quebec got 147%, Ontario got 107% and British Columbia received 34% of those dollars. The comments made earlier do in fact have a basis. It is a pity that the minister tried to cover for this with umbrage and accusation.

On behalf of my constituents, mill workers and industry workers who are suffering in British Columbia, I am pleased to enter this softwood lumber debate. I will say right off the bat that this is hurting people in my riding. Since we have been here the past few weeks, hundreds of workers have been idle in my riding of Nanaimo—Alberni. We have saw eight mills close in Port Alberni over the last number of years. Of 1,025 mill workers employed just a few months ago, there are now only 200 working.

In Port Alberni there were 950 loggers gainfully employed and now there are 185. Right now communities in my riding are hurting. They are sitting idle wondering when or if they will get back to work because of the situation that has arisen.

The problem has roots stretching back many years and the government has been inactive on this file. It should not have been surprised by it. We have had five years to prepare for this.

I noticed earlier the minister said that the government was waiting to see what the U.S. would do. Of course we know that the old softwood lumber agreement expired in March and we saw what the U.S. did. It immediately responded with a 19.2% tariff.

Having seen that, mill workers in my riding want to know why Canada did not do anything. Why did it not have a plan ready to take action? Many people in my riding would like to know why the government does not step up to the plate and take action to get our mill workers back to work. It is time to offer some leadership and it is time to get behind the industry.

One of the suggestions put forward was the issue of bonding. If our mills are going to be allowed to export into the United States, the regulation by the department of commerce and customs requires that they have to put up a bond immediately. People in my riding want to know why the government has not stepped up to at least help the companies put those bonds in place.

The bonding issue for the big companies is perhaps something that can be negotiated with banks regarding loans, but many of the smaller companies are simply not in the position to deal with that. They do not have the capital base and many of the marginally profitable smaller producers may be pushed over the edge. Jobs will be lost and families will suffer.

I will quote Rick Doman, the CEO of Doman Forest Products, one of the largest employers in my riding. He said the bonding guarantee is an important issue. This was stated in the *Victoria Times Colonist* August 25. Mr. Doman stated:

As a short term fix for companies struggling to post a bond, pending a final resolution on the duty, federal aid is being considered in the form of the Export Development Corporation.

That corporation gives bonding at commercial rates but it isn't specific to any one company or industry and it would be optional whether companies took advantage.

S. O. 52

That's great news, according to Rick Doman, chief executive of Doman Industries, Vancouver Island's largest lumber producer.

Doman said he's been pushing the B.C. and federal MPs to consider this route as a way of delivering foreign aid without aggravating the Americans.

We would like to know why the government has not stepped up to the plate to help our industry in this manner is an issue?

Canadians have suffered because of the inaction of the government on other issues: the farm crisis; leaky condos in British Columbia; continued high debt and high taxes; the immigration crisis; the low dollar; and the decaying military response and ability. It is time to demonstrate some leadership in this area.

• (1810)

On the bonding issue, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was quick to come to the plate in Vancouver shortly after the tariff was announced. I will quote him from the *Vancouver Sun*. He said:

A loan guarantee financed by the federal and provincial governments could help firms avoid insolvency while Canada fights the duty before international tribunals.

Our mill workers and mills cannot afford to wait one and a half years or two years for the WTO process to work its way through.

We heard the umbrage expressed by the minister over allegations that the government is much quicker to step up to the plate on behalf of industries in other parts of the country. People in my riding watched the Bombardier-Embraer events unfold. The government stepped up to the plate to support an industry in another province. It even offered low interest loans to American firms to secure purchase of regional aircraft. Those people want to know why the government cannot step up to the plate to offer some temporary support to keep our mills open and our workers working while we work through the dispute resolution process.

Unfortunately, we have not seen action that has been helpful to our members at the present time. Believe me, people are hurting, families are suffering and many people are wondering whether they will have a job to go back to.

Members of the House recently received a letter from a U.S. senator suggesting that we sit down and negotiate a settlement. Reaching compromises is appropriate at times but in this case we do not need to compromise. We have a binding agreement but we need some support to get through this dispute mechanism which is already in place with the World Trade Organization.

We will win the argument with the WTO but what will our mill workers do?

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the committee is adjourned and I now leave the chair.

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1815)

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I questioned the Minister of National Defence on May 8 with respect to the position that the Government of Canada speaking on behalf of the people of Canada would take on the proposed national missile defence scheme being advocated by President George Bush.

I urged the Canadian government to get off the fence, to take a clear stand and to join with the majority of Canadians who strongly opposed this missile defence scheme. This is a dangerous new escalation of the arms race.

In the most recent poll 58% of Canadians opposed the proposed anti-ballistic missile system that is presently before the United States congress. That was in May and we are now in October and still waiting for the Canadian government to take a stand on the issue.

We all look at the impact of the terrorist attack of September 11 and ask ourselves whether this has had an impact on the American proposals for missile defence. Tragically it would appear that it has.

Among the casualties of September 11 was the democratic senators' resistance to missile defence. Prior to September 11 democrats on Capitol Hill indicated that they were prepared to trim back the \$8.3 billion first year missile shield program and place tight restrictions on testing and development.

Unfortunately that opposition appears to have collapsed and the scheme is now proceeding. Those who would benefit are the global arms merchants like Boeing, Loughheed Martin, Raytheon and TRW. They are eagerly anticipating the possibility that they might get their hands on some of the \$60 billion that the U.S. government intends to spend on this dangerous escalation of the arms race.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that he was opposed to the creation of weapons in space. Canadians also share that opposition. Yet it is very clear that the U.S. missile defence scheme would lead to the creation of weapons in space. United States senior air force officials have made very clear that is their intent.

I call on the Canadian government to speak out on behalf of Canadians against this escalation of the arms race that would lead to the creation of weapons in space and lead to the possible abrogation of Start I and Start II treaties. Russian President Putin has made that very clear.

The sanctions on Pakistan have been lifted in the aftermath of September 11. That is a matter of deep concern. Prior to September 11 the United States government indicated that it was prepared to accept an escalation of China's nuclear missile program.

It is not acceptable that Canadians, along with people from around the world, should be charged with peaceful and non-violent protests. Guy Levacher from Montreal was charged in July when he protested this action peacefully and non-violently.

I appeal to the government to speak out on behalf of Canadians and tell our friends in the United States to stop this madness and instead work toward the abolition of all nuclear weapons on the planet.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Canadian government has not been asked by the United States to participate in a BMD system. What is more, we cannot very well make a decision for or against BMD without first knowing what the system will look like, how much it will cost, where it will fit into and how it will affect the global security framework. The Government of Canada is keeping an open mind about the proposed U.S. ballistic missile defence system and has not taken a position for or against it.

Ballistic missile defence has the potential to play a positive role in global security without jeopardizing arms control and disarmament. However, the outcome will depend largely on how missile defence is pursued. We are continuing to assess the U.S. plans for a missile defence system as they emerge and to consult closely with our allies.

A Canadian decision will be taken only after an analysis of the new global security framework into which the U.S. would fit a BMD system and a comprehensive review of the implications for Canada. In line with Canada's defence policy, and without prejudicing any future decisions on BMD, the government continues to examine the issue of ballistic missile defence and the details of the U.S. system as they develop. The American proposal does not yet include a timetable for deployment or specific details about the architecture of the system. U.S. officials have made it very clear that Canada will be consulted on the issues affecting our longstanding defence partnership, including NORAD.

We are pleased with the U.S. intent to reduce its nuclear arsenal and welcome the American commitment to consult with China and Russia on ballistic missile defence. The government has a longstanding tradition of consulting parliamentarians on major foreign and defence policy issues. At the moment, and in line with the 1994 defence white paper, Canadian participation in ballistic missile defence is limited to research and consultation.

I know I am out of time, but let me say that there has been no Canadian decision made with regard to BMD and our efforts remain within the perimeters of current Canadian policy.

Adjournment Debate

•(1820)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this

House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.22 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, October 4, 2001

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Ms. Meredith	5965
Petitions		Mr. McNally	5966
VIA Rail		Mr. Kilger	5967
Mr. Adams	5945	(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee).....	5967
Questions on the Order Paper		PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS	
Mr. Regan	5945	Blood Samples Act	
The Speaker	5945	Bill C-217. Second reading	5967
Request for Emergency Debate		Mr. Strahl	5967
Softwood Lumber		Mr. Lunn	5968
Mr. Duncan	5945	Mr. MacKay	5968
The Speaker	5945	Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	5969
The Speaker	5945	Mr. Kilger	5970
Business of the House		Mr. Kilger	5970
Ms. Catterall	5945	Mr. Strahl	5970
Motion	5945	Mr. Kilger	5970
The Speaker	5945	Division on motion deferred	5970
(Motion agreed to)	5946	Suspension of Sitting	
GOVERNMENT ORDERS		Mr. Kilger	5970
Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons		(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.27 p.m.) ..	5971
Mr. Boudria	5946	Sitting Resumed	
Motion	5946	The House resumed at 2 p.m.	5971
Mr. Reynolds	5948	REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE	
Mr. Gauthier	5950	Speaker's Ruling	
Mr. Blaikie	5952	The Speaker	5971
Mr. Strahl	5954	STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Mr. Lunn	5957	Dana Canada Incorporated	
Mr. Stoffer	5958	Mr. Richardson	5971
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Salmon Fishery	
Committees of the House		Mr. Gouk	5971
Procedure and House Affairs		Communities in Bloom	
Mr. Adams	5959	Mr. Wilfert	5971
Motion	5959	Literacy	
(Motion agreed to)	5959	Ms. Folco	5971
GOVERNMENT ORDERS		Oktoberfest	
Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons		Mrs. Redman	5972
Mr. Guimond	5959	Strathcona Christian Academy	
Mr. Asselin	5961	Mr. Epp	5972
Ms. Bourgeois	5962	Mental Illness Awareness Week	
Mr. Kilger	5962	Mr. Dromisky	5972
Mr. Lunn	5962	World Teachers' Day	
Mr. Kilger	5964	Ms. Bourgeois	5972
(Motion agreed to)	5964	Mental Illness Awareness Week	
Transportation Appeal Tribunal of Canada Act		Ms. Sgro	5972
Bill C-34. Second reading	5964		
Mrs. Desjarlais	5964		

The Speaker	5972
Mental Illness Awareness Week	
Mrs. Ablonczy	5973
Fire Prevention Week	
Mr. Malhi	5973
National Security	
Mr. Comartin	5973
Médecins du monde Canada	
Mr. Ménard	5973
World Teachers' Day	
Mr. Charbonneau	5973
National Library	
Mr. McNally	5974

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

National Security	
Mr. Day	5974
Mr. Manley	5974
Mr. Day	5974
Mr. Cauchon	5974
Mr. Day	5974
The Speaker	5975
Mr. Cauchon	5975
The Speaker	5975
Mr. Jaffer	5975
Mr. Cauchon	5975
Mr. Jaffer	5975
Mr. Cauchon	5975
The Economy	
Mr. Duceppe	5975
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5975
The Speaker	5975
Mr. Duceppe	5975
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5975
Mr. Loubier	5976
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5976
Mr. Loubier	5976
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5976
Airline Industry	
Mr. Blaikie	5976
Mrs. Stewart	5976
Mr. Blaikie	5976
Mrs. Stewart	5976
International Security	
Mr. Clark	5976
Mr. MacAulay	5976
Mr. Clark	5977
Ms. Minna	5977
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mr. Forseth	5977
Ms. Caplan	5977
Mr. Forseth	5977
Ms. Caplan	5977

Employment Insurance	
Mr. Crête	5977
Mrs. Stewart	5977
Mr. Crête	5977
Mrs. Stewart	5978
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mrs. Yelich	5978
Ms. Caplan	5978
Mrs. Yelich	5978
Ms. Caplan	5978
Foreign Trade	
Mr. Paquette	5978
Mr. Manley	5978
Mr. Paquette	5978
Mr. Manley	5978
Terrorism	
Mr. Pallister	5978
Mr. Eggleton	5979
Mr. Pallister	5979
Mr. Eggleton	5979
Public Works and Government Services	
Mr. Binet	5979
Mr. Gagliano	5979
The Economy	
Mr. Nystrom	5979
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5979
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Stoffer	5979
Mr. Milliken	5979
Mrs. Stewart	5980
Terrorism	
Mr. MacKay	5980
Mr. MacAulay	5980
National Defence	
Mrs. Wayne	5980
Mr. Milliken	5980
Mr. Eggleton	5980
Transportation	
Mr. Moore	5980
Mr. Collenette	5980
Mr. Moore	5980
Mr. Collenette	5980
Terrorism	
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean)	5980
Mr. Eggleton	5981
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean)	5981
Mr. Eggleton	5981
Mr. Obhrai	5981
Mr. MacAulay	5981
Mr. Obhrai	5981
Mr. MacAulay	5981
Inter-American Democratic Charter	
Ms. Thibeault	5981

Mr. Kilgour.....	5981
Terrorism	
Mr. Chatters.....	5981
Mr. Goodale.....	5981
Mr. Chatters.....	5982
Mr. Goodale.....	5982
Airline Industry	
Mr. Laframboise.....	5982
Mr. Collenette.....	5982
National Defence and Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Price.....	5982
Mr. Pratt.....	5982
International Co-operation	
Mrs. Tremblay.....	5982
Ms. Minna.....	5982
Health	
Mrs. Ablonczy.....	5982
Mr. Collenette.....	5982
Presence in Gallery	
Mr. Milliken.....	5982
Business of the House	
Mr. Boudria.....	5983
Motion.....	5983
Mr. Milliken.....	5983
Mr. Milliken.....	5983
Mr. Milliken.....	5983
(Motion agreed to).....	5983
Mr. Reynolds.....	5983
Mr. Milliken.....	5984

EMERGENCY DEBATE

Softwood Lumber	
Committee of the Whole—Mr. Kilger in the chair.....	5984
Mr. Duncan.....	5984
Motion.....	5984

Mr. Lunn.....	5985
Mr. Robinson.....	5985
Mr. Crête.....	5985
Mr. Duncan.....	5985
Mr. Pettigrew.....	5985
Mr. Duncan.....	5987
Mr. Paquette.....	5987
Mr. Robinson.....	5987
Mr. Keddy.....	5988
Mr. St-Julien.....	5988
Mr. Paquette.....	5988
Mr. Keddy.....	5989
Mr. St-Julien.....	5990
Mrs. Desjarlais.....	5990
Mr. Gagnon (Champlain).....	5992
Mr. Robinson.....	5992
Mr. Lunn.....	5992
Mr. Lunney.....	5993
Mr. O'Brien (London—Fanshawe).....	5994
Mr. Day.....	5994
Mr. O'Brien (London—Fanshawe).....	5995
Mr. St-Julien.....	5997
Mr. Crête.....	5998
Ms. Bulte.....	5999
Mr. Elley.....	6001
Mr. Elley.....	6001
Mr. Owen.....	6002
Mrs. Gallant.....	6003
Mr. Burton.....	6004
Mr. Anderson (Victoria).....	6005
Mr. Lunney.....	6006

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

National Defence	
Mr. Robinson.....	6008
Mr. O'Reilly.....	6008

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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