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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 29, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 29, 2002

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform hon. members of a major fire this morning at the Cliff Street heating and cooling plant, which services Parliament Hill. The chilled water and steam services will not be available until further notice, hence there will be no air conditioning service in any of the Parliament Buildings for at least the rest of the day. Public Works and Government Services Canada is assessing the damages, apologizes for any inconvenience and will remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

I am not urging members to ask questions of the minister as a result of this, but I can urge members on all sides to limit the emissions of hot air during this afternoon's proceedings so that we can continue in relative comfort.

As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

[*Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize students from the riding of Perth—Middlesex who have qualified for the Canada millennium scholarship awards for the year 2002.

Based on the strict criteria for eligibility and selection of the millennium excellence program the following students have been awarded millennium scholarships: Lita Tretina of Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute of Stratford was awarded a National Award; Cynthia L. Innes of Stratford Central Secondary School was awarded a Provincial/Territorial Award; and Danielle E. Jacques of Medway High School in Arva and Steffen Marcus of Listowel District Secondary School were both awarded Local Awards.

On behalf of the constituents of Perth—Middlesex I congratulate all these students for their hard work and perseverance.

ETHICS

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us review some recent public opinion polling.

Seventy per cent of Canadians believe there is corruption in the political process. This is an indictment of all of us who serve in elected office. We must examine why Canadians have come to this conclusion. If we dig a little deeper we find that in the case of the Liberal government, 46% believe it is corrupt.

We have had a few incidents with particular ministers over recent weeks. Canadians have some opinions on these matters too. Some 82% believe the former defence minister deserves to be the former defence minister; 60% believe the former minister of public works deserves harsher punishment than getting his old job back; and 70% of Canadians do not think the firings, demotions and the Prime Minister's public relations efforts on ethics are enough.

Did members notice that is the same percentage who think politics is corrupt?

* * *

DES AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week has been designated as DES Awareness Week.

DES is a synthetic estrogen that was prescribed to pregnant women between 1941 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage and ensure a healthy pregnancy. Instead it caused serious health problems for both the mother and the child, ranging from malformations of the reproductive system and infertility to cancer.

Recent scientific research suggests that the third generation of DES exposed people may have an increased risk of developing cancer of the reproductive system. D.E.S. Action Canada is an organization whose goal is to identify all the people exposed to DES and to inform them as well as health professionals of the tragic consequences of that exposure.

I ask members to join me in applauding D.E.S. Action Canada for its achievements and in wishing it a successful public awareness week.

S. O. 31

MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is part of this government's economic plan to help students acquire the skills and qualifications needed to compete in the global, knowledge based economy. Each year through the millennium excellence awards the foundation recognizes a select group of students based on their academic achievement, community service and leadership potential.

I am proud to note that three students attending schools in my constituency of Hamilton West were among the 379 recipients of this year's scholarships. Sidra Abid of Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School, Catherine Kates of Hillfield Strathallan College, and Daniel Meester of the Hamilton District Christian High School were chosen from more than 7,000 applicants.

The creation and endowment of the millennium foundation exemplifies the forward thinking commitment of this government to ensuring access to education. I would ask that all members of the House support the ongoing efforts of the foundation at every opportunity.

* * *

RURAL EXPO 2002

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Rural Expo is held annually at different locations in Ontario. This year I am pleased to say that it is being held in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex from September 17 to 22 in Glencoe.

Rural Expo is a showcase bringing together both rural and urban communities. The event demonstrates the whole rural experience. One will still see the machinery, new and antique; and the plowing, modern and horse drawn. It will also feature local entertainers, food and fashion shows, multicultural activities and learning opportunities for all ages.

There are 1,100 acres to celebrate our agricultural heritage and our vibrant future. It will run for six days, adding Sunday, September 22 to the traditional five day run. As well, Rural Expo 2002 will be joining with the Glencoe Fair to celebrate the attractions and achievements of the town and surrounding area.

I take this time and opportunity to invite all Canadians to this wonderful event and to come and meet us in the country. A warm southwestern Ontario welcome awaits. For more information people can call 1-866-IPM-2002.

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ETHICS

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better. The Prime Minister has made efforts to explain his and his government's ethical standards but Canadians think poorly of him, his actions on ethics, his cabinet and his standards of behaviour.

This is entirely understandable. We have already seen one disgraced minister moved overseas to a cushy job. Another minister in trouble was fired but then rehired in his old job. We have seen polling today that suggests Canadians do not buy any of this as a

solution. Perhaps it is because of the way the government approaches its apologies. There are none.

Government members do admit their actions may have offended some people but they do not admit any wrongdoing. They blame the bureaucrats for doing it. They blame the opposition for raising it, the media for reporting it, the pollsters for asking about it and Canadians for believing it.

It is time the government looked in the mirror.

* * *

TERRORISM

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to once again offer our thoughts and prayers to the families who lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001. I believe it is important for the survivors to know that as Canadians our hearts are with them throughout the year and not simply on one day.

Sadly enough, our riding lost a person in this tragic attack. Ken Basnicki was a devoted husband and a proud and loving father. As Ken's wife Maureen and his children Brennan and Erica attempt to pick up the pieces of a shattered life it is imperative that we as a government, in fact we as a country, offer them the support they require during these difficult times. It is my hope that in this home we call Canada, as a family of Canadians we rise to the challenge and help take care of our own.

To the Basnicki family and all the survivors of 9/11, I offer on behalf of the House of Commons our sympathy, our prayers and a promise: We shall not forget.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is now hearing from numerous witnesses as it reviews the Broadcasting Act. One of their primary concerns is the concept of local broadcasting and production. Witnesses want radio and television programs which they can relate to and which inform them about their community. The local concept implies not just broadcasting, but production in particular.

Yesterday, on returning to work at the Radio-Canada offices in Quebec City, the staff of *Au coeur du monde* were stunned to learn that their program was being cancelled and would be replaced by a program from Toronto.

Every summer, a show was produced and broadcast network-wide from Quebec City. Last year, this show was called *Le temps d'Épicure* and was hosted by Catherine Lachaussee. For now, it appears that no new show will be produced in Quebec City for the upcoming season.

Only two programs produced in Quebec City will remain on the Radio-Canada network, compared to four last year. This shows just how little importance is attached to the local concept by Radio-Canada management.

* * *

YOUNG PEOPLE

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I had the pleasure of welcoming a group of young people from my riding, students from Rochebelle school in Sainte-Foy and from the Petit Séminaire de Québec, who have become involved in their community through Plan Nagua.

They are here today with a declaration signed by almost 4,000 young people. This declaration was drawn up by a committee of young participants and sets out the foundations of the society in which they would like to live. Since first being drawn up in April 2001, the document has been translated into eight languages and has been circulated in several countries.

The declaration was read out at the people's summit in Quebec City, as well as being used as a springboard for special activities in a number of schools in the Quebec City area.

Today, the declaration was presented to various ministers and secretaries of state, so that the young people could present publicly the values they feel are important and the means they intend to use to bring about this blueprint for society.

This declaration has been a unifying exercise which has given everyone a chance to reflect on the importance of social commitment now and in the future in a responsible civil society.

I encourage these young people to pursue this project and to inform those around them of these values, which all Canadians hold so dear.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, after reviewing just a sampling of today's 70 news clippings on the subject, I must report to the House that the term Liberal ethics is an oxymoron.

After hearing these headlines the Liberals will likely try to shoot the messenger: *National Post*, "PM 'offended' Canadians"; Charlottetown *Guardian*, "PM didn't go far enough"; Montreal *Gazette*, "Money at the root of the rot"; Ottawa *Citizen*, "Federal cabinet is failing ethics 101"; Winnipeg *Sun*, "Leadership vote behind purges"; Toronto *Star*, "One reason PM finally acted: Rumbblings about poor approval ratings"; Windsor *Star*, "Cabinet shuffle just a public relations stunt"; London *Free Press*, "Prime Minister's double standard"; *Globe and Mail*, "The arrogance of power"; Ottawa *Sun*, "PM's willingness to flaunt his integrity has done him in"; Edmonton *Journal*, "Prime Minister's con job" and "Open up fundraising books"; and Vancouver *Sun*, "What? Not again! How could you, Mr. Prime Minister?"

Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more than one minute. There are many more.

S. O. 31

MANUFACTURING

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Parliament Hill today are more than a dozen CEOs from companies that make food and consumer products.

[Translation]

These are products Canadians use every day. This sector is an important part of our national economy.

[English]

It is second only to the automotive sector in terms of its share of Canada's manufacturing GDP. It employs 320,000 Canadians directly in every region in Canada and it uses 35% of all Canadian agricultural commodities in the manufacture of its products.

I ask colleagues to join me today in recognizing the important contribution this industry makes to the Canadian economy.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

M. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by refusing to respond to the opposition's request for a public inquiry into the allegations of corruption within the government, the Prime Minister is exposing himself to the worst possible of scenarios.

By systematically refusing to allow any witnesses who might cast some light on the situation to appear before the committee, where they are always in the majority, the PM's mercenaries are feeding the most negative of speculations about their ministers and decision makers.

By refusing to call for a public inquiry, despite the collateral damage to his party, the Prime Minister estimates that damage to be less than what would result from the truth if it were to come out.

While a very considerable majority of Canadians feel that this government is corrupt, the Prime Minister's attitude has a negative impact on politicians as a whole.

The Prime Minister is forgetting that the future is long, and one of these days history will judge, from all the details available to it, and will paint a picture of a man that could bring shame to his descendants.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the arrogance of this government is astonishing.

Oral Questions

Last October the government told 106,000 Canadians with severe and prolonged disabilities that they had to reapply for their disability tax credit. These are Canadians who are quadriplegic, who are blind, who have Down's Syndrome and who have schizophrenia. In response MPs from all sides of the House wrote to the minister of revenue demanding these letters be withdrawn. We never received a reply or an acknowledgement.

Today I am asking again for the government to fix this problem. I call on it to respond to the MPs' letters and tell these 106,000 disabled Canadians that last October's letter was a mistake, that the review is on hold and that the rules for the 2000 tax year will be applied until a reasonable and appropriate review of the program can be conducted.

I also call on the government to redo the medical form after real consultations with the disability and medical communities, and most importantly, I ask that this arrogant government offer these Canadians a written apology.

* * *

CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cambridge Memorial Hospital recently received the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's 2001 CCME Pollution Prevention Award. Cambridge Memorial Hospital is the first hospital to win this award recognizing companies and organizations showing leadership in pollution prevention.

With support from Natural Resources Canada and through strategic investments, Cambridge Memorial Hospital continues to raise its energy efficiency. For the third year in a row CMH also received the Recycling Council of Ontario's Institution Award for its waste reduction.

I join the House in recognizing the environmental commitment of staff and volunteers at Cambridge Memorial Hospital and the exceptional leadership and vision of Helen Wright, CEO of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

* * *

SAFE WATER ACT

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ind. Cons.): Mr. Speaker, last May the House passed a motion to act immediately to initiate a safe water act which would have seen a safe drinking water committee made up of advisers from provinces, municipalities and native reserves. We are still waiting for that legislation.

This week the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development announced that mandatory training for reservation water treatment staff and a plant maintenance funding review would be forthcoming very soon. Had this government done what it promised a year ago the minister would not have excluded Canadians who do not live on native reserves.

Currently Manitoba has 27 boil water advisory orders, two in my riding. When can we expect the government to finally fulfill its promise on the safe water act? Lives depend on safe water.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has fired the Minister of National Defence for having done a favour for a friend and he said that the credibility of the government was affected. Yet it was the Prime Minister himself who did the same thing by helping friends in his riding and telling us that it was his duty as a good member of parliament.

How can the Prime Minister justify removing the defence minister for giving a favour to a friend when he set the standard himself in the Shawinigate affair?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the duty of every member of parliament to work for his constituents, especially in a case like that when it was a project that created 22 new jobs. The loan was the third loan. Two other loans had been accepted by the Caisse populaire and the fund of the unions in the area. The third loan was from the bank. It was eventually approved. After seven years the loan was paid back every month.

It is a duty of a member of parliament to create jobs in his riding.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday the Prime Minister admitted there were ethical problems. Now he is back to rationalizing his own actions again.

The Prime Minister has one ethical problem after another: the public works minister, the solicitor general, I could go on and on. Even the Deputy Prime Minister now says that some Canadians were offended by his behaviour during the Shawinigate affair.

Having failed to establish in nine years clear ethical standards for his cabinet, for himself and for his government, will he now act and appoint a fully independent ethics commissioner?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a project that we announced two weeks ago we said that the ethics counsellor would be reporting his activities to the House of Commons annually. He is an ethics counsellor advising members of parliament, ministers, myself, bureaucrats and so on. I have asked him to report from now on to the House of Commons and he has obliged.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we will see whether the counsellor will be fully independent.

Oral Questions

We have all these contradictions. On Thursday the Prime Minister stood behind the public works minister. On Sunday what he did warrants removal from cabinet. Mr. Gagliano was removed and then rewarded to Denmark. We could go on and on.

I want to ask one question about the Prime Minister's actions of last weekend. When exactly did the Prime Minister learn of the contract the Minister of National Defence gave to his former girlfriend?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saturday afternoon at 5 o'clock.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us go deeper into the ethical morass that the Prime Minister is in.

On Thursday he said that what the public works minister had done was just fine and on Sunday he demoted him. What changed between Thursday and Sunday?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had to make some changes in the cabinet so I had a discussion with the House leader. We came to the conclusion that he was a very good House leader and it was better for him to be there at this moment because the minister of public works was willing to take on the task. I changed my ministers according to the present need.

The House leader graciously accepted the transfer. The minister of public works of today became the minister of public works Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the ethical standards are so interesting, are they not?

We come back to the red book promise. The red book promise was pretty specific. It stated that we would have an independent ethics commissioner that would report to parliament. When will we get that?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members only had to listen to the explanation of Mr. Wilson when he appeared on CTV on Sunday afternoon. He explained the difficulty that we were facing at that time. He is advising everybody.

I have asked him to report to the House of Commons. We hope that the House of Commons on both sides will agree to have an ethics counsellor that will be for all members of parliament, including ministers, for their duties as members of parliament and reporting to the House of Commons. It will be in front of parliament in October.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister who, last week, was preaching the virtues of ethics, has a very elastic moral code when it comes to protecting his minister of immigration. Indeed, the Prime Minister stated that his minister has the right not to answer questions on his stay at Claude Boulay's condominium. Yet, the former secretary of state was required to comply with the code of ethics when he denied these facts. He was a secretary of state and was therefore accountable for his actions when he gave the interview to the *Globe and Mail*.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, by protecting his minister of immigration, he is once again contributing to undermining public trust in the government and in democratic institutions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of this House for a very long time, and there is a well established and very appropriate principle whereby the personal problems of MPs are not within the public domain.

The reported incident occurred before the member became a minister. At the time, he was dealing with his private life. He does not have to talk about it to anyone, and nor do we want MPs to be required to answer questions from journalists, regardless of their position in the House, and this applies any day of the week.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about private life, we are talking about public life. When the interview took place, the member was a secretary of state. We are talking about public actions done in private. That is something quite different.

The Prime Minister is absolving a minister who did not tell the truth in the Groupe Everest affair. While Groupe Everest had just been awarded a \$500,000 contract, the member was denying the facts, this while he was a secretary of state, a minister who knew full well that if he admitted staying at Claude Boulay's condominium, it would put him directly in a conflict of interest situation.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, by downplaying the actions of the minister of immigration, he is sending the signal that it is OK for a minister to lie to the public?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister acted very properly. He said that what was going on in his private life before he became minister was his own business. If there are public matters that have occurred since then, while he was a minister, then he would have to answer questions.

The case to which the hon. member is referring involves a contract which, as far as I know, was awarded by the department of public works.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the treasury board's special rules established for advertising contracts, departments are required to hire firms through Communications Canada, which comes under the department of public works. However, the minister making the request does have some authority to recommend to public works.

My question for the minister of heritage is the following. In the case of the contract awarded to Everest, who at the department of heritage used this authority to recommend?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the authority to recommend followed the usual procedure in the public service.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, upon leaving the Liberal caucus, the Minister of Justice gave an explanation and what he said was this: "The minister does not have enough opportunities to intervene in the choice of communications firms. He should have more. He should be able to choose the firm he wants".

Is the Minister of Justice not setting the stage, in order to justify and explain what his colleague from immigration did, which is about to be brought to light?

Oral Questions

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite simple. In the debate that is currently taking place in the House, the members on the government side are being raked over the coals on a daily basis for decisions that were made, not by us, but through delegated authority, particularly when it comes to communications contracts.

Basically, if the other side wants to discuss reforms, then let us talk about even greater reforms. Let us talk about the role of politicians in the entire administration of government. Let us also talk about the role of members in the entire administration of government and in their ridings to ensure that the rules are clearly laid out and that when we go before the public every four or five years, we can fulfill our responsibilities.

• (1425)

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

It is predictable that the government would hide behind RCMP investigations. However we do not need an RCMP investigation to know that it is sleazy to transfer government funds to a crown corporation through a marketing firm, in this case Lafleur, so friends can get a piece of the action.

We assume the Prime Minister has been fully briefed on this latest revelation. I would ask him to inform the House whether railroading VIA Rail funds via Lafleur is an isolated incident or, with the government, is it just business as usual?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the matter the leader of the New Democratic Party referred to is, as she knows, in the hands of the RCMP. The very best legal advice given to me is that the worst thing members of the House could do would be to involve themselves in that investigation and perhaps defeat the purpose of what the RCMP are trying to accomplish.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it was quite predictable that we would have government members hiding behind the RCMP investigation. However let me remind government members what we have here.

Lafleur Communications, owned by Groupaction by the way, pocketed \$120,000 for the privilege of having \$1 million in government funds pass through on its way to VIA Rail, a crown corporation.

Does the Prime Minister not think that is a pretty hefty fare for railway passengers, even for Liberal freight?

• (1430)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the circumstances of the file resulted in a review by the officials in my department who referred the matter to the RCMP for the appropriate action.

The police will investigate. That investigation will take them wherever it takes them. It is up to them to conduct the investigation and I suspect they are considerably better at it than the hon. member.

* * *

GOVERNMENT LOANS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just told the House that the Auberge Grand-Mère loan is being repaid. That was the loan that was approved after the Prime Minister personally intervened with the president of the Business Development Bank.

Business Development Bank records are supposed to be confidential. The Prime Minister spent all of last spring saying that he had no interest in the loan. How does the Prime Minister know that the Yvon Duhaime loan is being repaid?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a graduate in law and I know that if a loan has not been paid after six months the loan is recalled and the company is sued. There is no such a record to the effect that the loan has not been paid. If the loan has not been paid, the Caisse populaire, le Fonds de solidarité and the Business Development Bank would have taken action against that businessman and they have not done so in the last six years.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister needs another napkin to write an agreement on.

The RCMP said that its investigation into the Groupaction files will go wherever it needs to go. It now extends to Lafleur Communications. Yesterday the Deputy Prime Minister told the House that Alfonso Gagliano was not under any police investigation.

How does the Deputy Prime Minister know that? Is he suggesting that the RCMP investigation will go wherever it needs to go except to Alfonso Gagliano?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have said that there is an investigation. We have seen no mention of former minister Gagliano's name on any of the documents or in any public communication in relation to this inquiry.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us try to figure this one out. Ministers who get caught with their ethics down get rewarded, fired, promoted or demoted.

One minister does the same thing as the Prime Minister and gets fired, while the Prime Minister takes trips and shrugs his shoulders.

Why are Liberal standards and ethics only made up on the day something happens?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought those people had some standards. Yesterday I was in Rome for one of the most important days in the western world. We made a decision to take the Russians into NATO.

Perhaps I can inform the hon. member that while I was there, NATO Secretary General Robertson said to me “Thank you, Prime Minister of Canada. The first time this problem was discussed at NATO it was an idea of Canada”.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, but meanwhile back at home the government has a terrible ethics problem and I think the Prime Minister should maybe concentrate on that a little.

Does this make sense to anybody? One day there are no standards, then there are some standards, but that is only when the Prime Minister looks bad, and then there are standards, but that is the bureaucrats' fault.

Why not develop quality standards for cabinet then hire an independent ethics counsellor who would report to parliament to oversee these? What is wrong with the concept? What is wrong with the government understanding—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than reading a prepared question, if he had listened he would have understood what I said. I said that I was inviting the House of Commons to establish an ethics counsellor who would look at the ethics of members of parliament, senators and ministers and would report to the House. I said that a minute ago. He should listen before asking questions.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It is impossible to hear the hon. member for Chambly, who has the floor.

[English]

I warned hon. members about the problem with our air conditioning and this will not help.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister of immigration stayed at the condo owned by his friend Claude Boulay, the president of Everest, when he was a backbencher. The Prime Minister has played down the whole affair by saying that he was not a member of cabinet at the time.

Will the minister of immigration tell us whether he has stayed in accommodation belonging to Claude Boulay, his wife, or Everest, here or outside Canada, since being appointed minister?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question is completely unacceptable. One could rise and ask the same question of everyone.

When someone asks a member whether he was in a particular bar last night, even if they know he was not, doubt is created.

One could ask a member whether he beat his wife yesterday. If he does not answer or says he did not, doubt will be created in people's minds. This is a deeply destructive and dishonest line of questioning.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: Really.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that the government would answer all questions in the House, and that that is why there would be no public inquiry.

Yet my question is simple and straightforward. Did the minister stay in accommodation belonging to Claude Boulay, his wife, or his company, since being appointed to cabinet, yes or no?

The Speaker: I have reservations about the acceptability of such a question. I know that we have already had an answer, but this question does not concern the minister's duties. There is no reference in the question to his ministerial duties. In my view, the question is unacceptable.

We will therefore proceed with oral question period. The hon. member for Crowfoot.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general admitted yesterday that he did in fact discuss a \$3.5 million grant application with the commissioner of the RCMP. Canadians are offended that he has not admitted and refuses to admit that he blatantly abused his ministerial position.

Will the Prime Minister admit that it was wrong for the solicitor general to lobby the very organization that he controls?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general is the minister responsible in the House for the province of P.E.I. Institutions in that province made an application. They sent a copy of the application to the minister who passed it on to his department. It was the commissioner who discussed it after he had received the document.

It was his duty as a member of parliament to represent his constituency and do something that could be useful for the RCMP and the people of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, clearly it is not the responsibility of the solicitor general. It is not his duty to lobby the organization that he controls, and certainly not on behalf of a family member.

Canadians do not need an eight point ethics package to tell them that the solicitor general crossed the line. I therefore ask my question again. When will the solicitor general do the right thing and resign?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, how low can they go?

I know the minister's brother and he has been an extremely competent public servant for a long time in P.E.I., working for a public administration.

The member of parliament says that he was lobbying for his brother. He was lobbying for a public institution in the province of P. E.I. I think it is shameful to act like that in the House of Commons.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that the series on the Rocket received a grant—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. We will have a little order. The official opposition has had questions and we will have more later, but we will not have them now.

• (1440)

[Translation]

The hon. member for Longueuil.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that the series on the Rocket received a grant of \$1 million, including \$120,000 that was presumably paid in sponsorships to the firm Lafleur, before transiting through VIA Rail Canada and finally ending in the hands of Robert-Guy Scully's production company. Incidentally, Robert-Guy Scully also received \$2 million to produce a television series on innovation.

In light of these new revelations, does the minister of public works not deem it appropriate to put the \$2 million contract awarded to Robert-Guy Scully on hold, until more is known about this case?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that this file was reviewed by officials in my department. They concluded that there were matters here that raised important questions. Those questions have been referred to the RCMP. The RCMP will investigate and the matter will be disposed of according to law.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, based on the minister's reply, we must conclude that the contract awarded to Robert-Guy Scully should not have already existed.

What we are asking first and foremost is this: In order to spare us the lengthy delays of the access to information requests, will the minister of public works pledge in this House to table, at the earliest opportunity, the contracts for the series on the Rocket and Robert-Guy Scully's new contract, which already exists?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the matter is in the hands of the RCMP. I am sure no member of the House would want to pursue any course of conduct that would in any way interfere with the RCMP investigation.

On the other hand, I recognize the need for transparency and I will consider what can be done to ensure that while this matter is unfolding there is sufficient transparency to satisfy the public interest.

* * *

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the president of Holland College is the brother of the solicitor general. In January the RCMP wrote Holland College to tell it there was no funding for its \$3.5 million proposal.

Yesterday the Prime Minister admitted that the solicitor general raised this matter with the RCMP in a meeting in May. Today he admits that the solicitor general was lobbying.

Why did the solicitor general reopen this matter with the RCMP when the RCMP formally denied the request?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the letter to which my hon. colleague is referring and I stand by the facts that I gave yesterday. The facts are that the proposal was submitted to the AIF. My office received a copy and it was sent to the RCMP to be reviewed. The RCMP decided it would not support it.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that explanation goes nowhere. The solicitor general should not put political pressure on the RCMP. An independent police force is the hallmark of a democratic society.

How then can the solicitor general possibly suggest he was doing his job when he put political pressure on the RCMP commissioner to reconsider the decision? How can corrupting the RCMP be doing his job?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday and I will say again today for my hon. colleague, as solicitor general I meet regularly with the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and he briefs me on issues.

As I indicated yesterday, on May 14 this was one of the issues that came up. I said that yesterday as a fact and it is a fact today.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONE YOUTH

Mr. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the minister of intergovernmental affairs announced a contribution of \$3.5 million for a new initiative, "Francophone Youth and Community Futures".

Oral Questions

Three well-established community organizations, the Foundation franco-ontarienne, the Société des Jeux de l'Acadie, and Manitoba's Francofonds, will be the three recipients of this funding.

Can the minister tell us how this announcement will benefit the official language minority communities of Canada?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is it absolutely appropriate that the first question the hon. member for Saint Boniface asks in this House is on something that will directly affect the youth of Saint Boniface.

For the first time, with the help of Canadian heritage—and I thank its minister—the Government of Canada will be able to provide, direct to young francophones in minority communities throughout this country, assistance that will strengthen their sense of attachment to and full participation in the life of their communities. There is nothing more vital to a community than the enthusiastic involvement of its youth.

* * *

•(1445)

[English]

WHISTLEBLOWING

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we are going to get to the bottom of these sponsorship scandals, we need public servants to feel comfortable coming forward with whatever information they have. However they are not going to speak out if they are worried about being disciplined, fired or even charged for the role they may have played.

Canada does not have any whistleblowing legislation. As an interim measure until we do, will the government agree to a general amnesty for any public servant who brings forward information relevant to investigation of these sponsorship contracts?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): As you know, Mr. Speaker, treasury board has a policy on disclosure and there is an integrity agent officer for the public servants. In no way will they be disciplined if they disclose any wrongdoing in the public service.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Canadians are deeply concerned about the fact that India and Pakistan are on the brink of war, possibly nuclear war, over Kashmir. In 1948 and 1949 the United Nations supported a referendum to allow the people of Kashmir to determine their own future.

I ask the minister this. Does Canada continue to support the principle of self-determination for the Kashmiri people and will we call on India to finally accept this political solution to avoid a disastrous war with Pakistan?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that the government shares the concern of the hon. member regarding the situation in India and Pakistan. The Prime Minister personally spoke to President Musharraf on the weekend. He also spoke to the prime minister of

India. We are doing everything we can along with our colleagues at the NATO meeting, which we were at yesterday, and in the international community to ask these two parties to draw back from the brink of what could be a nuclear war.

I do not think it would be appropriate for us now to interfere in the fight between them. What we need to do is stop the rhetoric and stop the potential of this tremendous violence.

* * *

[Translation]

MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian politics is in mourning. The voice of the federal Liberals in Quebec has been silenced. The member for Bourassa, the minister of immigration, after having put his foot in his mouth, no longer opens it at all.

A radio personality, vice-president of Polygone and buddy of Groupe Everest, this communicator with close connections to communications firms, is no longer communicative.

We are a tenacious bunch, however, so here is my question. Can the minister tell us whether a minister is lying if he deliberately mispeaks in answering a question? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think this question deserves an answer.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs said that, based on a report seven years ago, he made changes in first nations water quality, yet the Walkerton report said that it was unacceptable and disturbing that 83 reserves across Canada currently had contaminated water systems. The member for Toronto—Danforth, who held a water roundtable on a reserve, echoed the recommendations of the roundtable of the Conservative Party that the federal government must act to protect the drinking water for first nations.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why is the government not acting to ensure that all Canadians, particularly on reserves where they have exclusive jurisdiction, have access to safe drinking water?

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I imagine the member was away when I answered this question just a few days ago.

The reality of it is that since 1995, when we first did our own report between the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Health Canada, we put forward a plan to deal with all the insufficient plants on reserves. Through that process we went from about 140 plants that were inefficient down to 22. We are working on the last 22. In that time period, we have put an extra \$500 million into the system and we continue to put over \$140 million a year into upgrading those processes.

Having said that, I will be coming forward very shortly with an announcement to improve the system even further.

Oral Questions

●(1450)

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's revelation that the Liberal Party's ties to Groupe Everest now reach into the Prime Minister's Office is a cause for concern. We now know that Groupe Everest received an untendered contract to place an ad for the Prime Minister's Canada Day message. We hear from the public works minister that other contracts have been referred to the RCMP.

I would ask the public works minister this. How many more contracts have been referred to the RCMP by either his office or the auditor general and will he freeze all discretionary advertising until the auditor general completes her investigation?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman knows, the auditor general herself has made certain references to the RCMP. My officials have undertaken to refer any other matters that come to their attention to the RCMP. The advice I have, and I say this very sincerely to the hon. gentleman, from legal advisers is that for me or for anyone else to comment on the number or on the course of those investigations could do exactly what both he and I would not want to do, and that is foul up the investigation.

Therefore, I ask him to bear with me and assure him that any way in which I can be transparent in this matter I most certainly will be.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate him being transparent. I think any lawyer would tell us the number of more contracts that have gone. We announced publicly that three contracts went. I think Canadians would like to know how many more and as quickly as possible. As soon as he can get us that information, Canadians will believe it.

After all of this is done, will he clear the air now, because he said he would look into this the other day, and allow all parliamentarians to look at all the contracts that are sitting in the files so we can review them as the opposition?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the first part of the question, I will seek specific legal advice on whether the releasing of numbers would present a difficulty in the investigation. I will answer that question for the hon. gentleman just as soon as I can.

On the second part of the question, the files in this matter are being reviewed back until I believe it is 1997 by my officials. As he knows, there is also a full scale inquiry being made by the auditor general. I believe between those two processes, the internal one and the external one, all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, firms that are cozy

with the Liberal party are being awarded contracts for which they are being paid commissions twice over. Lost reports are being paid for twice, the same report is being used three times, rather than once, and yesterday in Toronto, even the Deputy Prime Minister said that the Prime Minister's behaviour in the Business Development Bank of Canada affair had offended Canadians.

Does the Prime Minister not think that all of the necessary ingredients have finally come together to warrant an independent public inquiry?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, what the member said and what the Deputy Prime Minister said are not the same thing.

He said that at the present time, we are working to establish a code. We will soon be tabling in the House a code to guide relations between members, ministers and crown corporations.

Right now, in response to the opposition in particular, we have asked the auditor general to conduct a review. That is what she is doing at this time and she is an officer of the House of Commons.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Alfonso Gagliano is now in Denmark, the second minister of public works has returned to his old position, the former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport has lost his memory, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is not being allowed to hear any witnesses, and Groupaction, Groupe Everest and Communications Coffin have now been followed by Via Rail and Lafleur Communications. The latest revelation is the Minister of Justice's salmon fishing jaunts.

Does the Prime Minister not feel that things are starting to add up and that a public inquiry is more necessary than ever?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said that the auditor general was looking into it.

However, what I have noticed and what I find unfortunate, because people are watching us, is that for 17 days, members of the opposition, who have had the opportunity to ask questions of the government, have not asked about agriculture, softwood lumber, Kyoto or the environment.

The public agrees with what we are doing. So, their only recourse is to try to ruin reputations.

* * *

●(1455)

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to get clarification on something the Prime Minister said earlier in question period. We want to get to the bottom of the ethical standards of the Prime Minister and the government.

Is it really his position that a minister of the crown has not only the right but the responsibility to directly lobby officials or agencies under his direct supervision to get favours for friends or family members? Is that really his position?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a minister, a member of the cabinet is a member of parliament and a minister is responsible for his province. He has the duty to pass requests that come into his office to any agency in the government. It is for the agency to say yes or no.

In that case, if there was lobbying, and there was no lobbying, it was a transmission of a request. The request did not receive a favourable answer because the commissioner reported to him, when they discussed it, that the RCMP had decided it did not have the funds to proceed with the request.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of ministers of the crown is to act in the interests of all Canadians, not as private lobbyists.

I have a second question. For days members from all parties have been asking the minister of immigration to clarify statements he made as a minister of the crown contradicting himself on whether he stayed at the Boulay chalet.

I am asking the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to stop stonewalling on this and allow the minister of immigration to answer this question. Why did he contradict himself?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a minister replies to questions about his ministry. It is a rule of the House of Commons.

Talking about stonewalling, when will he give us the names of the people who contributed to his campaign? When will he tell us who was funding the National Citizens' Coalition? Attacking every politician, never revealing his salary and never giving the source of the funds, all is completely hidden when it is the case of that party across. It is unbelievable that they have double standards like that.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a different topic, my question is for the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women.

Today the Quebec Council on the Status of Women made public its research on prostitution and the trafficking of women.

Could the secretary of state tell the House what the federal government is doing to address what is a very serious issue?

Hon. Jean Augustine (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to thank to my colleague for giving me the opportunity to answer the first question in my new role.

Canada is committed to preventing and combating the trafficking of women. On May 14 we signed the United Nations protocol to prevent, suppress and punish traffic in persons, especially women and children. The Status of Women has put in a lot of work with communities with responses to that very negative issue.

* * *

G-8 SUMMIT

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the government released its compensation

package for those affected by the G-8 summit. I have a document in my possession from a prominent insurance company in Canada in which it states that since September 11 it will no longer cover acts of terrorism.

Surely the minister agrees that the violence at G-8 summits in the past goes well beyond vandalism and is considered terrorism. Does the minister have a plan for those who will be denied private insurance coverage due to acts of terrorism?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we have a process in place to make sure that for any damage that takes place and is directly involved with the G-8, people are compensated.

• (1500)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have gone over this compensation package and it is very apparent that the claims decisions are discretionary, subjective and in the hands of government bureaucrats.

Will the minister give a definition of extraordinary costs for an individual? Will a person's house be covered or just the broken windows? Will a person's car be covered? What about bodily harm?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is probably aware, we dealt with the province of Alberta to make sure that we came up with an appropriate agreement before everything was agreed to, to have the G-8 in Kananaskis. We have the agreement of the city of Calgary and the province of Alberta and the G-8 will be a very successful and safe event.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the contract awarded to Robert-Guy Scully through Lafleur Communications for a series on Maurice "Rocket" Richard is being investigated by the police. We know that a new \$2 million contract has been awarded to Robert-Guy Scully for a series on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Given the fact that Scully has had serious difficulties relating to the funding of the *Heritage Minutes* and that his series on the Rocket is under police investigation, would the minister of public works not find it advisable to suspend the contract for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship series until such time as the police investigation is over, as he has announced will be done in the case of the communications firms under investigation?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take the hon. gentleman's question as a representation. I will review the file and see if there is any information in the hands of the Department of Public Works and Government Services that would in any way raise other questions, as has been suggested in the question, that would need to be followed up. If so, I will follow them up.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Cooperation is in Africa at this time, attending the annual assembly of the African Development Bank in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Can the minister's parliamentary secretary explain to us the commitments made in the past few days by our government in connection with the urgent problems of African development, for example in the areas of agriculture, health and nutrition, good governance and equality of the sexes?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today in Ethiopia the Minister for International Cooperation announced \$93 million for some very important initiatives in Africa.

For instance, \$74.5 million will go to the African Development Bank for loans to the poorest African countries. Another \$10.5 million is earmarked for farmers and shepherds, and \$7.95 million to foster good governance and equality between the sexes.

This government continues in its determination to address urgent development problems in Africa.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, to ease tension between India and Pakistan, world leaders are playing a role in preventive diplomacy but the Canadian government is sidelined. That is not surprising given the inconsistent and haphazard foreign policies of the government.

In 1996, the Prime Minister led a team Canada mission to India. In 1998, the Liberals unwisely imposed sanctions against both India and Pakistan in a knee-jerk reaction to their nuclear tests. In 2001, the government decided to lift the sanctions.

Given its erratic policy, does the Liberal government have any influence left in the region?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member had been with me when I was with the Prime Minister at the NATO meeting in Rome yesterday. If he thinks we have no influence in the world, he should travel with us. In every country I have had the privilege to go to people have asked us for the help of Canada precisely because we do have a consistent foreign policy.

The consistency in that policy is balance, tolerance, respect for others and a wish to help them end the violence between themselves when they are not able to do so, and we are proud of that record.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Nguyen Dinh Loc, Minister of Justice of Vietnam.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

● (1505)

The Speaker: Order, please. Due to the problems caused by the loss of air conditioning in the Chamber and potential damage to the audio systems, I have authorized that the speakers at members' desks be turned off.

[Translation]

Members are therefore invited to use their earpieces to monitor the debate.

[English]

I know things will be much quieter for the rest of the afternoon anyway, but I thought members would want to have that bit of information.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a similar train of thought, there has been consultation among House leaders on the following motion, which I would like to offer to the House, in view of the unfortunate incidents that occurred earlier this day. I believe you will find unanimous consent. I move:

That, for the remainder of this day and while the mechanical difficulties persist, whichever terminates earlier, the Speaker may relax the usual standards of dress for members present in the House provided that they do not hold the floor.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, provided that they do meet with the Speaker's concurrence, otherwise it goes without saying.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

An hon. member: Don't let it go too far, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will all follow the advice of the hon. member for Edmonton North and make sure it does not go too far.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

This report contains corrections to the 19th report of the committee on the World Trade Organization, tabled on May 9 2002.

[English]

TRANSPORT AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. Ovid Jackson (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations with regard to the estimates for 2002-03.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 60th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the legislative committee on Bill C-55, an act to amend certain acts of Canada and to enact measures for implementing the biological and toxin weapons convention, in order to enhance public safety.

I also have the honour to present the 61st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Transport. If the House gives its consent I intend to move concurrence in the 61st report later this day.

* * *

• (1510)

SUPREME COURT ACT

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-466, an act to amend the Supreme Court Act (appointment of judges).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill deals with the all important matter of judicial accountability. It deals only with the appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada. It would require parliament to review and approve the Prime Minister's proposed appointees for the country's top court.

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

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-467, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Criminal Code (truth in sentencing).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill provides for truth in sentencing. It would require people who have been found guilty of a second or a subsequent indictable offence to serve a greater amount of their sentences than is currently necessary before qualifying for conditional release.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-468, an act to amend the Criminal Code (impaired driving).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill is very straightforward. It deals with impaired driving. It would increase the penalties against people found guilty of a second or subsequent offence of impaired driving or of failing to provide a blood or breath sample.

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

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That Motion No. 388 in the order of precedence be withdrawn and replaced with Motion No. 387, both of these motions standing in the name of the member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 61st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present this petition on behalf of the residents of Carstairs and the Crossfield area in my riding.

The petitioners call upon parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or any other abnormal activities involving children are outlawed.

Routine Proceedings

The sooner we get this done the better.

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I wish to present a petition on behalf of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex constituents who call upon parliament to protect their children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia involving children are outlawed.

• (1515)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. In the first petition the signators call to the attention of parliament that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by a majority of people in this country. The courts do not seem to be defending the will of the majority.

The petitioners call upon parliament to protect our children by taking all the necessary steps to ensure that materials which are produced and promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities are outlawed.

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition the signators note that the federal minister of fisheries has a constitutional obligation to protect wild fish and their habitat from the effects of fish farming. As the auditor general and others have pointed out, the minister is not fulfilling his obligation.

The petitioners call on parliament to ensure that the federal minister of fisheries fulfills his obligation to protect wild fish and their habitat from the effects of fish farming.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today from the citizens of Consul, Saskatchewan and area. They would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by the clear majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way which makes it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment.

They call upon parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

[Translation]

RURAL ROUTE MAIL COURIERS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by several people from Quebec. They are petitioning the Parliament of Canada to repeal subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act, because they allege that this provision deprives rural route mail couriers of the right to collective bargaining. I therefore wish to present this petition on behalf of these people.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition in which 580 citizens of Canada draw the attention of the House to the fact that modern science has unequivocally and irrefutably established that a human being begins to exist at the moment of conception. They request that the government bring in legislation defining a human fetus or embryo from the moment of conception, whether in the womb of the mother or not, and whether conceived naturally or otherwise, as a human being and making any and all consequential amendments to all Canadian laws as required. This merits the consideration of the House.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I would like to table a petition that I received from Mark and Karen Petersen from my riding of Mississauga South, which is also signed by a number of other Canadians.

The petition has to do with the issue of child pornography. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that child pornography is condemned by a clear majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way that makes it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment. Therefore, the petitioners call upon parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote child pornography are outlawed.

It is an important issue to the House and to all Canadians.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 156 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 156—**Mr. Bill Casey:**

With respect to the Department of Health's regulations for the labelling and dating of foods with a shelf-life of over 90 days: (a) is there a regulation for the labelling and dating of these foods; (b) is there a regulation existing for the placing of a "packaged on" date for these foods, (c) if not, is the government considering putting forth regulations to ensure that these foods contain a "packaged on" date; and (d) if not, why not?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): (a) In cases where the shelf life of a food product is expected to be more than 90 days, there is no general requirement to label such products with a "best before" or "packaged on" date. Of course, all other labelling requirements, e.g. ingredient listing, common name, et cetera, apply unless exceptions are noted.

(b) As noted above, there is no general requirement to label products with a shelf life expected to be more than 90 days with a "best before" or "packaged on" date.

However, there are two types of products that may have a shelf life of over 90 days for which a requirement for date of packaging or date of processing on the label applies. These are “low-acid foods packaged in hermetically sealed containers” and “whole cheese that is not made from a pasteurized source”.

The regulations pertaining to a requirement for the indication of a date on the label for these types of products are quoted below:

B.27.005 states that “No person shall sell a commercially sterile low-acid food packaged in a hermetically sealed container unless (a) the label or container of the food bears a code or lot number that identifies, in a legible and permanent manner, (i) the establishment in which the product was rendered commercially sterile, and (ii) the day, month and year on which the food was rendered commercially sterile; and (b) the exact meaning of each item in any code or lot number referred to in paragraph (a) is available to an inspector at the establishment or, where the food is imported, from the importer”.

B.08.042 states that “No manufacturer shall sell whole cheese that is not made from a pasteurized source unless the date of the beginning of the manufacturing process is (a) marked or branded thereon within three days thereof or (b) marked on the label at the time of packaging, if the cheese is such that, because of its texture, consistency, or physical structure, such date cannot be effectively branded or marked on the cheese”.

In addition, there are certain foods for which expiration dates are required. Note that these foods all have specific nutritional requirements and several of them are used as sole sources of nutrition.

These are: Formulated liquid diets: B.24.103(g); Meal replacements and nutritional supplements: B.24.202(d); Foods represented for use in a low energy diet: B.24.304(h); Infant formulas, or human milk substitutes, and foods containing human milk substitutes: B.25.057(1)(f) and (2)(f)

“Expiration date”, B.24.001 and B.25.001, for these products means “the date (a) after which the manufacturer does not recommend that it be consumed, and (b) up to which it maintains its microbiological and physical stability and the nutrient content declared on the label”.

(c) There is no current activity with respect to putting forward such regulations.

(d) A durable life date provides consumers with an indication of the date until which a food, stored under appropriate conditions, would “retain its normal wholesomeness, palatability, nutritional value and any other qualities claimed for it by the manufacturer”. A growing number of Canadian companies have voluntarily adopted “best before” dating for their foods with a shelf life greater than 90 days to provide more information to their customers. This trend is expected to continue.

Regardless of whether a food is within or beyond its stated durable life date, if a food is considered to pose a hazard, it must be dealt with by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, or other relevant authority. In the course of an investigation, the CFIA may make a request to Health Canada for a health risk assessment, HRA.

S. O. 52

It is, nevertheless, the responsibility of food manufacturers/importers to ensure the safety of the food they put on the market and to ensure that the durable life date is valid.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 144 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question n° 144—**Mr. Paul Crête:**

With respect to the Youth Employment Strategy: (a) in the last fiscal year, how much money was allocated to the Strategy by all federal departments, broken down by province; (b) with respect to the four Youth Employment Strategy initiatives (Youth Internship Canada, Youth Service Canada, Youth Information and Awareness, and Student Summer Job Action) in Quebec, what organizations received more than \$4,000 and what amount did each receive; and (c) with respect to the four Youth Employment Strategy initiatives in Canada, what was the total amount allocated, broken down by province?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

AGRICULTURE

The Speaker: The Chair has received notice of an application for emergency debate from the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my application for an emergency debate made under Standing Order 52 concerns an important and urgent matter affecting the agriculture industry.

Government Orders

For the second consecutive year most farmers in Saskatchewan, Alberta and many other areas of Canada will confront the effects of another drought. All indications point toward another hard summer for prairie producers.

Throughout the winter and spring the prairies received very little precipitation. Spring runoff levels are in some areas non-existent. The South Saskatchewan river should be teeming with water right now but because of low water levels it looks more like a creek.

Our livestock producers are also dreading the summer. They too rely on the land to feed their cattle. Local forage for cattle and other livestock will be very limited. Again, Agriculture Canada is indicating that grass growth on pastures is poor across the prairies. If producers cannot allow their cattle to graze on local pastures, that means they will be forced to either sell cattle, buy feed or ship their animals out.

There is an added concern of an infestation of grasshoppers in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Agriculture Canada has listed a portion of my riding as having a very severe risk of a grasshopper outbreak. Three other areas in Alberta have been given this grade. Drought exacerbates this problem.

By allowing this emergency debate, members would have the opportunity to draw to the attention of cabinet the serious conditions in western Canada and the importance of effective safety nets, unlike the current crop insurance program which is not working.

This topic needs to be debated now before the summer recess so that improvements and other measures can be put in place as soon as possible.

• (1520)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair has heard the submissions of the hon. member and has reviewed carefully the letter he forwarded to the Speaker yesterday. I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I do not believe however that the application meets the exigencies of the standing order at this particular time. Accordingly, I am not inclined to permit the debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY ACT, 2002

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, an act to amend certain acts of Canada, and to enact measures for implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to enhance public safety, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have another opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-55.

The amendment proposed to this anti-terrorism bill number two does nothing to alleviate our concerns. In fact it has added to our consternation about the full intentions of the government with respect to public security. Our concerns about its approach remain.

Our worries have been heightened. The responses by government members have in no way lessened or diminished our worries and anxieties.

In general, we remain concerned that the bill does not ensure the appropriate balance between protecting the public and ensuring that the rights and freedoms of Canadians are not jeopardized in any way. The bill clearly provides sweeping powers for police and security intelligence forces to snoop into the lives of Canadians. It uses intrusive powers of police and security forces that threaten to interfere with the charter of rights and freedoms.

Bill C-55 diminishes the role of parliament and gives extraordinary powers to unelected officials in our government and in our society generally. It remains a concern for us that the term military security zones is so loosely defined that it can be used at every turn to repress and stamp out peaceful demonstrations.

The difficulties Canadian citizens are having in organizing peacefully around Kananaskis toward the end of June with respect to the G-8 summit are no coincidence. The government is determined to do everything it can to deny citizens the democratic right to protest peacefully and speak their minds at every opportunity.

The fundamental issues and concerns we have with respect to the bill remain. In the few minutes I have today I want to focus on the fact that the bill seems to be an attempt to make decisions that otherwise would not be acceptable were it not for the events of September 11. The government is attempting to use those tragic events to introduce changes in our society that are unacceptable and unnecessary.

If the purpose of Bill C-55 is to protect the public even within those narrow parameters of terrorist activities, then the bill does not do the job. We have heard recent reports of how CSIS has indicated it is no more likely to arrest people as a result of this bill than it would if the bill did not exist. We are not sure where the powers of the bill will lead in terms of actual implementation and detention of suspected terrorists.

More important is that the bill misses the boat when it comes to the real threat of terrorism if we are looking at the narrow definition presently in terms of public safety. The difficult area for us to deal with is with respect to nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism. Report after report has shown that this area is very difficult to—

• (1525)

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Winnipeg North Centre has some wonderful points to make on the bill yet I do not see a lot of Liberal members in the House. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to please call quorum.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: We now have quorum.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to emphasize a point that has been missed in this debate and that members opposite on the Liberal benches should be interested in.

Government Orders

When I say the bill misses the boat in terms of the real threats facing Canadians, I want to address it both in terms of the threat of terrorism and the broader threats facing Canadians in terms of health and safety. That issue was astutely put by Ken Rubin in a recent issue of *The Hill Times*. He said:

Ottawa misses the boat by obsessively dealing only with potential security safety risks rather than tackling actual lethal health and environment problems including how to deal with dangerous drugs and toxic wastes.

It is a point well taken and I hope members across the way are hearing that. When it comes to serious threats to public safety, such as adverse drug reactions, threats to the food supply, the state of our water, or the presence of toxic elements in the Sydney tar ponds, the government refuses to act. I will leave that aside as there is time for debate on that in other places.

Today we are talking about terrorism. The bill misses the mark when it comes to protecting the public with respect to terrorist threats. I refer again to the dangerous and real threat of chemical, nuclear and biological terrorism.

Report after report has said Canada is ill-prepared to deal with bioterrorist threats. The government has had the benefit of study after study suggesting it has known about the problem and has refused to act. In the last several years the solicitor general's report has stated Canada was unable to respond to major terrorist attacks and lacked everything from vital protective equipment for emergency personnel to properly trained teams to free victims inside collapsed buildings. An internal Health Canada report warned that cuts to the country's health care system would make it difficult to provide medical services to victims of terrorist attacks. A national defence report found Canada was years behind its allies in its ability to handle a biological or chemical terrorist attack.

That is where the government should be putting its attention, not jeopardizing Canada's rights and freedoms by giving itself and the police force inordinate powers. It should be putting its resources and energies into protecting the public in the event of bioterrorism.

We heard the Minister of Health announce with a lot of fanfare back in October that \$11.59 million would be going into programs to protect Canadians against a bioterrorist attack. We have yet to hear an accounting of that money. We have yet to hear that the money would be going to where it is needed and making a difference.

Canada should be putting its resources and energies into a number of different areas ensuring that we have an emergency preparedness strategy and a trained public health care workforce who will be able to respond should a terrorist attack occur.

That point was recently driven home by the firefighters who gathered on Parliament Hill to talk to all of us about their concerns. They made an important recommendation about the requirement for training of Canada's first responders in the event of a terrorist attack or any kind of incident involving hazardous materials. In their report they said:

While a military-based response to a chemical, biological or terrorist attack is hours, if not days away, professional fire fighters will be on the scene in mere minutes. However, a serious problem has been identified: that, while a small handful of Canadian cities, such as Ottawa, do have appropriate hazardous materials or chemical-biological response teams in place, the vast majority do not. This means that the majority of Canadians are completely vulnerable to the aftermath of a terrorist act involving chemical and biological weapons. The situation therefore

exists that Canadian fire fighters, police officers and other emergency medical services personnel will be called to respond to a chemical, biological or radiological incident without the proper training and equipment. An inappropriate response to the incident would only compound the potential impact on the public and the responding fire fighters. The effectiveness of Canadian first responders depends on their ability to apply the skills learned during hands-on training. No matter if the incident is a typical hazardous materials alarm or one that involves intentional dispersal of biological agents, first responders need to rely on a solid base of training in order to formulate a safe and effective response strategy.

● (1530)

That should be the priority for the government. That is the first task the government should be involved in with respect to responding to terrorism. It should put \$500,000 into a training program run and co-ordinated by the International Association of Firefighters to provide our firefighters the necessary training to respond in the event of a bioterrorist attack or any incident involving hazardous materials. Of the \$11.59 million promised by the government on October 18 for a response to bioterrorism why can the government not find \$500,000 to ensure that firefighters can train their members to respond in the event of a bioterrorist attack or any serious incident in our society today?

I challenge the government to face the real issues at hand, to put its money and its mouth where the problems are and start giving our first responders, our firefighters, paramedics and police, the resources they need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-55, which, as we know, replaces Bill C-42, introduced in great haste by the government following the events of September 11.

Members will recall that one of the main issues raised by the Bloc Québécois at that time dealt with the famous controlled access military zones, which raised a serious moral problem for all those who gave careful thought to the implications of such a measure.

First, we will obviously oppose the bill, because the amendments brought by the government are what I would call, in essence, minor amendments.

Finally, the government has reintroduced a bill that could have very serious implications for the freedoms of our fellow citizens. However, it can be said that the government gave in to the arguments of the Bloc Québécois by tightening the criteria for the creation of controlled access military zones.

If we accomplished anything, we accomplished that. Besides, Bill C-42 was withdrawn. However, and I insist on the word however, the minister remains the only person empowered to designate controlled access military zones.

Government Orders

What is the significance of this? It means that one man and one man only can designate controlled access zones. He is the one who decides to create them.

We know what is currently going on in this government. We realize that ministers may sometimes be more or less reliable. I hope that the new minister is more reliable than his predecessor. Nevertheless, to give a minister sole responsibility for designating controlled access military zones is to give him a very important power.

This issue also concerns all the provinces. For example, the authorization of the Quebec government is still not required to establish a controlled access military zone on its territory. And the same goes for the other provinces.

The federal government is giving itself a power without asking the authorization of the provinces to establish controlled access military zones. It can do so even without telling the provinces. Indeed, there is no requirement to obtain the approval of the provincial governments.

There is also the fact that the “reasonably necessary” criterion to determine the size of these zones has not really changed. It is still very much a discretionary thing. What it means is that, once again, the decision may be made by a single person. It can be made unilaterally, without any consultation whatsoever.

Another thing that could affect people's lives is the fact that people who suffer a prejudice because of the designation of a military zone, or the implementation of measures to enforce the designation, still cannot take legal action for loss, damage or injury.

The designation of a controlled access military zone means that absolute power is given over a specific zone and that people may be prejudiced following the establishment of such a zone.

This means that people could be prevented from going home. It means that they could be prevented from leaving these zones. It could even mean that, because of the measures taken, people could see their property damaged, yet have no recourse.

This is a very important provision in the bill before us, as it was in the previous legislation. Indeed, these people would not have any recourse against the government. They would not have the right to turn around and ask the government to compensate them. This is very important. This provision should be changed. The bill should be amended in this regard. People who could suffer a prejudice because of the establishment of controlled access military zones should at least have a chance to be compensated when such zones are designated.

We saw what can happen with these types of zones. The name was not the same at the Quebec summit, but the fact remains that some people were adversely affected. Some business owners could not serve their regular clientele and suffered losses because of that.

• (1535)

Of course, the government then offered to compensate these people. However, there is nothing about that in the current bill. That is something that should be changed because it is very important.

Bill C-42 also referred to such things as international relations, defence or national security as grounds for creating military security zones, but these are dropped from Bill C-55. One can therefore assume that all grounds are now acceptable. A controlled access military zone could be created because there is fear of an attack or of some other event. I think that this is very risky and very dangerous because of the discretionary power conferred upon the minister, upon one single person, under the bill before us.

This bill still contains provisions allowing various ministers, and in one case in particular public officials, to make interim orders. This is somewhat related to what I just said. The bill allows ministers or public officials to make interim orders, which would practically create an event.

That is also very dangerous. An amendment is required. The bill needs to be reviewed in light of what I have just said in order to make it less dangerous for members of the public.

Two minor changes were made, however. They deal with the tabling of orders in parliament within 15 days, and reducing from 90 days to 45 the period during which interim orders are in force without cabinet approval. I would call these minor changes because, basically, these controlled access military zones should not be created without first consulting cabinet and even parliament.

I also note that there is no provision for a prior check by the Clerk of the Privy Council for consistency with the charter and the enabling legislation. We are obviously referring to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is very important.

Bill C-55 would also allow two other stakeholders to obtain information about passengers directly from air carriers and operators of reservation systems. They are the commissioner of the RCMP and the director of CSIS. This also threatens the freedom of individual citizens.

This information may be provided for two reasons: first, if there are imminent threats against transportation security and, second, to identify individuals for whom a warrant has been issued. Recently, we saw in the newspapers that all the groups which defend individual rights and freedoms were completely opposed to the provisions of this bill regarding information which may be supplied to the RCMP or CSIS.

There is one somewhat positive note concerning the information collected by the RCMP and CSIS. This information could be destroyed within seven days of being obtained or received.

Last weekend, I was in the Magdalen Islands. We know that this bill amends a number of federal statutes. As people will recall, one result was the establishment of the infamous \$24 airport tax. In a place such as the Magdalen Islands, where flying is just about the only means of transportation in winter, people who are already paying a fortune for a plane ticket—it now costs \$1,200 to fly from the Magdalen Islands to Montreal—are being slapped with another \$24 on a return airfare. People are telling us that this will have quite a negative impact on tourism in the Magdalen Islands.

Government Orders

Fundamentally, when we look at the situation of all of the airports, that is where the events of September 11 have led us. The federal government has come up with measures that I would describe as excessive. The bill, as it has been introduced, is an excessive measure, given the events and what has happened since.

• (1540)

I believe that we have just about all of the elements and laws necessary to protect ourselves. All that was needed was to enforce them and use them properly. This bill grants a minister powers that can only be described as excessive. It gives excessive powers to the cabinet, to the police and to airport staff. Airlines are being required to use excessive powers, to hand over personal information on their clients and to provide information about their passengers. All of this violates the charter of rights and freedoms.

We are supposed to be living in a democratic country. With this bill before us, I am not sure that we will continue to be living in a democratic country. This bill could lead to abuses.

When it comes to establishing controlled access military zones, this power is given to one person, who in recent days has demonstrated that he is not necessarily reliable. I am not referring to the new minister, but the former one had problems.

It is very dangerous to give this power to one single person. We run the risk of denying citizens their freedoms, in an unjustifiable manner.

I wanted to come back to what I was saying about the Magdalen Islands, but since I do not have the time, I would simply like to say that, fundamentally, the bill before us threatens the rights and freedoms of citizens and it is not needed.

• (1545)

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to take part in the debate on Bill C-55, particularly since, in a way, its introduction represents a victory for the members of the Bloc Québécois.

As people are aware, the Bloc MPs have a reputation for being present, both in Ottawa and in their ridings on weekends. Contrary to what some people have said, when parliament is not sitting, this does not necessarily mean that the MPs are on holiday. Of course a member can take advantage of a week when parliament is not sitting to take a holiday and rest up, but this is not always the case. Every time parliament recesses is not a vacation for us; the people who come to our riding offices are very much aware that this is a time when we visit the people in our ridings, meet with people, visit factories, attend ribbon cutting ceremonies and so on.

I take the time for this introduction in order to raise people's awareness of one aspect of the question. Hon. members will recall that Bill C-55 started off as Bill C-42. There were many misgivings expressed by the members of the Bloc Québécois, and some more progressive members of the Liberal caucus, it must be acknowledged, concerns about the rights and freedoms impacted just by the introduction of Bill C-42, the ancestor of the present Bill C-55.

That is why we hear from people when we are out and about on the weekends, when we meet people at social or other activities, that

“it was a good thing the Bloc was there to raise questions like these in the House of Commons, a good thing the Bloc was there to tell this arrogant government what to do, this government that thumbs its nose at just about everyone and everything”. This is obvious with the scandals that are piling up one on top of the other, like layers of sediment on the earth. There is no end to the scandals being discovered. The ship of state is springing leaks on all sides. People keep telling us “A good thing we had the Bloc Québécois there to tell this government that what it is trying to do makes no sense”.

We managed to get the government to review its position. Indeed, it withdrew Bill C-42 to introduce a new one, Bill C-55. It must be realized that the Bloc Québécois cannot support Bill C-55, because it still contains some disturbing elements.

The debate is not over. The House will establish a parliamentary committee. This will be a joint committee, if I remember correctly. It will then be made up of unelected senators and of members of the House of Commons. We hope that, in the next steps to come, before this bill is read the third time and passed, the government will come to its senses about some questionable elements in it.

The Prime Minister and the minister of intergovernmental affairs were very proud, on April 17, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the coming into force of the charter of rights and freedoms in Canada, but, of course, they forgot about the unilateral patriation of the Constitution on April 17, 1982, whose twentieth anniversary was also being celebrated.

• (1550)

This may seem ironic, but 12 days later, on April 29, 2002, the government came back with Bill C-55. As he has since he was elected to this House on November 27, 2000, my colleague from Matapédia—Matane pointed out appropriately and eloquently that the Bloc Québécois has some problems, with the issue of controlled access military zones, for instance.

I must admit that the government accepted the Bloc's arguments and tightened the criteria for the creation of controlled access military zones. Again, this is another victory for the Bloc Québécois. It is the Bloc that raised the Liberal government's awareness and that countered its indifference or arrogance.

However, it will always be the minister of defence alone who will have the authority to designate controlled access military zones. This should be cause for concern. But, as my colleague said, we will give some time to the new incumbent, the former chief economist of the Royal Bank, who inherited the Department of National Defence to everyone's surprise. We will give him the benefit of the doubt.

Government Orders

Let us examine what the former incumbent did; he gave a \$36,000 contract to his former girlfriend. He was punished accordingly. The punishment was probably well deserved, because he acted unwisely. However, to judge by the personality of this former minister, we can clearly see that it is not safe to leave such a decision to the discretion of one person only, the minister of defence, because if this person should lack good judgment, like the former incumbent, this authority could be used improperly. We find that the bill goes much too far in this direction because only the minister is given this responsibility.

There is also the whole issue of respect for provincial jurisdictions. I will use an example that has already been given. A few metres away from Quebec's national assembly is the Armoury, and a few kilometres away, to the northwest of downtown Quebec City, the military base of Valcartier. It means that an ill-advised and ill-intentioned minister could designate that part of Quebec City, within a 15 kilometre radius around the Armoury, where the seat of democracy, the national assembly, is located, as part of a controlled access military zone. You can imagine the absurdity of all this. That is why Bloc Québécois members consider that the approval of the Quebec government should be required for the creation of any controlled access military zone on its territory.

Time flies. I would have many more points to make. As the Bloc Québécois critic for transport for eight years, I would like to comment briefly on the tax on regional air carriers, which will help Air Canada maintain its dominance in the market and its monopoly.

•(1555)

This tax will drive out of business the small regional air carriers, because people have a limited ability to pay. Air travellers in the regions are not just people with a hefty expense account who work for big paper mills or big mining companies. There are also ordinary citizens who sometimes have a medical condition and cannot afford to spend eight, ten or twelve hours travelling by bus, by car or by train. That is what I had to say, but, unfortunately, my time is up.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I admit that speaking after the member for Matapédia—Matane and also the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans is a pleasure, but also a challenge. Nevertheless, I shall try to introduce new elements into the context of our consideration of Bill C-55.

As my colleague from the Quebec City region pointed out, the Bloc Québécois has reason to be somewhat proud of the Liberal's openness toward amendments made to the old bill, Bill C-42, to introduce Bill C-55. It is a new and improved version, thanks in part to the main arguments and concerns raised by the Bloc Québécois.

The government did follow up on our arguments to provide a better definition of what was and still is called controlled access military zones. This is good. However—and I think this was already eloquently stated earlier, but it bears repeating—we are very worried that it is still the Minister of National Defence alone who will decide on the definition and description of the controlled access military zones.

Imagine for a moment, if the bill were passed as is, the trust that would be placed in the Minister of National Defence, or the good judgment that we would hope he had. Imagine for a moment that the Minister of National Defence was the former minister of defence, the

one who just left, and that he had to make a difficult decision. This is the same one who forgot to notify his cabinet colleagues, the Prime Minister and just about everyone that Canadian soldiers had captured prisoners in Afghanistan. Under this bill, we would have had to trust him to designate a controlled access military zone. I believe that this is putting too much faith or giving too much authority to this minister of defence.

What is more, last weekend he demonstrated to us that this faith that we could have, or should have given him would have been completely unwarranted when we learned that he awarded contracts worth \$36,000 from his discretionary budget to his ex-girlfriend for a study already underway in the Canadian army.

The minister probably would have consulted the Prime Minister, or the decision might have been made by the Prime Minister.

This is again a matter of judgment or confidence in the Prime Minister. We are once again faced with a problem of judgment or confidence in the Prime Minister, who was himself investigated in the matter of the Auberge Grand-Mère and the golf course, who was also investigated for contracts awarded to Liberal organizer friends in his riding of Saint-Maurice, with Placeteco, and who is again under investigation, directly or indirectly, because of contracts awarded without competitive tendering and against all the criteria established at CIDA. Now he should be trusted to make a decision on a controlled access military zone. I think that even with the Prime Minister, we could not feel safe.

Suppose or imagine that Alfonso Gagliano were the Minister of National Defence. Under Bill C-55, he would have had the power to create a controlled access military zone. Does he deserve our trust or have enough judgment to make such a decision? I am sure that the Prime Minister would answer yes to this question, given that he named him Canadian ambassador to Denmark instead of the second in command in the Paris embassy. Still, Mr. Gagliano is the one who awarded Groupaction, among others, tens of millions of dollars in contracts. We all know that Groupaction is also under criminal investigation for having obtained money from the government under three contracts that produced in fact three copies of a single report. If Alfonso Gagliano had been the Minister of National Defence at that time, one could have wondered.

Just think for a minute that under Bill C-55 as it stands, the Minister of National Defence could have been the former ex and now new government House leader who was also very briefly the minister of public works. Trust would have been put in the former new government House leader, who would have been told "You do have the authority to designate a controlled military access zone".

•(1600)

However, let us not forget that this is the same minister who enjoyed the hospitality of the president of Groupe Everest in violation of the code of ethics.

Government Orders

How could such power be conferred upon the former and current House leader when he does not even have enough common sense to know that he was violating the code of ethics and the most elementary rules of a public works minister with a huge budget, into which he was shamelessly dipping to reward his friends?

He is also the one who awarded contracts to Coffin Communication. This is worse than what we saw with Groupaction, since Coffin Communication was paid for reports that do not exist. At least, Groupaction made photocopies of a report, which shows that it had a minimum of decency.

However, Coffin Communication, a company without any employees, believe or not, received government contracts, never produced any report, and the whole thing was approved by the government and by the minister of public works.

If he were the minister of defence, knowing the powers associated with that office, I think that he would not deserve our trust because he would not have enough judgment to make these decisions.

However, concerning Bill C-55 as proposed, let us suppose that the position of minister of defence is held by the current minister of immigration. He could designate a controlled access military zone one day, forget that he did by the next day, and then come back the day after that and say "Yes, it is true, I did make such designation".

The minister of immigration is also the minister of amnesia. When we put questions to him, he does not remember anything. If he had spent only one night at Claude Boulay's, it is conceivable that he might have forgotten about it. But if a person spends six weeks somewhere, he should remember it. We may forget about a period of ten or fifteen minutes. But if we forget about a six week period, we should seek medical attention, and this is very relevant.

If the minister were the Minister of National Defence, could we put our trust in him or believe that he has enough judgment to make a decision? To ask the question is to answer it.

There are others in this government who can fulfill the duties of Minister of National Defence. Let us suppose that it is the solicitor general. Would the current solicitor general deserve our trust to hold a power as important as that of designating controlled access military zones?

I should point out that it is this same solicitor general who made representations to people in his own department to further the cause of his brother in his region.

Would the solicitor general deserve our trust? Does he have enough judgment to alleviate our main concern about Bill C-55, which has to do with the designation of a military zone? Again, to ask the question is to answer it.

Suppose the Prime Minister makes changes and says that none of these ministers will be involved. Upon hearing him announce that the Minister of Justice will be the Minister of National Defence, we would have to ask ourselves if he is worthy of the trust that is required to hold this important power.

He just made an admission very candidly, because he is lacking visibility. He said "This is no fun for me. My colleague, the minister of immigration, is always making headlines these days. My other

friend, the House leader, is also making headlines these days, but not me". So, he made an admission to journalists, who did not have to look for long. He said "Do not bother searching. I accepted fishing trips from Groupe Everest. I went on these fishing trips. I went to the Moisie River. I travelled to Sept-Îles, and it was pleasant".

Would he deserve the trust that is required under this bill to hold such an important power? To ask the question is to answer it.

However, if the Prime Minister ignored all this and appointed the first woman defence minister, namely the current Minister of Human Resources Development, would she deserve our trust and have the judgment required to hold the important power of designating a military zone?

Let us recall that there were 17 investigations into this minister's department because of a scandal of almost \$1 billion. Indeed, she was making up new terms in the Employment Insurance Act in order to find pockets of poverty in her riding. Such pockets of poverty did not exist in ridings with an unemployment rate of 14%, whereas the unemployment rate in her riding was only 8%. Yet there were pockets of poverty. Even the Tories, at that time, did not find it very amusing. I would remind the House.

However, what if the Prime Minister chose none of these ministers, but the heritage minister instead. That would be even worse. She has handed out flags to everybody. She has given \$2 millions to her friend, Robert-Guy Scully, something under investigation by the RCMP.

I know that my time is almost up. However, if the transport minister, who had to resign when he was defence minister because he had tried to shut down the Somalia inquiry, had had this power, would he have deserved our confidence?

I think we have every reason to wonder about the appropriateness of giving the minister this kind of power.

• (1605)

I could talk about the former solicitor general, who said certain things on a plane. I could talk about Michel Dupuy, the former heritage minister. I could talk about all the other ministers who have been caught up in conflicts.

I think I have shown pretty well why we are so reluctant to support the bill as it stands now.

[English]

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the member for Egmont here who can perhaps learn something with respect to what is or is not happening in his own government with respect to Bill C-55.

After September 11 the government demonstrated its inability to govern and put forward legislation that was necessary at the time. It had this knee-jerk reaction that brought forward a piece of legislation that was not well thought of and not well thought out. It was drafted over a short period of time by people who did not know what it was they were trying to achieve.

Government Orders

Bill C-42 was introduced in the House and went to committee. Everyone suggested that it was nothing more than simply a difficult way to put forward legislation to appease the situation of September 11. Everyone that came forward in committee spoke against it, yet the government was intent on bringing it forward, pushing it through and suggesting it was necessary in order for Canadians to cope with terrorism within our borders.

Better minds prevailed and, because the legislation was so terribly flawed it could not even be dealt with by amendment, Bill C-42 was pulled from the order paper. That was probably the only good thing that the government has probably done in the last nine years. It was a step in the right direction. The government admitted it had made a terrible mistake and had drafted some terrible legislation. In fact it listened to the opposition and the people who made presentations to the committee and pulled that terribly flawed piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, it did not totally learn from that mistake. The government then came forward with a replacement to Bill C-42, which is the bill we are debating today, Bill C-55. It brought it forward and made some changes to it. It made changes that make it worse than what it was when it was Bill C-42. It brought it forward and, believe it or not, suggested that it be referred to the transport committee. What a silly thought.

The government wanted to refer the bill to the transport committee when in fact the bill dealt with dozens of laws, the least of which would be transport. Yes, there was the innocuous little area of the Aeronautics Act but that was not really the here nor there of it. However, the government suggested that it be referred to the transport committee, again making a serious mistake.

Members on this side of the House who objected to the piece of legislation suggested honourably and seriously that it should go to another committee, a committee that encompassed more than just transport. In fact it did. It was referred to a newly struck legislative committee which was just passed today in the House. I received notice that the legislative committee had been struck. We have a member on it, as do other members of the opposition and the government. That is a pretty positive thing.

What is not positive is that the bill is still the wrong piece of legislation to deal with terrorism. Members should make no mistake about it. We have stood in the House and said time and time again that we absolutely do not condone terrorism, especially within the borders of our country. There has to be a consequence to any kind of terrorist action in this country. We believe we have that legislation right now with the Emergencies Act. If it were put into force it would provide everything that would be necessary to the government. However, the government decided that it would go beyond that.

Bill C-55 is a serious threat to the freedom of Canadians. Let us make no mistake about that. Canadians out there do not often pay a lot of attention to what is happening in this House. Canadians must pay attention to this piece of legislation because it impacts their civil liberties. There was a comment made the other day on a newscast I was watching that said if governments keep nibbling away at civil liberties, eventually they will become difficult to get back.

● (1610)

The government has no checks and balances. We have seen in the past, as we have seen recently, all the allegations that have been going on with respect to sponsorships, pork-barrelling and patronage. It seems the government is prepared to go to any lengths to take and grab those powers that it thinks is necessary for it to continue on that path.

This legislation is not the way to do it because this would seriously impact Canadians. The bill would grant cabinet a whole host of new powers, including the right to arbitrarily declare certain military zones off limit to Canadians, and to violate the rights of Canadians by supplying passenger information to the RCMP without any cause.

As was said earlier today in question period the police must be totally impartial in a free and democratic country. It cannot be given specific rights against the people it is policing. This legislation would allow it to do that.

Other pieces of legislation which granted similar powers were all withdrawn, some over time, such as the War Measures Act, while others were never made into law, and I refer to Bill C-42.

Bill C-55 would grant the government both the power to protect and the ability to abuse this power. Unfortunately, it is most likely the latter would prevail. The existing law, the Emergencies Act, ensures this does not happen by protecting the principles of a free and democratic parliament. This law would take parliament totally out of the picture. It would not allow parliament to be a part of any of the decisions that would be made based on this particular piece of legislation.

There is a clause in the legislation which would deal with interim orders. Eight parts of the bill would amend various statutes to provide a new power, permitting the responsible minister to make interim orders in situations where immediate action would be required. Two other parts which would deal with the Aeronautics Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act would extend the power of the minister to make such orders.

The statutes that would be amended to introduce the power, and respective ministers are those of the department of health, food and drugs, hazardous products, navigable waters, pest control, and quarantine. The ministers would be given power over every ambit of Canadian lives and Canadian law at the present time.

The extension of these powers unfortunately would have no backstop. They would not be able to come back to this parliament and have those interim orders removed. The ministers would have the ability to extend those orders if they feel it were necessary.

We talked about confidence. There was a motion yesterday in the House about how Canadians have lost confidence in the government. They lost confidence not only with respect to trade, but also in the government's ability to govern.

Government Orders

Can we have confidence in a defence minister, who unfortunately or fortunately for us as Canadians is no longer in that position, who would be able to have such extraordinary powers that no other Canadian, and parliament, would have any ability to take those powers away from him or from the government? Do we have confidence now in the Prime Minister when he leads by example? We see that day after day. In fact they, the Prime Minister, his ministers and his government, have no one who can take the ability of their incompetence away from them.

Bill C-55 will be going to a legislative committee. My hopes, wishes and desires are that every academic and non-governmental organization and individual being affected by this piece of legislation would appear before that committee and tell government why it is absolutely mandatory that this legislation be defeated and not go forward.

• (1615)

We have a piece of legislation now, the Emergencies Act, that will allow us to do what has to be done with respect to terrorism. We should not give government any other powers or any other ability to impact Canadian civil rights the way they would be impacted by this piece of legislation.

I will have the opportunity to speak to this again after speaking to the amendment. We will also have the bill coming back from committee with plenty of amendments because that is necessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is too bad, because if the member for Brandon—Souris had asked for more time, I am sure that members would have agreed. What he was saying was very interesting.

As we all know, some terrible events took place on September 11. A friend of ours, an ally, a democratic country, our neighbour to the south, was brutally attacked. Thousands of people, men, women and children, died. Innocent victims met death at the hands of barbarians, terrorists, savages who decided to attack people who had done nothing to them.

The world's reaction to these events took two forms. The first was external, to go after and destroy the very roots of terrorism. This resulted in the campaign in Afghanistan, where Canadian and other troops are now engaged. The decision was made to destroy and oust a regime which was taking in members of terrorist cells. This was accomplished.

This external approach included co-operation among various countries, including their secret services, in order to better track the various terrorist activities which might be going on worldwide. Various countries reacted internally as well.

The main challenge facing all democratic countries is that of striking an essential and vital balance between the protection of human rights and freedoms, on the one hand, and public safety, on the other.

This balance has not always been properly respected. Yesterday, as we know, Amnesty International released a report in which the well known international organization mentioned the sometimes disproportionate reactions of the various democratic countries

following the events of September 11. When an organization such as Amnesty International sounds a warning bell, it is the duty of elected officials in the various countries, and that includes us, to take note.

The government's first reaction to this threat to security was Bill C-42. This bill met with tremendous criticism. As the member who spoke before me mentioned, it is very rare for Canadians and Quebecers to pay much attention to the proceedings of this House. It is unfortunate, but that is how it is. Since 1997, when I first became a member, rarely have I seen as many reactions from my constituents, as many letters, as many e-mails, as many telephone calls as I did following the introduction of Bill C-42.

• (1620)

Accordingly, the Bloc Québécois echoed the public's unease and voiced its criticism in the House. The Bloc was exemplary in its constructive, tight and well-argued criticism of Bill C-42; as a result, recognizing the validity of many of the arguments put forward by my party, the government withdrew its bill. It then introduced a new version of its bill, which is the one before us today, Bill C-55.

While the Bloc Québécois is proud of the fact that some elements were removed from Bill C-42, Bill C-55 remains a source of concern for us. We still believe that the balance between the rights and freedoms of people and public safety, which should be the basis for this debate, has not been achieved in Bill C-55.

We could give various examples, but I will limit myself because I have precious little time. I will only address two main issues. The first one is the discretion given to the Minister of National Defence regarding controlled access military zones. The bill gives him complete discretion in that regard. My colleague from Repentigny demonstrated this in a brilliant and eloquent fashion. Who can have confidence in any minister of this government, after what we have been seeing day after day and given the lack of judgment displayed repeatedly by this ministerial team?

Take for example the EI issue or the Minister of Human Resources Development and the billion dollar boondoggle. How can we have confidence in the Prime Minister, whose personal integrity is being questioned? How can we trust the Minister of Justice, who brags about having participated in fishing expeditions with acquaintances of his? How can we have confidence in the Minister of Immigration, who blatantly changes his tune, even suggesting a deliberate attempt to mislead not only the House but also Canadians?

I see the head of the minister of intergovernmental affairs shooting up, but this is the main issue. He claims to know law so well, but it must be pointed out that, in the bill, this is at the minister's discretion. However, lately, one minister after another has shown a total lack of judgment.

In a bill such as this one, which threatens rights and freedoms to such a great extent, the danger is that people who, day after day, month after month, have shown their blatant and incredible lack of judgment, will have this discretionary power.

Government Orders

The other problem with controlled access military zones is that the approval of the province concerned is not required. This is dangerous, all the more so as there are no checks and balances to the minister's power. If at least the province's approval were required, we could say that there are some checks and balances, but this is not the case. It is dangerous especially with regard to the "reasonably necessary" criterion regarding the size of these zones. This is a problem.

We are talking about military equipment. I come from Quebec City. Several unbelievable examples come to mind. There is the Citadel in the heart of Old Quebec City, the armoury on Grande-Allée, which is some 200 metres away from the National Assembly. Under the guise of protecting military equipment, a minister who has the necessary discretionary power could say that the National Assembly, which is central to democracy in Quebec and is one of the oldest parliaments in the world since it dates back to 1791—let us not forget that—could be included in a controlled access military zones. The size of such a zone would have been decided by a minister of this government.

●(1625)

It is unfortunate that I have so little time left because there is so much to criticize in this bill. We will press on and see to it that it is never passed as it stands today.

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois for his comments. We too in the NDP will pursue this matter vigorously to ensure changes to protect citizens, not harass them, are the focus of any new security bill.

Coming from Atlantic Canada, I cannot let this public opportunity go by to say that even though there is a new Alliance leader, we still hear the same old comments. John Mykytyshyn, a member of the Alliance Party, talked about the attitudes of Atlantic Canadians, saying that they were lazy. The newly minted, newly elected leader of the new Alliance Party is now talking about the defeatist attitude of Atlantic Canadians. When will that party learn that we are all Canadians and that we pull our fair share of the weight in this country as well. I will have more to say about that at a later time. It is unfortunate that a brilliant man like he can have such a negative attitude toward Atlantic Canada.

The NDP is very concerned about Bill C-55. We have heard experts such as the head of CSIS and the privacy commissioner express serious concerns about the lack of credibility and the lack of concerns—

Mr. Rick Casson: Do not just read the headline, read the whole article.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I will read the article. I could carry on a debate with him, but all he has to do is come to Atlantic Canada and personally tell people what he thinks, then we will see if anybody gets nominated from that party in the next election.

The reality of the situation is that Bill C-55 will not improve the security of Canadians in regions throughout the entire country. One of the greatest concerns we have is the National Defence Act and the naming of military security zones. Not much has changed in regard

to the government deciding a secure military zone, for example the G-8 summit at Kananaskis.

Technically under this bill, if the government perceives a possible threat or conceives a possible threat, it can shut down the entire city of Calgary and declare it a secure military zone, if that is the wish of the federal government or the defence minister. What the defence minister can or cannot do is not spelled out exactly in the bill. We find it appalling that someone can have that kind of power over specific areas within the country. We are very concerned about that because we feel Canadians should decide these issues, not the defence minister. This should not be within the powers of the defence minister.

The other concern we have was raised by the head of CSIS that the possibility of convictions would be very unlikely under the new bill. When someone of that breadth of knowledge mentions that to the government, one would assume the government would take it seriously and ensure that right amendments were made to the bill.

I will say something positive about the bill. The Marine Transportation Security Act which allows the federal government to fund port authorities throughout the country is something we wholeheartedly support. That is something very positive and we should act upon it very quickly.

We still need to discuss the interim orders powers and the Canadian airport security authority. Instead of doing this behind closed doors and having short discussions near the end of our session in June, the government should be asking for input from Canadians from coast to coast to coast as to what they would like to see as new security powers for this government. The federal government should work in conjunction with provincial and regional governments as well. That would be very important and would give Canadians the ability to address their concerns in public forums. It would allow them to feel secure in knowing that their government listened to them. This is nothing but a top down approach and it is time for that kind of governance to stop, especially when it comes to security, the rights of people, their privacy et cetera.

We oppose the amendments put forward at this time. The bill can be greatly improved upon. We also reiterate the concerns of the Bloc Québécois.

Recent newspaper articles have raised a barrage of questions from members of all parties about the conduct of ministers of this government and the actions taken today and other days.

●(1630)

The government is asking us to trust it with the security of our nation and to trust it with the amendments it will put forward. Yet it cannot even handle its own departments in an open and transparent way and in a way that has relevance to the Canadian people.

If Liberal members cannot be trusted to run their own government and if they are ethically immoral or morally bankrupt, then how do they have the gall to stand up and tell us what they will do to provide security for Canadians? Canadians have lost confidence.

Government Orders

I thanked the Alliance yesterday for its motion on the loss of confidence Canadians have toward the government. It is absolutely right. There was quite a debate yesterday on that motion and we were proud to support it. Of course the government does not want to hear this, but the fact is Canadians have lost confidence in their government.

Then the government is going to turn around and pass a bill with such sweeping powers that would affect the lives of all Canadians? I think not. It is time for the government get off its high horse, travel across the country, have debates and dialogue with Canadians to find out exactly what new security measures they want put in place to protect them, their communities, their property and the country as a whole.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I must say at the outset that I did not intend to get up and participate in the debate today but I guess one of the great advantages of all members from all parties is that when we sit here—

● (1635)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but according to our records he has already spoken on the amendment. We will verify the two records to be sure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill C-55.

We know this bill is still a threat for the citizens' rights and freedoms. This is why it must be amended so that the consent of the Government of Quebec and of other provincial governments would be required before a controlled access military zone is designated on their territory.

The provisions on the creation of controlled access military zones, the absence of legal recourse following the creation of a security perimeter and the provisions allowing airlines to provide personal information on passengers, all pose serious problems, as far as keeping the required balance between security and freedom is concerned.

Bill C-55 contains much the same provisions as Bill C-42 with regard to interim orders, which would give much power to a small group of ministers.

As well, Bill C-55 allows much wider access to information about airline passengers. The government is assuming the power to modify, as needed, the nature of information that can be transferred between various agencies.

Moreover, with the new provisions, the RCMP and CSIS would now have a direct access to this information held by airline companies. These provisions would open the door to the use of personal information that would go far beyond the requirements of the fight against terrorism.

I believe that the balance required between public safety and the protection of freedoms is not always being respected with the new government bill. The Bloc Québécois will continue to be vigilant, to ensure that the federal government introduces legislation that is finally in keeping with the values of Quebecers.

I indicated earlier that several elements are affected by Bill C-55. I would like to go back to one of them, that is, the controlled access military zones.

One knows that, given the abuse that might result from the implementation of the first bill, we had to be vigilant, of course, about the interpretation of this one. A few changes were made. However, a number of irritants remain, including—and it is the main one—the ban on action for damages by reason of the designation of a controlled access military zone.

We could talk about subsection 260.1(1), which says:

Subject to subsection (2),—which we will see later—the Minister personally, on the recommendation of the Chief of the Defence Staff, may designate a controlled access military zone in Canada in relation to:

I repeat that the designation will be done by the minister personally.

It applies to, first:

(a) a defence establishment;

(b) property that is provided for the Canadian Forces or the Department and is situated outside a defence establishment;

(c) a vessel, aircraft or other property under the control of a visiting force that is legally in Canada by virtue of the Visiting Forces Act or otherwise.

The main difference between Bill C-42 and Bill C-55 with regard to controlled access military zones is, of course, this section.

However, subsection 260.1(2) says that:

The Minister may designate a controlled access military zone only if it is reasonably necessary for ensuring the safety or security of

(a) any person in, on or about anything referred to in paragraphs (1) (a) to (c); or

(b) anything referred to in paragraphs (1)(a) to (c).

● (1640)

A quick reading of these two provisions will show that, at any given moment, the minister, one single person, possibly on the recommendation of the chief of defence staff or on his own initiative, could decide for any given reason to increase the number of defence facilities on Canada's or Quebec's territory. We already have several of them but the minister could decide, on his own initiative, to increase their numbers. Every time someone visits those facilities, controlled access military zones could be designated, with all this implies for the rights and freedoms of people living in the surrounding areas.

Speaking about surrounding areas, we all know well that the minister is the one who will decide where it is reasonably necessary to designate a zone. Knowing the Liberal Party and this government, what could be considered reasonably necessary by the minister? Things that are considered reasonable one day by them are no longer reasonable for others the day after. Sudden changes of mood could occur and things would not go the way they were intended.

Under Bill C-55 as under Bill C-42, the defence minister is the one who designates security zones, now called controlled access military zones.

The provisions of Bill C-42 indicating that military security zones could only be designated for matters of international relations, defence and national security have been dropped from Bill C-55.

Government Orders

The definition of what can physically be included in the military zone is very broad. The bill refers to vessels, aircrafts or any other property as well as areas of land or water.

This is what subsection 260.1(4) says:

The dimensions of a controlled access military zone may not be greater than is reasonably necessary to ensure the safety or security of any person, thing or property for which the zone is designated.

Again, the words reasonably necessary are used. I am always very concerned when I see the Liberal government using words like reasonably necessary.

This phrase is included in all government programs, especially when they are designed for Quebec, like sponsorship programs. Were all these sponsorship programs really needed so that the government could get involved in various areas, especially in Quebec? One may well wonder. This seems to crop up regularly. The public keeps wondering why the Liberal government acts this way, especially when security is involved, and why it keeps saying that what it is doing is reasonably necessary. This clause is virtually identical to the one in Bill C-42. We still have ministerial discretion as to the dimensions of military zones. The minister is just required to ensure that these zones are not bigger than what is reasonably necessary.

We should also mention the maximum period during which the designation can be valid. With the addition of a few clauses in Bill C-55, it remains almost unchanged. The designation is valid for a maximum of one year and can be renewed for another year.

• (1645)

Under Bill C-55, a designation may not be for a period longer than is reasonably necessary, but if, as a result of the renewal, the designation were to be in effect for more than one year, it would have to be approved by the governor in council. But a period of two years during which people can be deprived of their rights is awfully long. It is much too long. Here again, the provisions in the bill are practically identical to those in Bill C-42.

Clause 260.1 (11) reads:

(11) The Minister shall publish in the *Canada Gazette* a notice of a designation, renewal, variance or cancellation within 23 days after the designation, renewal, variance or cancellation is made, unless the Minister is of the opinion that it is in advisable to do so for reasons of international relations or national defence or security.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Davenport, Fisheries; the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Shipyards; the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, National Defence.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Speaker, thank you for recognizing me while I was still not completely properly attired. I suggest that it is a Liberal plot that we are having to spend our time debating the bill in such intemperate weather. I also want to point out that if we had dealt with climate warming a number of years ago it may not have been quite so uncomfortable in here today. I never miss an opportunity to deal with that very important issue.

The bill we are discussing today is clearly an attempt on the part of the government to recover from a very disastrous response from the general public across the country to Bill C-42.

Bill C-42 was introduced shortly before we went home for the Christmas holidays. It was interesting to see the types of responses we were receiving from our constituents. I certainly know that was my experience. I am guessing that members of the government are receiving the same responses from their constituents to Bill C-55. The responses to Bill C-42 were that Bill C-42 was not acceptable to the Canadian public.

I have to say that the government's attempt to recover from its faux pas with Bill C-42 has not been very successful.

I must say that Bill C-55 goes some distance in addressing some concerns we have had over a number of years under various pieces of legislation but, after reviewing the bill, I see that there are still a number of excesses, especially in terms of security.

We have a crisis as a result of September 11 and we get a knee-jerk response that has not been properly thought out. A number of sectors that would be affected by the bill have not been properly consulted but the government goes ahead and says that there is a security problem. It often brings in this almost dictatorial type of response. It is an authoritarian response that is often not a methodology that will be successful but that will seriously impede the civil and human rights of Canadian citizens if the bill becomes law and attempts are made to implement it.

In a number of ways the New Democratic Party opposes the legislation. Certainly near the top of that list is the unprecedented powers that have been accorded to some of the ministers in government.

This is one of the areas where the government has tried to cover over the inadequacies and excesses of Bill C-42. I am sure other members of the House in the course of this debate have expressed concern over the declaration of what used to be a military zone, which has now been replaced by more neutral wording but which, in many respects, has the same effect.

The offensive part of that is that it would allow the minister of defence, without any other review and solely on his or her assessment of the situation and decision making, to decide what area will be a war zone. All the laws of the country will then be suspended in that area.

• (1650)

The government tried to cover that up by saying that it would only invoke that if it needed to protect its equipment. Frankly, if we were to analyze that explanation from an objective viewpoint we would see that it was plainly absurd.

Similarly, the bill would give the Minister of Transport a number of extraordinary powers in regard to the travelling public. Even if one could argue some justification for that, it is not, in a number of ways, possible to support that type of power. However even if one could argue the point in some other areas, it begs some other type of review, whether that be judicial or by a special committee.

Government Orders

We also have a number of other precedents within our legal and constitutional framework for those types of situations where a review could be established under the legislation thereby preventing any excessive use or abuse of the power. We see little or none of that in Bill C-55.

The powers that would be given to those ministers would clearly infringe the rights of Canadians. The bill still remains quite heavy-handed. It is not just the members of the New Democratic Party who are saying this. As I believe all members of the House know, the privacy commissioner went public with a letter to the Minister of Transport. It was very unusual for him to take that kind of position in the public venue. However his letter expressed deep concerns about the legislation. I want to quote part of the letter where he talked about the privacy and civil rights of Canadians. The letter states:

In summary, my concern is that its [the bill's] provisions could fundamentally and unnecessarily alter the balance between individuals and the state that exists and should exist in a free society such as Canada.

I know he used the words “fundamentally alter” but I think the more important words were “unnecessarily alter”. We know from some of the experiences we had with Bill C-36 that it was true about that legislation. However the government is now repeating the same errors.

There are already a number of criminal and quasi-criminal provisions in the criminal code and in other legislation that could deal with the points being dealt with in this legislation. These statutes could deal with them more appropriately because historically we have worked out any problems, as opposed to this bill which would expand powers significantly and, as we argue and as the privacy commissioner has argued, unnecessarily.

The government simply does not need the powers contained in the legislation that it has argued it needs. The potential for abuse is glaringly obvious when one analyzes the whole bill.

If we were to go back into history and look at the abuses of power, especially when the War Measures Act was brought in, we argue from the perspective of our party and we believe from the perspective of fully protecting civil and human rights, that we should almost give ourselves a slap on the side of the head and tell ourselves that we must not forget our history. The rampant abuse of power throughout history should caution us to not repeat the same mistakes.

• (1655)

Our party is adamantly opposed to the legislation in its present form. It needs to be withdrawn and sent into a consultation process. The problems that do exist require attention and the potential abuses that are contained in the bill need to be done away with.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am quite happy to take part in the debate on second reading of Bill C-55.

[*English*]

I am pleased to enter the debate on this omnibus bill, Bill C-55, and to specifically address the amendment before the House. It is important for us to remember that it arose from the ashes of this government's heavy-handed, ham-fisted handling of Canada's response to the horrifying events of September 11.

We are now dealing with Bill C-55, a bill that represents a second go around of the so-called public safety act that the government introduced last fall.

It is not surprising that within hours of the government introducing both Bill C-42 and Bill C-36 as part of its supposed comprehensive anti-terrorism plan, there was a very loud and growing outcry from Canadians. They understood the heavy-handedness of those legislative measures. It was ironic that on the one hand the government wanted to make Canada and its citizens feel safer and more secure but on the other hand it brought in measures that were in fact a very real threat to the human rights and civil liberties of Canadians.

In some ways we are talking here about a good news, bad news scenario. I am prepared to acknowledge, although it may sound a bit grudging, that at least the government was forced to beat a hasty retreat with respect to Bill C-42. Unfortunately it was not prepared to withdraw Bill C-36. Although it did capitulate to a great deal of pressure to introduce some amendments, the amendments were not nearly sufficient to address the underlying concerns. Therefore, the New Democratic Party, as people I am sure would have expected, could not support that legislation.

In the instance of Bill C-42, I am prepared to say that at least the government recognized that it had to withdraw it. Whether it was forced to withdraw it or not I suppose could be the subject of debate. In the strictest sense we could say that the government had the numbers to carry the day if it had wanted to persist but it did understand that politically it was simply unacceptable to ram through the so-called public safety act when it would have put in jeopardy some of the very important human rights and civil liberties of Canadians. It also put in jeopardy the protection of public safety, in the very broadest sense of the word. What public safety comes down to is whether people's human rights, civil liberties and their rights to be protected are fully intact.

It is obvious that there was a climate of very considerable fear, rage and certainly a sense of revenge in the aftermath of September 11. One of the things the New Democratic Party tried to do was to counsel and plead with the government that we were not alone in this. There was a great deal of support from citizens and citizens' organizations who were very vigilant about the importance of protecting human rights and civil liberties. They tried to encourage the government to not act in that climate of fear in a way that could only be described as overreaction. Unfortunately, the government was not prepared to take that counsel seriously.

The reason I say we are now perhaps looking at a good news, bad news scenario is that it is good news that the government felt compelled to withdraw the initial stage of legislation.

Government Orders

● (1700)

The bad news is that the government has still failed to take under serious advisement some of the most important warnings and pleadings that were made, not just to the Canadian government but to governments around the world as they grappled with the appropriate legislative responses to try to address the issues of public safety.

Instead of listening to the lesson, it is clear that the lesson was forgotten. That was the lesson that the UN secretary-general put out to all parliamentarians, all legislators, to say that in the war to defeat terrorism there cannot be a trade-off between human rights and human security or public safety. Perhaps an even more dramatic expression of that same important principle is found in the words that now are really seared in the public mind, the words of the lone member of the U.S. congress who had the courage to stand against the appropriation of funds to launch the military offensive in Afghanistan. She said "In the attempt to defeat terrorism, let us not become the evil that we deplore".

The bad news is that the government has still failed to take that very important principle under advisement.

My colleague, the member for Windsor—St. Clair, who spoke just before I rose, was quite right in pointing out that at a time like this when there are threats to public safety and when there is a sense of fear in the public, the pressures are enormous to weaken, to erode, to lessen and in some cases to just plain throw overboard human rights and civil liberties.

We are very proud to stand in support of standing up in that kind of climate against the pressures to conform, to cave in, to simply cater to the fears and toss aside the important human rights and civil liberties of our own citizens and of other citizens. In fact we represent the political party that has the most distinguished record in the country of doing that.

There are many examples. The examples are legion, but let me refer to a couple, one being the case of the Japanese internment. This party stood alone and said we could not accept that simply on the basis of ethnicity and national origin citizens in our country literally should be imprisoned and robbed of all of their rights and freedoms in the name of public safety, completely abandoning the rule of law, completely abandoning the upholding of human rights and civil liberties.

The more recent example, and the one that would be best known by the generation of young people now growing up in our country, was the example where the New Democratic Party, again alone, with at the end a tiny number of three enlightened so-called Progressive Conservatives at a time when in fact there were progressive conservatives in parliament, stood together in opposition to the imposition of the War Measures Act in Quebec in those dark and difficult days in Quebec.

Practically every one of the members of the NDP caucus have spoken specifically on the act, but in a general way I want to again implore the government to recognize that this legislation remains too heavy-handed. This legislation continues to characterize the inadequacy and the inappropriateness of the government's response to the climate of fear.

The fears are real and remain real and the climate is one of looking for assurances, but greater freedom, greater liberty, greater safety and greater security are not assured through the suspension of important human rights and civil liberties. The real test of whether a government believes in democracy is whether it will stand up against as much pressure as there may be to uphold democratic rights when those rights are threatened.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am not necessarily happy to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill C-55, however, it is important that I do so.

This bill comes after others that were passed in this House. I think that we must take them into account when we make a decision on Bill C-55, which will allow for the creation of controlled access military zones.

I want to remind the House that, over the last few months, since the events of September 11, we have passed, in spite of the Bloc Quebecois' opposition, Bill C-36, the Anti-terrorism Act, and Bill C-35, where section 5 allows the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to take measures, including building walls around any area where events are taking place, in accordance with procedures to be determined by the RCMP alone.

So we already have, over the last few months, passed two bills that are very disturbing from a civil liberties standpoint. Amnesty International, in a report published yesterday and discussed today in the media, says that, since the tragic events of September 11, freedoms and democratic rights in general have regressed, and this is true in Canada.

Clearly, in a number of countries these days, including our neighbours to the south, arbitrary arrests are taking place, detentions without warrant, or even, as was done with the prisoners brought out of Afghanistan, the creation of special courts that do not come under any civil authority.

This morning Amnesty International announced that democratic freedom had experienced setbacks in almost all of the western world. Canada is not, unfortunately, an exception. Bill C-55, along with Bills C-36 and C-35, which have unfortunately already been passed, is one more proof of this. Canada's reputation is exaggerated as far as democratic freedom is concerned. One of the signs of this is that, ever since Canada has become a member of the Organization of American States ten years or so ago, it has signed not one of the regional conventions on basic rights. I feel obliged to denounce this.

Moreover, more and more stakeholders, including Amnesty International, have emphasized this exaggerated reputation Canada has as far as democracy is concerned. For instance, the latest issue of the Quebec chapter of Amnesty International's publication *Agir* spoke out against the Canadian government for its attacks on democratic freedoms.

We now have before us a new bill, Bill C-55, which is in fact a reincarnation of Bill C-42, which the government was trying to ram through, like Bills C-36 and C-35, but which was withdrawn as a result of criticism by the opposition, the Bloc Quebecois in particular.

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So now we have its replacement, Bill C-55. This is the same bill again, except for a few cosmetic changes. For instance, the new terminology: controlled access military zone, instead of what was used in Bill C-42, that is, military security zone. Whatever the terminology, we are talking about exactly the same negative effect on rights and freedoms.

Bill C-55 cannot therefore be supported by the Bloc Québécois, as indeed Bills C-35 and C-36 were not, because of their totally arbitrary nature. Bill C-55 merely repeats what was in Bill C-42.

One might argue that some of the criteria for establishing these controlled access zones have been tightened up. Nevertheless, it is still the minister of defence alone who has the power to establish such zones.

Let us not forget that it was the minister of defence who, just recently, neglected to inform the Prime Minister about Canadian troops taking prisoners in Afghanistan and handing them over to the Americans, information which was quite important in the context. Moreover, this minister had to resign just days ago; he was fired from cabinet for reasons related to conflict of interest.

• (1710)

One can wonder about the adequacy of giving one minister, namely the Minister of National Defence, the power to create controlled access military zones. It seems excessive to us and it opens the door to much arbitrariness and dangerous situations, especially since the bill does not even require the approval of the Quebec government or any provincial government as far as the creation of a controlled access military zone is concerned.

As we know, unfortunately, there have been a number of federal interventions in Quebec that were not requested by the Quebec people. I am also convinced that a controlled access military zone would have been established at the Quebec summit in April 2001. If the Quebec government had objected, the minister of defence would have ignored it, just as they denied the Quebec Prime Minister the right to address the heads of state visiting our national capital.

In Bill C-55, the only criterion governing the designation of these controlled access military zones is that they must be reasonably necessary. This is a criterion that is elastic to say the least, both in terms of the dimensions of the zones and their period of designation. The provisions included in Bill C-42 and Bill C-55 are basically the same. No improvements have been made. There is only the following, in clause 260.1(4), which reads:

(4) The dimensions of a controlled access military zone may not be greater than is reasonably necessary to ensure the safety or security of any person, thing or property for which the zone is designated.

As we can see, there is a grey area, an arbitrary wording that will allow the Minister of National Defence, the federal government to do what it wants with these zones. Again, Bill C-55 complements Bill C-35, which gives the RCMP the power to erect walls, as it did in Quebec City. What were meant to be exceptional measures will now become the norm during any important event, any event of international scope. Bill C-55 has the same flaws as Bill C-42 in terms of the applicable criteria, and this is what makes it just as unacceptable.

Another aspect of the bill is that in these controlled access military zones, the people could lose certain rights. They will not be able to sue for damages, losses or injuries. It is written in the bill. For example, subsection 260.1(12) says:

(12) The Canadian Forces may permit, control, restrict or prohibit access to a controlled access military zone.

No reference whatsoever is made to the rights of people within this zone who, for example, would want to hold a peaceful demonstration, which is consistent with our charter of rights and freedoms and all the international conventions. Once again, nothing could be more totally arbitrary.

Finally, while in Bill C-42, a number of reasons, such as international security, defence and national security reasons, were given for the creation of such zones, in Bill C-55, all these references have disappeared. This bill essentially expands the reasons for designating controlled access military zones.

When we look at the bills passed since September 11, we find that not only Canada's reputation concerning human rights before September 11 was overrated, but the varnish is starting to peel off. The balance between rights and security needs was broken. Now, we are living in a state where civil liberties and democratic freedoms are more vulnerable than a few months ago.

In this context, the Bloc Québécois has no other choice but to oppose this bill.

• (1715)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is my turn to take part in this debate on a bill that will be very important.

Why? Because it will amend a whole series of acts. We are not talking about amending some sections, but about giving a lot of power to the Minister of National Defence to establish controlled access military zones. For the Bloc Québécois, this is far too much power.

In this regard, this bill is just as badly flawed as Bill C-42, which we opposed, as it gives the minister the same powers.

Simply to give the House an idea of how important this bill is in terms of changes, suffice to say that part 1 amends the Aeronautics Act. Part 2 amends the definitions of screening and screening point in the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act. Part 3 amends the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. Part 4 adds a new offence to the criminal code for communicating information and so on and so forth. Part 5 amends the Department of Health Act. Part 6 amends the Explosives Act. Part 7 amends the Export and Import Permits Act. Part 8 amends the Food and Drugs Act. Part 9 amends the Hazardous Products Act. Part 10 amends the Marine Transportation Security Act to give even more power to the minister. Part 11 amends the National Defence Act. We are told it is to give the Minister National Defence more powers, but they are giving him a great deal more power.

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Let me continue. Part 12 amends the National Energy Board Act. Part 13 deals with the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Part 14 amends the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act. Part 15 amends the Pest Control Products Act. Part 16 amends the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. Part 17 amends the Quarantine Act. Part 18 amends the Radiation Emitting Devices Act. Part 19 amends the Canada Shipping Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

This Canada Shipping Act has been changed a number of times, but never very substantially, at least not until now. I know what I am talking about, as I am particularly concerned with shipbuilding. The people involved in this field would like to see amendments made to this bill to bring about changes for the better, to foster development, rather than for the worse.

I am sure the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is paying close attention to this. I was his seatmate for quite a while. He claims to be concerned with development, but we often witness actions to the contrary by the government in the area of shipping or shipbuilding. The present minister is even thinking of closing down the Davie and Saint John shipyards. This is not pro-development; it is pro-closure. Instead of building up, it is destroying, and not just buildings, lives as well.

Felix Leclerc has said that when you pay someone to do nothing, it affects his morale. The government seems very insensitive to this. There is talk of thinking about closures. The workers have lived with uncertainty for years, and want the government to hold off. During the election campaigns, people come along promising that they are “going to do something”, they are going to develop programs for our ridings. The people's reaction: “My goodness, after the election, there will be a new minister”. There was, but he was in that portfolio barely a year. Then he moved on.

• (1720)

Of course, I am referring to Mr. Tobin, who was from Newfoundland. He left; he realized that he could not keep his promises. He realized that his government's ministers wanted to do nothing in this regard. When amending shipping legislation, at the same time, programs should be introduced to help people, to develop the sector. Canada has the longest inland waterways in the world. There are longer rivers, but not waterways. Yet, we are still waiting.

I have been here for nine years and for nine years I have heard the government tell us “Just wait, this is coming”. The Minister of Industry was planning to meet some people in the Quebec City area tomorrow, but the meeting was cancelled. The workers have been told “Wait, announcements will be made”.

However, the government now wants to amend legislation to give more powers to ministers. My God, this is troubling. Too much discretion is being given to some ministers. In this bill, military zones would be left to the discretion of the Minister of National Defence.

I turned 55 last week. I am not mentioning it to have you wish me happy birthday—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: I remember 1970. Quebecers were subjected to a truly unbearable sense of insecurity. We all remember the October crisis. A condition had to be met before a military intervention could be launched. The Premier of Quebec had to request it. The Mayor of Montreal had made such a request. I am not saying that I agreed with them, but the condition did exist.

There is nothing in this bill to indicate the province has to make a request. Nothing in this bill says that the mayor of a big city has to make a request through the provincial authorities. Nothing at all. All of this is left to the defence minister's discretion.

We all know that ministers of defence come and go. We had one who had to leave because he had abused his discretionary powers, granting contracts to somebody he knew very well, and I will go no further than that. We see that a minister's discretion is sometimes questionable, so questionable that even the Prime Minister, who is usually not too demanding in this regard, found the situation a bit excessive and changed his minister. We now have a new minister, whom we do not know. He was elected for the first time in the last election, but we have yet not seen him in action as a minister yet. We have seen him as a parliamentary secretary.

In view of the way he answers questions, it is a bit scary, but he is now the minister of defence. He is the one who will be responsible for deciding whether a military zone should be created, should problems arise. The people of Quebec are not fooled.

It is a matter that the Bloc Québécois members insist on defending. The Minister of National Defence has too much power in this bill, regarding the military zones. I am sure that my colleague from Jonquière will have things to add on this score.

• (1725)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on Bill C-55. I want to commend my colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière for his performance. Indeed, I have things to add.

As I was saying during my last speech on this bill, in the area I come from, there is a military zone, a military base at Bagotville. I do not know if many members of the House know about it, but I can say that this base is responsible for issues concerning NATO. NATO is also represented on this base. It is a major military base, and I live 15 kilometres from it.

Private Members' Business

Tomorrow morning, the newly appointed minister—it may not be him, because, unfortunately, this seems to be a very rapid ejection seat—who is a total unknown, whose philosophy we do not know in terms of the powers that will be given to him by Bill C-55, might say that he has decided to take actions that might affect the surrounding communities. All we know is that the new minister is a banker, a guy who is used to count money, but is not used to say such things.

Like my colleague, I am very skeptical about the minister's qualifications at this time, during consideration of Bill C-55.

What is serious is that these zones will be restricted. Ordinary citizens, people in my region, will not know if they are in such a zone. If someone commits an offence and military personnel arrests that person, the military will not have to tell that person why. That person could be convicted and not know why; whether or not the person is convicted will be left to the minister's discretion.

This bill is really devious. I think that back home, it is the Quebec government that has the authority. It should be the one to exercise its authority. In this bill, the Quebec government should be given the authority to decide how things are to be done. That government is the first representative of those people who will be affected by this bill. But no, the Quebec government is not mentioned, it will not be consulted.

In my region, there is a very important mayor, Jean Tremblay. He came here to the House of Commons. He was laughed at. I cannot say it any other way, he was laughed at and he will not be consulted. We all know how they dislike consultations. Only the minister will have the power to decide unilaterally whether he will act or not.

As my time is up, I will be pleased to continue some other day.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved that Bill C-415, an act to amend the criminal code (hate propaganda), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this legislation which I first tabled in the House almost 12 years ago. It was on June 27, 1990 that I tabled Bill C-326 to amend the criminal code hate propaganda provisions.

The bill is straightforward; in fact it is a single page. The purpose of the bill is to amend the hate propaganda and promoting genocide provisions of the criminal code to include in the definition of those who are part of the "identifiable group" that is protected under these provisions the ground of sexual orientation.

Under the current provisions of the criminal code hate propaganda sections, identifiable group means any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin. My

amendment would add the words "sexual orientation". I hasten to add that in the future I would strongly support expanding this provision even further to include, for example, the grounds of sex, and physical and mental disability, to include the provisions that are covered by section 15 of the charter of rights.

The section on hate propaganda has been in the criminal code since 1970. It was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Keegstra case. I will quote from one of the judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada as to the importance of this legislation. It stated:

The harms caused by [hate propaganda] run directly counter to the values central to a free and democratic society, and, in restricting the promotion of hatred, Parliament is therefore seeking to bolster the notion of mutual respect necessary in a nation which venerates the equality of all persons.

That is the purpose of this hate propaganda legislation. I would note as well that two major sections are encompassed by this, section 318 on the advocacy of genocide and section 319 on the public incitement of hatred.

Some might ask what about those who want to engage in legitimate debate about a whole range of issues, including the issue of gay and lesbian equality; or what if our religious beliefs, for example, force us to the conclusion that there is something evil about gay and lesbian people and that is an essential part of our religious beliefs? That speech is protected under the provisions of section 319 in a couple of areas.

First of all, there are safeguards in subsection 319(3). It states that no person shall be convicted of an offence under this subsection if, among other grounds, in good faith he expressed or attempted to establish by argument an opinion on a religious subject. There are other safeguards as well. In addition I would note that a prosecution under this section can only proceed with the consent of the attorney general, so there is that additional safeguard.

I want to take one moment to respond to a concern that has been raised by some members. That is the suggestion that because section 318 of the criminal code on advocating genocide does not include the protections in subsection 319(3) somehow we should not move ahead to include sexual orientation in the overall definition of "identifiable group".

I would hope that no one in the House would seriously argue that one should be permitted to advocate genocide, which is the deliberate destruction of an entire group under the guise of some sort of religious freedom. I do not think anyone in the House would advocate that. If there is to be opposition to this bill, I would hope that it certainly would not be on that particular ground.

If we amend subsection 318(2) of the code, it also has an impact on other federal legislation such as for example with respect to the interception, seizure and forfeiture of hate materials by agents of the state in other sections of the criminal code. The Canada Post Corporation Act authorizes the seizure of hate propaganda as defined in this section. The Customs Tariff Act prohibits the importation into Canada of material that constitutes hate propaganda within the meaning of the criminal code and the Broadcasting Act as well. This applies to those sections also.

Private Members' Business

●(1735)

Members might ask why it is important to include sexual orientation. I will not take the full 20 minutes because I want to give other members an opportunity to participate in the debate, but I want to give one very graphic and powerful example of why this is important.

There is a fellow named Fred Phelps from the United States. Fred Phelps hates gay people. In fact, he operates a website called www.godhatesfags.com. If we went to that website we would find that it is full of hatred. It has an image of a young man named Matthew Shepherd, who was brutally beaten, tortured and left to die on a fence in Wyoming because he is gay. It has a picture of him burning in hell. On the website Fred Phelps celebrates the fact that according to him Matthew Shepherd has been in hell, as of today, for 1,326 days.

Fred Phelps wanted to come to Canada to burn the Canadian flag and to promote hatred against gay and lesbian people in Canada. Many of us were concerned about that. The RCMP in Canada said they would like nothing better than to have the tools to stop this hate purveyor from coming into Canada to promote his hatred, but they said because of the provisions of the criminal code they could not do that. I quote for example Sergeant Pat Callaghan who is the head of Ottawa—Carleton's hate crimes unit. He said:

If this was done against a Catholic, a Jew or a black person, charges could be laid. If we had that legislation, we wouldn't have to put up with his nonsense on Monday. We could have told him, "If you show up and start spreading this hate, we'll arrest you".

That is as it should be. That is a very important reason for promoting and supporting the legislation.

As well I would note it is important because the impact of hate literature is very destructive. Hate propaganda is very destructive. It has an impact on gay and lesbian people who are struggling with their sexuality in terms of their own sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

One woman showed me a leaflet that came in the mail. She has a young son who is gay. The leaflet was full of hatred. It was a diatribe of hatred. She said "Imagine, Svend, how this affects my son" and how it affects other people, young people like Hamed Nastoh, a young man who, in despair after having been bullied and brutalized by his classmates, threw himself off a bridge in British Columbia not that long ago. There are others who, because of the failure to clearly condemn this kind of hate propaganda, feel that somehow there is a licence to attack gay and lesbian people.

Rob Peterson, for example, a young law student at the University of New Brunswick was brutally attacked in November 1999. He was kicked in the face, punched in the face, repeatedly called a fag and seriously injured. The failure of this country and of our government to say that hate propaganda is unacceptable creates an environment in which these kinds of attacks are in fact deemed more acceptable.

Of course the fact that we have hate propaganda legislation that prohibits hate propaganda on certain grounds but excludes gay and lesbian people sends out the very clear message that somehow we are less than equal. The failure to include gay and lesbian people

sends out the message that we are in fact second class citizens in our own country. That as well is clearly not acceptable.

Finally, I want to note that in terms of the legislation, it has some of the broadest base of support of any private member's legislation, indeed sometimes government legislation, that has come before the House. Every provincial and territorial attorney general supports the bill. In fact in November last year there was a meeting of provincial, territorial and federal attorneys general and they unanimously called on the government to move ahead to adopt the legislation.

●(1740)

I see at least one member of parliament here from Alberta. The attorney general of Alberta, Dave Hancock, pointed out that protecting gays from hateful propaganda has nothing to do with endorsing homosexuality. Here is what he said:

I support the hate crime legislation which prohibits people from spewing hate against anybody for any reason. There are appropriate ways to discuss issues in our country...and you don't need to put forward hateful literature. It doesn't matter what you believe about sexual orientation.

I issue a special plea to my friends in the Canadian Alliance. I hope they will listen to their colleagues the provincial attorneys general in every jurisdiction in Canada on this issue.

This is an opportunity for the Alliance to take a stand on an important issue. On every other occasion, when the issue of equality or respect for gay and lesbian people has come before this parliament, the Canadian Alliance has voted against that legislation. I am hoping today will be different. I am hoping that today members of the Canadian Alliance under the new leadership of the member for Calgary Southwest will in fact have the wisdom to recognize that they should be supporting this legislation which has such broad support right across the political spectrum.

In fact, I have another letter which was sent by Mike Harris and Howard Hampton jointly calling on the federal government to move ahead on this legislation.

I want to quote as well the House leader for the Canadian Alliance, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, who said that he supports this change in legislation. In fact, in a public statement he said "It makes sense to me. I don't believe in incitement of hatred against anybody". I hope other members of that caucus will support this as well.

In closing I want to say that if one is allowed to dedicate legislation to anyone, I would like to dedicate this bill to the memory of Aaron Webster. He was the British Columbian who was brutally beaten repeatedly with a baseball bat in a park in British Columbia for one reason and one reason only: because he was gay. I hope that this parliament will send out the strongest possible signal that hate crimes and hate propaganda of any sort, whether it is racism, anti-Semitism, whether it is directed at gay and lesbian people or people with disabilities, has no place in Canada.

In fact, at Aaron Webster's funeral his two sisters, Pamela Miller and Faith Quintillan, both of whom live in Alberta, said that they hope their brother's legacy will be tougher laws to protect gays and lesbians. I hope that this parliament will heed that plea.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am most pleased to speak today to Bill C-415, an act to amend the Criminal Code, which deals with hate propaganda, introduced by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

This bill would amend the definition of “identifiable group” outlined in the criminal code provisions on hate propaganda. It would add “sexual orientation” to the criteria used to establish that a group comes under the definition of “identifiable group”. By ensuring that a group is considered as an “identifiable group” under the terms of the definition, the provisions on hate propaganda would apply to this group.

For more than 30 years, the criminal code has targeted the promotion of hate. Provisions on hate propaganda were added to the criminal code to avoid the difficulties associated with using libel provisions to take legal action with respect to a group as opposed to individuals.

The provisions that were added to the criminal code in 1970 were based on the recommendations of the special committee on hate propaganda in Canada, which submitted its report in 1965 to the justice minister at the time.

This committee, chaired by Maxwell Cohen, included notable personalities, such as the future justice minister and Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and another future justice minister, Mark MacGuigan. It was under Mr. Trudeau's government that these provisions were added to the criminal code.

These provisions prohibit the dissemination of hate messages targeting an identifiable group. This term is currently defined as any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin.

What offences are created under this provision?

First, encouraging genocide or promoting genocide is considered an offence. Genocide is defined as killing of members of the group, or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, with intent to destroy in whole or in part any identifiable group. It is interesting to note that adding sexual orientation to the criteria used to define “identifiable group” would expand the usual meaning of genocide, which normally applies to a race or a people.

The second offence mentioned in the provisions dealing with hate propaganda is communicating statements in any public place and thereby inciting hatred against any identifiable group, where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace. From the condition attached to this provision, it seems that its main purpose is to protect public peace.

The third offence is communicating statements, other than in private conversation, which wilfully promote hatred against any identifiable group. It seems that this provision is aimed at protecting members of a particular group rather than the state.

It should be noted that, apart from statements made in public or in private to advocate or promote genocide, all other offences require

an element of public communication. This shows that, even before the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted, legislators were careful not to interfere in cases where ideas and opinions were expressed in private by an individual.

In recent years, the Internet has been used as a means of communicating hate propaganda against identifiable groups. This is why, in the fall, the government added a provision to deal with this problem in Bill C-36, the anti-terrorism legislation.

The provision in question authorizes the court to order the deletion of hate propaganda stored on and made available to the public through a computer system within the jurisdiction of the court. This would allow for the deletion of any offensive material in cases where the person who posted it is not known or is outside the country.

Canada is now involved in negotiating a protocol on the Council of Europe's cybercrime convention signed by some 30 other countries in November 2001. Among other things, the convention would provide for international co-operation on investigations and legal proceedings regarding certain offences. The protocol would extend the benefits of the convention to offences related to hate propaganda. The question raised in Bill C-415 is whether legislative provisions dealing with hate propaganda should be extended to a group that is identifiable because of its sexual orientation.

● (1745)

In considering this issue, we must take into account the fact that in the Keegstra case, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the provisions on hate propaganda interfere with the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms. However, by a slim majority of 4 against 3, the supreme court confirmed the provisions as being a reasonable limit in a free and democratic society.

One of the areas examined by the supreme court was the damage caused by the promotion of hate toward identifiable groups. It stated that the damage was caused on two levels: the members of the group singled out by the hate propaganda and society as a whole. The court found indications of the damage caused to groups identified by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin and stated that the protection of identifiable groups was a pressing and important goal aimed at by the legislation.

We must ensure that any amendment made to those provisions will not bring about some imbalance between freedom of expression and protection of minorities that could jeopardize the provisions regarding hate propaganda.

Before adding to those groups, we must ensure that there is enough hate propaganda targeting the group to justify its inclusion under the protection provided by the provisions on hate propaganda.

The Minister of Justice supports this bill. I think this issue should be given careful consideration before we decide whether Bill C-415 should go forward.

● (1750)

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will take a few moments to speak about the merits of this bill.

Private Members' Business

In recent years, as parliamentarians, we have sent a number of messages to the effect that we wish to treat homosexuals with all the respect and equality inherent in our support for diversity.

In 1997, the House passed an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to make sexual orientation a prohibited ground of discrimination.

Following the Rosenberg decision, we also passed a bill to amend public pension plans.

Two years ago, we passed an important bill recognizing that a partner in a same-sex relationship is entitled to exactly the same benefits in all federal statutes.

Hate propaganda is something even more serious, because we are sending the public a message. We are sending a message that when there is hate propaganda based on sexual orientation in public messages, when particular groups make fun of homosexuality or treat homosexuals badly, those who engage in such behaviour will be charged and, as legislators, we expect the courts to take this into account.

This is what the bill introduced by the member for Burnaby—Douglas is proposing. He is asking that the criminal code be amended so that we can ensure that just as we do not tolerate discrimination against those of a different colour from the majority, so we will not tolerate hate propaganda based on sexual orientation.

We all remember that the question of hate propaganda had been examined by a working group in the early 1960s. It was the Cohen group. They told us that it was very important to remain vigilant. At that time, for instance, in various parts of this country for instance, the Ku Klux Klan and white supremacist groups were advocating things that those who believed in equality would have found most repulsive.

Section 318 of the criminal code was amended. We do not tolerate hate propaganda against a person or a group based on the colour of their skin, their race, their religion or their ethnic origins. The member for Burnaby—Douglas is right to want to add sexual orientation to the list.

I know that in Canada as well as in Quebec, there are still many more young people of homosexual orientation who commit suicide because they are victims of prejudice and have difficulty taking their place in society. The more clearly we condemn discrimination and hate propaganda, the more clearly, as a society, will we be helping young people who discover their homosexuality to accept themselves.

This is what I had to say. Again, I join the member for Burnaby—Douglas in inviting all members of parliament to support this bill.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the matter. While I cannot speak for the Canadian Alliance on the issue I can speak for myself and my constituents.

I have no doubt that every member of the House is firmly opposed to all forms of genocide and the public incitement of hatred against

others. At the same time it is our duty as parliamentarians to ensure that any legislation to censure these acts is consistent with both the principle of fundamental justice and our Canadian ideal of a free and democratic society. I prefer to deal with the issue on a principled and rational basis than on the emotional basis that has sometimes accompanied the debate.

In 1995 the Reform Party put forward a persuasive argument against adding section 718.2 to the criminal code. The section instructs sentencing judges to take into consideration whether offences are motivated by hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or any similar factor.

Reform Party members opposed the addition of the section on the basis that all criminals should receive appropriate sentences regardless of their reasons for committing a crime. The Alliance continues to maintain that political and social ideas that may motivate an offender to commit a crime are irrelevant. What is relevant are the facts of the crime and how to deal appropriately with the offender. Similarly, victims who suffer from crimes motivated by greed should never be treated with less dignity than victims of crime based on hatred.

For similar reasons members of the Canadian Alliance opposed the definition of terrorist activity in the first anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-36, which referred to the religious, political or philosophical motivations of a person committing a terrorist act. People's political or religious thoughts at the time should have no bearing on whether they are convicted of a terrorist offence or on the severity of the sentence they receive if convicted.

The issues we are dealing with in the hate propaganda laws are somewhat more nuanced and complex. Some speakers glossed over the distinctions between hate propaganda and advocating genocide. These are very different issues and considerations, yet they seem to lump them all together.

I do not intend to wade into the convoluted and intricate arguments that surround the discussion of how freedom of speech can or cannot be applied to hate literature. However I would point to two specific concerns in the bill which must be addressed and which form the grounds of my opposition to the legislation.

First, the legislation would extend protection from hate propaganda to some groups while excluding others. While the bill would add sexual orientation to the list of groups who may claim protection from hate literature, a number of other Canadians who may be targeted for reasons of age, health, disability, social status or a number of other characteristics would not be afforded the same protection.

Private Members' Business

What concerns me is not only the piecemeal way we are approaching the law but the exclusion of a number of vulnerable groups in our society that are routinely subject to discrimination and inequality. Discrimination based on age will present an increasingly difficult moral dilemma in the ongoing public debate surrounding euthanasia and how we treat elderly members of our society. Promoting hatred or genocide against those perceived by some to be a drain or to no longer be contributing members of society is a real concern. It will undoubtedly present a challenge for us in the future, particularly in the contemporary climate of modern technology.

A more broadly based approach would assist in addressing the challenges the mentally or physically infirm may face from those who advocate eugenics or euthanasia. The unfortunate case of Robert Latimer, a father who took the life of his severely disabled daughter in the hopes of relieving her pain and suffering, has brought the issue to the forefront of moral and ethical debate in Canada.

• (1800)

Groups representing disabled Canadians have voiced concerns that they may become targets without their consent. To address the issue there are two possible solutions. First, the definition of identifiable group could be expanded along the lines of our current standard in the charter of rights and freedoms. The charter currently extends protection from discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

Amending the definition in this manner has been suggested in the past. In April, 1985 the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution recommended the definition be broadened to include sex, age, and mental or physical disability. The Law Reform Commission of Canada recommended the same so the provisions would be consistent with the charter of rights and freedoms. A broader definition would be consistent with international standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees that everyone is entitled to rights and freedoms:

—without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Second, I would prefer to remove the definition that applies to the offence of advocating genocide, since genocide in itself is self-defining. This way any group which found itself subject to abuse could seek and receive the necessary legal protection.

It is second reading and I am not entitled to move an amendment. It will therefore have to wait. At the same time, given the shortcomings of the bill I cannot support it either.

Another concern about the legislation relates to the issue of legal defences. Section 319 of the criminal code proscribes public incitement of hatred. One of the four defences set out in the section would likely preclude prosecution in the context of the expression of a religious opinion. Subsection 319(3) reads:

No person shall be convicted of an offence under subsection (2)

(b) if, in good faith, he expressed or attempted to establish by argument an opinion on a religious subject—

These defences do not currently apply to section 318. There is a substantive difference between section 319 and section 318.

However problems immediately arise that need to be addressed, and Bill C-415 ignores the difficulty in a simplistic way.

The absence of defences in section 318 could pose a problem for a number of common publications including the Bible, the most widely read and widely published book in Canada and across the globe. This would affect both Christians and Jews. In addition, many Muslims do not believe homosexuality should be permitted. Specific books of Islamic law dictate that homosexuals should be punished harshly. Under a broad definition of the law this could arguably fit into the definition of advocating genocide based on sexual orientation.

Is this the intention of the amendment? If it is, or if this is its effect, we cannot support it. I do not believe this kind of material was intended to be prohibited under these laws. However without specific defences in place individuals could be subject to costly prosecutions. Religious publications of many varieties could be subject to censorship or even prohibition. If Bill C-415 passes second reading we must require the committee to consider which legal defences would be appropriate in this context.

The Canadian Alliance has always promoted equal treatment of all Canadians under the law. However we are not in favour of preferential treatment of any group, something the legislation in its current form would do. We must be mindful that one man's or woman's freedom is not arbitrarily exchanged for another's based on what happens to be the current political flavour.

I will continue to work to extend equality and freedom from discrimination to all Canadians. Although I will not be supporting his bill I thank the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas for bringing the matter forward for debate.

• (1805)

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to speak for only a few moments to the initiative brought forth by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

I want to state categorically for the record that both the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and I as a private member for the riding of Fundy—Royal are in wholehearted support of Bill C-415. The bill would amend subsection 318(4) of the criminal code and replace it with the following:

In this section, "identifiable group" means any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

To illustrate the issue I will bring members back to Fredericton, New Brunswick on the evening of November 7, 1999. A young man named Robert Peterson was walking home on Regent Street after a night out with his friends. His only crime that evening was walking home. He was heinously attacked in a brutal and severe fashion. As a result Robert Peterson, a law student at the University of New Brunswick, ended up with his eyes blackened. He required stitches on both sides of his face. The motivation for the crime was clearly established as a gay bashing. He was attacked merely because of his sexual orientation.

Adjournment Debate

Moments ago a reference was made to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in terms of how it distinguishes discrimination if not racism and does not include sexual orientation in its list. The declaration was written by a man named John Peters Humphrey who came from my riding of Fundy—Royal.

Things change in society. We learn to add where appropriate. Also in my riding of Fundy—Royal is Gordon Fairweather who was Canada's first human rights commissioner and the hon. member for Fundy—Royal from 1962-78. He believes sexual orientation must be added to the code.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas said he wanted to dedicate his initiative to the memory of Aaron Webster. I want to send a signal on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada that the heinous beating of Robert Peterson will not be forgotten. In his name we support the initiative of the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. I thank him for the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to add a couple of comments on Bill C-415 which is a bill to amend the criminal code with regard to hate propaganda. It also seeks to expand the definition of what is called an identifiable group, in the area of hate propaganda in the criminal code, to include any sector of the public distinguished by sexual orientation.

This bill makes me ask the question: How are our laws made and conformed? We went through the debate some time ago on the matter of amending the charter to include sexual orientation as prohibitive grounds for discrimination. One of the discussion points dealt with a list. If we make a list then someone must be left out. It is an interesting point for me because I would have thought that charter amendments to the human rights code, or whatever, would automatically be conformed in legislation. I am not sure about the legal point of whether all legislation which emulates a list would have or should have been conformed. I am not sure why that is the case. Therefore, I wanted to identify that question and get the answer.

Many groups within our society could be identifiable. Currently the criminal code specifies colour, race, religion, and ethnic origin. Bill C-415 seeks to add the identifiable group sexual orientation. I do not think there is any question with regard to the principle matter of hate propaganda. I have often thought that to have a list, if it tends to leave an identifiable group out, is perhaps not as inclusive as it should be. I would have thought the criminal code would identify hate propaganda as a criminal offence, period.

Regardless, Canadians, citizens or not, would be covered by the charter provisions, the provisions of the human rights code and by the laws of Canada. We should seek to be more inclusive in the legislation by not creating lists which somehow seek to be more inclusive when the existence of the list itself presumes that someone is left out.

As time goes on other groups will say to include them too. All of a sudden we would get into a situation where we would have to balance the relative priority. Have we done legislation a service by somehow continuing to change it? Provisions such as this appear in a

number of pieces of legislation. I am not sure whether or not we have the formula for making changes to the extent that the intent is to make a parallel. That parallel should be consequential to the main change that was made and all other related references, in whatever pieces of legislation, would consequentially be made.

I wanted to raise that point not so much with regard to the specific bill and what it is seeking to do but rather to identify that it seems to be a long way around to do something that should be done automatically. The member should not have to have a bill before this place to do something which this House has already dealt with.

• (1810)

It is an unusual situation. I hope that in the future as we come to similar matters, whether they be government bills or any other bills, they be more omnibus in nature and seek to make consequential conforming changes which would reflect the decisions of this place. In this way the same debates would not happen over and over again.

I thank the member for raising the bill. I congratulate him on being selected in the lottery and having his bill become votable. Obviously he has sought and obtained substantial support for his bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed that we see the clock at 6.30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FISHERIES

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the year 2002 is the 20th anniversary of the launching of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea.

Adjournment Debate

In the 1970s and the early 1980s the Government of Canada strongly supported the law of the sea and was one of the first nations to sign it in 1982. The convention has been in legal force since 1994 but Canada has yet to ratify it.

In the 1993 election campaign, we Liberals promised to ratify the law of the sea. In 1994 and in 1995 Canada's foreign affairs ministers confirmed in the House that the government would ratify the convention. Concurrently the government tabled Bill C-98, the oceans act. In it Canadian maritime boundaries and substantive rules were harmonized with the requirements of the convention.

The official explanation for not ratifying it is that the government is waiting for a "high seas and fisheries enforcement regime" which needs to be put into place. Last December Canada ratified the related spinoff United Nations agreement on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. The straddling stocks enforcement regime is now in place. Therefore the question is why is the government still waiting? The question is asked because not ratifying the law of the sea has serious disadvantages.

The first is that Canada claims a 12 nautical mile territorial sea over which it exercises sovereignty. It also claims a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone and the right to certain resources, such as oil and gas and some forms of marine life, on the continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical mile zone.

In the absence of ratification, Canada cannot forward any claim to the commission on the limits of the Canadian continental shelf. Our claims are not recognized in law and therefore remain unenforceable. Apparently the Russian government is about to announce continental shelf claims which could overlap with Canadian claims. Having ratified the law of the sea, Russia will have a considerable advantage over us.

Second, Canada is at a disadvantage as a non-party of the law of the sea for other reasons. Article 234 of the law of the sea convention, I am told, would provide Canada with clear legal authority over the Northwest Passage, a most important route for environmental and economic reasons. Moreover, Canada cannot be a member of the law of the sea tribunal which could rule on crucial issues.

Third, article 18 of the Vienna law of treaties convention obliges Canada to refrain from acting inconsistently with the law of the sea but does not confer the benefits of the law of the sea.

Fourth, most parties to the convention are now planning to establish all their maritime boundaries as allowed by the convention. Canada however is taking selective advantage of the convention and enjoying many of its benefits without assuming the responsibilities that go with the benefits. It is profiting without paying, so to speak.

Fifth and last, all industrialized states except for the United States and Canada have ratified the convention. The U.S. congress may introduce a bill next year which would lead to the United States government's ratification of the convention. This would leave Canada in the company of a small number of states, such as the Congo and Botswana, outside the scope of the convention.

To conclude, Canada was a leader in the negotiations of the law of the sea convention and also gained most from it. The 12 years

leading to the drafting and conclusion of the convention provided Canada with a leadership role in the international system. Evidently we have lost ground but we can regain it by ratifying.

I am therefore asking the parliamentary secretary—

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Order. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question which as usual is well researched and hits dead on the target.

As recently stated in the House, it is the policy of the government to ratify the United Nations convention on the law of the sea as soon as possible, bearing in mind it is the primary duty of the government and ourselves to protect Canada's fish stocks. This means an effective international fisheries regime for straddling and highly migratory fish stocks outside the 200 mile exclusive economic zone.

By way of background, I note that the UNCLOS was opened for signature in Montego Bay, Jamaica on December 10, 1982. This marked a culmination of more than 14 years of work by over 150 countries. The convention currently has 158 signatories and 138 parties. The convention entered into force on November 16, 1994, and is now binding and effective for states which are party to it.

Canada signed the United Nations convention on the law of the sea in 1982, after being one of the most active participants in the negotiations. Although the UNCLOS was one of our highest priority treaty negotiations in the 1970s, Canada initially delayed ratification in the mid-1980s due to its opposition to its seabed mining provisions.

A satisfactory resolution to the seabed mining issue was found in 1994 through an agreement amending UNCLOS. However increasing concerns about the failure of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea to address the problems of overfishing of straddling stocks prevented Canada from proceeding with ratification. Consequently, it was agreed that Canada would ratify when an effective enforcement regime for high seas fisheries was in place.

Since 1992 Canada has focused its efforts on the development and adoption of the UN agreement on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, UNFA. This agreement fills these gaps by establishing this management regime.

Adjournment Debate

UNFA entered into force last December. It is an excellent first step toward establishing the effective high seas fisheries regime for which we are looking. However UNFA is not yet in force for a number of the significant participants who are fishing off of Canada's shores. In this regard I note that the European Commission has stated its intention for the EU and its member states to ratify the UNFA by the end of this year, 2002.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her comprehensive reply and background that she has given to us. I also thank her for the reference to the European Commission and its intention to ratify the straddling stock convention by the end of the year.

Considering the disadvantages to Canada for not ratifying, could the parliamentary secretary give an indication to the House as to when Canada plans to ratify the United Nations convention on the law of the sea in view of the very reasons that I described earlier in my presentation?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Madam Speaker, the recent entry into force of the UN agreement on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks is an important step in this process and will be considered with regard to the question of timing. My understanding is that it is not a question of if we will, but when we will. The priority is the establishment of the enforcement regime.

I believe, as the hon. member does, that the European Commission's ratification will and should be a trigger for us. I quite personally undertake, having learned something through this process, to press the issue within the department and to request an explanation of when that timing will be. Should it be later rather than sooner, I would like to hear the answer for that, having listened very carefully to the hon. member's rationale and good reasons.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

SHIPYARDS

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, tonight I would like to come back to the representative for the Minister of Industry about a question that I asked of the minister on Wednesday, May 22. I asked him to confirm or deny information that was given by a number of media outlets the day before. According to the media, the Minister of Industry had been given a report that recommended permanently closing the Saint John, New Brunswick and Lévis shipyards.

In his response, the minister said that he was considering all options. He mentioned that it was up to the shipyards to decide whether or not they would close. The power the Minister of Industry and the federal government has is great. He is capable of influencing MIL Davie's decision. MIL is the former name of the Lévis shipyard.

On Monday, I wrote the Minister of Industry. I spoke with him yesterday and we gave him a document. I invited the minister to come and visit the shipyard, in order to understand the situation and to see for himself the scale of this shipyard, to realize that it is the largest one now since the Saint John shipyard closed two years ago. It is now the largest shipyard in Canada. It is the only one with the ISO 9001 standard.

Why does it have this standard? Because it specializes in design and delivery, but also because it has after sales service, as it were; it can go to a site. The Lévis shipyard engineering service is one of the top five in the world. Right now, a Korean shipyard is using technology tested by the Lévis shipyard.

I told the minister not to rely on the report by senior officials which said that the government's requirements were limited to \$111 million. This report is based on budgetary availability dictated by politicians. These are not real requirements. In my letter, I reminded the minister that the needs for military equipment exist.

As the Minister of Industry, he is responsible for the program set up by his predecessor, Brian Tobin, the structured financing facility. There is one way to let a shipyard die and that is to not respond to demand. Yet, demand there is. Right now, the shipyard has an order for \$100 million in conversion work on a ship. I ask the minister to follow up.

I also ask him to take the leadership Mr. Tobin had promised to take with respect to other ministers, especially in connection with the \$2 million we are waiting for from the department of public works. Unfortunately, there is a new minister. This is for work already completed since December.

I ask the parliamentary secretary today if the minister really intends to go and visit the Davie shipyard and meet with its managers.

Mr. Serge Marciel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to speak about Davie today. Davie has been in serious financial difficulty for some time now and was placed under the protection of a bankruptcy trustee on October 24, 2001. The reality is such in the private sector that all businesses experience some difficulty. Davie and the shipbuilding and industrial marine industries are no exception to the rule.

Of course, the Government of Canada has sympathy for the Davie workers who face an uncertain future. The industry minister met the shipyard workers last week, on May 23, 2002, to talk about the situation in the shipbuilding industry.

It is for the very purpose of helping the shipbuilding industry that the Government of Canada kept its promise and published a new policy framework for shipbuilding on June 19, 2001. The new framework provides for 20 practical and affordable measures that will help the shipbuilding industry to be efficient, productive, creative and competitive on the world market.

A key element of the new policy framework is the structured financing facility for which the federal government has earmarked \$150 million over a five year period. This facility will stimulate economic activity in the Canadian shipyard industry by providing financial assistance to buyers and lessees of ships built in Canada. This initiative has already ensured the success of three approved projects, while creating jobs in Vancouver and Victoria, in British Columbia, and in Île-aux-Coudres, in Quebec.

Adjournment Debate

The other initiatives taken by the Canadian government to help the shipbuilding industry include the following: supporting the promotion of exports through Team Canada Inc.; intensifying efforts to make the Canadian industry benefit from offshore oil and gas development; and giving the shipbuilding and industrial marine industry access to the funding of Technology Partnerships Canada, so that it can develop innovative technologies.

In addition to these measures and to the establishment of a new branch at Industry Canada, the federal government was already providing assistance to the industry in the following forms: accelerated capital cost allowance for Canadian-built ships; a 25% tariff on most non-NAFTA ship imports; Export Development Corporation financing for commercially viable transactions; and a very favourable research and development tax credit system.

The federal government did not sit idly. The new policy framework, which is widely supported by the industry, shows that this government really wants to continue to help the industry.

In conclusion, as the Quebec government and Davie Industries know, we will continue to work as hard as possible to help Davie Industries take advantage of all the opportunities available to it under the new policy framework.

● (1830)

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madam Speaker, I also wish to thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer. He just spoke about the structured financing facility. He should know that Davie submitted a request under that program and is waiting for an answer from the Minister of Industry.

As I already mentioned at the end of my speech, the federal government, through the department of public works, owes \$2 million for some work already completed. It would be very good for Davie to receive an answer on this.

I ask the Minister of Industry to show some leadership so that the whole government can act consistently and help Davie. The work involved concerned a dry dock and the cost was \$12 million. Of that amount, \$10 million has been paid and \$2 million is still outstanding. Following a \$10 million to \$12 million investment for a dry dock, the decision to shut down Davie would be incredible.

Finally, will the minister go and meet with the people at Davie next week?

Mr. Serge Marcil: Madam Speaker, on May 23, 2002, we published an overview of government procurement, to give shipyard owners a realistic idea of government work available to them. Shipyards are commercial enterprises and they make business decisions based on opportunities in the commercial and public sectors.

The new policy framework on shipbuilding launched in June 2001 will foster a shipbuilding sector that is efficient, productive, innovative and competitive on the world market. Canadian shipyards able to meet the needs will still have a chance to compete for future government contracts when it is ready to go ahead.

The Policy Framework on Shipbuilding and Industrial Marine Industries is aimed at promoting opportunity, growth and innovation in niche markets where Canada can compete. With the development

and implementation of this new strategic framework, in addition to its existing shipbuilding policy, the Government of Canada recognizes—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I know that the member has more to say but I am glad you cut him off.

I am again up on the Lancaster Aviation file, the Henry McFliker file, if you will. I want to bring attention to some of the inaccuracies of the parliamentary secretary last night in his response to my question.

Basically my question is this: How could the Government of Canada allow spare parts to leave the country, go to Florida to a third party and wind up in a warehouse owned by a convicted felon in the United States by the name of Henry McFliker?

When I mentioned the inventory that has been dealt with by Henry McFliker, the parliamentary secretary used information that is not accurate. The numbers he quoted were in Canadian dollars and he has underestimated them by at least 100%. The fact of the matter is that if we take Mr. McFliker at his word, and I know that is very difficult to do, he advertised having close to \$40 million U.S. in Canadian aviation spare parts and military parts housed in Florida.

This is a serious issue. The reason we have been at this for two years now is that basically I would like to have a level of honesty from the government in terms of how this contract was allowed to be negotiated. What eventually happened to those spare parts in Florida? When Henry McFliker, who was marketing and housing spare aviation and military parts on behalf of the Government of Canada, was arrested, many of his holdings were seized by the government of the United States. To back that up, I have with me documentation from the attorney general of the state of Florida where this court case was heard and where Henry McFliker was convicted.

The question is, what safeguards do we have? Did the government keep an accurate inventory of parts that did wind up in Florida? What did that inventory include? I do not think the government knows what was in that inventory. It certainly does not know the value of that inventory, so if it does not know the value of the inventory how can the member stand in the House and say that everything is okay, that we received fair market value for these parts?

Adjournment Debate

My suspicion is that the Government of Canada did not receive fair market value for those spare aviation parts. The reason is that Mr. McFliker, who owned this warehouse and who was selling these parts, was fined \$1.7 million by the attorney general when he was proven guilty of money laundering and drug trafficking and all of the rest of the charges that were thrown at him. He had to pay a huge fine, only two years ago. My suspicion is that he sold off these parts to pay off his obligation to the courts in the United States. In other words, we were the fall guys.

Because of sloppy bookkeeping and all the other reasons that Mr. Gagliano got himself in trouble, as well as the former public works minister, I think that the Government of Canada owes it to the people of Canada to go down to Florida, in co-operation with the FBI, and do a thorough investigation of this file so that we will know.

At the very minimum, Madam Speaker, would you not like to know? Would you not like to see the inventory list of these spare parts and what happened to them? If the government would provide us with that inventory list we actually could track these parts.

Just to conclude, Florida has—

● (1835)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we went through a lot of the detail yesterday on the very same question, I will not repeat the answer that I gave last night.

Let me address very forthrightly some of the allegations. First, he said that we gave the wrong information when we got to the parts. I quote from *Hansard* of yesterday, at page 11870, in which I said:

There are currently only about \$1 million or less of spare parts assets.

That is currently. There have been parts sold. In fact the member identified that the value of the parts were substantially more, so the member just misunderstood the answer last night and I am sorry he did not understand.

With regard to the relationship, let me point out that the Government of Canada had assets of which to dispose. It entered into a contract on a competitive bid basis with Lancaster Aviation of Mississauga, Ontario.

Lancaster Aviation is in the business of marketing and selling surplus military assets. Lancaster transported those assets to Florida because that was where the marketplace was. There were eight Challenger jets, two Twin Huey helicopters and a substantial value of parts which were mostly parts for the obsolete Boeing 707. The Challenger jets have been sold off. The Twin Huey helicopters have been sold at fair market value. All the parts have been sold except for about \$1 million worth which still have not been sold but which Lancaster continues to sell.

The member's problem is that Lancaster has leased a hangar from Airspares Inc. It is an incorporated company. It so happens that the owner of the shares of that company is someone who has been convicted of a criminal offence. The member has suggested that somehow this gentleman, who leased storage space, has taken these

parts and has sold them to pay off a fine he has been charged because of his criminal offence.

The member just has not got it yet. The owner of the storage facility does not own the parts, does not sell the parts and never did sell any parts. He is leasing a hangar to Lancaster Aviation. Lancaster sold the parts and sold the planes. Lancaster got the proceeds, not this convicted felon.

The member ought to get his facts straight before he comes back to the House. I suggest that in this case the member has written to the RCMP. He has raised all these points. The RCMP simply came back to him and said that if he had any information that was worth having, to please let it know.

● (1840)

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, again the parliamentary secretary is wrong in a number of the facts he brought before the House of Commons. I suppose that is not his fault, because he is representing a ministry that is totally out of control and this is an example of that. This is an example of why Mr. Gagliano's name has been raised consistently in the House in terms of improprieties and some of the really sloppy deals that he created as minister, only to be followed by another minister who was sacked by the Prime Minister.

The fact remains that, if the government would provide us with information that is accurate, we could lay this case to rest. I wanted documents from the department and I worked on that for a solid year. When the documents were delivered to my office, a high stack of documents, 90% of them were blacked out. Therefore we have no idea at all of what is going on.

If we talked to the attorney general of the United States of America, he would tell us that when Mr. McFliker's warehouse was raided and goods were seized, the goods that were seized could have been put in my briefcase.

The question would be whether there is \$1 million worth of goods left, as the parliamentary secretary has said there is. If for one minute we can believe him, what happened to the rest of those spare parts?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, is it not wonderful that we are finally using this as the committee of the whole? We can see the member's eyes and we can see that he is very nervous about some of the statements he has made.

The contract entered into with Lancaster was competitively bid. If the member has information to the contrary and if he is making allegations, it is his responsibility and duty to raise those allegations with the proper authorities for full investigation. He has checked out this matter with the RCMP. The RCMP has said that he has no basis on the information.

I simply conclude by directly answering his allegation that somehow these parts have gone missing or have been seized by the U.S. government. I can say emphatically that the assets have not been seized by U.S. authorities and that no investigation of the sale of assets has been initiated since Lancaster continues to provide the services under the contract. There is no question that this is a two year old matter. The assets were sold in accordance with the contract, and the remaining assets will be sold.

Adjournment Debate

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 6.44 p.m.)

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