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Monday, June 1, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 1, 2009

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN PRODUCTS PROMOTION ACT

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ) moved that Bill C-306, an act respecting the use of government contracts to promote economic development, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, we have been working for a very long time on this bill which, I believe, has become even more important today in view of the current economic situation.

Just a month ago, a \$34 billion deficit was projected, and we learned last week that it would reach \$50 billion. The federal deficit will be \$16 billion higher than projected. It is very difficult for workers, it is difficult for the public in general and it means that economic recovery will not happen tomorrow but much further down the road. Therefore, measures must be taken to encourage Canadians and Quebeckers and help them through this economic downturn.

Bill C-306, an act respecting the use of government contracts to promote economic development, would encourage buying in Canada. Of course many people would say that we are following the Americans and that this bill is similar to the Buy American Act. Yes, this legislation could be said to be a protectionist measure, but I want to make it clear that it has absolutely nothing to do with the American legislation, and I will explain why.

It is also for that reason that I would like all my colleagues to read the bill and to give us an opportunity to debate it in committee. It is indeed a rather complex piece of legislation and we must be able to discuss it in committee. This important bill will allow Canada to buy, annually, up to \$600 million worth of products made in Canada, which could create up to 21,000 jobs.

Do we not need jobs at this time while we are facing an exceptionally high unemployment rate because of the economic crisis and because of the government deficit? Would it not be

desirable to create 21,000 additional jobs to give people a chance to work?

We support free trade, international economic agreements and the WTO, and this bill does not interfere in any way with NAFTA, the WTO or international economic agreements. It deals with small amounts and targets purchases made by the government. We are talking about a portion, 9.3%, of the government's total expenditures for goods and services.

I see no reason to be against apple pie. Basically, this bill will be grist to our mill for the next few years and could help small and medium-size businesses grow and continue to operate during difficult economic times. It would be desirable to pass this bill, which is, after all, very specific.

Chapter 10 of NAFTA, which deals with government procurement, provides that, as a general rule, the government shall accord the same treatment to American and Mexican goods and services as to Canadian ones when making purchases. Conversely, the United States and Mexico commit to accord Canadian suppliers equally open-minded treatment. In the lingo of international agreements, that is called the national treatment rule.

Clause 7 of the bill is designed to reflect that obligation under NAFTA. NAFTA does, however, contain provisions allowing the government to buy Canadian in certain circumstances. These exceptions are far from insignificant and probably cover the majority of government purchases.

The legislation I am proposing this morning includes all of these exceptions and, in each case, requires the government to give preference to and buy Canadian products.

The main exceptions to the national treatment rule include any procurement where the value is under \$50,000 U.S., \$25,000 U.S. with respect to the United States in accordance to a provision of NAFTA that was renewed, calculated in constant January 1, 1994 dollars.

In current Canadian dollars, that means all contracts valued at less than \$80,000. For crown corporations, the threshold is five times higher: \$400,000. Also included are all purchases for construction contracts valued at less than \$5 million U.S., in constant January 1, 1994 dollars. In current Canadian dollars, that means all construction contracts under \$8 million.

Private Members' Business

For crown corporations, the limit is 60% higher, at \$12.8 million. That includes all construction contracts from the Department of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, meaning roads, airports, railways, docks, etc. It also includes all purchases made for national security purposes by the Department of National Defence, the RCMP or the Canadian Coast Guard. As well, it includes the construction, maintenance or repair of ships, subways and commuter trains; communication and monitoring equipment; most agricultural products, except those used directly by the government, for example, purchases made by the cafeteria of Parliament; cultural products; and a vast number of services.

The bill refers to more than 60 categories of services. I will name them, because it is important for parliamentarians to understand why this bill was tabled. The bill includes all financial services, all public services, all categories of health and social services, all services related to research and development. Heaven knows that the government has made cuts to research and development. It needs to get back to basics and reinvest in research and development. The bill also includes most telecommunications services; most transportation services, for passengers and cargo; most services related to government activities in the areas of agriculture and fisheries, such as tests, inspections, veterinary services, resource management, management of government facilities, postal services, transcription and translation services.

I think that given the situation we are experiencing right now, our bill is absolutely not comparable to the Buy American Act. We are simply asking the government to favour Canadian purchases for anything that does not fall under international agreements, and anything that costs less than \$25,000 and does not require a call for tenders.

This bill also calls for purchases to be distributed equally among the provinces on a pro-rated basis so that all provinces receive fair treatment and not all purchases are made in Ontario and Alberta. We have to make sure that all of the provinces are treated equally.

I think that this bill is very clear and that we can talk about it in committee. If it needs to be changed or amended in any way, that can happen; we are open to that. But I don't think that we should turn our backs on the possibility of creating 21,000 jobs. We are not talking about huge amounts of money here. We are talking about \$600 million per year, which is just a fraction of the government's annual budget. That would be enough to help some companies survive these economic times of plant closures and massive layoffs.

There have been lots of layoffs in my region. Bombardier laid off 1,000 workers and issued temporary recalls. Bell Helicopter laid off over 600 workers and also issued temporary recalls. That makes things very difficult for people who are laid off for a period of time then return to work with no job security. We have to support a buy-at-home policy.

We have the technology we need right here. Why buy things from other countries when we can buy them here?

This bill caps the price difference at 7.5%.

• (1110)

If the government wants to buy a Canadian product, it can spend up to 7.5% more. If I issue a \$25,000 tender abroad, I can spend up

to 7.5% more on Canadian products to support our own businesses. That is not a lot of money. It is relatively little. Spending \$25,000 is not the end of the world; that is about how much would be spent on stationery, for example. That is money the government would spend anyway. They should be spending that money here. The government should be buying goods like that at home.

The House of Commons uses a lot of goods and services. Running Parliament is expensive. Why not support companies that can supply products the government needs? For example, Cascades, a company in my riding, supplies specialized stationery to the government. Of course there are tenders, but this is a good thing because the government is supporting a company that is producing goods here. Why buy things from Australia or any other country when our country is going through hard economic times?

This is also a message we want to send to the Americans. We love the Americans. We do not want to send them a negative message. We want to tell them that we too want to buy our own products. We want to give preference to some of our own products while honouring the agreements we have with them so as not to create conflict. The bill is written in such a way that we are complying with international agreements and respecting the American government, but we are sending the Americans a very clear message that, in an economic situation such as the current one, we too will give preference to our own products, in a far more respectable way than the Americans with their Buy American Act. We will be able to create employment and help our workers keep their jobs and small and medium-sized businesses stay open.

I sincerely hope that all the members of this House will read the bill. It may seem hard to understand, but I have given a good description of what it contains. I sincerely hope that the bill will be referred to committee so that we can hear witnesses. To date, I have spoken with a number of companies and unions that support the bill. They see it as a first step in at least stimulating the economy, which badly needs a boost.

The government could also take this approach in the future. We know that Canada and Quebec can be very prosperous. We could develop new businesses. We can invest in research and development. I sincerely hope that this bill will be examined in depth and that we will hear witnesses such as unions and interest groups as well as companies that support this bill, consider it a step in the right direction and feel that it complies with international agreements. This is very important to them. Many firms in Canada and Quebec export their products and need international agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO. Certainly, we want to keep on honouring those agreements while giving ourselves the opportunity to promote local purchasing.

Private Members' Business

•(1115)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says that this bill will only affect \$600 million worth of trade, a small amount, she says, but what about the message that it sends to the rest of the world? What about our reputational risk as a protectionist nation if we were to allow this bill to go through? Is it worth it for such a small amount?

There is no provision to exempt new and emerging trade agreements. In order to emerge from this recession, we need to continue trading with as few barriers as possible. The Great Depression taught us that the downward spiral of protectionism will only make the situation worse.

Surely, the member opposite cares about Canada's reputation and credibility. I would ask her this. If she is interested in our reputation, why is she putting forward a bill that is undermining current and emerging trade agreements?

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, that does not make sense.

The Conservatives are introducing bills to enter into bilateral international agreements with developing countries that have certain problems. Those agreements contain no measures to protect workers and the environment. We do not need to take any lessons from them.

Second, it is true that \$600 million is not a large sum, but it is a step in the right direction, and not a step back. What message would we be sending to the rest of the world? It would show that we are taking care of our own affairs, our citizens, our workers and our industries, while still respecting all international agreements. We therefore do not need to take any lessons from the Conservatives in that regard. They need to go back to the drawing board when it comes to the agreements they are trying to conclude with troubled nations.

•(1120)

[English]

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in discussing Bill C-306, An Act respecting the use of government contracts to promote economic development, we have to remember that we are in the middle of a worldwide recession. As Canadians, we are in fact in the process of arguing strenuously against any American efforts at protectionism. They are very, very real, as many manufacturers in this country have already discovered. Protectionism, particularly at a time of such economic crisis, is simply not the direction we want to be going in.

With regard to specifics in the act, there is no empirical evidence or sound economic reasoning behind what the bill is trying to achieve. The 7.5% price differential this act wants to apply was pulled out of a hat. There is no logical way of measuring the Canadianness, and an attempt at measuring this for the 50% to 75% requirement simply does not measure up. The agreement certainly does not provide any indications.

The act tries to suggest that NAFTA will still be complied with. We have serious doubts that this is even possible, and it certainly

goes against the spirit of it. Therefore, for many reasons, we do not support Bill C-306.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, both sides of the House are very similar.

We must stop being afraid. It is time to show some backbone, as they say, and do something. It is not true that we are sending a negative message. We are sending a positive message that shows that we are standing up for our citizens and that we also want to invest in our own country. We do invest elsewhere; we export our products. We are one of the world's biggest exporters. That does not stop us from establishing measures for our country in order to protect certain companies and create jobs. It is a question of \$600 million. That is a small sum. It was limited for that very reason. Norms were established to ensure that it respects international agreements. What else does the member want? There is no doubt it will be respected; that is in the bill.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on Bill C-306, which was inspired in large by the Buy American Act that currently exists in the United States. However, this bill will have a lesser impact than the Buy American Act since it gives preference to Canadian products in government procurements only. How does she explain that both the Conservatives and the Liberals seem to want to oppose this bill? We know about the free trade agreements with the Americans with regard to softwood lumber. We heard about how the Buy American Act is affecting the steel industry. This bill is a small step towards protecting our jobs, but other parties seem determined to oppose it. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, I was on the executive of the Canada-United States Association for 10 years. It was during the softwood lumber crisis. The Americans did not do us any favours nor did they intend to. We need to take matters into our own hands. It is true this bill is small step and presents no danger. It is high time we passed such legislation.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the government to argue against Bill C-306, which the hon. member from the Bloc introduced last February.

The year is 2009, not 1929. We live in a time when Canada no longer needs to prop up its industries with protectionist laws. We live in a time of liberalized trade and increasingly open world markets.

The fact is that Canada is a trading nation, and it always has been. Trade is a huge part of who we are. It is a part of our past, it is a part of our future competitiveness and it is a key part of our fight against the current recession.

In a recent report by the World Economic Forum, Canada ranked fifth among 118 countries in enabling trade. That report measures the degree to which a country facilitates international trade and investment, and it bears witness to its successful economic development.

Private Members' Business

Indeed one in five jobs in Canada is dependent on international trade, and we export half of all our manufactured goods. Clearly our success as a nation is built on increasing trade with other countries, not putting up barriers to trade.

However, this bill would do exactly that. It would put up trade barriers by making it the law that federal departments and agencies buy only Canadian produced goods, and not only that, but buy them at prices up to 7.5% higher than the competing products of other countries. This is deeply flawed economics and a very short-sighted response to the recession.

However, we do not have to take my word for it. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have said publicly that protectionism is not the way to fight a recession. Their position, and that of the government, has been stated clearly: protectionism would mean recession, or worse, for a very long time.

Just a few months ago, in Washington, the Prime Minister spoke out strongly against protectionism in the United States, saying, "If there is one thing that could turn a recession into a depression, it is protectionist measures across the world".

The reality is that the economic slowdown is not just a Canadian problem; it is an international one. All countries need to focus on stimulating the global economy because we are in a global economy, not just our national economy.

One of the ways we are doing this is by keeping protectionism at bay. This is the point that Bill C-306 completely fails to grasp.

Can we imagine what would happen if Bill C-306 did become law? First of all, Canada would be made an international laughing stock. After all, at the November summit of the G20 countries, we, and all other countries, agreed to avoid a return to protectionism.

That the hon. member opposite would table such a bill shows how out of touch she and her party are. At a time when the world needs less protectionism, the hon. member has produced a bill that would force government departments and agencies, crown corporations and even foundations to buy Canadian products at inflated prices and to invite retaliation.

That is woolly economics. From the point of view of our trading partners, it would be a subsidy. Our trading partners would have a field day the next time we find ourselves in front of an international trade tribunal, which will be soon if the bill passes.

What kind of retrograde thinking is this when the countries of the world are acting together to fight the worst economic crisis in a generation? If we want to protect jobs today and position the economy for growth in the future, we do not do it by hiding behind artificial barriers to trade. That is totally wrong-headed.

For one, we are not helping our industries to become more competitive; we are coddling them. For another, adding a price preference for Canadian products essentially adds 7.5% to the operating costs of government, at all levels. I cannot believe that a member of the House thinks that is going to make our economy more competitive.

At a time when Canadians are sacrificing and when governments have put their costs under the microscope, to suggest that we pay a

premium for bad economics is the height of absurdity. Our government is not looking backward like this. We are looking forward and outward.

We are against protectionist policies and we are determined to respect and uphold our trade commitments with our partners. That is why our Prime Minister was in Europe earlier this month, opening doors on trade talks with the European Union potentially worth \$12 billion in new Canadian exports.

•(1125)

The government has a perfectly good plan to fight the recession. It is the economic action plan. This multi-year plan outlines the steps we will be taking to stimulate the economy, to protect Canadians during a global recession and to invest in our long-term economic growth. As a result of these actions, Canada will emerge from this recession with better infrastructure, a more skilled labour force, lower taxes and a more competitive economy.

To finance this plan, the government is making a deliberate choice to run a temporary deficit to help stimulate our economy. There will be no long-term running of permanent deficits because the approach we are taking emphasizes capital expenditures rather than increasing the operating costs of government. This allows us to meet short-term needs while serving long-term goals. It helps sustain and create jobs during the global recession, and it allows us to build the infrastructure our country needs for long-term growth.

As the economy recovers, we fully expect to emerge from deficit and return to surplus within five years. We will use future surpluses to pay off the debt incurred during this recession. This plan will get money into the hands of individuals, families and communities in all provinces and regions of this country.

The measures we are taking are necessary, affordable and short term. I want to emphasize that point. It is temporary. It will not permanently increase the cost of government. We will continue to avoid a long-term structural deficit that we cannot afford. The amount that we borrow this year will remain affordable and reasonable by international standards.

Let me also assure the hon. members that the economic action plan contains many measures to support industries in difficulty, including the forestry, manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, fisheries and automotive industries. At the same time we need to focus on keeping our markets open and continuing free trade with our American partners. When 80% of our manufactured goods are dependent upon the U.S. market, we cannot afford to start putting up barriers to trade. Nobody can, so let us not start with this bill. We need to keep the Canadian market open and we expect our trading partners to do the same.

Private Members' Business

Do the hon. members of this House honestly think that the best way to fight the recession is by increasing the cost of government and putting up new trade barriers at this time? Do they think that is the best way to protect jobs and prepare Canadians for the future?

I doubt the majority in this House would agree that this is the best way forward. I would ask members to vote to defeat this bill, which would undo everything that Canada and the world is fighting for: more jobs and strong, competitive economies for the future.

• (1130)

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not support Bill C-306. Frankly, the bill seems aimed less at being passed than as a medium for certain partisan discussions. Its purpose seems to be to implement buy Canada legislation in response to the buy America provisions in the recently enacted U.S. budget. It is for those very reasons that we object to it. We are in the middle of a worldwide recession. Protectionism is widely regarded as the worst possible thing that countries could engage in in a worldwide recession. We are in the throes of objecting strenuously to the American buy America provisions.

As an aside, we on this side of the House are very upset with the fact that the current Conservative government has not done nearly enough in anticipating these buy America provisions and working in Washington before they were enacted to ensure that they were not, and we are seeing many manufacturers in Canada already suffering as a result. We have a concern that the current Conservative government has not done nearly enough to deal with these protectionist measures, but our position is very strongly that they do not belong, especially in a time of worldwide recession. In that sense, for a Canadian bill to suggest a similar approach is completely opposite to what makes sense from an economic perspective.

We have some significant concerns with the way the bill has been drafted. There is no empirical evidence or sound economic reasoning behind what the bill is supposedly trying to achieve. The 7.5% price differential this bill wants to apply seems to have been completely pulled out of a hat. There is no logical way of measuring the Canadianness and an attempt at measuring this for the 50% and 75% requirements in the bill is comical, at best. The agreement certainly does not provide any indication of anything otherwise.

The bill attempts to say that the provisions of NAFTA would still apply but, in our view, certainly this bill contravenes NAFTA and it certainly contravenes the spirit of our free trade agreements with the United States, Mexico and others.

The bill is poorly and vaguely drafted to allow for interpretation that may be inappropriate, in our opinion.

Ultimately, if protectionist measures are imposed, our significant concern is that this will harm Canada's economy, not improve it. We are on record as saying that free trade is important for economic competitiveness, economic sustainability and ultimately, economic prosperity. We object strenuously to the American attempts at protectionism, and we have said so publicly. For Canada to be seen to be attempting to do so completely flies in the face with our public position. Not only would it be damaging to our economy, but it would be extremely damaging also to our international reputation.

Mr. Speaker, I neglected at the beginning to ask to split my time with my colleague from York South—Weston. If it is all right with the Speaker, having neglected to do so, may I make my request at this point and ask my colleague to step in?

• (1135)

The Deputy Speaker: As the member may know, because we are in private members' business, she would need the unanimous consent of the House to share her time with her colleague, the member for York South—Weston.

Is it the pleasure of the House to allow the member for Willowdale to share her time with the member for York South—Weston?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my hon. colleagues in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let the record show that was not totally unanimous as there was a latent undercurrent, but I thank members of the House for allowing me to say a few words on this subject.

The Bloc is well motivated with respect to the desire to remind Canadians that within the global economic picture there still is an element, albeit in a permissive way, for there to be a concept of buying local, for example, buying agricultural products that are produced by our farmers which are the best agricultural products in the world. We are reminded of our forestry industry. We have the best fibre in the world and yet we have an industry that is in serious decline. It is affecting towns and communities rights across the country.

I appreciate and I am sure the House appreciates the spirit and motivation of the Bloc in bringing forward this bill. Within the context of globalization, the movement of capital, the serious competitiveness of the movement of capital and God knows that we need to have capital invested in the commercialization of technology, we are trying to transform our economy. At the time when we need to identify these global trends and not only stay within the spirit of the WTO and globalization, but also the law itself, this is not the time for us to disaggregate our capacity with respect to competitiveness.

I would suggest that while the Bloc may not intend that, we could see a disaggregation with respect to our national strategy to compete in a global sense. At the very time when we think we are doing the right thing for our regions and provinces, we would be doing the very opposite. While I understand the motivation, I think that the Bloc should reconsider this issue.

Private Members' Business

Very recently, for different reasons, we have been looking at drawing closer relationships, for example, with the CARICOM countries of the West Indies. We have been looking at more of a hemispheric approach with respect to our ties with Colombia and Peru. There is a serious debate in terms of why we should embark upon that particular strategy, but the reason I mentioned that is that those particular initiatives are in keeping with globalization and, where there is a balance of payments and a capital deficiency with respect to investment, to open doors that would redress that and to bring Canadian products into a competitive mode and to balance that out against our interests.

While the bill may not intend to undermine or be contrary to what our global strategy should be, in fact that is what it does. From my perspective it invites a retaliation. If it is not deemed to be in the interests of our national policies, if it is deemed to be protectionist, then the perception of that will drive those whom we are attempting to reach out to, to be in trade relationships and the extension of that to drawing capital and investment here, we would be going the very opposite way.

For those reasons, as I said, I believe the Bloc is well intentioned on this, but in actual fact the bill would have exactly the opposite reaction to what the Bloc is hoping to accomplish.

• (1140)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for bringing this important issue before the House to Commons today. I want to thank her for saying what we are all thinking.

We have all been thinking in recent months and years that Canada's procurement policies go beyond stupidity. Sometimes they border on economic treason. I would like to use one case study to illustrate my point.

I should point out as well that the NDP feels so strongly about Canada's faulty procurement policies that our member for London—Fanshawe has introduced a similar bill to be debated in the House, Bill C-392. We have seen many parallels. These two bills complement each other, because the issue is as poignant for those in London—Fanshawe and the rest of Canada as it is for my colleagues in the province of Quebec. I am pleased to see that my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord is generous in her spirit by saying that her Canada includes Quebec, or her Quebec includes Canada. Let me put it that way.

The one illustration I would like to point out is something that happened recently in my home province of Manitoba. We believe that good government means putting the interests of Canadians first. I use that quote from the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

The Government of Canada needed new troop buses for the Canadian military, so it put out a tender. I should point out that Manitoba builds the best buses in the world. The second best buses in the world are built in the province of Quebec. There are two bus companies in Canada and both build excellent buses, first class buses. In fact the Canadian military uses nothing but buses built in Quebec and Winnipeg for the rest of their troop carriers.

The government put out a tender for 32 new buses. Only two Canadian companies bid on it, from Quebec and Manitoba. A third company, a German company, Daimler-Chrysler, was the low bidder. Get this. It was a \$32 million contract. Mercedes-Benz won it by \$60,000 on a \$32 million contract. This is 1,000 Canadian jobs. We got screwed. For less than the price of a set of tires, the Government of Canada chose to give that contract to Germany, so our tax dollars are creating jobs in Germany and unemployed Canadians in Quebec and Manitoba could have and should have been building those buses.

Let me expand on this folly. Let me expand on how stupid that is. I do not use that term lightly, but that decision was fundamentally stupid, because now we have said to the rest of the world that if they want a good troop carrier, they should buy German. That is what our army did. Now all of our NATO allies in Afghanistan in the field are being ferried around in 32 buses made by Mercedes-Benz.

We also had to build in a whole new parts regime. We had to train our mechanics so they could fix the Mercedes-Benz buses as well as the good Canadian buses that they used to drive.

The Deputy Speaker: It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Speaker to hear the member who I can normally hear with no problem, so I will ask for a little bit of order until the member has finished his remarks.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, we should point out to the hecklers on the other side that I have the floor and it is my turn to talk. This drives me nuts.

We started a postcard campaign and 5,000 postcards came into the Government of Canada to explain the folly of this decision. This is only one concrete example. It happened just last year and it is a top-of-mind issue, but this happens all the time. My colleague for Rivière-du-Nord put forward a bill that respects international trade agreements. It simply says that preference should be given to made-in-Canada products providing it does not offend existing or future trade agreements.

Where is the problem with that? What is the matter with being patriotic enough to say that we will, to the greatest extent, show preference to Canadian made products? We should declare that with pride instead of being on our hands and knees to some phantom god of the free market that those people are foisting on us. This is folly. The rest of the world does not play by these rules. The United States has had a made-in-America procurement policy since 1927 and it is not in any contravention of NAFTA with that. In fact, it ignores trade agreement rules whenever it is convenient. We respect trade agreements but we will not to be suckers.

Frankly, this bill makes me proud. I thank my colleague for Rivière-du-Nord again for raising this on behalf of all of us.

One of these postcards has a picture of three monkeys. One is supposed to illustrate the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, the other is supposed to illustrate the Prime Minister and the third one is supposed to illustrate the Minister of National Defence. All three ignored reason, logic and even economics by giving these buses to Germany. This was a \$60,000 difference on a \$34 million contract. The military officers who go over to inspect the manufacture of those buses during their construction would have spent more than \$60,000 going back and forth. It is completely irresponsible. Whoever was in charge of that file should be dragged into the streets or, at the very least, fired because they are not representing the best interests of Canadians.

We were sent here for a specific purpose by the people we represent and that is to look after their best interests. No one can tell me that it is in anybody's best interest to give our job away by some blind ideology that has not borne results or fruit. The people at Motor Coach Industries are the ones bearing the brunt. The people at Prévost in Quebec, who also could have quite capably built those buses to carry our troops, are the losers.

Once again, it falls to us, the two smallest parties in Parliament, to stand up for the best interests of Canadians. Those guys are playing games that no one can understand and they certainly do not advance the interests of the manufacturing sector in this country.

My colleague for Rivière-du-Nord and my colleague for London—Fanshawe have carefully crafted bills that will succeed without offending existing trade agreements. My colleague for Rivière-du-Nord went even further to say that these jobs, to the greatest extent possible, should be spread among the regions of Canada so that not too many of them are concentrated in any one part of Canada. These are sane considerations that any procurement policy should be crafted around.

By what pretzel reason and logic is it that Canadian taxpayers are better off creating jobs in Germany with their tax dollars? I know we have agreements with our NATO allies when it comes to military procurement but this bus contract did not apply to that. These are troop carriers. We had no obligation to buy those buses. It had the lowest bid by a razor thin margin and somehow we got screwed and it got the jobs, which is fundamentally wrong.

I will be voting in favour of this bill when the first opportunity arises. I will be voting in favour of Bill C-392 when it comes to the floor. Hopefully, our relentless pressure on the Government of Canada's procurement policies will bring some reason, logic, patriotism and nationalism to our procurement policies and not be strangled by some misguided ideology and some Boy Scout attitude that we play by a set of rules that the rest of the world ignores. That is a sucker's game.

● (1145)

On behalf of the people in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, I will spend what little time I get to spend in the House of Commons protecting their jobs, standing up for their jobs and looking after their best interests. Canadians do not need representatives to come to Ottawa to sell them out. They need representatives to come to Ottawa to look after their jobs, not trade them away to a low bidder. For the price of a set of tires, we sold out the workers at these two bus manufacturing plants.

Private Members' Business

Members should read some of the comments on the postcards that I have brought with me today. Perhaps the one that sums it up the most is in large font that says, "We got screwed". That is a quote from the member for Winnipeg Centre. That is actually my own opinion.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the debate on Bill C-306, introduced by my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord.

I prepared a speech on the bill this morning, but after listening to the Conservatives and Liberals, I do not think I will need it. I am just going to talk a bit about whether these representatives of ridings all across Canada are aware of the consequences of voting against a bill like this.

Are the hon. members in touch with their constituents? Or do these Conservative and Liberal members always stay in Ottawa and never get out to meet the people? I think that must be it.

If these members met the workers in their individual ridings, they would know that these people want to work. Even though we are talking about protectionism and keeping jobs in Canada, Bill C-306 is not the end of the world. It is hardly the Buy American Act. It does not talk about 40%, just 7.5%. We chose very small numbers precisely because we did not want to frighten off the Liberals and Conservatives, but those numbers are still too big for them. It seems we should keep giving and doing nothing, and should not protect our jobs.

We are talking about \$600 million here, in the knowledge that \$300 million would create 21,000 jobs a year. The Liberals ask the Conservatives every day what they are going to do about the crisis in softwood lumber and how they are going to create jobs, but the Conservatives never answer. Twenty-one thousand jobs could be created now in a very reasonable way, but the party in power refuses to do it and the power that aspires to power refuses as well. We are not going to create jobs by sitting on our hands and wondering what the rest of the world would say.

The Liberal member just said we would be an international laughing stock. Do they know what it is to be an international laughing stock? It is when Olympic athletes go to other countries dressed in clothes made in China rather than in Canada. That is what it is to be an international laughing stock. We cannot even make clothes for our own athletes. We have them made elsewhere.

We took this a bit further than they wanted. It is the same as when the NDP reacts to buses being purchased in Germany, something that I objected to as well. It is quite the situation. Canadian companies build buses, but we turn our backs on them and award these contracts to Germany. I understand the situation, but we have jobs to protect right here.

Private Members' Business

The Conservative government will not stand up for Canadians and the Liberal Party, the official opposition that aspires to power, says it is ready to defeat the government at the first opportunity. Neither of these parties is really able to stand up to the Americans and tell them that they could do a bit better with their steel products. It is only fair and reasonable for us to present our proposals. We are not talking about \$600 billion here, just \$600 million.

I think it is very reasonable in all respects to proceed with this kind of bill, and that cannot be said about the Conservatives and the Liberals with their fear of the Americans and of what they might do and what they might say.

Canada is being colonized by the Americans, and we are incapable of standing up to them. We cannot even stand up in front of our working people and say we will try to protect their jobs, will go to any lengths to save their jobs and are even going to create some new ones with Bill C-306. That is all perfectly clear.

•(1155)

I cannot understand how we can enter into free trade agreements with Peru and Colombia, and in all of that, the Liberals and Conservatives are focusing their interests on other countries. You can talk to them about the workers, people who work every day to earn a living, who work 40 hours a week and give half their pay to the provincial and federal governments, but they laugh in their face. I find this disappointing.

I hope that the people listening to us today will see how wishy-washy the party that aspires to power is. Today it is a little too far left, and not in a protectionist way, compared to the voters. The official opposition can forget about asking the public to elect it to form the next government when it cannot even step up to the plate for \$600 million. These poor Liberals want to trigger an election campaign when they cannot even take a stand. In my riding, people will know that we tried to enact a few little measures to keep the jobs that are available and create jobs at home and that two parties in this House of Commons were strongly opposed to it and said we would be an international laughingstock. The laughing stocks in Canada and Quebec are the Liberals and the Conservatives. I am not even weighing my words because I could say even more than that.

We do have to assume that things might change fairly quickly. Ultimately, if they agreed to give this bill second reading and refer it to committee, we would be able to see its value. Today, it is being brushed off by those two parties without giving us a chance to consider it or hear witnesses such as representatives of unions, companies and industries who could tell us whether it is a good bill and a good start. The bill is small step, but at least it is a start.

We just want to refer it to committee and they want to pull the rug out from under our feet. They do not want to hear about it so as not to upset their American friends. I have some news for them. All they have to do is ask Canadians and Quebecers what they think about a little protectionism to keep and create jobs here at home. All of these members, sitting here in this House, have not gone out to see the public they represent, to learn whether or not they agree with the protectionist measure in Bill C-306. I firmly believe that these members sit in this House and listen to one or two people, and are afraid that some people will not like them as much.

Does a country that decides to take a stand at some point think about what the country next door is going to say? It works for its people. We are talking about a people, but some individuals are unable to think of there being a people. They recognized the Quebec nation, but they are unable to keep their word. We want to give our workers, our workers who are in trouble, a little more. We are in a recession. The budget the Conservatives have proposed was supported by the Liberals, but today they are telling us they do not know where we are going. We find that we are short \$50 billion.

For all these reasons, I completely agree with Bill C-306 and I hope we will move forward with it.

•(1200)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings will have about three minutes before private members' hour is concluded.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity to start my comments today. I rise today to speak to the hon. member's private member's bill, which clearly is a protectionist bill and which the member is regretfully presenting for the third time.

It is no coincidence that both the NDP and the party of the member presenting the bill have never and will never form a government, for the simple reason that they have a myopic approach to this, which is to look after their own backyard rather than the common good of the Canadian people, which is the responsibility of responsible members in the House. This is why I will be speaking out against this it.

The bill would require that every department and agency of the Government of Canada would give preference to Canadian products when purchasing goods, services and natural resources. This preference would be in the form of a price premium of up to 7.5% across the board for Canadians. The bill also contains the option of giving Canadian products either exclusive access or a price preference exceeding 7.5% when deemed advisable.

The bill, regretfully again, would not only apply to every department and agency of the Government of Canada, but to any crown corporation as well and any foundation or trust, with 75% of its income or its funding from the government. It would also require the government ensure an equitable distribution of acquisitions across each and every province in our country.

The grounds for opposing the bill are many. With the limited time I have today, I will start on one. I will proceed with more at a later time.

Today I will focus on the major one, which is the perils of protectionism. This has been commented on by members across the House and we welcome their like-mindedness on an issue on which we share the common good of the Canadian people.

Government Orders

I encourage the hon. member who presented the bill to read her history books. It was protectionism that helped end the golden age of trade in the 1930s and it was protectionism that turned a severe recession into the Great Depression. Even the sectors that demanded protectionism regretfully ended up losing from it.

Trade, on the other hand, is vital to our well-being. Some would say it really is our true lifeblood. Trade touches all of us, and each and every Canadian somehow shares in its benefits. Trade reduces the cost of living. Protectionism, on the other hand, raises prices. We are not only talking about goods in front of us, such as computers and televisions. We are talking about services as well. For example, trade liberalization in telephone services has made phone calls cheaper.

I see my time is winding down, and I will finish at another time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have seven minutes left in his time slot the next time the bill is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has expired and the order is dropped from the order of precedence to the bottom of the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA-PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT ACT

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure and conviction that I rise again to speak to Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru.

Once again, the environmental and labour issues are being dealt with in side agreements, which aim for the minimum requirements established by the country with which we are signing the agreement rather than promoting the environmental and labour rights and laws in that country. Every free trade agreement always contains a section on investment. We agree that there should be a minimum of protection for foreign investment and that it should be properly regulated. However, there must be limits on the powers given by agreements, for example NAFTA's chapter 11.

We are in an era of innovation. We must innovate not only in the sciences, social sciences and business, but also in free trade agreements. We are discussing bilateral agreements. We must be innovative and promote environmental rights, labour rights and, in some countries, human rights.

This innovation could start today, in the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, simply by our telling the

government to redo its homework. The government must do it again and innovate in terms of bilateral free trade agreements, as in this case.

An aside, if I may. The Bloc Québécois strongly advocates multilateral agreements. It must be pointed out that, in this sort of agreement, the same set of rules applies to everyone. Even the WTO must protect human rights, labour rights and environmental rights. That is the end of my aside.

The government talks of liberalizing trade. An American author said that increasing the freedom of trade index by 1% could and would increase trade. Hence the mad race by all countries to establish agreements with other countries to liberalize trade. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that freedom must also rhyme with responsibility. When the government makes an agreement with another country it must be responsible for its actions and for the decisions and agreements it makes. They can create a multitude of problems for people in emerging countries who want to improve their situation.

We see this responsibility clearly in the mining sector, among others. At the moment, Canada's mining companies operating abroad cause damage to the environment and displace many people. They are responsible only under the environmental laws of the other countries. This agreement does not promote environmental rights strongly enough to ensure our mining companies are responsible. Their responsibility is voluntary, to all intents and purposes. It is why a significant number of mining companies from around the world incorporate in Canada, for then they are not responsible for their actions abroad.

● (1205)

Thus they can save a lot of money. But they create catastrophes as well, and they should be responsible for them. If I have the time, I will come back to the subject of mines.

In my remarks, unlike in the speeches we often hear, I would like to return to the testimony given before the Standing Committee on International Trade. This testimony was heard long after the agreement was signed and long after the parties had indicated what stands they would take on this bill.

I have notes on a number of witnesses, but not all, because I could have spent an entire day on it. A number of things were said in committee that most of the Liberal and Conservative members did not hear, unfortunately. Perhaps it would be a good idea to tell them that this might be the perfect opportunity for this agreement to become the model of agreements for Canada in the future. We oppose this agreement and hope to have the support of the majority of members in this House in order to innovate. Although we would prefer multilateral agreements, when bilateral agreements are made, they must be made in the best possible way.

Government Orders

For example, I will quote a witness who appeared in committee on May 7, the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which is the largest agricultural association in Canada with over 200,000 producers. In Quebec, there is an expression that the witness used at the beginning of his testimony. He said that this agreement *ce n'est pas le Pérou*, meaning that this agreement is not perfect, it is not a cure-all for all of the current trade problems or irritants. But it is being signed with Peru.

The president said that it is obviously not perfect, far from it. But he and his producers would still like it to move forward as quickly as possible. He also criticized the negotiators. I would make a distinction. There are negotiators who negotiate. Often, the negotiators negotiate what the government asks them to negotiate. The negotiators focus on things chosen by the government. The negotiators also negotiate by leaving out some aspects, because the government has asked them to leave them out. The government asks the negotiators to sign, at any cost, almost any condition, whether or not it is favourable to the people, to entrepreneurs and to businesspeople. He criticized the negotiators because, according to him, if we compare this agreement with the one signed with the United States, the reduction was faster in the United States than in Canada. The quotas were also much larger and there was no most favoured nation clause. He said that some sectors benefited more—grains, wheat, barley and pulses. Of course, some sectors lost out. We never saw an impact study from the government or the negotiators. According to them, some sectors stand to gain, and others stand to lose. However, we have never seen an impact study and projections of these impacts, not only for the business of people who export, or for the benefit of some who import, but also for all workers in Quebec and Canada.

• (1210)

Impact studies would tell us what will happen in a given industry or in a given sector and what the gains and losses will be. We should also ask ourselves what our priorities are and why. We never had impact studies on free trade agreements. We are not asking anyone to tell the future by looking into a crystal ball. In fact, it is obvious that there are not too many crystal balls around. I know a government that went from a zero deficit to a \$50 billion deficit in a span of a few weeks or a few months. So we do not really need a crystal ball.

There are various other products, but I will not name them.

Of course, the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture was aware of deficiencies with regard to labour and environmental laws. He still argues that even though our farmers do not enjoy the same treatment as American farmers and even though progress is slow, we should sign the agreement. Again, there has not been any impact studies on producers and farmers, nor on the population as a whole whose quality of life we must look to improve to a certain extent. For example, to show the difference, in the United States, the tariff on certain products, including pork, will be eliminated within five years. However, in Canada, it will take 17 years. So the difference is quite substantial.

The president of the federation told us also that the federation agreed to multilateral negotiations. That being said, he kept repeating that negotiators would have to adjust, but also that, in turn, it would be mostly up to the government to adjust.

We heard from other witnesses, including the Canadian Wheat Board. The wheat sector is obviously among the biggest winners.

I mentioned pork. I want to show the relative importance of that agreement for Canadian pork, for instance, on international markets. Director General Jacques Pomerleau said:

Knowing that we would never get what the Americans received, our negotiators became very creative in ensuring that we would still get some benefits. They accepted a longer tariff elimination period, 17 years instead of ten, but they were able to get for us a duty-free quota that will allow our exporters to better position themselves at the very beginning. We have to admit that this quota of 325 tonnes, that will progressively extend to 504 tonnes over 10 years, is relatively small for an industry that exports over one million tonnes every year.

• (1215)

There are little aberrations like that. Others, like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, are very much in favour. The only thing, really, is that we do not want to be overtaken by other countries that could sign a FTA with Peru, among others. The same holds true for other agreements. Because Colombia and the United States were negotiating an agreement that did not get Congress approval, Canada raced like mad. It was intent on signing and implementing an agreement before the United States did. This was crucial to the government, even if it meant doing so at the expense of Colombia or human rights. Globally, a mad race was on, with businesses from all countries trying to globalize, as we do. Soon, every country on this planet will have bilateral free trade agreements with the 199 other countries. Naturally, variances and differences will develop. Why not focus primarily on multilateral agreements? I think it would be the most sensible way to go.

I was talking about environmental laws earlier. The Canadian Environmental Law Association was represented in evidence given before a committee on May 26, 2009. Ms. McClenaghan, executive director and counsel in that association, criticized the fact that investors can access the states. She said it was a serious problem. Particularly when we talk about investors, we must of course refer to the investment agreement that echoes chapter 11 of NAFTA whereby investors have access to the state, which could be problematic. We know that investors can sue countries for various reasons under the major heading of expropriation, which includes two elements. There is direct expropriation, that is, in the true sense of the word, and indirect expropriation, which, no matter what happens, relates to a business' loss of anticipated profits.

To give an example of such a free-trade agreement, Ms. McClenaghan referred to the agreement between Australia and the United States whereby no investors had access to the state. It was also a model of social and environmental protection. In terms of labour laws and occupational health and safety, Canadian businesses are operating in a country where little attention is paid to people's rights.

Government Orders

I must briefly come back to the topic of mining. Regarding mining companies and corporate responsibility, we have motion M-283, moved by the hon. Liberal member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, and Bill C-300 introduced by the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood. The Bloc Québécois supports both items—the motion and the bill—because their goal is to make mining companies accept greater responsibility in countries like Peru and Colombia. If the Liberals are to be consistent with their bill and their motion, they must also, for that reason, vote against the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. I therefore call on all Liberal members, including those from Quebec, and all members to vote against this implementation act.

• (1220)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable interest to my colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke. I work a lot with him on the Standing Committee on International Trade. I am happy of course with the Bloc position. The same cannot unfortunately be said for the softwood lumber agreement and the sellout agreement on shipbuilding. The Bloc unfortunately voted in favour of these two bills, which led and is leading to job losses in Quebec. It is too bad, but it does not matter, the Bloc is on the same wavelength as the NDP now and everyone can be glad.

I do in fact have a question for my colleague from Sherbrooke. He spoke eloquently on the subject of labour rights. As we all know, Peru is unable at the moment even to honour all its WTO obligations. Agreements already signed to permit unionized labour, to entitle people to organize under the protection of a collective agreement, all these protections, which should exist internationally, have been ignored by the Peruvian government. We heard that in testimony before the committee. It is unfortunate. It undermines the credibility of this agreement. If it provides no protection and if the Peruvian government is in the process of rejecting all the agreements it has signed, questions need to be asked. What real protection does the agreement provide?

I wanted to put these questions to my colleague from Sherbrooke. Does he see any sort of protection at all in this agreement for people seeking the protection of a collective agreement?

• (1225)

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I do indeed work with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. We are not, obviously, going to start quibbling over who follows whom or who is on the same wavelength as whom. We agree on some fundamental principles and considerations, but not others. Overall, however, as regards this agreement, this implementation legislation, we oppose this free trade agreement.

Naturally, as we have criticized it and will continue to do so, this is not the right approach. This is a time for innovation and not for including these side agreements. And they are just that, off on the side, separate. So they will never be part of the main agreement. They must be included in the main agreement along with clear aims and obligations. Good intentions are set out in the side agreements and warrant a response at least. Is there agreement with the ILO principle and international environmental rights? Who can say not?

No one. And yet, when ask ourselves whether these agreements will enable us to improve legislation on labour in Colombia or on human or environmental rights, obviously everyone—at least half of the members on this side of the House—believes we should not proceed because labour and environmental rights along with the agreements on investments would not improve the situation in the country we are doing business with. With a good trade or economic agreement, both sides emerge as winners, especially their peoples.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech on the Canada-Peru agreement, which is somewhat similar to the Canada-Colombia agreement. The agreement allows mining to occur in situations where, often, neither the country nor the investors respect human or environmental rights or labour standards. This bilateral agreement also includes chapter 11, which protects investors from future policies that could help workers in countries with mining activity.

This morning, the House considered Bill C-306, and the Liberals and Conservatives spoke against it. That bill would have created jobs here at home, in our regions. The bill would have strengthened our position vis-à-vis free trade agreements with the United States, but they were against it anyway.

I would like my colleague to comment on the corporate social responsibility motion moved by a Liberal Party member and supported by the Liberals. Why does he think the Liberals voted for a foreign corporate social responsibility motion, then turned around and voted for bills that do not respect workers' rights?

• (1230)

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is perfectly right. There is indeed a discrepancy. There is a problem and I would even say that it is a serious problem. That is where we find more or less the same direction followed by government negotiators in free trade agreements and, let us face it, that direction comes from the government.

Whether we are talking about side agreements on labour or environmental laws or about the chapter on investment, they are just good intentions that hide a huge possibility of wrongdoing and abuse.

There is a fundamental problem if the Liberal Party wants, on one hand, to make mining companies and oil and gas companies accountable with its bill and, on the other hand, to vote in favour of implementing the free trade agreement with Peru. There is the truth, and then there is make-believe. Right now, there is every indication that, both in the motion and in the bill, it is just make-believe. We know full well that they think they will form the government, which means that they must also please large corporations.

Government Orders

So there is a significant gap between what is the truth and what is make-believe. If the Liberals bring forward a motion on mining companies and oil and gas companies and a bill to make them accountable, then accountability must also be included in this free trade agreement. The time has come to step away from what the Canadian government has done historically in free trade agreements. I strongly suggest to the Liberal Party to vote against this agreement if it wants to follow its own motion and its own bill.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we see nothing about workers' rights in this agreement. We have been hearing that this agreement is inferior to the one negotiated by the United States and the American Congress.

My question is quite simple. If workers have fewer rights and there is less protection for the environment, it is an inferior agreement.

Why does the member for Sherbrooke believe that the Liberals are prepared nevertheless to support this agreement, which is clearly inferior to the one that the U.S. and the American Congress were able to negotiate and amend subsequently?

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, that is a fundamental question. First, what are the Conservative government's motives behind its instructions to its negotiators for negotiating agreements of this type? One word comes to mind, but it is unparliamentary. Second, what are the Liberals' motives for not putting a stop to these types of agreements? During his speech on the Colombia agreement, the Liberal Party critic for international trade raised the fact that it was because his party was aspiring to power. Does that mean that you have to set aside your values in order to be in power?

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this morning to voice my opposition to Bill C-24.

One of the things I was reminded of as I sat here is that in the early to mid 1980s we started a free trade agreement with the United States. I recall that a certain Conservative member said it was like sleeping with an elephant and if the elephant rolled over we would be in some difficulty.

That particular debate went on, and ultimately the free trade agreement was signed. Then the elephant rolled over and from 1988 to 1990 Canada lost 524,000 manufacturing jobs. We have progressed, some people might say, to NAFTA, and the repercussions are still being felt.

What I see as a change in this proposed agreement is that we are somewhat of a dominant partner in this one. With that dominant partner status comes a responsibility. As a nation, we could have been taking the lead on the environment and labour rights in this particular country. We know that many of the South American countries have some tremendous problems in the area of human rights. The records are disastrous down there.

Bill C-24 is a bill to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru. With regard to labour cooperation, we had an

opportunity to enhance the labour standards in this country by setting benchmarks that should have been in the agreement.

Nobody in this place will dispute the necessity of trade. We all understand that Canada is a trading nation. Canada has taken a leadership role in human rights in the world for many generations now, and it is highly regarded and respected. This is a lost opportunity. We had an opportunity to similarly move the benchmark forward in the negotiations around the free trade agreement with Colombia. As we know, Colombia has the worst human rights record on the face of the earth. Some will say, and I am sure they are sincere, that by having trade and having an agreement with Colombia, Peru and other countries, that this will enhance and bring forward their human rights. Personally, I believe we should have been pressing for human rights prior to even entering into negotiations.

Members may recall that there was a report prepared on the corporate and social responsibility. In fact I believe the member from Sherbrooke commented on it in his remarks. Well, that particular report never made it to this House. That report was returned to the government a year ago last November. It was talking about situations, particularly of Canadian enterprises operating in South America and other countries.

There has been a question in our communities as to why that was never tabled in this House. Why was that document not brought forward? The NGOs, the civil society and other people came together across this country to prepare it. I think the evidence is now here as to why the government would not want the corporate and social responsibility document tabled; it is because it would directly impact on these two agreements.

From time to time in our offices we are visited by guests from other countries. Just last week we had a young woman, Yessika Morales, who visited us from Colombia. Yessika's father was shot and killed by the paramilitaries in 2001. She came to us with her concerns about that particular trade agreement with Colombia.

They have a great fear in that part of the world. In no way am I suggesting Canadian companies are directly complicit, but in South America, if a corporation from any part of the world working there were to be something like King Henry when he said, "Will nobody rid me of this troublesome monk?" and Thomas Becket died, in a similar fashion, if the executive board or the executives of a mining corporation or other enterprise were to suggest that there is any kind of problem with a labour leader, that labour leader would be gone.

• (1235)

The example is Colombia, where 2,690 trade unionists have died since 1986. Some people ask how I know that is part of that; it's because in the same period about 17,000 people died. Amnesty International's Human Rights Watch and others have documented these cases.

We had a great opportunity with this dominant position that I referred to before to take our place as an international leader on human rights, to sustain that position and to move forward to help countries like Peru. We failed to do it.

Government Orders

In the particular agreement, once again, labour rights and environment rights are side agreements. I come from the labour movement, and in my time I was part of the negotiations between Bell Canada and the union, on the union side. During negotiations in 1988, and then again in 1990, we went to the employer with our list of our proposals and the employer would have a list of their proposals. It is interesting that ours were called demands and theirs were called proposals, but that is another issue. At some point in the negotiations we reached a place where we said we could not resolve this. But we had to have something. In that case, the employer wrote a letter of intent.

That was all well and good. When the collective agreement was signed and we were back in the workplace and workers' rights seemed to be impinged, we went to the union and said we wanted to grieve. The union said it was sorry it could not because that was only a letter of intent; it was not binding.

These side agreements are exactly the same thing as this letter of intent. It is a nice way of masking that we do not have any powerful, sustainable actions we can take to protect the environment in Peru, or protect the workers' rights, or the workers' lives, in many cases. It is very troubling when we look at an agreement of this nature.

I will give some credit to the government, because it has moved somewhat away from the Bush agreements of the past. We would probably find that some of those have been getting a very rough ride in the Congress of the United States, but it has moved somewhat past that. Still, it does not do what is needed to protect the workers of this country. As we demean or lower the rights of any nation in the world, it takes the rights of all nations and lowers them.

It is important to consider who will benefit from trade agreements of this nature. I will give an example of one company, the Bank of Nova Scotia, that will be moving to higher investments in Peru. I am sure that on the investment front there will be some reciprocal trade that happens, and it is to the benefit of the countries involved.

I must point out, Peru is not a major trading partner with Canada to begin with. Our two-way merchandise trade between the two countries only reached \$2.8 billion in 2008, and Canadian imports were over \$2 billion, of which 50% was from Canadian gold companies operating in Peru.

I go back again for a moment to corporate social responsibility. That highlights the importance of having a framework of the responsibilities we expect of Canadian companies when they operate in a nation like Peru, whether we have a trade deal or not.

With that initial trade deal, the negotiations were started as far back as 2002, under Mr. Chrétien and the Liberals at the time. They first held discussions with Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. Our trade minister in 2007 launched the formal trade talks with Peru, and the government signed in May 2008.

There are critics around the world on trade issues and trade agreements. Mary Tharin, from the COHA, Council on Hemispheric Affairs, was talking about the U.S.-Peru free trade agreement, and she suggested the agreement has given the president of Peru the excuse to start dismantling labour rights and what regulations they do have on the environment in Peru.

● (1240)

From my perspective, the good news is that since the president started doing that, his approval rating has dropped or has almost vanished. However, we are not talking about a democracy like Canada when we are talking about the impact that would have on him and how that might sway him not to proceed to a greater degree of damaging those particular rights.

In the United States in 2007, there was a considerable debate and, as indicated, some compromise was made and it approved a free trade agreement with Peru designed to drastically reduce import-export tariffs, hypothetically putting an end to protectionism on both sides.

We hear the government saying that we cannot have a buy Canadian strategy because that would be protectionist in this worst of times. As the member from Winnipeg pointed out earlier in his remarks, in 1927 the United States undertook protectionism, if we want to call it that, but it was buy American where procurements of local governments and state governments were intended to spend their taxpayer money on, heaven forbid, American goods, which is, in my opinion, precisely what we should be doing in this country.

The approval for that free trade agreement in the United States has been delayed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives due to concerns, mostly on the part of the congressional democrats, I would say, about Peru's environmental and labour standards. It took quite a while for that to ultimately get resolved.

Despite the free trade agreement's conditions, which state that labour standards must not be lowered, a number of President Garcia's recent decrees have put the country's public service workers in jeopardy. In May, the Federation of State Employees got to the point where they felt desperate enough to organize a strike.

The whole problem is that these agreements are about trade at all costs. We should think about that for a moment. Yes, I said in my opening remarks that trade is important, and we all accept the necessity of trade, but Canada as a country has always been a country that took principled stands, a country that stood up for human rights and for the values that are necessary to sustain a healthy country.

Tomorrow there will be a demonstration outside of this place by a group of labour unions and labour activists. As we close in on June 6, the anniversary of D-Day, we are reminded how the veterans of this country fought in the war against Nazi Germany to have Canadians sustained and have the right to demonstrate outside of this place.

Canada has gone far and wide to protect the rights of citizens in other countries and in our own country and has done a wonderful job in doing so. However, when we move to agreements with nations with questionable human rights records and questionable records on the environment and we fail, as the dominant partner in those negotiations, to improve areas of the environment, environmental regulation, labour laws and rights, then we fail as a nation.

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I am really troubled that in the two agreements, the agreement with Peru and, more particularly, the agreement with Colombia, I think our government has failed us. In the particular case of the free trade agreement with Colombia, I am quite ashamed of the fact that we would even negotiate with a government that is as tied to the drug trade as that nation is.

• (1245)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the benefit of four years working with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation under the NAFTA. After two decades of recommendations by public advisory boards actually appointed by the present government and the governments of Mexico and the United States calling for stricter adherence to the environmental agreements and, in fact, taking a step further in incorporating the side labour and environmental agreements into the agreement, could the hon. member please speak to the issue of whether or not it is appropriate that we are still side-barring environmental impacts and labour rights in our trade negotiations?

• (1250)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my remarks, I have a history in the labour movement with negotiations. The very failure of having a letter of intent in a collective agreement is worse than not having something in the agreement that states what is needed. It is masking over the fact. These side agreements are doing something very similar. They are not addressing the issues in a substantive way to move the mark forward on the environment, human rights or labour rights in this case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to compliment my hon. colleague on his excellent remarks. I know that he comes from a labour background, which means that he is very sensitive to issues affecting human rights and the environment.

I partly agree with him when he says that this type of agreement is smoke and mirrors. The economic benefits to Canada from agreements with countries like Peru and Colombia, where human rights and workers rights are ignored and no efforts are made to improve social conditions, will be extremely minimal.

There is something I do not get, though. That trade has little impact on our economy, but at the same time we are very soft on the great, big country with which we do a lot of trade, namely the United States. Trading with the United States has much more of an impact on our economy.

This morning, a bill was introduced, which both the official opposition party and the ruling party have spoken against. Our borders are currently closed, and there are protections for the buyer's market in place. In my opinion, these are very important issues, much more important to our economy and our employment situation than the Canada-Peru agreement, whose impact is much less significant.

I would like to hear the hon. member on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the bill we debated here this morning about a buy Canadian strategy, I indicated

in my remarks that the U.S. started such a strategy in 1927. Americans buy locally and are proud to buy American products. We should be proud to buy Canadian products.

In my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we have been decimated on the manufacturing front. It is tragic at times to see the flow of vehicles crossing the border into the United States to purchase there and then come back. All my life I have spoken to my friends about buying Canadian. Hamilton used to be the textile capital of Canada but it is no longer there. Steel is at risk in Hamilton, although at this point indications are that it is because of the market downturn, but still, all in all it is a major concern.

I am not opposed to having a free trade agreement with any nation so long as we set a standard in that agreement and that we ensure the agreement enhances environmental regulation and human rights. Where human rights are in question, we should never be signing the agreement until we are satisfied that there is a basic fundamental set of human rights in any given country.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in looking at this agreement, one of the concerns expressed has to do with a decree by the Peruvian government, legislative decree 1015, which was designed to facilitate the privatization and stripping away of communal lands held by indigenous people, allowing them to perform the subsistence farming that supports their communities.

That particular decree was pushed back but many others are coming forward from the same government. Our government seems to feel that those decrees are business as usual or that doing business with the Peruvian government is just fine. As I said, these new laws are meant to facilitate the expropriation of the country's land.

Interestingly enough, a similar thing happened some years ago in Colombia where that government, in order to facilitate trade agreements with the United States, privatized land. It took land away from the indigenous people who were farming it. In the case of some of the people living in the mountains, some of the territories had gold mines on them. Canada, of course, jumped on the gravy train on this one. Essentially, these people were stripped of a livelihood that was centuries old. Canadian and American mining companies went in and simply grabbed whatever they could.

Like the people of Peru, those people stood their ground. They literally stood at the entrances of their villages and told the junta and death squads that they could not enter. They did not care whose businesses the junta and deaths squads felt they were protecting. They were not going to allow them to enter and kill their children.

This whole reality in terms of how we deal with South America seems to be repeated in this Peruvian agreement. I wonder if the member, as a human rights expert, could comment on what we are seeing with regard to these trade deals and the abuse of human rights.

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•(1255)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, a tragedy is unfolding in South America in regard to the displacement of people and the disappearance of trade unionists. It is interesting how we hear that they were not murdered but that they have disappeared. It happens to tens of thousands of them across South America. The tragedy is that when a dominant nation, such as Canada, goes into negotiations with a particular country, a lot of things start happening in preparation for that agreement.

The people on the farms are quelled by leaders saying that they should be moved off and out of the way before the agreement is signed. Trade unionists disappear. I used the example earlier of Yessika Hoyos Morales' father who disappeared in 2001. Four years later, a colonel quietly told her that his death squad had killed him. This is horrific.

As a nation, in any trade agreement we have a responsibility and our government has a responsibility to enhance human rights wherever we travel, to set that example worldwide and to live it every day in the protection of our own human rights, labour rights and environmental rights and those of any nation with which we do business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in participating in the debate on Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru, but I also have some serious concerns.

When we look at the debate surrounding this free trade agreement with Peru, it is clear that there are few things that are specific to this Latin American country. In other words, this agreement is part of the trade policy the federal government has been pushing in the Americas for the past few years. So, some of the criticisms I will make today will sometimes be similar to criticisms I could make of the agreement with Columbia, which we saw recently.

In both cases, the Conservative government presented Parliament with agreements that had already been signed and negotiated before Parliament even had a chance to examine them and make recommendations or changes. That is a disgrace. I participated in a mission to Columbia with the member for Sherbrooke. We met with unions, community groups, grassroots groups, business leaders and others and they made a number of important comments. If the government had really taken the time to examine this agreement and the report put out by the Standing Committee on International Trade, I am not sure that this agreement would be before the House today.

On January 28, 2008, the federal government announced that it had signed a free trade agreement with Peru, once again presenting parliamentarians with a fait accompli. As representatives of the people of Quebec and Canada, we cannot accept this sign of contempt, this negligent attitude toward democracy that the Conservative Party demonstrates when it presents us with this sort of agreement that has been signed without any substantive debate.

In my opinion, this contempt for institutions is certainly not the best way to serve democracy. I deplore the fact that the Liberals sanction such behaviour by the Conservatives. They want to take over the government in the next election, so they should know that we cannot accept this sort of thing.

That said, the Bloc Québécois is strongly opposed to this implementation bill because it does not meet a number of criteria and objectives that, in the Bloc's view, must be met before free trade agreements are signed, especially with developing countries.

In the interests of international solidarity, we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to condemn bilateral free trade agreements that go against workers' rights, the environment and even some countries' ability to maintain their sovereignty. We condemned the bill to implement the free trade agreement with Colombia, as I mentioned, and we are condemning this one as well today.

Not so long ago, I was reading a great American writer, Joseph Stiglitz, who said that the problem with bilateral agreements is that often, stronger countries exploit weaker ones. This is less likely to happen with multilateral agreements.

That is the danger of these agreements. Often, they come back to haunt us. If, during the negotiating process, Canada does not respect the rights of foreign workers and developing countries, it very often finds itself exploiting people in very difficult conditions. Companies are not always environmentally friendly. They take their operations offshore and cut jobs here at home because it is easier for them to engage in their economic activities if they do not respect certain social conditions, certain working conditions and the environment.

•(1300)

The Bloc Québécois has always maintained that trade can contribute to the socio-economic prosperity of nations. However, this can only be the case if trade agreements include measures that ensure sustainable development, respect for the environment and the development of the populations involved. That is particularly true when these bilateral agreements involve a developed country and a developing country, such as the treaty with Peru.

The free trade agreement with Peru includes a clause to protect investments that is patterned on NAFTA's chapter 11 and that will allow businesses to sue governments. To include a chapter protecting investments could impede Peru's social and economic development. So, any legislation that prevents an investor from fully enjoying his investment could lead to court action and compensation. We are essentially giving the upper hand to foreign investors, who will dictate the social, economic, cultural and environmental policies of the country that welcomes them. That is not normal.

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Imagine an environmental law that would prevent a polluter from enjoying his polluting investment, such as in the mining sector. The act would not be struck down because an environmental provision would allow the state to maintain it, but it could be deemed as requiring payment of compensation. Moreover, the agreement has the effect of raising the amount of compensation to be paid. Indeed, in the case of expropriation, not only does the state find itself forced to pay the value of the investment—that is the initial amount invested—but also all the revenues that the investor anticipated from his investment.

In other words, in this chapter 11, compensation also applies to lost profits. That is shameful. With such agreements, the sky is the limit. This government seems to want to promote these agreements, instead of multilateral treaties. This opens the door to court action, and the amounts involved would be so high that they would deter the state from passing any legislation that may upset multinational companies that carry on operations on its territory.

Since the Peruvian economy is the more vulnerable one, it is more likely to suffer the consequences of a clause protecting investments. In Canada, which is a developed country, the impact will not be as significant, particularly since there are not many Peruvian investments here. The situation is quite different in Peru. For example, a Canadian multinational will be able to legitimately challenge any environmental law passed by the Peruvian government, on the ground that the legislation prevents it from benefiting from its investment.

Considering that Canadian investments in Peru are primarily in the mining sector, which is a great polluter, there is cause for concern. Indeed, Peru's mining potential is significant, and over 80 Canadian mining companies are present in that country. Canada is the number one investor in Peru's mining sector. Given the poor track record of Canadian mining companies, and a total lack of will on the part of the Canadian government to regulate their operations, protecting the additional investments of these companies through a new chapter 11 is definitely not the best thing to do to improve the social, environmental and economic conditions of Peruvian workers. Moreover, I do not see how this could have a positive impact on the economy of Berthier—Maskinongé and of Quebec as a whole.

In a nutshell, we are afraid that measures to protect investments provide disproportionate protection for Canadian investors as opposed to local people and the environment. Obviously, Peru can enact legislation and make regulations to govern the activities of mining companies.

● (1305)

But the danger lies in the fact that the Peruvian government does not have the resources or infrastructure needed for proper oversight of the companies' activities inside that country.

The Bloc Québécois is opposed to this agreement. We are not opposed to protecting our companies' investments abroad, but this must not be done at the expense of the rights and needs of the local people. Because Canada's primary interest is in investments in the mining sector, the Bloc Québécois believes we need to adopt a real policy to hold Canadian mining companies accountable. I am not talking about a disguised policy like one of the motions the Liberals introduced in the House not so long ago. They lectured us on the

whole question of corporate social responsibility abroad and they vote in favour of agreements like these with Peru or Colombia. We need a real social responsibility policy, one adopted here in this House, an aggressive policy that means that when we sign bilateral agreements, that being something we are somewhat opposed to, preferring multilateral agreements, at least chapter 11 will not apply.

In 2007, the Bloc Québécois called on the federal government, as recommended in the Report of the Advisory Group for the National Roundtables, to adopt mandatory standards and accountability measures relating to the activities of mining companies abroad. This issue has been going on for a long time. Those measures should be accompanied by penalties for companies that do not comply, for example by eliminating their entitlement to tax benefits, loan guarantees and other forms of federal government assistance. Not only are these companies often operating in very particular situations, but they are also financially supported by our governments. In March, unfortunately, the Conservative government rejected a large majority of the recommendations we had made. The Conservative government has decided that social responsibility standards will be voluntary instead of mandatory.

The Liberals support the free trade agreement, in spite of all the speeches they make in this House where they say they support respect for the environment and corporate social responsibility abroad.

If we do not have an accountability policy, the mining companies will be able to expand their activities and will be subject to no rules and liable to no consequences when they pollute or they threaten human rights.

I also want to mention the dispute settlement mechanism in this agreement. The mechanism provides that a company that feels that a government has violated the investment provisions can institute proceedings directly against that government before an arbitration tribunal. We have a lot of questions about the dispute settlement mechanism in this chapter. The tribunals hearing the disputes are set up to hear a specific dispute. The deliberations of the arbitrators and their decisions are secret, unless both parties to the dispute decide otherwise. It is quite something.

Although the free trade agreement with Peru has a number of improvements in terms of transparency—this has to be said and we pointed a few of them out—the Bloc Québécois still feels that disputes should be settled on a centralized, multilateral basis involving the different countries that signed the bilateral agreements, rather than on a case-by-case basis.

We cannot accept the fact that multinational companies not only have special privileges in comparison with the host society in general but can also institute legal proceedings against a national government before special tribunals.

Our opposition to this free trade agreement is not based solely on the way investments are protected. We think that the government's strategy of concluding individual trade agreements makes it impossible to establish a fair trading relationship that benefits everyone.

We cannot enrich ourselves by exploiting people because, as I have said, that comes back to haunt us every time.

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●(1310)

We put downward pressure on wages in other regions. If people are kept in poverty with terrible working conditions, the downward pressure is felt by working people around the world. If companies are allowed to exploit people now, they will come back here in another form to do business and put downward pressure on the working conditions of our workers.

The government is currently negotiating free trade agreements with some 20 countries, in addition to the agreement it signed with the four countries of the European Free Trade Association. We supported this agreement. We are not against all agreements. This one was economically beneficial and respected workers' rights and environmental legislation. It had major benefits for Quebecers and all Canadians. For these reasons, we supported it. We are not opposed to every kind of agreement.

No studies have been done, though, showing whether these bilateral agreements are beneficial. Regardless of whether they are good or not, the Liberals and Conservatives are ready to sign more of them even though it is still impossible to determine whether they have been beneficial.

Last year, I sat as a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade. We invited government experts and we asked them what the benefits would be for Quebec and Canada. We wanted to know if this agreement was fair and if workers were going to benefit from it, or if it was going to result in job losses. The government is often unable to provide an answer to that question and it signs free trade agreements with other countries, without knowing the economic, social and political consequences of these treaties. That is unbelievable.

As I mentioned, I was with the member for Sherbrooke during the discussions on the agreement with Colombia. The government spent money to send a parliamentary delegation, to meet officials in that country, and to see what was going on there in the context of this agreement. However, the agreement was signed before the government read the committee's report. That is strange. It does not matter whether the agreement is good or bad, the Liberals sign it.

In a report presented by the Standing Committee on International Trade, the Conservative government even considered signing a free trade agreement with China. Just imagine: a bilateral agreement with China. What would be the economic spinoffs here?

In my riding, the manufacturing, furniture and textile sectors have felt that impact. There was talk of a new bilateral agreement. When it comes to international trade, this government does not seem to have a clear direction, along with objectives to ensure economic viability and respect for individuals, environmental standards and workers from all over the world, and not just Quebec or Canada.

These agreements weaken the multilateral approach. Bilateral agreements with developing countries should be avoided, because they often lead to agreements that put richer countries at an advantage over poorer countries. This is not from me, but Mr. Stiglitz, a former adviser to the Clinton administration and the author of many books, who condemns these bilateral agreements. This is the situation that we are experiencing with this accord and with the one with Colombia.

Since I only have one minute left, I am going to conclude.

●(1315)

I do not believe that these treaties will have a major economic impact in Quebec, particularly the agreement with Peru, or the one with Colombia. Instead, we should work a lot harder to get respect from our big American partner, and we should stand up to it regarding some issues.

[*English*]

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening carefully to what the Bloc member has been alluding to and I have been trying to understand the thesis with respect to how he views free trade agreements. I would like to think they are fair trade agreements to some extent. He has argued that because there is no strong multilateral framework, these bilateral agreements will supersede issues as they relate to the environment, human rights and so on. I think the House is impressed with the knowledge the member has, but my question is, is there any other alternative?

When Brazil and Canada were engaged in an aerospace situation with respect to Embraer and Bombardier, there was a charge that the Government of Canada was unfairly benefiting one of our industries. Through the WTO, Canada was able to bring attention to that issue. There was a degree of voluntary acceptance with respect to the findings.

The House is seized with the argument that the member has put forward. However, without these kinds of agreements with the Caribbean countries of the CARICOM, and without the ability to stimulate capital transfers and investments in those countries, where would those countries be? My colleague has argued that this \$2.8 billion balance is favourable to mining interests and so on.

Given that there can be strong human rights legislation in Peru, and I would argue that the Peruvians have capability in the area of labour jurisdiction and labour law, does entering into these kinds of agreements with Canada not give more protection to those countries?

●(1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

My answer is that we are signing bilateral agreements with countries where living, economic and social conditions are often pretty tough. Our mining companies, as my colleague and I both know, frequently fail to respect workers' rights and environmental standards.

That is why we cannot support this kind of agreement. My colleague mentioned the WTO, which offers a number of recourse options because it includes many countries and the rules are well-defined. Bilateral agreements can cover anything at all, and that is why we are saying that respect for the people and countries involved is not always included. In multilateral agreements, however, there are both rich and poor countries, so there are rules and the negotiations cover more issues. I think that makes it easier to respect all of the people involved.

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When I speak here in the House, I often mention the fact that we have gone through some tough situations with the Americans. Just think of the softwood lumber issue and our partially closed borders. It is a kind of protectionism. When our truckers cannot cross the border freely to export goods, that affects the cost of production. But it does not look as though the government is interested in dealing with these situations. The government is hiding its agenda and trying to convince people that agreements with Colombia and Peru will support our economic growth. I am not so sure about that. We have seen the numbers, which suggest that the impact on our economy is negligible. All it will do is protect foreign investors in the mining sector. Fine, we are not against that, but the economic impact would be minimal, in our opinion.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned with the number of issues in regard to this agreement, perhaps because I and many of my colleagues here have lived through the less than stellar agreements of the past, such as the free trade agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement. In both of those cases we have seen Canadian workers and labour rights in Canada decline. We are living in a reality where Canadians are suffering quite significantly because of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Despite all of the claims that it was somehow going to improve employment and improve our standard of living, we see a rapid and quite disastrous decline.

In this free trade agreement with Peru, we see that new laws have been put forward, decrees by the government, which it says is to modernize the public sector. Unfortunately this so-called modernization seems more punitive than positive. In fact these new rules have given the National Civil Service Authority the right to negotiate with workers in Peru and skip the collective bargaining process entirely.

I wonder if the member could please comment on the fact that collective bargaining is being undermined and how important collective bargaining is to the rights of workers.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

I would like to reply by quoting Joseph Stiglitz, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics. She surely is very familiar with him. He has written a number of books about trade relations and globalization. He is very interested in matters pertaining to working conditions and the negotiation of collective agreements for the most disadvantaged. When he received his honorary doctorate from Université de Louvain on February 3, 2003, Joseph Stiglitz—an author who I often read—said, “As our interdependence has increased, we have discovered that we need rules to govern the process of globalization and to create institutions to help it function. Unfortunately, these rules are too often established by the rich countries to serve their own interests and especially individual interests within these countries.”

That is basically what my colleague is saying. These agreements place a great deal of pressure on countries. In Colombia, we have seen that unions cannot necessarily negotiate their working conditions. Furthermore, they have even been threatened. People

have been assassinated for negotiating their working conditions. I do not believe that this promotes good working relations or good conditions for the local population.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the member for Berthier—Maskinongé on his speech.

Towards the end of his speech, he alluded to the fact that free trade agreements negotiated by the government have never required, prior to being adopted, a status report to determine the real impact on certain industries, or even certain industrial sectors, in order to have an idea of what might happen. In committee, an amendment was proposed asking the government for a report, within five years after the signing of a free trade agreement, on what had taken place or what should be changed. The proposal was rejected by the Liberals and the Conservatives. What does my colleague think of the government's lack of vision?

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, as we were saying, progress reports and committee reports are not being complied with. As parliamentarians, we should, as a minimum, be able to see the impact of an agreement on employment and on the economy, to see if that type of agreement is beneficial, to see if conditions within the agreement are respected even though they may be standard within these types of agreements, to have a follow-up on all these issues.

[*English*]

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill today.

It is of utmost importance not only to Canadian workers and Canadian society but obviously to Peruvian workers and Peruvian society as well.

Quite often the government, as well as their new coalition partners, the Liberals, is really fond of talking about rules-based agreements. When one thinks of those terms, it sounds rather magnanimous, we are going to have rules. The first thing that comes to mind is that somehow the rules will be even-handed, because most of us grew up playing games that had rules in them that were about fairness, equity and making sure that those who were not as gifted as others when it came to the games we were going to play could be included. So we developed rules for that.

Here we have this agreement that is based on rules, but we have to ask the fundamental question, “Who set the rules and for whom were they set?” When we look at this particular agreement, the rules are set but clearly they are set for one group to dominate another. We did not learn anything from NAFTA's chapter 11. We might have learned to do it a little bit better in the sense of making sure that those who could take advantage could take advantage even more.

What we have inside this agreement is indeed still that style of chapter investor protection that we all have come to recognize does not work well. If it does not work well and the rules are not working for Canadians and for other trading partners who sign on to those agreements, then why indeed would we continue to make them part of the rules, why would we not amend them or change them drastically to make sure that they are not in there.

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In fact, we can see in other more modern agreements, and my colleagues in this House quite often tend to use the term fair trade, that they still use fair trade with chapter 11-type agreements. Whereas a fairer trade would actually eliminate those types of provisions and deal on a more even-handed basis with all participants in trade, including workers, the environment, civil society and communities as a whole. However, that gets lost in this agreement.

One may well ask, "Well, who sets the rules?" In this particular case, the government of this country bargained this agreement with the government of Peru. Did it have ability to do that? Yes. Does it have the moral authority to do that? Well, in Peru, I would suggest the Peruvian government does not. President Garcia's most recent poll ratings are 19%. One can say, "Well, a poll is a poll". That gages public sentiment at least. And the public sentiment clearly shows that less than one in five Peruvians agree with the leadership of that government.

If the Peruvian government is about to set the rules for Peru in the labour movement, for workers and general society, and four out of five or 80% of the population is not in agreement with that government, is it going to be setting rules that really are about fairness for all of those citizens of that country? I think that when one does the arithmetic, one would have to come to the conclusion that no, that is not the case.

Here we have a rules-based agreement being set up by a group, in this particular case the Peruvian government, that really has no moral authority to do so. Consequently, how do we know what the Peruvian government is saying to us is really representative of what Peruvians are saying to their government? I think we have to doubt, very much, what exactly it is saying to us.

We need to look no further than what the Peruvian authorities do in their actions inside their own government, inside the country, for us to take a look to see if indeed we should believe the things they are telling us they will do, when indeed inside the country itself they are doing the opposite of what they are telling us they will do.

As my colleagues pointed out earlier, there is this question of how the Peruvian government treats trade unions, especially in the public sector, where basically it is taking away the right of collective bargaining; however, one of the rules in the rules-based agreement is to protect collective bargaining.

The Garcia government says "We are going to protect that type of right. We are going to enshrine it as a piece off to the side of the agreement", and I will get back to talking about why it should be in rather than outside the agreement, but yet by its deeds it is actually taking rights away from collective bargaining and from workers in general.

• (1330)

So, here we have the government of Peru saying one thing, and some folks would use the old acronym "talk is cheap" when it is saying one thing, but when it gets to doing the walk and doing the deed, we can see the dastardly deed it does when it takes rights away from workers, takes collective bargaining away from workers, and it puts processes in place that would affect those workers, the very workers that it is supposed to represent. This is a government that is

supposed to protect its workers, as we should be protecting ours. But then again that is a debate of probably another bill for another day as to how well the current government and the preceding one actually protected workers in our international trade agreements. One could argue, I would say, very successfully that that did not happen in this country either.

So, when we look at that sense of where workers are in Peru and the fact that only 9% are really covered by unions and that minimum wages cover a certain portion of the population, we would say that does not seem so bad, that it looks like it is going to up. In fact, I believe the statistics state it went up to \$176 a month. I know that is a very paltry sum in this country, but that is a different society. But then again, if we delve much deeper and we actually look at what is the minimum wage and who does it cover, we find by the very deed that it in fact covers very few people at all because the vast majority of folks work in what is called an informal economy.

Here we might have called that under the table or the grey market, which usually is a market where people go out and work to subsidize an already established income. They have a job but maybe they work on the side. Dare I say it, the grey economy is usually to avoid taxes in this country.

However, the informal economy in Peru is the majority of the economy, where wages are not the paltry \$176 a month but are \$20 to \$30 a month, which is not quite 15% of the minimum wage.

We all know that minimum wage is really established as the floor. But really what we have is folks not living on the floor but living underneath it. The vast majority of them, indeed, are living underneath it. And here we have this agreement, entered into by the current government and the government of Peru, to somehow do something to help folks who are below the floor when we see the government is not enacting legislation to help them rise up even though it says in the agreement that it will definitely do that.

So when one looks at what is said in agreements and the words that are written there, it is the deeds that are done by government that actually tell us whether the words will true or they will ring hollow.

In the case of the Garcia government, clearly they ring hollow, and the echo is deafening. They do not protect the workers in Peru nor civil society in Peru. Large tracks of the indigenous population in Peru are saying they do not want this agreement, that it is not good for the Peruvians.

I would argue it is not necessarily good for Canadians either, in certain aspects, because it did not get rid of the chapter 11 situation. It did not get rid of that whole sense of investor rights. I would call it investor privilege because the labour organizations and workers in this country do not get treated on an equal footing. If we cannot equate the two and we cannot make them equal, then we cannot have fair trade. It will always be free trade for some and an obligatory trade for others, those of us who have to live under the rules and those who get to write the rules. That will never make agreements fair for all of us who participate in them.

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So, when we look at this agreement, and there are a number of folks who have, and we are looking at the implementation of this agreement, not the debate of the agreement, obviously, but simply the implementation of it, we ask, “Is this in the best interests of those who are there?”

My colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood has a private member's bill before the House that talks about mining companies and talks about how they should behave in a manner that is fair and equitable, similar to what they do in this country, when they are in South America, and places like Peru.

• (1335)

In my riding office, I have received literally thousands of signature cards from young people, their parents, grandparents, and in some cases their great grandparents who are saying that until the government can make sure that workers in Peru and other parts of the hemisphere are treated fairly and the same way they are treated in Canada for the same corporations, then we shouldn't enter into these agreements. By signing these cards, they are saying they do not agree with this agreement. They do not agree that this agreement is actually a good model for Peruvian workers in Peruvian society.

When there is an outpouring of support which was not generated by me as the MP but by civil society in my riding and there is a private member's bill that talks about that, and is supported by literally tens of thousands across this country, that should tell us something about what people feel and intrinsically know is not a good deal, and so should we.

As parliamentarians we should know it is not a good deal. We should know that we should have labour and environmental standards. Why are we any different than the U.S. when it actually signed a deal, albeit flawed? The U.S. signed a deal and enshrined the labour and environmental standards in the body of the collective agreement. I call it a collective agreement because it is bargained between two countries.

Normally, in collective bargaining, when something is intrinsically important to the parties, it is put in the body of the agreement because that is how it is defined and enshrined as being that important. It is not put in as a side piece or an addendum. It is not added on at the back. It is not referred to in a chart. It is put in the body of the agreement because that is the weight given to it.

When we look at this agreement, what do we find in the body of it? We find the usual platitudes of the back and forth between two governments and, of course, investors' rights enshrined in the heart of the agreement. We do not find that as an addendum or a chart. We do not find it stapled to the back of the agreement. Yet, when it comes to the fundamental situation of labour and workers' rights, it is tacked on at the back.

Let us look at the environment, the very place in which we live. We have all heard the horror stories about environmental degradation throughout the entire world and Peru is not immune to that. It is, indeed, in the same situation as other countries where environmental degradation has taken place against their best interests and wishes in a lot of cases. Why would we not have enshrined that in the heart of the agreement? We tacked that one on the back as well.

When the question is raised as to why it is not in the body of the agreement, the answer is, “Trust us, we have your best interests at heart”. Again, those are words and the words “trust us” from the Peruvian government are not matched by the very deeds it talks about when indigenous people are being forced off their lands. There was an attempt by the Garcia government to change the constitution so there would be a different voting structure to remove people, which was eventually lost in a constitutional challenge.

Good for those who challenged it through the Peruvian constitution and said the president of the country could not do that. Unfortunately for them, the constitutional courts upheld it and said no, the government would have to enshrine and secure all of the pieces, which takes two-thirds of a vote to remove people who would give up land willingly.

If we left it to Garcia to do, he would have removed indigenous people in favour of mining corporations. In fact, he was quoted one time as telling a mining company not to worry, he would take care of it, the company would get its land claim and be able to set up its mine. He forgot to ask the folks who actually owned and lived on the land if that is what they wanted. Until this particular point, they said no. That mine has not established itself yet and good for the indigenous folks who live and farm there.

From the NDP's perspective, when it comes to Canadian agriculture, we did not get the same deal that the Americans got. If we were to look at some of the pieces that may be of benefit to Canadian agriculture, there were certainly some issues around the grains and pulse sectors.

• (1340)

When it comes to the red meat sector, we did not get the same access that Americans did. Why would we sign a deal that is inferior to the Americans? On one side, we are unable to get the open access to the markets, which the government says it wants, yet it is willing to sign a deal that does not open the market the way it wants it to.

There is the old adage that half a loaf is better than none, but I would argue half a loaf that has gone bad is probably worse than none. At least if we start at the beginning, we have an opportunity to craft something that makes sense and that is a positive benefit for all the parties. In this case, it seems the bill will not do that.

We did not get the open markets. The Peruvian government says that it will do certain things and then it restricts things when it comes to workers. It agrees to a settlement process that states a fine might have to be paid, yet it turns a blind eye. It reminds me of one of the old Monty Python skits of nudge, nudge, wink, wink. It has become one of things that is between the mining corporations and those who will benefit directly from this agreement. It has become the nudge, nudge, wink, wink of an agreement.

The government pretends it has this agreement, that it will include a piece about labour and environmental standards in the agreement and that we should not worry because we it will not have to walk the walk. It then will be able to tell its friends and international labour organizations that it has this as part of the agreement, but that is not the case. It is simply an add-on.

Government Orders

The Americans did not do that because the agreement would be held up in the U.S. Congress. They enshrined the labour and environmental pieces inside the agreement to ensure it would pass through the House of Representatives. It is still flawed because those provisions about the same penalties still apply and no one is certain how that penalty will be exacted and enforced because there are no teeth when it comes to those pieces.

That is the problem. The investor piece gets an arbitration panel, gets to make charges before it. Yet with the labour and environment pieces, there may be a fine. Again, this is a flawed agreement that is weighted on one side and not on the other.

One has to wonder if this is the future for us. Will we continue down this path of constantly opening up free markets and free agreements that are not fair or balanced? It would seem that is the case. It seems we have not learned anything from the previous ones. We have learned to perhaps placate those of us who say those are wrong-headed agreements, but we have never learned to fundamentally change the direction so we develop fair trade agreements.

If we are not going to do that, why would we sign flawed agreements? That is a fundamental question that all members should ask themselves. If we know the agreements are flawed, and I have heard many members say that it is not exactly what we want, or not quite what they would like to see, why sign it? Why not take it back and start again? Why not listen to those parties who have said that it is flawed and have given suggestions how to fix it? It is not just a question of opposing for opposition's sake. It is saying that it is flawed and here are some fixes.

The Peruvian population is saying the same. There are things we need to do to fix it and we are willing to come forward to give the governments the opportunity to fix it. The agreement could have a number of propositions that will enhance the bill and make it fair for both countries so we can trade.

It should never be confused that somehow those who oppose free trade agreements, especially those that have chapter 11 enshrined in them, are opposed to trade. It is not the case. We all understand that trade takes place on this globe and it is one of the things we have done for centuries. We will always continue to do that. However, we should not allow ourselves to sign flawed agreements that will either not benefit Canadians or those of our reciprocal trade partners. We should never stoop to taking advantage of those who find themselves in precarious situations. It should be about even-handedness and ultimately about fairness.

• (1345)

That fairness will drive equality for both partners and ultimately then, and only then, will we have trade agreements that all of us, I believe, unanimously could stand up and support. We should strive to be there because that would be equitable and fair for all the parties and for the world.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada exports about \$390 million worth of merchandise to Peru and we import \$2.5 billion. That gives an idea of the dimensions about which we are talking. There is a trade deficit. Peru has also entered into trade agreements with the United States, Chile, Thailand, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Singapore. The member is well aware that not to participate in a trade agreement with Peru will

put Canadian business at a substantial disadvantage. In fact, wheat sales are an example.

The member has raised some interesting points about the chapter 11 side deal and the environmental side deal. If we continue to expect to have 100% of what we want every time we do a trade deal, we will never be able to negotiate meaningful trade relationships that will help our economy and help us to ensure the trade deal operates in a manner which is fair to all stakeholders.

Is the member seriously suggesting that we should not enter into trade agreements, which clearly are to the advantage of Canadian business, simply because we want to look at some other areas outside the trade umbrella that we think, as boy scouts, we should look at? Is that his view is?

• (1350)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, one could argue that the only boy scouts around here are those who sit in government now and the others who sat in government before them. When they bargained the North American Free Trade Agreement, they gave away everything, including the forestry agreement, then they lost nearly every challenge to the Americans since. Therefore, one might argue that the boy scouts were those two governments and they gave things away.

We need to look at the sense of this fairness aspect to trade policy. Trade policy is about not taking advantage of one country over another. That is the intent. That is the spirit of the policy when we enter into it.

My hon. colleague talks about how much we send to Peru through the business route and how much Peru sends back to us. However, I remind my colleague that the majority of that dollar value out of Peru is raw resources and a lot of it is gold. It comes out of Peru as gold, not as finished products, and heads north and a lot of it heads back into the country to be reprocessed. We are extracting raw materials from Peru and quite often bringing them into the northern hemisphere to reprocess them into finished product of one dimension or another.

In a lot of ways Peru reminds me of Canada in its infancy 150 years ago, when we used to extract things. Some might say that this is what is happening to us again because we seem to be extracting raw materials and sending them out of the country to let someone else do things for us.

We see both things happening. Peru's industries are extraction industries, which are Canadian held in most cases. Without a question, Canadian mining corporations are some of the best in the world. They have gone to all these different countries to set up mining operations, and they have done that in Peru. They are extracting that raw material from Peru and sending it elsewhere to be processed.

The figures are somewhat skewed. They do not really give a true indication of what type of trade goes back and forth between this country and Peru. I remind the hon. member that numbers can look bad or good depending on how one tries to frame them. In this case it may look like there is a trade imbalance between us and Peru, but then again, by the time we finish the product, it may be indeed more valuable.

Statements by Members

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member speak about the Canadian mining companies in Peru. In my earlier remarks, I talked about the corporate social responsibility report that was never tabled in the House. A year has passed since that report was completed. It is very concerning to civil society and those of us who are concerned about the approach Canadian companies take in different countries.

Last week, Yessika Hoyos Morales was next door. Her father was a trade unionist who was assassinated in Colombia. I understand she was scheduled to speak before the trade committee and the door was closed to her. I have to wonder why in the world that would happen in Canada, a place that champions human rights.

We were very fortunate, and I want to give credit to all members of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, because, by consensus, this woman was added to our agenda at the last minute. However, it strikes me as strange that one of our committees would do such a thing.

• (1355)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could answer that for my colleague. I wish I could give him an answer that makes sense and that would be representative of the House, but clearly does not make sense.

One would hope that we would want to hear from someone who has intimate knowledge of what happens in the southern hemisphere. As much as Peru is not identical to Colombia with regard to trade policy and internal operations, there are indeed lessons to be learned and things that we could have learned. Unfortunately, the committee had an opportunity to learn and it turned it down.

For those who made that decision to turn her down, they should always remember that learning is always a positive thing, regardless of whether they think they believe in the piece or not. There is always value in learning new things and having them validated. Unfortunately, in this case, the young woman was not heard by the committee and that did an injustice to the House. More important, it did an injustice to those members who said no.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous Bloc speaker had an interesting thesis in which he argued that bilateral treaties of this ilk should be superseded by a broader multilateral regime that would deal with environmental and social responsibility issues and so on.

Rather than focusing on the bilateral relationship with respect to sidebar agreements, would he not back the Bloc member in terms of looking at the International Court of Justice, the International Labour Organization tribunal and those multilateral regimes that would deal with the kinds of issues he has raised, rather than suggest that a government should not enter into, in the better interests of its citizens, the kinds of agreements for the kinds of reasons as put forward by some of my colleagues?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, people always have to be careful about acronyms because they can get caught up in them. The ILO has clearly stated what it believes should be the minimum standards when it comes to labour. Indeed, the Canadian Labour Congress is calling for those standards.

The difficulty is we have added it as an addendum. We did not enshrine it in the agreement. We could have. We cannot say that no one else has done it, that we would be the first to do it and that we could not get it done. The Americans did it. That begs a simple question. Why did we not? It was not that the Peruvians did not want to do it. They did it with the Americans, who are a trading partner of ours. The Americans have the same sorts of rules that we do because we entered into NAFTA with them. It is not as if Peru was to find that as a foreign piece. It just simply did not want to do it and our government said okay. I do not believe the Conservative government actually believes in enshrining labour rights inside the agreement.

The fundamental question we should ask is this. Was it really the Peruvian government that said no, or was it the government across the way that simply said that it was not important enough to do? Did it say it did not care, that would not put it in the agreement? However, when there was some pressure, it then tacked it on the back of the agreement.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SCLERODERMA

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the month of June, thousands of Canadians hope to draw attention to a little known but devastating disease called scleroderma. According to some medical experts, it is now more prevalent than multiple sclerosis or muscular dystrophy.

While more has been learned about this disease in the past decade than in the previous century, more needs to be done to end the suffering of thousands of Canadians. Sadly, almost 80% of the sufferers are women, often diagnosed before the age of 50.

In the past my family has had to deal with the devastating effects of scleroderma. This dreaded disease took my mother and now threatens to take the life of many of my friends within the scleroderma-stricken community.

I call on my parliamentary colleagues and all Canadians to assist the Scleroderma Societies of Canada and the provinces by raising awareness in our communities, particularly now in June, as this is National Scleroderma Awareness Month.

We look forward to the day when a cure is finally found for this terrible and ultimately fatal disease.

* * *

• (1400)

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for over 50 years Uncle Jim Anderson has documented life in Makkovik on Labrador's north coast. He is a self-taught photographer and videographer who has captured changing ways in his hometown over the decades.

Uncle Jim's work was recently showcased in an exhibit by The Rooms provincial art gallery and the Labrador Interpretation Centre, bringing his talents to a new and broader audience.

Statements by Members

Just last month, Uncle Jim received the Rogers Arts Achievement Award presented by the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, recognizing his lifetime of creation through his camera's lens and his vision. Not only is he an inspired visual artist, he is inspiring others.

On behalf of all Labradorians and my Liberal colleagues, I congratulate Uncle Jim Anderson on his many achievements.

* * *

[Translation]

ARIANE MOFFATT

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge today the career of a Quebec artist who has received two prestigious awards during the first half of 2009. I am referring to Ariane Moffatt.

In March, at the 38th Annual Juno Awards, Ariane Moffatt took the honours for francophone album of the year for *Tous les sens*. In July, at the Francofolies de Spa, she will be officially presented with the Rapsat-Lelièvre prize for the same album. This prize is awarded each year by a jury of experts from Quebec and Belgium. It comes with a cash award and financial assistance from both governments.

This singer-songwriter-composer has a solid musical background. Her first album, *Aquanaute*, released in 2002, enchanted the francophone public. Then, with her second album, *Le coeur dans la tête*, we saw a more sensitive side of her. *Tous les sens*, her latest album, released in 2008, has been called a luminous album enchanting once again the Francophonie. An album representative of Ariane Moffatt.

My colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and myself acknowledge Ariane's exceptional talent. May all her dreams come true in the future.

* * *

[English]

BUY LOCAL

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, food is a vital part of our lives, and what we put into our bodies is not only reflected back to us in our personal health, but also in the health of our communities.

If we support local farmers, businesses and crafts people with our daily purchases, we will be ensuring the long-term vitality and viability of our communities.

We have all become accustomed to instant satisfaction, so what I am suggesting is that we each take a step back and follow the chain behind our purchases and ask: Where does the product we are purchasing come from? Where does our money end up? Does the chain end up in another country or a farmer's field just outside our town?

In the Welland constituency we have three fantastic farmers' markets that serve our communities with fresh healthy produce and meats every week, every year.

I encourage all constituents to take the time to check out what the farmers' markets have to offer. People should remember, that if they

ate today, they should thank a farmer, and remember to buy local or it could be bye, bye local.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May 2008, Craig Oliver asked the Liberal leader, "Do you still believe in a carbon tax? Of course you do". The Liberal leader replied, "I do, Craig". Of course he does; he invented the Liberal carbon tax. Now he claims he knows nothing about it.

When the Liberal leader is in America, he is an American. When he is in Britain, he is British. When he is in B.C., he opposes loans to the auto company. When he is in Ontario, he thinks those loans should be bigger.

He condemns the economic action plan that he voted for, while demanding billions in spending that would make the deficit bigger. He says the coalition he signed on for would break up Canada, and now he wants to put that coalition back together.

If we do not like the Liberal leader's positions on the issues, we should wait five minutes and he will change them for us.

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GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a young man from Winterland, a small community on the Burin Peninsula in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's in Newfoundland and Labrador. Gaetan Kenway has been awarded the Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarship valued at \$70,000.

The criteria for the scholarship points to Gaetan's exceptional talents. The award is based on academic excellence and research potential, plus communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities.

Gaetan is an amazing young man. After graduating from Marystown Central High School in 2003, he completed a Bachelor of Science in engineering physics at Queen's University and then entered the Master of Applied Science program at the University of Toronto. A year later he was fast-tracked into the Ph.D. program at the school's Institute for Aerospace Studies. Gaetan is currently studying in the multidisciplinary optimization of aircraft systems program.

His parents, Nancy and Morley Kenway, are teachers. They are justifiably proud of their son's accomplishments.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Gaetan Kenway and wishing him continued success.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

BRUCE DENNISTON BONE MARROW SOCIETY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the backbone of Canada, what makes this country great, is our communities and neighbourhoods which work together in thousands of different ways, behind the scenes and unreported by the media. We can all tell stories of the unnamed heroes who volunteer, who coach sports teams, who offer support in hospitals and who raise money for charitable causes.

On Friday, May 15 in Powell River, B.C., I had the great pleasure to attend the launch of a cookbook assembled by the Bruce Denniston Bone Marrow Society, an organization dedicated to raising money for bone marrow transplants. The organization was inspired by the life and untimely death of Bruce Denniston, an RCMP officer who died of leukemia.

The Powell River community is famous for its spirit of volunteerism and many people turned out for the book launch. Busy hands prepared almost 50 different dishes based on recipes in the cookbook. The Minister of Natural Resources attended in person, adding to an event which resounded with unity and hard work for a good cause. It was a classically Canadian event.

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*[Translation]***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this House has twice supported implementing a refugee appeal division. The first time, Bill C-280, introduced by the Bloc Québécois, went through all the stages in the House and the Senate, but died when this government made an early election call. Reintroduced barely a month ago, Bill C-291, sponsored by my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, once again received the support of the House.

Yet even though they supported Bill C-291 during the vote at second reading, the Liberals are now working with the Conservatives to block the bill in committee. The Liberals claim to stand up for refugees, but in fact, they are in bed with the Conservatives.

It is pathetic that the Liberals, who claim to support Bill C-291, should be playing the government's game.

Clearly, the Liberal leader's new strategy is to talk out of both sides of his mouth in order to fool the public, especially refugees, whose status is precarious.

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*[English]***TOBACCO PRODUCTS**

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked World No Tobacco Day.

World No Tobacco Day is celebrated around the world every year on May 31. This yearly celebration informs the public on the dangers of using tobacco and what people around the world can do to claim their health. The member states of the World Health Organization created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes.

I had the pleasure of celebrating World No Tobacco Day at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit with Dr. Charles Gardner and a group of students led by Kari Merriott in Barrie on Friday.

I think we can all be very proud this year of the progress our government has made in combatting the dangers of tobacco. The proposed changes to the Tobacco Act by our health minister will make significant progress as we work to prevent the targeting of children and teen smokers through prohibiting candy flavoured cigarettes, cigarillos and blunts.

It is great progress for our country and our children.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, according to the last census, the proportion of Canadians born outside the country is at its highest level in 75 years. In fact, two-thirds of our population growth comes from immigration.

In my hometown of Mississauga, 52% of the population is foreign born, the third highest among Canadian municipalities. Many of these people are permanent residents waiting to receive their citizenship, but for some odd reason living in Mississauga means unprecedented wait times. Many residents wait four to six months after their files are transferred simply to get their test dates. Had these residents moved to other parts of the country or even neighbouring cities, their files would have been processed much more quickly. This is simply unacceptable.

The Conservatives do not like it when people who already have a Canadian passport spend too much time abroad, but I would hope that they could find it in their hearts to help future Canadians achieve the dream of citizenship.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week Canadians celebrate the elegance and beauty of Canada's environment in tribute to the landscapes that lend definition and character to our great nation.

Canadians are blessed with a rich natural heritage that inspires and helps define the image of our country.

Sky, land, water and wildlife all form the natural legacy that we are entrusted to preserve for the next generation.

Our government is working hard to protect and preserve our rich and vast ecological landscapes. To date, over 100 million hectares of land, roughly 10% of Canada's land mass, and three million hectares of ocean waters have been protected.

Canada's Environment Week is an opportunity to focus on our impact on the environment, our communities and the quality of life that we treasure here in Canada.

Let us celebrate all that is unique about Canada's vast environmental heritage. The natural treasures of our land should be cared for and appreciated all year long.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

SENIORS

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently a gentleman from a prominent seniors organization came up to me and said that seniors “feel invisible to this government”.

In my hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, almost 17% of our seniors live in poverty, well over twice the national average of about 7%.

As reported in *The Globe and Mail* today, 75% of private sector workers have no pension plan at all and many of the existing defined benefit plans are facing significant shortfalls.

That is why I have been touring the country, listening to the stories of seniors, and finding out what they need from their representatives in Ottawa. After my tour I will report their stories and their concerns to our leader, Jack Layton, and they will form the basis of the NDP's national seniors strategy.

I want all Canadian seniors to know that we are here. We see them and hear them. We will not stop fighting for seniors until each and every one of them is able to live in the dignity that all of them deserve.

The Speaker: The hon. member knows he must be careful not to mention other hon. members by name in his statements. He will want to refrain from such conduct.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our Prime Minister was honoured with not one but two awards recognizing his strong leadership and decisive actions in defending human rights at home and abroad.

He received the Canadian Jewish Congress Saul Hayes Human Rights Award, the first serving prime minister to ever receive this award, and also the Simon Wiesenthal International Leadership Award.

Since forming government, our Prime Minister has led Canada in a new era of principled foreign policy based on Canadian values, taking bold positions on the world stage regardless of how popular they were at the time. Canada was the first country to cut off funding to the Hamas government and the first to pull out of the Durban hatefest.

Here in Canada, our Prime Minister has acted to protect the rights and safety of communities at risk through creating the security infrastructure pilot program. Just yesterday, he announced that our government will table legislation that would allow victims of terror to sue those foreign entities responsible for the attacks.

It is great to see our Prime Minister acknowledged for his leadership and conviction in advancing human rights. Canada and the world are better for it.

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the CBC is having to make drastic cuts that will result in the loss of more than 800 jobs, a group of private citizens have come together to get recognition of the cultural and social importance of the crown corporation. SOS Radio-Canada also hopes to convince politicians to permanently increase public funding for the institution, something the Bloc Québécois naturally supports.

SOS Radio-Canada will have its work cut out for it, because not only is the Conservative government completely uninterested in the public broadcaster and culture in general, but the Liberal Party's record is no better, even though it claims otherwise. It was the Liberals who, in the 1990s, contributed in part to slashing \$400 million from the CBC's annual budget and preferred investing in flags rather than culture, depriving many festivals and cultural events of their funding.

It is therefore important that as many people as possible join the movement to support the CBC.

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[English]

MEMBER FOR NEPEAN—CARLETON

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Prime Minister's hand-picked parliamentary secretary twice used the expression “tar baby”.

As a child, I was taunted with this name by people who wished to demean me and make me feel inferior. The mountain of correspondence I have received in the last few days shows my experience among black children was not unique.

The parliamentary secretary has stated he was unaware the term is also a pejorative description of blacks. I accept his explanation. I am concerned, however, at that MP's tendency to make hurtful statements. One year ago this week, he was forced to apologize for his offensive comments toward first nations people, and now this.

Now that he knows the negative connotation of this expression for blacks, black Canadians hope he will publicly pledge to remove this pejorative term from his vocabulary, and we hope all Canadians will do so as well.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is keeping quiet and no longer wants to talk to Canadians about his hidden tax agenda. Who will pay for the tax increases the Liberals want to bring in? Our poorest citizens? Unemployed workers? Women? Who? Canadians are still waiting for an answer.

Oral Questions

He is always ready to make sweeping statements and probably still believes that Quebec's nationalism is blind, that Quebecers do not speak the kind of French he can understand and, more importantly, that Quebecers are simply North Americans who speak French.

But does he really understand Quebec? No. For him, Quebecers are simply Frenchies.

This Liberal leader is disappointing Quebecers. They are disappointed by the attitude of this man who is trying to pass off his true ideas on Quebec—

The Speaker: Order. We will now proceed to oral question period.

The hon. member for Ottawa South.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation concerning medical isotopes is critical.

Every day, 5,000 Canadians and 60,000 patients around the world depend on Chalk River. Some 18 months ago, when the first of the three unplanned shutdowns happened, the minister called it a matter of life and death. The Prime Minister said more or less the same thing when he called it a threat to human health.

When will the production of medical isotopes resume in Chalk River, if it ever does?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, AECL is informing the public and ourselves on an updated basis as to its inspection of what has happened at Chalk River and what possible repairs may take place there. It is updating us both on its website and in daily reports to us. It is the same as we reported last week, which is that AECL expects that Chalk River will not be in operation for at least three months.

In the meantime, we are working with our global partners to increase the supply of isotopes.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2 million procedures in Canada every year rely on medical isotopes, 80% of which come from Chalk River.

Dr. Jean-Luc Urbain, president of the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, describes the situation as a real catastrophe.

The Prime Minister has no one left to blame and no one left to fire.

Since the government does not know when its own reactor will be back on line, could the Prime Minister tell us when and from where supplies of medical isotopes will be secured? Will every Canadian who needs diagnostic tests and cancer and heart treatments get them, yes or no?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the isotope shortage is concerning but Canadians can have

confidence that this government is taking short-term measures and looking at long-term solutions.

I have been in contact with my provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as the medical community and experts in the field. Natural Resources is working on the supply issue.

We are also using levers, such as the special access programme and clinical trials, to provide alternatives to Canadians. I will continue to work with the territories and provinces to address the issue.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just 18 months ago, the Prime Minister's position was that getting back a reactor online was a matter of life or death.

MDS Nordion stated today that the government has no long-term plan for the supply of medical isotopes.

Dr. Christopher O'Brien, of the Ontario Association of Nuclear Medicine, states, "There just aren't enough reactors out there that can take the place of Chalk River".

Clearly, isotope supply will not meet demand in Canada or elsewhere. If this is a matter of life or death, where will the required isotopes come from and, if there are not enough, which patients will suffer and who gets to decide?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we take this matter very seriously and that is why—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1420)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, regardless of the catcalling from the other side, we think it is very important to communicate this.

This is a serious situation and we have great concern for the health and safety of Canadians. We are working globally with our partners who produce medical isotopes. As well, we are looking toward the future, recognizing that we need to find that long-term supply and that is why we called an expert review panel to look at all the options that we have received. It is a heck of a lot more than what they did in 13 years, which was nothing.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 5,000 procedures in Canada rely on medical isotopes every day but it appears that foreign suppliers could supply, at most, 2,000. This means that at least 3,000 procedures a day in Canada will not occur through June, July, August, who knows how long. Patients will be moved onto waiting lists that are already too long for other types of tests and treatments that are not as good. This will put more stress on patients, families and medical professionals.

How could the government have failed to see this coming?

Oral Questions

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada has provided advance warning and regular updates to the provinces and the territories and worked with the isotope experts to develop medical guidance on dealing with the shortage, including examining other possible isotopes. Many tests can be completed using other options. What this means for Canadians is that we are making alternatives available so that medical isotopes can be used where most needed.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, she did not answer the question.

[Translation]

The minister announced last week that her department would assemble an expert panel to explore other ways to obtain isotopes for Canadians. While experts in nuclear medicine are calling the situation a disaster, the minister still has not chosen her panel.

Why did the government not seek such expert opinion 18 months ago? Why was it asleep at the switch?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member may be confused between the two processes, the one from last year and the one this year. Last year an expert panel discussed the issue. We learned from those lessons, which is why we are working with the globe in terms of dealing with the shortage in isotopes. In fact, I have a call scheduled for tomorrow morning with the other isotope producing countries in order to discuss maintenance schedules.

Finally, even though there is a great need to be catcalling to me as I try to talk about the important issue of medical isotopes, it is important to remember that we are—

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

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is giving \$5 billion to General Motors, thus bringing to \$10.2 billion federal assistance to the automobile industry. By comparison, the Conservative budget, which the Liberals supported, provides only \$170 million for the forestry sector, which is critical for the regions of Quebec. The government also added \$100 million for silviculture, but that is still far short of the \$10 billion given to the automobile sector, which is primarily located in Ontario.

Will the government finally admit that loan guarantees are legal under all trade agreements, and that Quebec's forestry companies need them immediately?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the automobile industry is a free market that is not governed by an agreement signed on both sides of the border to regulate an industry. As for the forestry industry, it is at the very request of that industry, following requests made to us in 2006, that our government signed an agreement with our American partners. We must now respect this agreement.

I know that forestry workers are going through difficult times, but we will continue to support them by implementing programs to help them.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in London, the workers paid by the federal government are arguing the exact opposite of what the minister just said in the House.

As for the Minister of Finance, he stated that the government had no choice but to help the automobile sector, otherwise thousands of jobs would be lost. The fact is that, over the past two years, 50,000 jobs were lost in the forestry sector in Canada, with half of those in Quebec.

When will the government realize that, just like the automobile sector, it has no choice but to help Quebec's forestry sector immediately, to put an end to these job losses?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote Avrim Lazar, president of the Forest Products Association of Canada, who said: "The government did not kill the forestry industry; the market did. The government did not drop the prices on wood or pulp and paper; the market did."

Our solutions must focus on the real issue, which is that no one wants to buy our products right now, because we are going through a global recession. We have set up, along with our colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, a Canada-Quebec committee that is working on finding solutions. We have already announced some of these solutions and others will follow.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recently, the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) falsely stated that Export Development Canada had given \$9 billion to Quebec's forestry sector. EDC officials refuted that statement in the papers.

Can the minister tell us how much EDC gave Quebec's forestry sector in loan guarantees? How much?

• (1425)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in answer to my colleague's question, the journalist who made the mistake corrected it. Perhaps my colleague has not read that article. He only read what he wanted to.

EDC supplied \$9 billion in financial services, including accounts receivable insurance and other services, to 226 forestry companies in Quebec in 2008, and it will continue to do so.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us why amounts given to the Ontario auto industry were made public while amounts given to Quebec's forestry industry by EDC are still secret?

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber agreement signed in good faith by the Canadian and American governments included a framework that we must abide by. The agreement provides for support from government partners. The government itself must comply with the terms of the agreement.

With respect to the auto sector, this is a free market issue, and any announcements that have been made or will be made in the next few hours involve the governments of both countries and a provincial government. That is something else altogether. Someone has tried to mislead people, but it is not true.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has broken all records for poor economic performance. Worse yet, the Conservatives are rewarding this poor performance.

Despite record losses of \$24 billion, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board executives are earning bonuses.

We have heard about \$6 million over two years for David Denison. Mark Wiseman, they say, got \$5 million, while Graeme Eadie and Donald Raymond got more than \$3 million each.

Why does the government refuse to take action?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by law, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board operates independently and at arm's length from the federal government and the provincial governments across the country. That is something the member opposite has not put on the floor. But it also deals with taxpayers' money, and any compensation for its executives should reflect that reality.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those managers have wiped out four years of Canadians' contributions to CPP with that loss of \$24 billion and yet they are going to haul in bonuses of \$7 million this year. That is added to \$23 million that those executives took in bonuses over the last couple of years.

It is offensive and public outrage is growing about it. Why? Because the average senior gets \$500 a month from that pension plan and yet those guys can raid the bank for millions even when they lose money. It is outrageous—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just about every pension plan in every corner of the world is facing the reality of the economic downturn that has taken place right across this continent and around the world. Canada's economy is doing demonstrably better than most countries.

Patricia Croft from RBC Asset Management said, "Canada continues to be the envy of the world in regard to our fiscal position, and we can get out of it without having to raise taxes". That is an important message for Canadians, and it is a very important

message for the leader of the Liberal Party, who wants to raise taxes on hardworking middle-class Canadians.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister cannot get the words "\$24 billion lost by these managers" out of his mouth, and he also cannot describe the magnitude of the bonuses, because if he ever said it, he knows Canadians would be upset about it.

It is time Conservatives took some action. This is Canadians' money we are talking about. Month after month, they pay into it. There are seniors living in poverty, and these guys reach out and grab millions. If they are doing such a great job, let them find a job somewhere else.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the leader of the NDP wants to make derogatory comments about people who work in the public service and who work in the benefit of Canadians. What is increasingly clear is that maybe it will be the leader of the NDP who is looking for a job before anyone else in that regard.

* * *

● (1430)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said "no recession". There is one. The Minister of Finance predicted a surplus. Wrong again. Then he said we would have a \$34 billion deficit, and it is now over \$50 billion.

The government has lost all credibility when managing Canada's financial crisis. Is the Minister of Industry any better at math than the rest of the Conservative bench?

Canadians now have \$9.5 billion on the line with GM. Can the industry minister assure Canadians that he will keep his promises, get every penny back and that the deal protects Canada's fair share of jobs and 20% of production?

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course as every member of the House knows, the automotive sector in Canada is facing difficult times due to the global crisis. The announcement today was the result of a significant amount of work, a significant amount of sacrifice by auto workers in this country, by the CAW and the UAW, by auto executives. The announcement was the result of hard work by governments on both sides of the border and the Ontario government as well. We think we have found the best way forward for our Canadian industry and for Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada will become part owner of both GM and Chrysler, as Canadian taxpayers provide 20% of the rescue package.

Oral Questions

The Council of Canadian Academies has recently pointed out that private sector R and D advancement in Canada is low. This is a priceless opportunity for the government to ensure that both GM and Chrysler commit to performing some of their R and D in Canada in proportion to Canada's investment.

Canadians can, and should, contribute to developing the cars of tomorrow. Will the Conservatives seize this opportunity and make it happen?

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the deal that was announced today, there are a couple of important aspects. One is that it maintain the long-term viability of the industry. That was one of the things we said was important in this deal. The other thing is the proportionate share.

Another thing I would point out in answer to the member's question is that there is \$1 billion committed to R and D investment in this country as part of this deal.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's border with the U.S. gets thicker today. For the first time Canadians and Americans will require a passport to travel between our countries. With only a quarter of U.S. citizens holding one, it threatens billions in trade and countless jobs that depend upon spontaneous travel.

The Conservative government did nothing to prevent this. The Conservatives have left it to the provinces to scramble for solutions while for three years their inaction has created the most closed border in generations.

When families get turned away, when businesses close because of reduced travel, when people get laid off, will the government look them in the eye and tell them just how little it has done?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to refresh the hon. member on the history of the western hemisphere travel initiative. It was actually adopted by the Americans, not while the Conservatives were in government but rather while the member's party was in government.

Does the House know how many Liberals went to Washington to make their case to Congress, to make their case to the Senate and the House of Representatives? Zero. Not one. There was not one word. They did not even know it was happening.

When we became government, we achieved a number of extensions on implementation. We managed to get flexibility with an enhanced driver's licence as an alternative travel document. We have done a lot to make it easier for trade to flow across our border.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it may come as news, but the minister and the government have been here for three and a half years. In that period of time they have done so little, and maybe they are proud of this, that the former president of the United States, who left office just four months ago, and the former president whose wife is the Secretary of State, said they had no knowledge of these conditions, that it was news to them.

How can Conservatives stand up and say they did anything when our largest trading partner knew nothing about an issue that put thousands of jobs at risk? Why have they failed to defend Canada's interests or even make them aware that our interests exist?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the awareness of the former presidents matches that of the Liberal Party when these initiatives were being put in place.

However, in our three and a half years, we have obtained successive extensions related to the air provisions. We have obtained two extensions for implementation of the land provisions. We obtained permission for alternative travel documents. We actually did some things to make it better for Canadians. We actually delivered some results.

This past week we delivered a shiprider initiative jointly with the Americans, a joint emergency protocol with the Americans and, as well, an agreement to a joint threat assessment so we will have a common approach to managing our border.

We are delivering real results. The Liberals just ignored the problems and never did anything about them.

* * *

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today in Montreal the Nuclear Waste Management Organization begins the Quebec phase of consultations to develop a process for selecting a disposal site for this type of waste. But Quebec, which produces only 3.7% of all the waste, does not want to become Canada's garbage dump. On October 30, 2008, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously called on the federal government to prohibit the burial in Quebec soil of irradiated waste coming from outside Quebec.

Will the government respect this demand?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, which is in charge of implementing a safe and secure plan for managing nuclear fuel waste over the long term.

The key part of this mandate is that it "outlines its process to identify an informed and willing community to host a repository for the safe and secure management of nuclear fuel. This will not be forced on anybody. This is for the community to be informed and make a conscious decision if they would like to be the site for this disposal".

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec clearly expressed its desire to not receive any other province's nuclear waste, especially since Quebec's nuclear waste is expected to decrease in the coming years.

Will the minister exclude Quebec from this potential list?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while I respect the pronouncement by the member opposite, I will indicate again that it is the actual community within Quebec that gets to say whether it is willing and informed. We will negotiate with the communities, not with the Bloc.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA MEDIA FUND

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last March, Quebec's culture minister wrote to the Minister of Canadian Heritage to share her very serious concerns regarding the new program called the Canada media fund. The Quebec minister is afraid that these new criteria based mainly on audience ratings will disqualify Télé-Québec.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage realize that if these new media fund criteria are not adapted to the reality facing educational television, Télé-Québec will be unable to qualify to obtain funding from this new organization?

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course the introduction of the Canadian media fund was much celebrated by producers right across this country. It is a way of moving forward.

That is what our government is doing. We are looking to new technologies, to new platforms in this country, and we are supporting them and we are supporting Canadian artists.

Specifically related to Quebec cultural policy, Quebec has control over its cultural policy. It controls whether it will allow tax credits at a provincial level. Federal tax credits for in-house productions are allowed.

We are working with the Government of Quebec, and we are working with Canadian artists.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, did I understand correctly that Télé-Québec will from now on be disqualified from the Canada media fund?

Quebec's culture minister also fears that the new operating rules will undermine creators and producers, especially independent ones.

What does the minister plan to do to protect the interests of independent producers in particular?

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the member has it wrong.

Federal tax credits for in-house productions are allowed. Of course the Canadian media fund will give all broadcasters the opportunity to participate on a level playing field. A level playing field is how the Conservatives roll.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premiers of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan have all called for reform of the EI system.

They have asked the federal government to ensure that Canadians living in their provinces do not have to work more hours to qualify for EI than Canadians in some other parts of the country. That makes three fiscally Conservative premiers in this country who are asking for the government to deal with the hurt and the suffering of Canadians.

When will the government respond to the suffering Canadians and make changes to the EI system so that everyone is treated fairly and equally?

● (1440)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour pointed out, if we were to make such a move the areas that would be hardest hit would be those of high unemployment.

What the Liberal Party fails to recognize is that the majority of people who were unfortunate to lose their job during this global recession are people who have been at work for a long period of time. They have been paying into EI for 10, maybe 20 years, and now they may not have a job for the future. We want to help them get the training they need for the jobs of the future. That is what we are doing to help them and our economy.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's insensitivity never ceases to amaze me.

Premier Campbell called the EI rules discriminatory. Premier Stelmach said that he would expect to see some common ground in the coverage for the unemployed. Premier Wall has emphatically expressed similar sentiments in Saskatchewan. British Columbia's welfare rolls are up by 77% this year over last.

When will the government stop being insensitive to the suffering of Canadians, sit down with the provinces of this country and make the EI system fair and workable for all Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are trying to help those who have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs by preparing them for the jobs of the future.

Too many of the people who have been laid off will not have a job in the industry they came from because those jobs are gone permanently. That is why they need new skills. That is why we are investing over \$2 billion to help those who are on EI, and even those who are not, to get the skills they need so they will be eligible to look after their families in the long term.

It is time the Liberals stopped ignoring those people and started working with us to help them.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in November 2008, the Minister of Finance told us that we were facing a technical recession and we would see slight negative growth. We now know that Canada has just gone through the two worst consecutive quarterly declines in this country's history.

Are these disappointing numbers enough to finally convince the government to get stimulus funds flowing from its coffers and start creating jobs for Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always encouraging when that hon. member is talking down the economy. However, speaking about that hon. member talking, let us take a quote from one of his pronouncements. He said:

Nobody knows where the bottom is. This is a global economic crisis, so it makes such forecasts very difficult.

That hon. member should talk positively about some of the positions that this government has taken with our economic action plan. We have not yet seen a plan from any of the opposition parties. We put one in place. Let us have a little support for it and help Canadians.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad he can read but it would be nice if he could count.

The budget shows that the Minister of Finance planned for employment insurance claims to increase by 12% this year. We are now in the middle of the sharpest recession on record. Unemployment is 30% higher than a year ago and he is surprised that he grossly underestimated EI revenues?

How can Canadians believe anything the government says?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me continue on with some of the pronouncements that the hon. member has made.

On this side of the House, we try to put forward some positive news. The IMF and the OECD have said that we went into this in the strongest position and that we will come out of it in the strongest position. However, that hon. member said:

Alarmist statements about the federal deficit may be useful if the purpose is to frighten the public.... They can only be counter-productive if the object is to rebuild consumer confidence and create jobs.

That was the member for Markham—Unionville. That is not helpful.

Oral Questions

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Environment Week, a week championed by our Conservative forefather, Prime Minister Diefenbaker. Even back then, Conservative governments realized the importance of protecting the environment.

After more than a decade of Liberal neglect, will the Minister of the Environment please tell the House how this Conservative government is continuing this environmental tradition?

• (1445)

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having just returned from the climate change negotiations with our international partners, including the second major session of the major economies forum, I can assure the House that Canada is well on track. As each major economy has promised in those international discussions, we will table all of our post-Kyoto climate change policies prior to the Copenhagen conference this December.

As promised, in 2010 we will gazette the CEPA regulations, which are necessary to implement those policies. Those regulations will then be brought into force sector by sector. We are on track to achieve our 20% reduction by 2020.

* * *

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have a health care crisis in this country since all Canadian production of isotopes has come to a halt. The Conservatives like to blame the Liberals but it does not matter who is at fault, whether it is the Liberals or the Conservatives. What really matters is what is available for cancer patients and others desperately needing isotopes for medical imaging.

What plan does the minister have for the some 30,000 Canadians whose appointments will be cancelled this week because isotope production has stopped and the government has no plan?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I concur with the member that this is an issue of concern. I have engaged with the provincial and territorial ministers with regard to this issue. I can say that since 2007, governments and health care providers have developed contingency measures to minimize the impact on patients and that includes using alternate isotopes, such as thallium.

We will continue to work with the experts on medical isotopes to assess the situation and to seek their advice on alternatives. I will continue to work with the provinces and territories.

Oral Questions

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, alternatives that will not come on the market for another year will not help cancer patients. A study that does not even have members named to it and that will not report until next fall does not help people right now.

What will the study do to help those people who depend on isotopes for the detection of tumours, for the detection of movement of cancer to the bone and for the detection of a pulmonary embolism that, as members know, is fatal when a blood clot moves to the lung.

All those treatments require diagnostic analysis through isotopes.

What does the minister say to them? How will they sleep any better tonight knowing she is studying something in the—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2007, governments and health care providers have developed contingency measures to deal with the issue. As well, I had conversations last week with the experts on medical isotopes who are assessing the situation.

Many tests can be completed using other options. What this means for Canadians is that we are making alternatives available so that medical isotopes can be used where they are most needed.

I will continue to work with the provincial and territorial ministers on this issue.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before the Prime Minister began free trade discussions with the EU, an anonymous member of the government wanted to reassure producers under supply management by claiming that they would be protected. The preliminary report on negotiations between Canada and the EU indicates that there is in fact cause for concern.

Supply management has always been excluded from bilateral trade agreements. However, this time, everything is on the table including supply management. Why?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would once again point out that this House passed a unanimous resolution to protect supply management. And we are doing so in our negotiations with the WTO and in our discussions with the European Union. Our intention remains to protect supply management.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, and yet the executive director of the dairy producers of Canada, Richard Doyle, told the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food that, unlike in the case of other bilateral agreements, supply management was not excluded even before negotiations began.

The Minister of State (Agriculture) must realize that it takes more than one anonymous source from his government to reassure producers. It must officially exclude supply management from all agreements. Will it do so?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we begin discussions with the European community, our aim of course is to increase exports overall in these countries, especially since we are an exporting country. That said, I want to remind the member that the House of Commons has decided to protect supply management and government has adopted this position.

* * *

● (1450)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last three years, we have had three ministers and three plans to address climate change.

The Conservatives acknowledged last week that federal rules to limit industrial greenhouse gas emissions will not even be developed for another year, nor will they be implemented for another six years, because they want to wait for the U.S.

Why are the Conservatives still waiting for the Americans to create Canadian climate change policy?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would refer the hon. member, as I am sure she wants to be helped, to the previous question that was posed and the answer that was provided.

I can assure her that Canada is on track. We will develop climate change policies that are appropriate to Canada's national interest and reflect our national interest.

We will fulfill our international commitments. We are engaged at the table internationally, including in the major economy forum. The major democracies at that forum have committed to table their plans, post-Kyoto, at the Copenhagen conference. That will be done.

In the following year, in 2010, the detailed regulations will be developed and, in the year after, sector by sector, we will proceed with the enactment of those in the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than adopt its own policy on climate change, the Conservative government is waiting in order to copy that of the Americans. In the meantime, we are losing precious time in making the changes that must be made in any case. This is one more example to be added to that of the economy and the Chalk River fiasco, demonstrating the government's inability to act positively on anything.

Could this government, the champion of inaction, make an exception and act proactively for once?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are headed in the right direction in order to achieve our objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020. I have already announced the regulations on automobile emissions.

In addition, we will soon announce regulations on coal fired power plants and the government's policy on compensation. In order to protect jobs in Canada, we will ensure that our regulations are in line with those of our North American and international partners. That is clear.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, I, along with the Minister of the Environment, attended meetings with world and industry leaders discussing the climate crisis where we witnessed joint calls by industry and governments alike for expedite action for science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets, a cap and trade regime and shifting investment to clean energy sources.

While other countries have already passed laws and committed spending to reduce greenhouse gases, could the minister explain why he has returned to announce a further six year delay before the government will finally act?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no such thing has been announced. No delay has been announced. I continue to say exactly what I said when I became Minister of the Environment, and that is that we will develop our climate change policies with the effect of significantly reducing greenhouse gases in Canada. We will do that through the clean energy dialogue that President Obama and the Prime Minister have struck. That holds incredible promise for our country.

We will continue to be a constructive partner internationally in all of the international forums that are taking place. In the time after Kyoto and in the time after the Copenhagen conference, Canada will proceed with the commitments that it has given sector by sector with detailed regulations.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the *Globe and Mail* reported that Canada Post entered into an untendered contract for air mail services worth more than \$100 million. Since the story was published, Canada Post has admitted that this is true. Competing companies say that they could have met the timeline and requirements, wanted to bid on this golden tender and would have liked to have had a fair shot at the work.

Why has the Conservative government chosen to follow the Liberals down the path of lucrative, untendered contracts? Did it not learn anything from the Gomery commission?

• (1455)

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is a crown corporation at arm's length of the government. My responsibility as minister is to ensure its mandate is followed in a commercial way and that it follows all the rules, laws and regulations. I have chatted with the chair of Canada Post. He will be getting back to me on that but he has assured me that is the case.

* * *

NATIONAL SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning I read that the current national sex offender

registry has not helped to solved a single crime since it was set up five years ago. This registry, which was created by the Liberals, simply does not work. It seems that more than 40% of those persons convicted of serious sex offences were never listed on the registry.

Could the Minister of Public Safety explain what the government is prepared to do to ensure that the sex offender registry operates in a manner that better protects our children and communities and provides the police with another investigative tool?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the national sex offender registry is not working right now. Almost half of all convicted sex offenders actually escape registration and that is simply not acceptable.

International sex offenders returning to Canada also escape registration. What is more, our police are not permitted to use the registry for prevention or community safety. We will be taking action as a government to correct these deficiencies and we will be taking action to do that today.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the Auditor General raised serious concerns with regard to the tendering of the contract for relocation services for the armed forces, RCMP and public servants. The government responded that it would ensure fairness the next time the contract was tendered.

Now it appears that the timeline provided by the government is so short that only Royal LePage, the incumbent, will again get the contract.

Will the minister responsible pull the tender and give all interested parties a fair opportunity to bid?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are tremendously concerned and obviously want to ensure that all processes are followed and that the very best value will be made for the taxpayers. That is something we will continue to do.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I recently asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans a question about the Rimouski wharf, which is in a state of disrepair. On the one hand, she says that the safety of fishers comes first, but on the other, she says that safety accounts for only 20% when it comes to the criteria for the small craft harbours modernization project.

Will the government adopt phase 2 of the Bloc's assistance plan, which recommends immediate action by investing \$300 million in small craft harbours and renovation of Rimouski's wharves?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member should know, we take our commitment to small craft harbours very seriously. That is why we put \$200 million over a couple of years in our economic action plan for that. We are continuing to work on those.

A whole process is involved in deciding which projects should take priority. We continue to work on them in that way.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Canada-U.S. border became thicker. The U.S. passport policy, which takes effect today, will cause travel delays, gouge Canadians and damage our tourism industry.

The Prime Minister hoisted a white flag instead of the Canadian flag when he first agreed to this policy on March 31, 2006, with President Bush. His record of advocacy was best exemplified when former Presidents Bush and Clinton spoke in Toronto last Friday. They were not even aware of this new passport policy. This is from the policy's architect.

Could the minister tell us why he would accept a border policy that threatens our Canadian tourism industry and jobs when he is not even being taken seriously?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. In no way did we accept the policy. In fact, we worked very effectively once we became government to try to correct the deficiencies that were allowed to arise under the previous government.

We did that in a number of ways: by putting in place a number of extensions on implementation of the western hemisphere travel initiative; by creating the opportunity to utilize alternative documents such as an enhanced driver's licence. We engaged the Americans in a way that no other party did. In doing so, we were able to significantly advance the interests of Canadians.

We will continue to do that on a number of fronts because our relationship and our trade across that border is very important.

* * *

● (1500)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands of allied veterans who fought alongside Canada in the second world war and Korea were abruptly cut off from potential federal benefits in 1995. These brave veterans fought against the same evils Canadians did. They stood up for the same values we did. In fact, a number of them had already been living in Canada before they returned to serve with the armies in their native countries. Others came here later at our request to build Canada.

Could the minister please tell the House what the government is doing to keep its promise to allied veterans, a promise to restore

benefits to the deserving group of people that fought side by side with Canadians?

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman of veterans affairs committee and all members of committee on both sides of the House, who do such good work for our veterans and our men and women in uniform.

As the member indicated, it was the wrong thing to do in 1995, so we will restore those benefits to our allied veterans. It is the right thing to do for obvious reasons.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Veterans Affairs has the floor.

Hon. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, that very seldom happens in question period, but I thank all my colleagues for that standing ovation. When they are doing that, they are not saluting us; they are saluting our men and women in uniform. I thank every member for that.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and the co-operation of the House, I will introduce that bill following question period.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of three guests from Nunavut: the Hon. Eva Aariak, Premier; the Hon. Peter Taptuna, Deputy Premier and Minister of Economic Development and Transportation; and the Hon. Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth for Nunavut.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Jim Kenyon, Minister of Economic Development for Yukon Territory.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the 2008-09 report to Parliament of the Transportation Safety Board.

I have here some copies for the House.

Routine Proceedings

● (1505)
[English]

WAR VETERANS ALLOWANCE ACT

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-33, An Act to amend the War Veterans Allowance Act.

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

* * *

PROTECTING VICTIMS FROM SEX OFFENDERS ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts.

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

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-399, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (asbestos).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce two bills that are the product of a competition called “Create Your Canada”, which we have been running in Skeena—Bulkley Valley for the last year or so. We believe it is the first time in Parliament's history that a competition has been run among young people to come forward with their best ideas for the country.

This idea, presented by Hayley McDermid, Claire Hinchliffe and Chloe Staiger, who are looking on right now, is to ban asbestos in all its forms. It is backed by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who has worked long and hard on this issue.

It presents to Parliament, in all clarity and purposefulness, the vision of what young people in Canada look for, which is leadership from the House to protect the health and welfare of Canadians and also of our trading partners, so we do not export our cancer overseas or we do not export misery to the countries with which we deal.

These young people have shown us the way. I look for the full and confident support of the House.

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

* * *

BICYCLE PATH PROMOTION ACT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-400, An Act to promote the development of bicycle paths.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is the result of the second winner of our contest. A young man, Luke Santerno, who is here with his mother, was able to come forward with a bill that is backed by my colleague from Ottawa Centre, a strong advocate of bicycles in Canada.

This young man has realized that with all of the infrastructure development that has either been promised or committed to in the country, there is almost no consideration for those who wish to use bicycles, those who wish to get themselves to and from work by a means of transportation other than the automobile. This young man

has come forward to say that all future considerations of funding coming from this place must consider the use of bicycle lanes in all of those infrastructure implementations.

This, again, is the young people of Canada coming forward and pointing us in a direction, showing us what the generation to come wants to see now and in the future. It is incumbent upon us as parliamentarians to consider that voice, to give strength and power to that voice and to support the bill. Let us get it done.

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

* * *

WAR VETERANS ALLOWANCE ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I could refer back to an item that was dealt with moments ago, the introduction by the Minister of Veterans Affairs of the legislation pertaining to veterans' allowances, which he referred to in question period and which achieved a very warm reception from the House, I wonder if I could simply have clarification from the minister.

I take it that bill is in a condition where it could be proceeded with expeditiously. Would he consider this a candidate to go to the House leaders' meeting tomorrow to see if there is a way that we can bring that bill to a speedy conclusion in the House and expedite the parliamentary process to get it done.

● (1510)

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is unexpected good news. I think we are willing to take the House leader of the opposition up on that, but, and I think the member would understand, there is a technical correction that has to be made to the bill, which I should refer to his officials, our officials and the House leader officials so we can ensure that is considered before we expedite speedy passage of the bill. However, I appreciate the generosity. I think once officials get together, they can determine how we best proceed.

* * *

PETITIONS**PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS' COMPENSATION FUND**

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36, certified by the Clerk of Petitions, on the subject matter of public safety officers. As we know, the firefighters visited Parliament a couple of weeks ago and they inspired this petition, signed by a number of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners would like to point out to Parliament that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk in the execution of their duties on a daily basis, that the employment benefits of these public safety officers often provide insufficient compensation to the families of those who are killed in the line of duty and that the public mourns the loss of police officers and firefighters in the line of duty and wish to support in a tangible way the surviving members in their time of need.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to institute or establish a fund known as the public safety officers' compensation fund for the benefit of families of public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

[Translation]

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last month was Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, a cause dear to me because my daughter suffers from this disease. Today, I am presenting in this House a petition signed by 275 Quebec residents who support the proposals of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, namely: ease the criteria for employment insurance sickness benefits so that people with episodic disabilities can work part time and receive benefits part time; make the tax credit for people with disabilities refundable so that they can increase their income; and allow spouses to claim the caregiver tax credit.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to present two petitions.

The first petition has four pages of signatures from people mostly in Toronto, collected by Women in Solidarity with Palestine and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network of Toronto.

The petitioners call upon Parliament and the Government of Canada to immediately undertake a change in its position regarding the Middle East and to initiate concrete action to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing violations of international humanitarian law.

HOUSING

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by many people in Alberta and elsewhere across the country who support the need for a national housing strategy that will, in consultation with first nations, harmonize the work of all levels of government to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for all Canadians.

The petitioners ask Parliament to ensure the swift passage of Bill C-304, which is an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am holding in my hand a petition with the signatures from 3,678 Canadians from all across Canada. They are calling upon Parliament to support mandatory minimums for traffickers of children 18 years of age and under. Today I will present in committee on Bill C-268. The public is very aware that parliamentarians are going to address

this initiative and urge all parliamentarians to support this very important initiative.

MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING DATES

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of hunters on the south coast of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These hunters feel that the migratory bird allowable hunting dates in zone 3 should be changed from the current dates of November 25 to March 10 to January 1 to April 30. This area of the province is open to the Atlantic Ocean which makes it extremely difficult for hunters to participate. For those who are unable to hunt ducks and turrs for food because of the high winds they ask that consideration be given to the situation in which they find themselves. Therefore, they ask the House that consideration be given to this change of date that would allow hunters to fill their quotas and participate in this seasonal activity.

● (1515)

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by numerous Canadians from across the country regarding the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. They suggest in the strongest possible terms that the government revisit what it is doing with the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement. There have been numerous petitions presented by members of this House to which I add one more. It is incumbent upon the government to hear what Canadians are saying from coast to coast to coast about this trade agreement. In light of what we have heard today in the debate on another agreement, one ought to pay close attention to that.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May was Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. I am presenting a petition signed by a number of people from across Canada who are concerned about the hardship that MS places on their families. They have suggested a number of means, including EI as well as tax reforms, to allow them to make their lives better. As a person whose family was impacted by MS with my sister, I am proud to bring their concerns to the House of Commons.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by residents of the Lower Mainland who believe that George Bush was guilty of war crimes, should not have been allowed into Canada and should have been arrested when he was here.

Routine Proceedings

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today to present a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians. They draw the attention of the House to the fact that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos. They point out that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and even blocking international efforts to curb its use. These thousands of Canadians call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and introduce a just transition program for the workers who may be displaced, to end all government subsidies of asbestos in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. It comes to be that whereas Canada is a country which respects human rights and includes in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that everyone has a right to life and whereas it has been 40 years, in May 1969, when Parliament changed the law to permit abortions and since 1998 has had no law to protect the lives of the unborn child. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by residents of my constituency of Leeds—Grenville and others across Canada. The petition calls upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 136, 137, 144 and 153.

[Text]

Question No. 136—**Hon. John McKay:**

What is the total loss to government revenue due to the tax free savings account?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the landmark tax-free savings account, TFSA, is a flexible, registered account that our government introduced to help Canadians with their different savings needs over their lifetimes by allowing them to set money aside in eligible investment vehicles, and watch those savings grow tax-free.

Jon Kesselman, a research fellow at the C.D. Howe Institute, declared TFSA “the most significant advance in Canada's tax treatment of personal savings since the registered retirement savings plan was launched in 1957.” John Stapleton, a policy fellow with the Metcalf Foundation and St. Christopher House, and Richard Shillington, a senior associate at Informetrica Limited, jointly proclaimed it “an instrument that has the potential to provide low-income Canadians with real choices in planning for their future.”

The tax savings from the TFSA were estimated in the budget presented to the House of Commons on February 26, 2008, to be \$5 million in 2008–09, \$50 million in 2009–10, \$190 million in 2010–11, \$290 million in 2011–12, and \$385 million in 2012–13. As the TFSA matures over the next 20 years, the annual tax savings will continue to grow—it is estimated that, relative to the size of today's economy, these tax savings will grow to over \$3 billion annually.

Question No. 137—**Hon. John McKay:**

With respect to family and spousal sponsorship how many people have been disqualified for sponsorship based on default of financial obligations and how many have been reinstated for sponsorship eligibility upon curing of the default (for fiscal year 2008-2009)?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the fiscal year 2008-2009, 671 people who submitted a sponsorship application were reported to be in default for financial obligations.

Of the 671 people in default, 655 were subsequently found eligible to sponsor.

Question No. 144—**Hon. Shawn Murphy:**

With regard to the 16th Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada, which reported that a total of 4,200 individuals were recruited from Canadian universities by the various departments and agencies of the government during the fiscal year 2008-2009, what is the detailed breakdown as to which universities each of the 4,200 students came from?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office does not track information on the identity of post-secondary institutions from which graduates were recruited.

Question No. 153—**Mr. Jim Maloway:**

What is the government doing to ensure that MTS Allstream and other similar enterprises are treated fairly by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission and not diminished in favour of telecommunication giants?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, MTS Allstream has appealed two decisions of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to cabinet. Appeals of related decisions have also been filed by Bell and TELUS.

The decisions in question concern access to wholesale telecommunications services, which the former monopoly telephone companies are required to provide to competitors at regulated rates and terms.

The government has conducted a public consultation on the appeals and is engaged in a thorough analysis of the issues.

As the matter is before cabinet, it would be inappropriate to comment on the merits of the CRTC decisions or any party's position.

Government Orders

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question Nos. 107 and 129 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 107—**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:**

With respect to funding applications made to each of the regional offices of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, for each fiscal year from 2004-2005 to 2008-2009: (a) how many applications were received under each of the Agency's programs; and (b) of this number, how many were approved?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 129—**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:**

With regard to all government advertising which promote Canada's Economic Action Plan or its website: (a) what companies were used to produce each ad; (b) what media outlets were used to air or publish each ad; (c) what criteria were used to select the ad placements; (d) how much did it cost to produce and air or publish each ad; (e) how often are the ads aired or published; (f) how much commercial broadcast time, air time, newspaper space and other communication venues available was ordered per outlet; and (g) how much was spent per outlet?

(Return tabled)

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NUNAVUT OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC) moved:

That, in accordance with section 38 of the Nunavut Act, chapter 28 of the Statutes of Canada, 1993, this House concurs in the June 4, 2008 passage of the Official Languages Act by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

CANADA-PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this question be now put.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-24 proposes to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru.

I will explain the position of the Bloc Québécois, which will oppose this bill to implement an agreement with the Republic of Peru.

I will first quote from the statement by the Canadian Labour Congress, Peruvian central labour organizations, the Coordination of Andean central labour organizations and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas, or TUCA, on the free trade agreement and the agreement on labour cooperation between Canada and Peru.

I found it interesting, because we have seen the new democratic American Congress force President Bush to review the agreement he had already negotiated with Peru—not by himself, of course, but through others—because Congress wanted that agreement to provide for greater rights, particularly for workers, and a greater social safety net. That was done.

Are these amendments enough for us to support this free trade agreement? No, and I will explain why.

Here is, first, an excerpt from the statement:

Based on their collective experience of free trade and investment agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Free Trade Agreement between the United States of America and Peru and the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Peru, the above-mentioned organizations [the ones I mentioned a moment ago] state that they profoundly disapprove of this kind of agreements that put the rights of investors before human rights, labour law and the social, economic, cultural and democratic rights of the people. These agreements are designed to be entered into by nations with comparable levels of development—

That is why a free trade agreement served as a basis for the establishment of the European Union. The declaration continues:

—and therefore ignore existing disparities between the economies of nations like Peru and those of nations like the United States of America and Canada, whose development is a hundred times greater than that of nations like Peru.

Clearly, those who made this statement also disagree with the signing of the United States-Peru agreement.

The Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement and the Canada-Peru Agreement on Labour Cooperation were negotiated in record time, and no civil society or labour organizations were consulted, nor were any analyses conducted on the effect they would have on the sectors of production, employment, human and labour rights, and the environment of both countries.

Government Orders

These agreements were negotiated in record time, without any consultations or analyses of the consequences.

● (1525)

Experience has shown that these types of agreements compromise the democratic process by giving more power to companies than to citizens and governments. They make the creation of an unregulated free market easier and more widespread, and encourage the adoption of economic, social and labour policies that make the job situation more precarious. That increases poverty, social exclusion and negative impact on the environment, particularly in Peru. Since we are experiencing a global economic crisis, this is not an appropriate time to be signing this type of agreement.

As indicated in Labour's Platform for the Americas, which was adopted by labour organizations of the entire western hemisphere, in order to be considered acceptable, all international trade agreements must have a primary objective of creating decent jobs and sustainable development. The agreement must protect the fundamental labour standards that can be implemented in the signatory countries.

Experience suggests that it is unlikely that the labour provisions [which I spoke of earlier] in trade agreements, whether they are side deals or the main agreements, will lead to concrete improvements to the situation of workers. Trade agreements like NAFTA are not intended to improve labour standards, and there is no indication that they can become a means to ensure labour rights.

We urge the Parliament of Canada to refuse to ratify the Canada-Peru FTA until there has been a full assessment of the economic and social impacts it will likely have on capital mobility, wages, employment stability, working conditions and the environment in both countries and steps have been taken to make up for any deficiency.

The Bloc Québécois is opposed to implementing this free trade agreement not only on these grounds, but also because the Bloc Québécois is against the government's strategy of making piecemeal trade agreements. The Bloc Québécois prefers the multilateral approach. Multilateral is a word that may seem complicated, because it is not used on a daily basis, but Latin scholars will know that it means a strategy that includes all the parties, on different sides.

The current economic crisis clearly shows that a market economy can work properly only if it is regulated and stabilized through an institutional, political and ethical framework. Canada should work within the International Labour Organization to ensure that the rules governing international trade are the same for everyone.

The Bloc Québécois believes that trade can contribute to the prosperity of nations. That does not mean that trade and trade agreements automatically profit everyone. It is important to see whom these trade agreements benefit. However, ordinary people can benefit only if these trade agreements include measures that will ensure sustainable development and that will promote the development of the populations involved.

However, I must point out that the Canada-Peru free trade agreement includes a clause to protect investments that is patterned on NAFTA's chapter 11 and that will allow businesses to sue governments. I will talk about this later, but I want to say that the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, which has been in force for a number of years, has promoted development in Canada and the United States. That free trade agreement included an investment clause, but it was nothing like the clause in NAFTA. It was mainly because of that investment clause that the Bloc Québécois campaigned hard against the free trade agreement of the Americas.

● (1530)

In fact, the presence of a chapter to protect investments such as one patterned on chapter 11 might interfere with Peru's social and economic development rather than helping it to develop, as is hoped.

Peru is a minor trading partner for Quebec. Quebec's exports to Peru represent only 0.14% of total exports from Quebec. It is therefore a small partner and Quebec does not stand to lose.

It must be added that Canada's main business activity in Peru is in the mining sector. Unfortunately, Peru's track record on worker protection in that sector is hardly a glowing one. So the agreement does not contain any real policy to hold Canadian mining companies accountable. We talk about it here and there, and the government commissioned a substantial report on the need to impose constraints on mining companies that are created in Canada and everywhere in the world.

Ratifying this agreement will enable mining companies to expand their activities without being liable to any consequences for their actions when they pollute or when they flout human rights.

In Peru, this agreement will not help the situation of people in need, and it will especially not help the Peruvians most desperate to defend their rights, the indigenous people. There are about 600,000 indigenous people in Peru, in the Amazon region, who are subject to enormous inequality, and yet they are the ones most affected by this agreement between Canada and Peru, from what I understand. The mines and the extraction companies that operate facilities in the tropical forest or in areas where the indigenous people live will destroy their habitat without offering any compensation and without consideration, as is generally the case. The indigenous people, for whom it is already difficult to defend their rights, will find themselves in an even worse situation.

Is that our business? Yes. We cannot tell the Peruvians to look after the indigenous people there. Quite the contrary. We know that various products like oil are extracted there. Other products are extracted from mines by various companies. There are also the forestry companies.

● (1535)

Those companies certainly do not come bearing gifts for the indigenous people; quite the contrary. The agreement, which provides for there to be a significant increase in investments, cannot help but please the government, regardless of its feelings about the people there otherwise. I do not want to meddle in this, but I simply want to point out that Canadians have a responsibility in negotiating this kind of agreement, which will enable extraction companies to displace populations who have no means to defend themselves.

To provide an idea of the situation they are in, I thought I would tell the House about some of the documentation I have seen.

Government Orders

There was a study, for example, on inequalities in infant mortality rates. Infants born near the national capital of Peru have first year survival rates that are more than two times higher than the national average. These are children born near the capital. Children born in the forest or the Sierra region, especially in the south, have rates that are almost two times lower than the national average. These inequalities in the infant mortality rates are the result of social inequality, which itself reflects the different rates of inclusion in the social system. This study was a few years old, but there is nothing to indicate it cannot be used today to understand the plight of the indigenous peoples.

The government and Peru's Indian communities are meeting this week in Lima, the capital, against a backdrop of mounting tensions in the northeast, where a state of emergency was decreed pursuant to indigenous demonstrations against the oil concessions granted to the Franco-British multinational, Perenco.

The president of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle, Mr. Pizango, described this decree as an act of aggression. Pizango and a number of Indian leaders are going to meet with Prime Minister Simon today, but without any apparent hope of making progress. "The government, and not just the government, has always treated us like second-class citizens", Pizango said. His organization represents 65 different ethnic groups living in 1,350 communities with a total population of 600,000 located in the east Amazon part of Peru.

There have been blockades for a month now of roads, rivers and airports in the north to get the decrees I mentioned rescinded. According to the indigenous communities, the controls over mining, petroleum, forest and water development on their ancestral lands are being weakened. Between three and ten demonstrators were hurt on Sunday. On Monday, the International Federation of Human Rights supported the demands of the indigenous peoples and called for the withdrawal of these decrees as well.

One of the reasons I have been fighting the free trade agreement is that it allows all Canadian investors—who may be fine individuals—to pursue and to step up the exploitation of sub-surface resources in these sensitive regions, which need to be protected, along with the people who live there.

● (1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member whether she is aware of the geopolitical drivers or events that have driven the agenda in favour of this agreement at this time. It seems that the government is very eager to get this agreement signed. In her mind, what is driving this whole agenda?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. I cannot say that I have an exact answer. However, the logical answer is important, since it is the American policy that seems to be driving this. It is clear that the Prime Minister wanted to negotiate a free trade agreement on the heels of the American agreement. Now the conditions have changed and I hope that Canada will revise its policy. The Bloc Québécois does not want this agreement to be ratified.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île had to say.

I would like to ask her if I am right or wrong. We just discussed a free trade agreement with Colombia and now Peru. It seems to me that the negotiations were not open or transparent enough to believe that these agreements are in the best interest of the people of Colombia, Peru or Canada. I am left with the impression that only the resources matter. It is as though we are seeing a new colonialism and returning to imperialism, which is a form of colonialism. That is my impression. Does the hon. member feel the same? Can she comment on that?

● (1545)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. As I have often said, as the Bloc has often said, and as others have no doubt written, free trade agreements are negotiated between countries and among groups of countries that are more or less similar economically and socially. They are not negotiated between a rich country and a poor one. If they were, it is likely that the country benefiting would not be the one that ought to in terms of social justice.

Upon closer examination of the two agreements in question, what stands out is the fact that we are committing to increasing mining investment. One might think that would help develop the country, but we have looked at a number of cases and it is clear that groups of people are often displaced and forced to give up their traditional livelihoods, after which they cannot find new ways to make a living. Either there are no provisions restricting investors' actions or there are none protecting workers and allowing them to unionize. Even if there were, it is extremely difficult to make sure that the rules are being followed when we are so far away.

My colleague used some strong language, but he was right. This situation is a kind of new colonialism.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île raised the question of who benefits from this agreement. Is it ordinary people?

I have in my hand a copy of a press release from some critics of the America-Peru free trade agreement. These critics are ordinary people. They are workers.

They point out some of the problems with the U.S.-Peru agreement. They list that foreign investors based in Peru would have the right to question domestic laws and get compensation if those laws undermine corporate profits. They cite that nothing would change for the 33,000 slave labourers cutting down the Amazon rainforest. They cite that subsistence farmers would be forced off their land because cheap U.S. food produced by agribusiness would undercut their prices. They say that this is what happened with NAFTA and it resulted in millions of poor Mexicans leaving their farms.

That is the example in the U.S. Does the member see any hope for things being different if we do have a Canada-Peru free trade agreement?

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I see no reason why things would be any different. Canada wants this agreement because of the provisions that favour investors. I did not discuss chapter 11 of NAFTA, which we fought, but which is basically copied in this agreement. It is hard to understand why a developing country would sign such an agreement, and that is not just our opinion.

If a company is harmed by any law seeking to improve working conditions or social laws and can calculate the impact on its bottom line, it can sue the government. It does not have to wait for one government to take up the matter with the other. No, the company itself can go to court to have its case heard. That has happened a number of times. Not only does that lead to the consequences I mentioned earlier, but it interferes with the government's ability to improve workers' living conditions and other social conditions.

• (1550)

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would quickly like to add something in order to give my colleague the opportunity to reply since there is little time remaining.

I would like to know if she has some concerns with regard to workers, and especially children? We know that children are often forced to work in absolutely horrible conditions. I would like her to comment on that. It is important, the country's future is at stake.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I spoke earlier about children born in the forest compared to those born in urban areas. The situation has perhaps improved somewhat. However, the situation of children in these work areas, in general, is totally unacceptable. The problems caused by the use of chemical products, the fact that they are thrown out onto the streets, the fact that their parents cannot work and earn a living in healthy and safe conditions—all of this affects them. Children are the ones who suffer the most.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-24.

Bill C-24 is an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru. There are two side agreements, the agreement on the environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru, as well as the agreement on labour cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru.

If we start with a bit of background, a little of the history of how we got to debate this bill, it is actually the implementation legislation for the Canada-Peru free trade agreement. Canada is following the United States, which completed an FTA with Peru under the Bush administration in December 2007. This was in spite of strong opposition from trade unions, from civil society and from democrats who viewed this bill as an expansion of NAFTA.

Free trade negotiations with Peru date back to 2002, when the Chrétien Liberals first held discussions with the Andean community. The Andean community is Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia.

On June 7, 2007, then minister David Emerson announced the formal launch of free trade negotiations with Peru, and this government signed the bilateral agreement in May 2008.

The NDP opposes NAFTA-style treaties that put big business interests before workers and the environment at all costs and that have increased inequality and decreased quality of life for the majority of working families.

In the case of Canada-Peru, our concern is that a larger and much more economically developed country would take advantage of a country from the global south and that large corporate interests would end up shaping the so-called free trade architecture to serve their needs and not the interests of the public or the interests of the two trading nations.

My colleagues from the NDP and from the Bloc have spoken to some of the problems with this bill. They have spoken to the problems from the labour perspective, the problems with the impact on the environment and the problems regarding human rights. I think they have spoken the truth. Their words have been eloquent, as well as compelling.

I would like to speak to a possible solution. New Democrats are not anti-trade. Trade is good, but the trade we want to see is fair trade.

In question period, I have heard the stock answers from the ministers and the Prime Minister to our questions. The Prime Minister as of late has been answering so many questions with the response that it used to be that the NDP stood for something and now it is clear that the NDP stands for nothing. If I only had a nickel for every time I have heard that answer to a question that deserves a real answer.

We do stand for something. We stand for trade that is fair, that takes into account workers and farmers, that takes into account the environment, communities, wildlife. It is fairly easy for me to talk about what fair trade would look like and not as some pie in the sky theory or some untested utopia; it is something that is real, and it is something that works.

I have an example of fair trade right in my backyard in Nova Scotia. Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op is Canada's first fair trade coffee roaster. It is located in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. It is not in my riding, but it is not too far away.

Actually, it is in the riding of the Liberal member for Kings—Hants. I strongly encourage this member, who happens to be the Liberal international trade critic, to go there, in his riding, to meet with the folks from Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op, because they will be able to present him with a different view on international trade, one that is innovative and one that works.

Just Us! has a very firm belief in people and planet before profits. That is its motto. It is a fair trade coffee roaster.

What does fair trade mean? It is an innovative model for international trade. It offers not only a fair price to the workers but respect and empowerment for global south producers.

Government Orders

• (1555)

This little coffee co-op is a great example for us to look at. It has coffee, tea, sugar and chocolate. All of its products are grown naturally, without chemicals, and they are grown to enhance the well-being of farmers, communities, the environment and wildlife.

Imagine a world where governments signed fair trade agreements that kept to these principles. Imagine a North American fair trade agreement. Imagine a Canada-Colombia fair trade agreement.

Fair trade is a trading partnership. It is based on dialogue, transparency and respect, and it seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the global south.

Fair trade organizations, which are backed by consumers, are engaged actively in supporting producers. They are engaged actively in awareness-raising and in campaigning for change in the rules and practices of conventional international trade.

The strategic intent of fair trade is threefold: first, to deliberately work with marginalized producers and workers in order to help them move from a position of vulnerability to one of security and economic self-sufficiency; second, to empower producers and workers as stakeholders in their own organizations; and third, to actively play a wider role in the global arena to achieve greater equity in international trade.

To put it more simply, fair trade is an alliance between producers and consumers that cuts through the middlemen. In the process it empowers producers, it gives them greater dignity, and a fairer price for their product. It provides consumers with high quality products they know are sustainable from a social and ecological point of view.

I commend Just Us! for leading by example. It was the first. We are really proud that it is a Nova Scotian company. It is interesting to note that when I go around Nova Scotia, I can go to the smallest coffee shop or the biggest chain and they are all serving Just Us! coffee. I invite members to room 519 of the Confederation Building, my office, where it is always stocked with Just Us! coffee. I am very proud to support its work in ensuring fair trade for our coffee growers.

This operation is located just off the highway in Wolfville, which is outside my riding. I am in the Annapolis Valley fairly often and I always try to stop by. There is actually a fair trade museum in the shop. It is quite something to see because it tells a story of fair trade from the perspective of farmers, women, the elderly and children. It is a really innovative way of looking at history and the museum tells a wonderful story. Congratulations to Just Us! for leading by example and also for trying to educate us, for trying to make us conscious consumers, and for trying to make us conscious and conscientious trade negotiators.

Let me go back to the agreement.

The Canada-Peru agreement is a somewhat improved copy of the outdated Bush-style approach to trade. It still puts big business before people. There is no effective human rights or enforcement of human rights. It pays lip service to environmental protection without any real tough measures or dispute resolution mechanisms.

These types of NAFTA copycat agreements are meant for trade between highly industrialized and highly developed countries, but Peru is a developing nation. We do not like to use that word, but Peru is still working on industrialization and still developing economically.

This trade deal will not help Peru grow sustainably. It will not help increase the standard of living for its citizens. Instead, it is going to open up the country to exploitation by multinational corporations like, sadly, Canadian gold companies. Canadian corporations are very active and large investors in the natural resource sector in Peru.

The fact that this trade deal will not help Peru grow sustainably and increase its standard of living implicates us. We are complicit. Not only are we not helping Peru, but we are making sure that it does not grow sustainably, that it does not advance economically.

• (1600)

I am sure if we talked to Canadians on the street and asked, "What do you think about free trade?" Many people are probably going to say, "Yes, trade is a good thing. I'm all for it", but if we took the time to actually explain what the implications of these trade deals are, I am sure we would get a different answer. Canadians are compassionate to each other and they are compassionate with their international friends and partners. I am pretty sure that Canadians would support fair trade over free trade given the option.

This free trade regime is strongly opposed by civil society groups, trade unions, environmental groups, and citizens from both Canada and Peru. This trade deal was negotiated in record time without any consultations with trade unions, environmental groups, civil society or citizens.

Another issue with this free trade agreement is the structure of it. It actually is in three parts. This is a bill about all these different parts of a free trade agreement. Why are things not all in one package? Why do we have these separate parts?

There is the main text of the FTA. Then there is a labour side agreement and an environmental protection side agreement. Labour and environment I would think would be fundamental issues to any trade agreement, yet they are put in these side agreements. They are on the side. They are not central to what is happening.

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The CPFTA does not include tough labour standards. The labour provisions are in the side agreement. They are outside of the main text and they are without any vigorous enforcement mechanism. Trade unions in Peru have expressed concern because Peruvian labour law and arguably human rights law is deficient in several areas.

If we look at environmental protection by addressing the environment in a side agreement there is no effective enforcement mechanism to force Canada or Peru to respect environmental rights.

The Canada-Peru agreement on the environment commits both countries to pursuing environmental co-operation which sounds nice and to work to improve their environmental laws and policies which sounds nice, but it can only ask their parties to enforce their own domestic law. Pretty please, will ya? If they do not, there is not necessarily a consequence. Therefore, it is hard to imagine how this actually is going to be effective.

We can look at the situation in the U.S. and learn from it. Sometimes we learn from the successes, sometimes we learn from the failures, and I would argue that this time we should be looking to the failures to try to learn.

I have a great article by a woman named Mary Tharin. She is a research associate from the Council on Hemispheric Relations. She wrote an article in October 2008 entitled “Can Free Trade be Fair? Lessons from the Peru-U.S. Free Trade Agreement”.

I would encourage members to have a look at this article because it really does take the U.S. experience and draw out the lessons on this agreement. She notes that the United States has been complicit in Peru's legal and economic deterioration. That is a fact that needs to be taken into account before any further FTAs can be signed. She said in her article:

The Peruvian government is beginning to unravel as corruption charges and scandals threaten to completely discredit the already unpopular leadership of President Alan Garcia.

She talks in this article about how Garcia's minister of mines and energy as well as other top energy and state oil folks were fired in response to allegations of favouring a foreign energy company in exchange for bribes. Garcia also has a history of putting economic growth before the welfare of the population in Peru, before the welfare of the people. For years the Garcia administration has been manipulating Peruvian law in an attempt to draw foreign investment while at the same time completely failing to alleviate domestic poverty and therefore sacrificing the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people of Peru.

●(1605)

However, Ms. Tharin argues that the United States, instead of taking a stand against Garcia's mishandling of the economy—because it could do that, it could stand up and say, “No, this is not the way we conduct business and we don't want to do business with a country that behaves this way”—has actually contributed to the problem by signing trade agreements with this unpopular government.

An approval of this FTA in the U.S. had been delayed in both the senate and the house, due to concerns mostly on the part of congressional Democrats about how Peru's environmental and

labour protections would be affected by the agreement. Those are just a few of the problems with this agreement.

In closing, I think it would be incumbent upon all of us in this House to vote against this bill, considering the human rights violations that have been spoken about by my colleagues, the labour issues that have been spoken about and the environmental issues. We should be looking to what has happened in the U.S. and taking our cue from the failures there with this agreement. We should be looking to the successes that we can see with fair trade right here in Canada, right there in my home province of Nova Scotia.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice that when the member for Halifax was speaking, she seemed to be emotionally charged, and that she needed to go to her water from time to time. It struck me that when people from so many countries in the 20th century came to Canada to get away from human rights violations, pier 21 in Halifax would have been one of the very first places they would have seen. This member represents the very area where that pier is located and where we have memorialized those trips. Today we are debating human rights and labour rights, and the violations that have gone on in Peru and the situation there today. Seeing that passion is very touching.

However, the reality is that when we talk about labour rights, there is a tendency, to which I am to some degree guilty of because I came from the labour movement of Hamilton, with such a proud history, to focus and frame many arguments from the perspective of organized labour and the people who have been fortunate enough to have a union. What does the member see as the situation for non-union workers in Peru?

●(1610)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, as far as this agreement goes, there has been a lot of criticism and a lot of outspokenness, which is amazing, from organized labour, whether it is organized labour in Peru or organized labour in Canada, and rightly so. They have problems with this agreement. The problems that labour has with this agreement are significant.

However, there is a much larger problem, I think, that plagues the majority of Peru's population. I actually have an excerpt from a 2007 human rights report and I believe in that human rights report it was found that only 9% of Peru's population actually is unionized. So, we have to think about that. If there are problems with labour law, if there are human rights violations of workers, how will these workers be able to collectively protest?

If they are just scattershot, and probably many of them are working in the underground economy, they do not really have the ability to collectively protest when labour laws are changed. Even more than that, this human rights report that I was looking at says that more than 70% of Peru's workforce is in the informal sector. That means that any regulations about minimum wage or working conditions are not even going to cover them, so concerns over labour law almost seem to be a moot point when we consider these folks who are working in the informal sector.

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Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the comments made by the member for Halifax about the matter of fair trade versus free trade. She did mention a particular coffee trading company in Halifax. I am curious. Can she explain why, under the former Liberal government, when the member for Kings—Hants was attempting to secure \$300,000 for Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, her party, the NDP, would not support the application for funding?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I was not around when that was happening so, unfortunately, I do not have an answer, but I will look into it.

Whether a company gets money secured from ACOA or any other funding body is one thing, but what we are not doing here is looking to the model that works. How it started is irrelevant. What really matters at this point is that it is working. It is working and yet we have this public discourse and this discourse in the House that if people question free trade, they are off their rocker and cannot possibly be supportive of business, development or economic progress, which is completely not the case. This is a very successful company that is run as a co-operative. It took these values that we hold core to us as Canadians and turned it into a successful business model.

Despite having these successes right here in front of us, we are still going back to these old models and we are fear-mongering saying that if people speak out against this free trade then they must be against Canada developing and becoming economically secure. However, that is not the case at all and the examples are right here in our backyard.

• (1615)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Halifax a question.

We have had free trade agreements with other countries, such as the U.S.A. and Mexico, and we have seen what has happened to our auto industries and jobs moving to Mexico for cheaper labour. We have seen what has happened with our forest industry where trees have been cut and put on ships to be shipped overseas. We saw what happened to John Deere, a very profitable company in southern Ontario that moved to Mexico. In my riding we have seen Vale Inco transfer profitable and well-paying jobs from Sudbury to Brazil.

Could the hon. member tell me how many Canadian workers will lose their jobs if this agreement is signed?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, if I had a crystal ball and could see into the future I am sure that whatever the number is it would be pretty grim.

Earlier today, one of our colleagues spoke about how a company in Winnipeg and a company in Quebec lost the contract for building buses to Germany over the fact that they were underbid by \$60,000, something that our colleague argued would be about the price of a set of tires for these buses. It just makes no sense.

We need to keep jobs here in Canada. Our workers need to be paid fairly. We have human rights standards, labour codes and minimum wages and we need to keep a lot of those jobs here.

Some people have said that the Canada-Peru labour standards agreement that is tacked onto the side, which I was talking about, is actually an improvement on NAFTA, so, hurray, we have won.

NAFTA just focused on the enforcement of labour standards, while each trading partner retained full regulatory control to establish or modify its labour and employment standards. This agreement is more substantive because it seeks to prohibit violating core international labour standards. It is trying to say that we do not approve of this, that we need to stick with international labour standards. It is making the attempt but there is absolutely no empirical evidence that this kind of enforcement mechanism even works.

It is great that we a little bit more language in there but where is the proof that this will do anything? Where is the proof that this will help workers in Canada and in Peru? There is no empirical evidence at all.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering how the member would better approach this whole area with Peru than the government has. Does she think there are any amendments that could make this agreement a little more palatable, because at the end of the day the Liberals will be voting with the government and this will go through, with only the Bloc and the NDP opposed?

Does she consider any possible amendments that could make this agreement a little more palatable given the circumstances that we find ourselves in right now?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. Is this amendable? I think we have a duty to consider amendments that take into account labour standards and environmental clauses. However, the best thing to do at this point is to hoof it out and actually have people engage with the agreement process. What about the workers? What about environmental advocates? What about women? What about seniors? Why are we not talking to the people who will be affected rather than just the gold mining companies that will reap great profits?

We should be looking at amendments but in a perfect world we would start from scratch.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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 Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Science and Technology; the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

• (1620)

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are at the second reading stage of Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru. That is the bill now before the House of Commons.

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I would start by saying that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to the implementation of these three agreements. The reasons why we refuse to support these bilateral agreements are as follows.

First, the Bloc Québécois disagrees with the bilateral aspect of the agreement. We prefer that multilateral agreements be entered into, for several reasons. Second, there is the fact that there are no measures to guarantee sustainable development and to ensure that the peoples affected are able to thrive. And third, the presence of an investment protection clause will enable Canadian businesses that believe their rights have been violated to sue the government of Peru, and this could plainly interfere with Peru's social and economic development. The Bloc places greater weight on Peru's social and economic development, and calls for constraints to be placed on businesses with economic involvement in that country.

So there is no policy to hold mining companies accountable. This is in fact Canada's main business activity in Peru. People from various ridings have sent us postcards telling us about working conditions in the mining companies, of which there are many in Peru. That is its main economic activity.

Today, I would like to expand on two points, the first being the bilateral aspect of these agreements, as opposed to negotiating and implementing multilateral agreements. These bilateral agreements make it possible to negotiate piecemeal treaties that generally do not guarantee respect for certain fundamental rights.

I would also like to address the question of holding Canadian companies abroad accountable, and more specifically mining companies, as I said earlier.

When bilateral agreements or treaties are signed, it clearly shows that multilateralism is being abandoned in favour of bilateralism. It is much easier to achieve a bilateral agreement, because there are only two parties involved. When a country gives preference to bilateral agreements over multilateral agreements, it is easy for it to sign piecemeal agreements, based on what works to its benefit. This tactic is widely used by the United States. If you are unable to reach agreement with all of the other countries in relation to treaties and negotiations, you negotiate with each of them individually, hoping that this will enable you to derive as many benefits as possible from the agreement and make the fewest possible concessions.

Clearly, the Prime Minister's government has also decided to drop the multilateral approach in trade and is tempted to do the same in foreign affairs. The proof is that it is currently negotiating with 22 countries individually to conclude free trade agreements. Negotiating with a country individually means that agreements can be concluded piecemeal, that is, outside the institutional and international trade framework. While this type of agreement permits freer trade, it does not usually include rules to civilize that trade. And this is where the Bloc disagrees with bilateral agreements, because they do not set standards for certain companies developing business in certain countries. Often, certain environmental and human rights constraints are ignored. So, this sort of agreement, like the one before us today and the one negotiated with Colombia, totally disregards environmental, human rights and labour rights standards.

The Bloc cannot accept this sort of trade, which lowers the standards for rights and the environment.

● (1625)

I think people can understand that. In Quebec, we are very attuned to human rights, and many environmental groups have told us about their fears over this agreement between Peru and Canada.

In addition, the violation of labour rights and human rights in these countries strikes us as a form of unfair practice. Other countries have worked hard to control certain business practices. For example, child labour and forced labour, combined with the denial of such fundamental rights as the freedom of association, make it more advantageous economically for our businesses to set up in these countries, as the labour costs are lower.

Businesses operate in other countries because they do not have all these constraints—such as freedom of association—and thus benefit from worker isolation and the fact that workers cannot defend their rights.

The member for Halifax was saying earlier that a report on labour in Peru indicated that 7% or 9% of Peruvian workers were unionized. That shows that a lot of employees are left on their own and work for companies without protection.

How can they get ahead when they are mistreated with long hours of work and certain work practices that used to be found in Quebec and Canada in the days when companies ignored human rights? Here again, these businesses, rather than operate in Quebec and Canada, head elsewhere, and Peru is not the only destination chosen by a number of Quebec and Canadian companies.

If this government were sensitive to the local population, it would first work within the WTO, the international trade structure, to ensure that the same regulations governing international trade applied to everyone according to what is commercially desirable for the two countries and not adopted piecemeal. This is why the Bloc cannot support this bill. It is just piecemeal and fails to take into account the rules governing international trade according to what is commercially desirable for both countries.

At the very least, if the government were also serious about respecting the environment and the rights of local populations, it would include clauses in its bilateral trade negotiations requiring compliance with international environmental, human rights and labour law standards. This was not done, though, in the agreement we have in this bill. The bill just implements the agreement. It therefore totally disregards these protections, which were not included in the agreement.

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In order to provide a concrete example of the latitude there is in negotiating bilateral agreements and to show how important it is for certain standards on the environment, workers' rights and human rights to be included in the treaty, I want to address a more specific aspect of the trade between Canada and Peru. It will show that these kinds of bilateral agreements do not necessarily include standards or do not include any at all.

As I mentioned earlier, the mining industry is Canada's main commercial interest in Peru, where it exploits natural resources. Canadian investment in the Peruvian mining sector is around \$5 billion, which makes Canada the largest investor in mine exploration in Peru. More than 80 Canadian companies are involved. That is an awful lot of Canadian companies active in Peru.

The Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement is far from equitable: it tends to give more protection to the Canadian companies that invest in the mining sector, to the detriment of local populations, workers and the environment. There is an obvious danger that the measures to protect investors will be disproportionately in their favour.

Environmental and human rights organizations are very worried.

●(1630)

I think they have reasons to be worried about this treaty, and they are not the only ones. Hundreds of people all over Quebec and in my riding among others have written to their member to voice their concern that Canadian mining companies are not being held responsible abroad, especially in Peru.

Most of them referred to a report tabled in 2007 as a result of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive industry in Developing Countries. Civil society, the government and industry were all represented.

Although concerns were expressed about the extent to which mining companies respect human rights and the environment, a number of recommendations were also made, especially in order to create more transparent mechanisms for handling allegations of rights violations. Canada chose to ignore them. It is disgraceful that the elected government of Canada is not more sensitive to working conditions and the environment.

In fact, this is obvious here, when the government answers questions on employment insurance and on environmental issues, for example. The government's attitude is very clear. It shows complete disregard for certain consequences on the environment, or on the living conditions of many workers who are losing their jobs, who do not qualify for employment insurance, and who will have to go on welfare. As we know, the number of unemployed people is increasing. In a period of economic crisis, the government should be much more sensitive to these two realities.

As was mentioned in a document written by students from UQAM's international clinic for the defence of human rights, Canada refuses to incorporate clauses that would protect workers' rights and human rights in bilateral free trade agreements. It is not just us who are debating this issue. Civil society is also worried. It is aware of this issue. When we see the government's attitude regarding this issue, we cannot support this agreement. Canada also states that it is up to the host country, the one in which mining companies operate, to ensure that human rights are respected.

How can we leave the protection of human rights to the host country, when we know that some countries cannot provide that protection? Canada should be a leader, it should show the way to other countries, and it should not condone such practices.

This attitude and this transfer of responsibility to the host country create a problem, because in countries where violations of human rights are likely to occur, the justice system is often questionable. In the case of Peru specifically, we fear that this state may very well not have the resources or the infrastructure required to ensure the proper monitoring of mining companies operating on its territory.

Since we can obviously not presume to know how efficiently the justice system is going to work in the host country, Canada should take measures to ensure that mining companies act responsibly. We are not against mining companies doing business abroad. The problem is their behaviour. The Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of mandatory standards and accountability measures for these companies.

Even here, we often have a hard time making companies, and even the government, assume certain responsibilities. Some may act irresponsibly towards the environment, for example by dumping contaminants in lakes. The Department of National Defence itself is targeted, because of what is now considered far from acceptable behaviour, namely the contamination of water by dumping TCE into the groundwater.

●(1635)

This contaminated the well water in Shannon. I will come back to this issue later on this week.

With respect to the recommendations from the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries that I referred to earlier, the Bloc Québécois believes that Canada must first form an all-party committee made up of representatives from the extractive industry and others, who would advise the federal government on creating and implementing a Canadian corporate social responsibility framework for mining companies. There would be three measures.

The first measure would be mandatory corporate social responsibility standards that Canadian mining companies would have to respect when working abroad. The second would be punitive measures for offending companies. For example, they could be no longer entitled to tax breaks, loan guarantees or other forms of government aid. This would be one way to bring certain companies into line, if they are not good citizens abroad. The third measure would be an independent ombudsman who would conduct impartial investigations to determine whether or not complaints are founded.

Government Orders

The demands of civil society, which are the same as ours, are clear. Bilateral agreements like the one we are debating today must guarantee that these standards will be adhered to. But instead of living up to our international reputation as a defender and advocate of human rights, this government decided to make the responsibility standards for Canadian mining companies working abroad voluntary and not compulsory.

Members know what happens when we count on people to act of their own free will. A company is attracted to profits. It wants to work quickly, wants to give people a lot of work and use certain people, even children, who work cheaply. We cannot count on companies to do things voluntarily. We must make these standards compulsory and not expect that these industries will toe the line if the profit is attractive.

We have also been told that a committee has been set up, an Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor, created last March. But it is far from independent, since it reports to the minister and its capacity to investigate is extremely limited. It can investigate the complaints it receives only if the mining company agrees to such an investigation. Here again, it is clear that this will not work. Do you think that a mining corporation that flouts all of its civic obligations will want an investigation into its own case of straying from the path of responsibility? Under such conditions, the mining company will not agree to an investigation into its own wrongdoing. Given this masquerade of measures, it is clear how little this government wants to make mining companies abroad accountable, and clear how it is jettisoning its responsibility to adopt instruments and standards on the subject. Hence, it is not surprising to see that such standards do not figure in this treaty.

On this point the Bloc Québécois is categorical. In the absence of a genuine policy on mining company accountability, the ratification of this agreement will allow these corporations to extend their operations without being subject to any rule or consequences when they pollute or flout human rights.

I know I will not have time to deal with this, but I also know that with chapter 11, the companies are still being given a certain amount of latitude. They will have the right to challenge a government that has the audacity to bar their road through programs or policies, whether on the environment or other areas. A company could feel wronged by a government that does not give it the opportunity to make enough profits, or does not respect its development, out of possible concern for the fate of its population. This makes no sense. It is in chapter 11. This would permit such companies to prosecute the government. There have been many cases where governments—including the Canadian government—have been prosecuted, and been obliged to pay millions of dollars in damages to companies that felt persecuted—poor little companies—by governments that were a little bolder than the companies themselves.

● (1640)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know the legislation will probably pass the House with the support of the Liberals and the government, with the Bloc and NDP voting against it. Does the member think there are any amendments that possibly could be introduced to make the legislation more palatable? We would like to adopt a different approach.

I am sure the Bloc and NDP would have a totally different approach to a free trade agreement, but on this specific legislation, are there any amendments that she thinks could be made to make this more palatable?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, first of all, measures are needed to ensure sustainable development and the development of local populations. They have to abolish the clause to protect investments that would allow Canadian businesses to sue the Peruvian government if they believe their rights have been violated. What is needed is a policy to hold mining companies accountable, since that is the main Canadian business activity in Peru. The entire bill is problematic.

This government favours concluding bilateral agreements that do not take into account certain protective measures that are included in multilateral treaties. Everything involved in concluding multilateral treaties must be taken into account. A great deal of effort will be needed to change the attitude of the Liberals and the Conservatives, who can be lumped together in the same category, and want to protect companies working abroad. However, we must have a social conscience, first and foremost.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Québec for her speech.

I listened to her very carefully and she talked about the mining industry. As we know, two Liberal members have presented two measures, namely, motion M-293 from the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, and Bill C-300 from the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood. Both measures relate to corporate responsibility in the mining sector.

The Liberals are getting ready to vote for the free trade agreement between Canada and Peru, even though they know very well that the investment agreement based on chapter 11 allows mining companies to sue the state if it improves its legislation concerning the environment, workers' rights and occupational health and safety. They want to liberalize trade, but with such liberalism comes responsibility. How can the Liberals bring forward motions and bills to improve corporate responsibility among mining companies on the one hand, and on the other hand, accept and support such a free trade agreement, when the government should be sent back to the drawing board and forced to take a new approach to free trade agreements?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is quite right. This is not the first time we have seen this sort of contradiction or paradox here in the House. We are standing behind companies that violate environmental or human rights laws. We are giving them the right to go to those countries and we are giving them all the tools they may need to hamstring a government that may wish, for example, to stop the use of hazardous waste sites.

My colleague is quite right. The Liberals should go back to the drawing board and have a hard look at their actions, specifically in this matter. We often tend to believe that the Liberals are strong social democrats. However, their attitude is often similar to that of the Conservatives.

Government Orders

•(1645)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague and I would like to ask her a question. What contradiction or paradox does she see in an approach that favours free trade with another country and, at the same time, acceptance by Canadian mines of their social responsibilities?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to say to my Liberal colleague that it is the Liberals who are not accepting their responsibilities. We are not opposed to corporations being developed abroad. What we want is for the government to establish a framework that would impose certain rules on corporations. We defend rights in this country and they are the same rights that should exist elsewhere.

If the rules were established from the outset, corporations might find it less lucrative to go elsewhere and take advantage of the fact that workers and the environment are not protected. When corporations work abroad, they should fulfill certain obligations.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member have any experiences that she can share from observing our experience under NAFTA and the side agreement on environmental protection? Do we appear to have learned anything in the crafting of later agreements, including this one?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, chapter 11 of NAFTA was critical in giving companies full discretion to sue governments. Many court actions come to mind. For example, Ethyl Corporation, an American company, sued the Canadian government for banning the use of a fuel additive. The \$250 million lawsuit lasted two or three years. Even if a settlement was eventually reached, \$13 million still had to be paid out.

There have been many other cases like that. In the Metalclad Corporation case, legal action was instigated after access to a toxic waste disposal site was denied. Again, this was a \$16.7 million U.S. action for damages. British Columbia was the one involved in that case. Many examples could be given of the discretion that chapter 11 of NAFTA affords companies to sue governments.

However, setting limits would be desirable, for instance by prohibiting the export of a fuel additive for environmental reasons.

Members of the Liberal Party profess to support the environment. It would come as no surprise from the Conservative Party, but it is rather troubling to see the Liberal Party pursuing today the same objective as the Conservatives. Yes, we must ensure that our companies have some discretion in order to be able to grow, but not at any price, especially nowadays. More and more citizens are increasingly aware of various issues like the environment. There is also the economic crisis, which disrupts things and causes people's attitudes to change. Change will come when proactive political parties which are not afraid to tell it like it is are in power.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to express my profound

opposition to this bill. My opposition is 100% premised on the failure to yet again address environmental issues in trade agreements.

Twenty years after signing NAFTA and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, we appear to have failed to learn any lessons. That is despite review after review of the failure to take the approach of making environment and labour issues simply a sidebar, non-binding part of these agreements. We have seen trade agreement after trade agreement come before Parliament, repeating the same mistakes and refusing to listen to the input provided by Canadian experts over the last 20 years on the failings of the NAFTA agreement.

Instead of strengthening the environmental provisions of our trade agreements, we are moving to water them down further. Despite the weaknesses of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, NAAEC, recommendation after recommendation to strengthen that agreement went in the opposite direction. The government has chosen to further downgrade any responsibilities for environmental protection either on this country or on the countries with which it signs trade agreements.

In place of non-binding side agreements, why did the government not take the environmental provisions and incorporate them into the text of the trade agreement? That is precisely what President Obama raised during the last election. His issue with the NAFTA agreement was this very issue. It was the fact that environmental and labour issues had been sidebarred. We should revisit these agreements, not to open up and provide for even freer trade without any limitations, but to reconsider them and make these environmental conditions binding.

The government seems to have an inability to understand that it is not economy versus environment. I had the privilege of attending meetings of world and industry leaders in several countries in Europe with the Minister of the Environment. We heard from world leaders and CEOs of major industries, including the major coal-fired power companies. They said that we must incorporate environmental considerations into our economic development. They said that we must shift to incorporating environmental considerations in any economic or trade policy.

The government has turned a blind eye. It has blinders on to what is happening in the rest of the world. We seem to have blinders on in our attitude toward negotiating trade agreements. We need to enter this century. We are mired in old concepts. It is incumbent upon the government to take this bill back, reconsider it, rewrite it and negotiate it with the Canadian public and the public of Peru.

The rest of the world agrees. We need to step up to the plate. We need to shift our economy into the new green economy. We need to make those kinds of negotiations open and transparent and include the very people who are impacted: our Canadian industry and our Canadian public.

Government Orders

Let me talk about some of the provisions of this sidebar agreement on environment to the Canada-Peru trade agreement proposed under the bill. That is what it is: a sidebar, non-binding document.

This agreement, as with similar agreements and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, does not demand or compel Canada or Peru to protect the environment. It merely encourages the parties to not weaken or derogate from their environmental or health laws or measures to attract or encourage investment or trade.

First, we are simply saying that it might not be a bad idea, as a sidebar, to give a thought from time to time to not downgrading our environmental and health standards to get a trade or investment advantage. That is absolutely reprehensible. This is the kind of measure that should be at the heart of any trade agreement Canada signs.

• (1650)

Second, this sidebar environmental consideration to the trade agreement, similar to the other trade agreements we have signed, commits Canada and encourages Peru to ensure environmental impact assessment processes are in place.

Forgive me if I hold back a deep laugh. We have just witnessed in this Parliament the demise of federal environmental impact assessment laws, and we have the gall to propose signing off an agreement where we will hold Peru to account for implementing environmental impact assessment laws. I think we better step back and take a look at the record of our country before we make recommendations to other nations that are looking to trade with us and benefit from our experience.

The provisions are non-binding and non-enforceable. They provide for absolutely no recourse or penalties if they are not abided by, unlike, as the previous hon. member mentioned, the provisions in the agreement where a private business can file a legal action for compensation should we not abide by these agreements. There is absolutely no mechanism in these sidebar agreements to hold either government to account for abrogating its environmental assessment or environmental standard setting laws or for the failure to enforce those laws.

We have mentioned the record of the government in relegating our 30 years of development of strong, laudable environmental laws to mere red tape. Is that the lesson we are taking to the table with Peru? Is that the example we are setting? Is that our expectation of Peru? Sure it should go ahead and pass environmental impact assessment laws, set environmental standards, but do as we say, not as we do.

The sidebar agreement also commits, not requires, Canada and Peru to comply with and effectively enforce their respective domestic environmental laws. As above, we have witnessed the actions of this federal government in the failure to enforce its own environmental impact assessment law on its own expenditures.

One of the backbones of federal environmental law is that all expenditures by the federal government will undergo a careful assessment to ensure they are not having an unnecessary and reprehensible environmental effect. What did our government do? It moved behind closed doors, with no public notice and no

opportunity for public comment, to rescind and exempt major federal expenditures and project development from environmental impact assessments. Is that what we can expect on this provision of this sidebar agreement?

Another foundation of these sidebar environmental agreements that we have seen with the United States, with Europe and now this one, is the commitment to transparency and participation. This sidebar agreement, mirroring the North American agreement on environmental cooperation, commits Canada and Peru to increased transparency and public participation in the making of our environmental laws and policies. Let us witness the decision by the Minister of the Environment to waive even the notice requirement when he exempted massive projects from environmental impact assessment regulations. Can we expect something different here?

Witness the continued dialogue with the United States on energy and climate change held behind closed doors. Having participated last week in the world dialogue of business leaders and another world dialogue among nations on innovative technology and the urgent need to address climate change, did this occur behind closed doors? No. It was a live broadcast on webcam.

However, when we come back to Canada and our dialogue with our neighbour on what we are going to do jointly on addressing energy issues, energy security for this country and climate change, we go behind closed doors. Is this what we can expect to witness in the Peru-Canada agreement? It looks like it.

Witness the refusal of the government to finally bring forth the negotiated action plan on addressing air pollution, which was long promised by the government and unaddressed, and the failure to bring that proposal before the public, before this Parliament, so we can review it.

• (1655)

Where does it sit? It is on the minister's desk, again turning a blind eye to years of voluntary commitment by business leaders and the environmental community and ignoring the effort to provide input to the government.

Under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, the Government of Canada, the Government of Mexico and the Government of the United States made a very bold decision. They included mechanisms whereby there would be public advisory councils. The joint public advisory committee, to advise the North American council of environment ministers, was also established under that agreement. The agreement also provides for national advisory councils to advise the environment minister with respect to the three countries.

What has the Canadian government done? It simply allowed the organizations to die. No new appointments have been made under its control. Is this what we can expect under the Canada-Peru trade agreement? Is this what we can expect under the non-binding, ever friendly environmental side agreement? I would hope not, but experience shows otherwise.

Government Orders

Despite the review after review commissioned by independent experts on the relationship between trade and environment, on extensive analysis of how well the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation has effectively delivered on the commitments to protect environment as we practise trade, what have we learned from those reviews? Apparently very little. We do not see major changes advancing the consideration of environmental protection in this agreement. For that reason, we must oppose it.

Another clear mechanism in the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation is the right of citizens of North America to file a complaint of failure by any of the three countries to effectively enforce their environmental laws. The successive governments of Canada have undermined that process. Instead of embracing this agreement and treating it with the seriousness that the European Community has treated its environment commission, and respecting the direction, the directives and the policies of that commission, our governments have chosen to implode and undermine the very process set up to allow for the transparency. There is delay after delay, interruptions of reviews, and dragging out the process. Even despite that, when the secretariat of the North American commission has come forward with a very thoughtful, independently prepared report, the recommendations simply gather dust.

Have we learned any clear lessons? I guess the lessons we have learned are that the government is turning a blind eye to what we have learned over these 20 years.

I find it extremely regrettable. I think that Canada, in reaching out to other nations, reaching out to nations in South America, Latin America, European nations and Asian nations, could be setting the bar. We could be setting the example for future treaties of this kind. We could be coming to the table and demanding that environmental measures be incorporated into the text of these agreements, that our environmental commitments become enforceable and binding and that there be clear penalties that can be imposed on a nation that abrogates those provisions.

Therefore, I stand clearly in opposition to this agreement. It is with great regret that the government has not taken this opportunity to take the bold, progressive step to make the statement that environmental protection is actually part of any economic development for the future of this country.

• (1700)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the United States-Peru agreement includes labour and environmental agreements, but within the agreement. Whereas this particular agreement leaves labour and environment as side bar issues.

The question I have is this. Why would Canada not get as good an agreement as the U.S. did with its U.S.-Peru agreement?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, indeed it is most disappointing that we have chosen to take a different path than the path taken by the United States in forging its trade agreement with Peru. Clearly it is practising what it has preached. It is actually taking what were once sidebar agreements in the NAFTA and apparently incorporating them into the binding text of its trade agreements.

It raises the question of what is going behind closed doors at the United States-Canada dialogue on energy, security and climate change. Perhaps the United States is actually proposing that we move forward with these types of measures. If that is the case, it is indeed a sad day for Canada.

I implore the Government of Canada to open up that dialogue so that Canadians can participate and that Canadian interests are put at the forefront in the negotiation of these agreement.

• (1705)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently and I did notice a theme throughout the hon. member's speech. It seems to be a paternalistic theme and a theme of disrespect.

One thing the NDP forgets is that the countries involved in these free trade agreements are actually democracies. In other words, here in Canada, whether the NDP likes it or not, Canadians have a democratic right to elect a government based on a platform, the same as Peru and the same as other countries where we are negotiating free trade agreements. One of the things that political parties run on is a platform, and some political parties actually run on a platform to help promote free trade. This happens to be the case between the two countries we are discussing now, Canada and Peru.

I am wondering why the NDP has such disrespect for a democratically elected government. That was put forth by the people of Peru and the people of Canada in this negotiation. These two democratically elected governments came to an agreement that would benefit both countries. I am wondering why she has such a paternalistic attitude towards these democracies and how she can explain that disrespect.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the only evidence of paternalism I see in this House is evidenced by the minority Conservative government to the will of the House.

I ran on a platform of making sure we give due consideration to the rights of workers and our protected environment in any future trade agreements. I find it absolutely incredulous that the member would make a suggestion that we would be paternalistic in suggesting certain measures in the agreement.

Any measures in that agreement would apply equally to Canada and to Peru. In signing on to the agreement we would be undertaking that we will effectively enforce our environmental laws and we will ensure that workers' rights will be protected here.

What we have found under the NAFTA and the sidebar agreement is that far more complaints have been filed against Canada than any of the three nations in its failure to effectively enforce environmental laws.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pity that I cannot respond directly to the Conservative member who asked a question of my colleague in the NDP. If there is a party that lacks respect in this House, it is surely the government. This can be seen from the way it proceeds with free trade agreements. This government has never tabled any reports or impact assessments on free trade negotiations. The members of the committee and this Parliament have never been able to see an impact assessment for any of the agreements it has negotiated. Worse still, in committee we have proposed amendments and the Liberals and Conservatives have voted against them. Given that we cannot get impact assessments, we have asked to at least have some follow-up on the free trade agreements. That way we might be able to prove to the Conservatives and the Liberals that there are some negative aspects.

I would like to know whether my colleague would agree to having the side agreements that are being established—whether on human rights, particularly in Colombia, or labour rights and environmental protection—incorporated directly into the main agreement, not for the appearance of good will, but to formalize things and demand that workers' rights, occupational health and safety rights, and environmental protection not be further diluted but improved and augmented.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, many studies were commissioned by both the Council of Environment Ministers and the Secretariat of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. It is incumbent upon the government to obtain and review those reports and take into consideration the profound recommendations. There has been article after article critiquing the way we entered into the NAFTA and the failure to incorporate labour and environmental standards into that agreement.

The government is turning a blind eye to any independent analysis. The main question that needs to be raised is in whose interests this agreement is being signed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, her colleague who sits on the Standing Committee on International Trade surely must have told her that it would be best if the government went back to the drawing board. I imagine that my colleague is in favour of the government reviewing the way it does its free trade agreements, and going back to the drawing board.

In my opinion, we cannot let this opportunity pass by. Things must be done differently starting today: we must partner with emerging countries so that their citizens can truly benefit from that partnership and not be exploited by Canadian firms like the mining companies.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, contrary to the earlier question from the member opposite, it is not paternalistic to bring to the table sage advice and learnings from previous experience. It is for precisely that reason that it is necessary for the government to bring forward these documents and share them with the other nations,

particularly emerging nations, so they can learn from the mistakes made previously.

Why do we want to keep repeating the same mistakes over and over? This countries does not seem to want to follow the path taken by other nations. We are doing it on environment, on climate change and now we are doing it on trade. We are regressing instead of progressing. It is absolutely incumbent upon the government and the parties that are negotiating this agreement to revisit the agreement and move us into this century.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is rather paradoxical. I had the opportunity to go to Peru with the Minister of Labour, who at the time was a Liberal minister. I was able to see the situation of the workers in Peru and that of the children, who work for nothing and do not even have shoes on their feet to work. I could speak at length about this, but I will return to it. I would like to state the position of the Bloc Québécois, which is against the Conservative government's strategy of concluding trade agreements on a piecemeal basis. We prefer the multilateral approach.

The present economic crisis shows us that a market economy cannot function properly unless it is regulated and stabilized by an institutional, political and ethical framework. Instead of making piecemeal agreements, Canada must work within the WTO to ensure that the rules that govern international trade are the same for all, without exception. We are also now talking about a free trade agreement with Colombia, concerning which I will also speak a little later.

We believe that trade can contribute to the enrichment of peoples, and in that sense can be an important instrument of socio-economic development. For that to happen, however, trade agreements must contain measures to guarantee that the populations concerned can develop sustainably and thrive, in other words, to guarantee workers' rights and human rights. The free trade agreement with Peru contains an investor protection clause, copied from chapter 11 of NAFTA, which will permit companies to prosecute governments. The presence of a chapter on investor protection could constitute an impediment to the social and economic development of Peru.

As we all know, Canada's principal commercial activity in Peru is mining. Peru does not have a glowing record on protecting the workers in that sector because it does not have the resources. In the absence of a genuine accountability policy for Canadian mining companies, ratification of this agreement will permit those companies to extend their operations without being subject to any rules or consequences when they pollute the environment or flout human rights.

Government Orders

We will therefore be voting against this bill. Nor must it be forgotten that we are at third reading, a stage at which it is impossible to amend the bill. The attempt was made in committee. The Bloc Québécois and the NDP tried to find out more. Everything was done on the sly. It is worrying when things are not put clearly on the table, when documents are not clear, when we do not have access to certain documents and we do not feel that we are being listened to. Instead they want to pass this bill as quickly as possible to get the Canadian economy rolling in another country, because we are in an economic crisis and we have to make money to repay the debt and see that our companies make money. It all appears to be based on worry.

I would like to talk about chapter 11 of NAFTA. We have been through highs and lows on this subject. To set the context, NAFTA chapter 11 on investment permits investors in a member country of the North American free trade area to claim compensation from the government of another party to NAFTA when they feel they have been prejudiced by the adoption of regulatory measures that modify their company's operating conditions. These regulatory or legislative modifications must, however, be comparable to direct or indirect expropriation or to a measure equivalent to expropriation.

NAFTA is the only major free trade agreement binding on Canada that contains such extensive provisions on the treatment to be given to investors in the other parties. Since the free trade agreement with Peru contains a similar clause, the Bloc Québécois considers that it is not in Quebec's interest to support such an agreement, and we shall oppose ratification of the agreement with Peru.

In reality, it is difficult for the free movement of goods not to be accompanied by the free movement of capital.

● (1715)

When specific provisions are not incorporated in free trade agreements, bilateral agreements generally provide for the protection of investments coming from the other party, and all these agreements contain substantially similar provisions, that is, a neutral arbitration procedure in the event of a dispute between the foreign investor and the host state of the investment. There are presently over 1,800 bilateral agreements of this type in the world.

The provisions of chapter 11 of NAFTA governing investments have been called into question. They are the source of numerous proceedings that have been brought against various governments in Mexico, the United States and Canada. They sometimes result in millions of dollars in compensation being awarded. We need only think of the whole softwood lumber saga. I went to the United States several times myself to meet with American senators and representatives to make them aware of our problem and tell them that it was not true that we were subsidizing softwood lumber. They used chapter 11 against us, and that cost us millions of dollars more. We have to be careful.

In short, for the Bloc Québécois, chapter 11 defines an entire investment regime. The definition of investment is very broad, perhaps far too broad. Some of the provisions of that chapter, including the concept of expropriation, have generated numerous proceedings. In addition, the current trend is toward extending that concept to encompass lost profits.

I have a number of examples here. I was speaking earlier about the softwood lumber quotas. There is one legal action on the banning of MMT, another resulting from the prohibition of a toxic waste landfill site, and many others. We have many examples of proceedings.

In addition, many questions are raised about the dispute settlement mechanism provided for in this chapter. That mechanism provides that a company that considers a government to be contravening the investment provisions may bring an action directly against that state before an arbitral tribunal. The arbitration tribunals that hear these disputes are formed to hear a specific dispute. The deliberations of these arbitrators and their decisions are secret, unless both parties to the dispute decide otherwise.

Once again, everything is done in secret, behind closed doors. Even if an agreement is reached that does the least possible harm to either party, we are still talking about millions of dollars that have to be spent to settle a dispute, and that dispute can drag on for years.

While the free trade agreement with Peru contains certain advances in terms of transparency—something we do not deny—the Bloc Québécois feels that disputes should be settled on a multilateral and centralized basis, instead of case by case between the different states that sign bilateral agreements.

In fact, the NAFTA provisions on investment are similar to the ones in the proposed free trade agreement with Peru. They give very broad powers to businesses and give us concern as to the ultimate sovereignty of governments and their ability to take measures to protect the health of people and the quality of their environment.

The Bloc Québécois will therefore oppose this agreement. I have shown what chapter 11 means. As I said earlier, I had the opportunity to go to Peru with a Liberal Minister of Labour, and I saw the working conditions of the people who live there. I also saw the conditions of the indigenous people. Certainly, if you go to Lima, the country's capital, you will see a completely different reality than if you go into the mountains and meet with the indigenous people who are born there. It is a completely different reality. These are people who have no way of defending themselves. They have no unions.

● (1720)

They can be made to work for starvation wages. As I said earlier, children who are actually barefoot are going to be made to work. That is a fact; I am not exaggerating. Adults who have no resources and will have no choice but to work for starvation wages are going to be made to work, and our wealthy mining companies, which make bags of money around the world, will exploit them, which is unacceptable.

Once they have finished exploiting them and emptied the mine, they will work the ore elsewhere. But they will leave the mining site in a sorry state. They may have contaminated the water table, in which case the water will no longer be potable.

Government Orders

Peruvians already have serious drinking water problems. In fact, they have serious education, health and environment problems. Yet we are sending companies into Peru that, under this agreement, are not required to follow strict rules. Their compliance will be voluntary. I cannot get over it. I have sat in this Parliament for 16 years, and I know that voluntary measures inevitably lead nowhere.

We have seen it in every aspect, including the environment and labour, and it is not working. We have to force these companies to abide by stringent and specific rules, and we have to make sure they follow them. It is all very well to make rules, but there also has to be monitoring and an authority to do the monitoring. There are non-governmental agencies that can monitor, but that is all there is.

Canada has responsibilities to these countries. When it sends its companies to do development there, it has to make sure that this does not serve only the companies' interests, that they are not the only ones that make money, and that the host country also benefits properly, which means that it benefits in environmental terms.

We now have methods of extracting ore and working in mines that are much better for the environment than they were in the past. We have to know how to use these resources. Obviously, the mining companies want to go as fast and as cheaply as possible, and will want everything to be as profitable as possible for them, because they are not forced to follow rules and the measures are voluntary. Well, voluntary measures lead nowhere, and will not help Peru to develop. That is what is troubling us about this agreement.

In Canada today, there are mining companies already being blamed because they do not do their work properly and they exploit people, they exploit young people and children. These companies exploit the people and the environment, and then they leave and go on their merry way. When there is no more ore and no more money to be made, the country is the one with the problem then, but it does not have the resources it needs to remedy the environmental situation.

When the environment is destroyed, it can be expensive to try to restore an acceptable environment. We talk about acceptability. The country may not even have the resources to think about investing in the environment. Very often, the country invests in essentials and tries to save its people before investing in the environment.

I have seen children there who simply did not eat and who slept in cardboard boxes. We, citizens of wealthy countries, who have a roof over our head, we need to go there and see how they live. I am not persuaded that when mining companies set up facilities there and exploit their resources it will mean that those people will not still be living in little cardboard boxes.

When this agreement was negotiated, on the sly, as I pointed out before, we should really have made sure that stringent constraints and monitoring methods were included, for overseeing work done there.

• (1725)

Perhaps then we would not see children and families living in cardboard boxes, but rather families making money with the prospect of forming a union. We can help them. We have expertise here. We can also send them this expertise when we send the mining companies. We cannot send only big business and not provide

resources to the people in the host countries. These countries really do not have a lot of resources, and we, for our part, go there to exploit them. We lead them to believe that they will make money, but in the end they are the ones who pay the price, once more.

The same is true in the case of Colombia. There are emerald mines there, and we know the value of emeralds. When the mining companies get there, they will work them thoroughly and make a lot of money. How can these countries defend themselves against big companies, the multinationals making a lot of money? They can afford lawyers and court cases lasting five or ten years. The host country is poor and does not necessarily have the means to contend with these multinationals. So, we must help them. We are going there. There must be very strict rules to ensure that their environment, their life, the life of their children, the life of the indigenous people and the beauty are not destroyed. Peru is a magnificent country. If operations begin without a thought to the environment, whole landscapes may be destroyed there and waterways essential to the life of the country may be rerouted.

My concerns are real. I am even more concerned when I think of Peru, because we can see the agreement was negotiated on the sly. They do not want to give us information. They keep everything hidden. We do not know how it will be operated. We also see that only Bloc and NDP members are interested in discussing the matter.

We are really on the wrong track. This is 2009. There is a worldwide economic crisis to overcome. It affects these countries too. It is having a huge impact on them. In addition, we are running the risk of destroying what little they have managed to build over the years, in terms of the environment and labour with the help of NGOs and in terms of drinking water, culture and agricultural development. If we come lumbering in and destroy all that, there will be nothing left. We will have to live with the horror of saying it is our fault. It is in fact the fault of the Conservative government, not of the Bloc. Unfortunately, there are not enough of us to defeat this agreement and renegotiate it more intelligently. The Conservative government will have to take the flack.

We can imagine the impression this will leave internationally. We can imagine what people will think of Canada and what these so-called will voluntary measures will do to our international reputation.

Of course, we will oppose this agreement. I sincerely hope that this people does not suffer from the mismanagement of the Conservative government, which is sending mining companies to develop there unrestricted.

• (1730)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague in the Bloc a question. Free trade agreements are usually negotiated by and for the rich. We have a good example of that here in Canada with the softwood lumber agreement negotiated with the United States. Rich Americans got everything and we lost \$1 million. John Deere, another very profitable company, is in Mexico now.

I would like to ask my colleague from the Bloc whether it would be worthwhile sending this bill to committee or whether the House of Commons should just immediately vote it down.

Government Orders

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, we are at third reading, and at this stage, a bill cannot be sent back to committee or amended any more. There is nothing more we can do. We have reached the end. We can only talk about it here in the House and make people aware of what our position is. We are boxed in and our hands are tied. Nothing more can be done, other than to inform the people listening to us about what is happening.

We get information from our fellow citizens. We are currently getting postcards on the free trade agreement with Peru. There is a large Peruvian community in my riding that is very aware of this issue. I have received telephone calls telling me how concerned they are about the free trade agreement because it does not contain any measures on respect for the environment, human rights or labour rights.

Thus, we are at third reading and we are stuck with this bill. We have to vote for or against it. We have decided to vote against it and the NDP will certainly adhere to the same position. It is our task to show that the Conservative government and the Liberals, who will vote in favour, are making a monumental mistake by voting for such a poorly written agreement.

● (1735)

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her remarks and especially on her sensitivity to the situation that could arise. The agreement that has been signed does not make it possible to force Canadian companies that invest in Peru to improve their records on labour rights and the environment. Companies that are globalizing their investments obviously think Peru is more profitable than Canada. These profits will often be derived from working conditions and the environment, especially in the case of mining companies or oil and gas operations.

The government needs to be sent back now to do its homework. Therefore, we should vote against this implementing legislation. We should also ask the Liberals not to be two-faced and to uphold the values they are really most attached to if they want to return to power some day. If they want to return to power, they really should abide by those values.

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my colleague. One cannot speak from both sides of the mouth at the same time. One cannot talk about environmental protection on one hand, and then accept an agreement as badly written as this one. The Liberals should do their homework. If they vote with us against the bill, the agreement will be rejected. If they vote for the bill, they will have the shameful task of defending their position later on. I find their position appalling because they will destroy instead of building.

Of course, when multinationals and mining companies go into countries like Peru, they should contribute to the improvement of the population's standard of living. Oftentimes, that is not what we see because people in those countries do not have the means they need to defend themselves. In this case, the agreement does not give them those means. There will be only voluntary measures. That is unacceptable and it must be denounced. A great many of us will vote against the bill.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke eloquently about the government's claims and about the effects of this so-called free trade agreement. In

fact, the government claims that the agreement will improve the economic situation of Peruvians. However, as the member clearly said, poverty is rampant in Peru. Only improvements in workers' rights could eventually raise the development level of the country.

Does the member see in the agreement any single measure that could guarantee Peruvian workers some rights that could lead to economic development and improve their economic condition? I would also like to know how she reacted when she learned, as all hon. members in this House should know, that the Peruvian government even refused to respect its own signature on the International Labour Organization treaty. In other words, the government of Peru already reneged on past commitments aimed at guaranteeing the rights of the workers. Does the agreement include measures to prevent that from happening again or will it perpetuate the problem we see with the Peruvian government refusing to recognize the rights of the workers?

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this will simply perpetuate the problem and the situation will get worse. It cannot improve, particularly when there has already been a signature opposing labour rights.

Imagine that a union tries to organize in Peru to protect mine workers, when the government has already refused to sign. At present there is absolutely nothing in this agreement to allow a union, an environmental group or any group that would be good for the country to take action and speak out against what is going on. They could have some power to respond and to make the company engaging in misconduct respond.

It is a waste of time from the outset. It is too bad. It is sad to see, but that is the decision made by the Conservative government, supported by the Liberals. We will remind them of it in the election campaign. Have no fear about that.

● (1740)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I could not help but listen to the member's response, saying that this is a decision of the Conservative government. This is a decision of the democratically elected governments of Canada and the democratically elected government of Peru.

The sadness here is the Bloc member, who claims to support democracy, standing in this House and saying that even though two governments have come to a decision on trade, the Bloc members will vote it down and disrespect that decision.

As we see historically with free trade agreements, when Canadian companies go into other countries they raise the bar and provide jobs. What I am hearing from that member and other members in the House is that they immediately start to disrespect Canadian companies that have a wonderful reputation around the world by saying that our companies are out there exploiting people in these other countries, which is entirely disrespectful.

Government Orders

What does the member have against Canadian companies and Quebec companies going out into the world to provide jobs for people and raise their standard of living? Why do the Bloc members not respect the democratic right of these countries to make trade agreements in order to raise the bar for all citizens involved?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yes, they were democratically elected. I understand that quite well, but they are a minority. As long as they are a minority, that is how it will be. We will always have our say, and I too was democratically elected here to this House, just like all the members from all parties. I think we do not need to keep bringing that up.

We have nothing against the companies, except that we know, and we have the evidence, that there are problems with Canadian mining companies all over the world. They have engaged in bad exploitation.

Why is there nothing in this free trade agreement with Peru about requirements to avoid these situations? On the contrary: preference is given to adopting voluntary measures, well never mind that, just say openly that you are going to exploit.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to follow my colleague for Rivière-du-Nord and her learned presentation. We share many of the concerns raised by my colleague. This is the second time today I have spoken to an issue brought forward by my colleague for Rivière-du-Nord. She is having a very illustrious day in the House of Commons today.

The position of the NDP has always been that we are not opposed to free trade providing that it is fair trade. We sounded the alarm in the 1980s when the first free trade agreement was introduced. We cautioned people that the globalization of capital was not some force of nature, that it was not like gravity or the conservation of mass. This is a choice made by nation-states on behalf of corporations. The free trade agreement and the NAFTA became like a charter of rights and freedoms for corporations to move freely and override the sovereignty of nation-states.

What we cautioned then, we continue to caution today, which is that there is an erosion of sovereignty associated with the free trade agreements that we have entered into so frequently and freely since the early 1980s when the first FTA was put into effect.

Mr. Speaker, you know that I am a socialist and a trade unionist and you should also know that I am a fiercely proud Canadian nationalist. As such, on all of those fronts, we are dedicated to a multilateral point of view. We are dedicated to elevating the standards of wages and working conditions for people all over the world, not just for Canadian workers but for the international movement of workers' rights. The international solidarity of workers' rights is alive and well. In fact, it is the free trade agreements entered into so freely by nation-states around the world that have revitalized the importance of workers coming together through their free trade unions, where such free trade unions are allowed, and through the international plenary umbrella of international organizations of those unions.

It seems that we alone are standing to try and caution people about the predictable consequences of some of the causes associated with what are called free trade agreements, such as the one we are contemplating today.

The international trade critic for the NDP, my colleague for Burnaby—New Westminster, has been a tireless champion of these issues. Again, this is not to be negative and try to criticize the concept of freer trade, tearing down barriers to trade or some of the non-tariff barriers to trade. Granted, we want the free movement of capital and of goods and services. We even want the free movement of people around the world. However, we also suggest that when there is the globalization of capital there must also be the globalization of labour rights, human rights and environmental standards. We want to harmonize at the highest common denominator, not the lowest, and that has been the actual empirical evidence in many of the free trade agreements that we have now had the luxury of time to study.

The old yarn put forward by the neo-Conservative movement that a rising tide lifts all boats, is not in fact true. If our boat has a hole in it, it does not rise with the tide. It simply stays down. We watched this movement propel itself around the world and, frankly, capitalism does not had a very good name lately.

When I announce that I am a socialist, I guess it is no surprise because we are all socialists now. We just bought General Motors. I always thought that one of the signs of the apocalypse would be when General Motors went bankrupt. Is that not when the four horsemen appear on the horizon and there is darkness at the break of noon when GM goes bankrupt?

An hon. member: It is the four horsepower.

Mr. Pat Martin: The four horsepower of the apocalypse. That is very good.

The fact is that we now have Marxism realized. We own the means of production and we did not have to fire a single shot. It is really quite phenomenal what went on today.

We have always cautioned people that unfettered capitalism has no conscience. I do not blame it for that, just like a shark cannot be blamed for having no conscience. It simply swims through the water and gobbles and gobbles because that is what it does.

● (1745)

It is up to us because we have the moral conscience. It is up to people to apply morality to capitalism and that is what we seek to do when these free trade agreements come through. Some of us need to rise up in the spirit of true democracy, contrary to what my colleague implied, that those of us who raise legitimate concerns are somehow less than democratic. We do not respect the unfettered right of the Conservative minority government to enter into free trade agreements without scrutiny, oversight and due diligence by duly elected members of Parliament in this chamber. That would be an affront to democracy, if there were any associated with this.

Government Orders

My Bloc colleague from Rivière-du-Nord pointed out earlier that one of our serious legitimate concerns about this free trade agreement and others is the investor rights that it gives to corporations. The chapter 11 rights were unheard of until they were introduced in the NAFTA agreement. These rights give a corporation nation-state status so it can sue a duly elected government for inconveniencing its ability to commercialize a certain product.

That was horrifying to us. We blew the whistle and sounded the alarm in 1988. We warned people that this was folly and that it would lead to untold complications. I will give one example from a few years ago and example of one that is going on currently involving MMT.

The people of Canada decided that the gasoline additive MMT was too poisonous to be exposed to and that we did not want it put into gasoline in this country. We were sued because this decision interfered with the ability of Ethyl Corporation to sell its product in Canada. It sued Canada for lost opportunity and it won. We paid the corporation for the inconvenience. We had to shell out \$13.5 million to Ethyl Corporation because we as a nation decided we did not want MMT in our air supply and in our children's organs.

I will give the House a more recent example. The province of Quebec, quite rightly, wanted to ban the cosmetic nonessential use of pesticides in homes, gardens, schoolyards, on golf courses, et cetera. This was the right thing to do given that we now know that exposure to chemical pesticides can lead to a number of cancers, birth defects and problems in reproductive health. However, believe it or not, Dow Chemical, the manufacturer of many of these chemical pesticides, is now suing the Government of Quebec for having the temerity to do what it thought was right for its citizens.

That is fundamentally wrong on so many levels that I can hardly express them, but this is the very same concept we are now introducing in this free trade agreement with the people of Peru.

The good people of Peru will find themselves stripped of some of their sovereignty to chart their own destiny in a matter so vital and so fundamental as public health. The same investor right clauses can be applied should their democratically elected government decide to curtail the ability of one of the Canadian mining companies operating there or impose stringent standards on the operation of those companies. Those companies can sue because this interfered with their ability to commercialize that product.

That is just one of the concerns that we have that warrants further debate. I regret we are now at the stage of debate on this bill where we do not have the opportunity for further amendment. All I can do is express our dissatisfaction with this and our legitimate concerns.

The NDP, advocating on behalf of workers around the world, has tried to introduce what we call our corporate social responsibility bill, a bill put forward by my former colleague and the former leader of our party, Ed Broadbent. It was taken over by the next leader of our party, the former member for Halifax, Alexa McDonough.

For a decade or more, we have been trying to introduce something that would recognize the problems in the free trade agreement. If we are going to give a charter of rights to businesses and to corporations, then we need to offset those rights with what we call

the extension of corporate social responsibility of Canadian companies when acting abroad.

● (1750)

The rules that apply to them when they are within the domestic jurisdiction where they come from should apply to them when they act and operate outside this jurisdiction. That way we would truly be elevating the labour and environmental standards of those other companies with which we trade because we would export not only the business operation, but we would export their *modus operandi* of how they conduct themselves as well.

These companies should not be able to form and incorporate in this country and then when they conduct themselves abroad, go to the lowest common denominator or standards, health and safety standards, labour standards and environmental standards, that are often far lower than what we would require a company to adhere to in this country.

We noticed when the Canada-Peru free trade agreement was first signed, the president of Peru, Alan Garcia, was optimistic that Canada, having a greater production outcome, would share some of that outcome. He said that Canada had a production output 12 times greater than Peru's and bought \$600 billion worth of goods from other countries. He was therefore optimistic that Canada, by virtue of this trade agreement, would add more Peruvian wood, mining products and farming and manufactured products to the list.

At the same time, critics of the current president and the regime spoke out against the free trade agreement and against the president's administration, pointing out that the president's approval ratings had sunk as popular support for his policies continued to vanish. An international commentator said:

The Peruvian government is beginning to unravel as corruption charges and scandals threaten to completely discredit the already unpopular leadership of President Alan Garcia. The minister of Mines and Energy as well as other top energy and state oil officials have been fired in response to allegations of favoring a foreign energy company...in exchange for bribes.

The regime that we are entering into an agreement with is falling apart. I speak now on behalf of the working people in Peru. It could well be that the Peruvian government does not have the mandate to enter into this agreement from the people of Peru any more than this minority Conservative government has the absolute mandate of the people of Canada to enter into this agreement.

We should remind ourselves that it was not long ago that bribery was such a common business practice in international trade, et cetera. Until the mid-1990s, the Government of Canada allowed companies to write off bribes as a tax deduction. This only changed in the mid to late 1990s after Canadians were horrified. The companies pushed back and said that it was the way business was done when they operated abroad. They have to grease the wheels of commerce with bribes and therefore it is a legitimate business expense. Until recently, the Government of Canada accepted this.

Government Orders

Revenue Canada has been under a lot of scrutiny lately with the Oliphant inquiry into the Mulroney-Schreiber Airbus affair. Many of us were horrified at some of the things Revenue Canada deemed to be acceptable. When we pay our taxes diligently, not exactly eagerly, and then the former prime minister of Canada, after not paying taxes for nine years on money he received in a brown paper bag in a hotel room, finally decides to come clean with Revenue Canada and it arbitrarily decides that he only has to pay taxes on 50% of what he failed to declare all those years earlier, the credibility of Revenue Canada comes into question.

I was even more horrified to learn today that the practice was only stopped by Revenue Canada last November. When this whole situation began to surface, Revenue Canada quickly stopped the practice and covered up its tracks.

● (1755)

That does not explain what happened to the former privacy commissioner, George Radwanski, who owned \$650,000 in back taxes and 24 hours before he started a job, which paid \$250,000 a year, Revenue Canada forgave him all the back taxes on the basis that it was not possible to retrieve.

Those are the kinds of decisions that Revenue Canada makes from time to time. It makes Canadians really question if there is not two tax systems in our country, one for the rich and the connected, someone who has connections with the PMO, and the rest of us.

This free trade agreement is fraught with concerns. We felt obliged to oppose the agreement when it was first introduced. My colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, at every stage of debate and through the committee stage, made efforts to amend the free trade agreement so it would be in a form of which we could be proud.

Those of us who want fair trade do not object to free trade, as long as it meets those basic tests. We do not want the huge imbalance that exists, an imbalance that would act as a charter of rights for corporations to override the sovereignty of a nation state and completely give them carte blanche to conduct themselves in any way they saw fit without a considered attempt to elevate the standards of conditions in the places where they settle.

My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord said that one of the faults of the bill was that it set guidelines for voluntary compliance, by suggesting these companies should conduct themselves in a certain way will make it so. I am sorry, but we do not buy that. It is just not credible. We should judge people by what they do, not by what they say.

We find ourselves in the middle of an economic downturn. Some people are saying that it is the end of an era of a certain ideology and certain economic policies. Some people are calling for a new Bretton Woods. Some people are calling for a new internationalism, coming out of the ashes of what began as the globalization movement.

The champions of the globalization of capital saw it as a panacea, that all we had to do was increase and improve lines of trade with countries and they would automatically come and be harmonized at some western standards.

That has not been the case at all. These things will not happen by accident. These things will not happen because there has been no collective agreement, which is one of the goals, one of the objectives. When businesses come to governments looking for a licence to operate in a certain way, it is up to us then to inject and insert those secondary objectives into the activities that they have under way. They have one goal and one goal only, and it is the profit motive. There is nothing wrong with that. That is what businesses do. They seek to maximize profits for their shareholders.

We are here with a different mandate, a different set of rules. We are here with different goals. If our goals are to elevate the standards of wages, living conditions and social conditions of fellow workers around the world and if we use these opportunities to achieve those secondary goals and objectives, we can do more than just enable free trade. We can mandate fair trade and then we will realize those noble objectives of elevating the standards of the people with whom we are trading.

What we want for ourselves, we wish for all people. That is one of the founding principles of the party to which I belong. As a socialist and a trade unionist, it is my obligation, every chance we get, to try to elevate those standards of my colleagues around the world, my brothers and sisters in the international labour movement. It is through trade agreements we can achieve those things, but not if we let them slide by in a substandard way like this.

● (1800)

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, he and I have managed to find ourselves on different sides of many issues, but I respect the fact that he and I have also had occasion to work together for the kind of common good to which he has spoken. He would also know there is currently a private member's bill before the committee, which was passed by the House, Bill C-300 on the issue of corporate social responsibility.

We have been studying it as recently as this afternoon and the thing that has been most interesting is the aggressive action that the Government of Canada is currently undertaking with respect to corporate social responsibility.

I put to the committee today the concept that there was not one person in the House, and probably not one person in Canada, who was not serious about wanting all of our corporations to be involved in the world with the concept of corporate social responsibility.

The only thing I would suggest for my friend is this. An awful lot of the time I have been in the House and have taken occasion to listen to the speeches of the NDP, it always seems so dower, so down and so negative. We cannot do this and we cannot do that and those great big greedy corporations. There is all this negativism.

What the Government of Canada wants to do with this Peru free trade agreement, as with other free trade agreements, is to open up the possibility for Canada and Canadian workers to have more opportunity in the world because Canada is such a free trading nation.

Government Orders

Would my friend not want to put on a more positive face, a bit more of a smile, rather than always being concerned about being dragged down? Canadians are the most productive creative people in the world. We are a nation that can carry our own and we can carry these things to Peru and to other countries to help them bring themselves up to a higher level.

• (1805)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his thoughtful remarks. I should tell him that one of the reasons the NDP enjoys its third majority government in Manitoba is that we have taken the hair shirt off the NDP. We have become a lot more fun, and the member would be happy to know that.

We are all in favour of good corporate citizenship. I know he is not speaking on behalf of corporate Canada, but we do take the member at his word, that most Canadians would expect Canadian businesses to conduct themselves in a way that his honourable when they operate outside of the domestic jurisdiction.

That has not always been the case. There is nothing particularly binding on them. We find the environmental standards, the labour standards and the health and safety standards in other countries sorely lacking. It is difficult for small countries or developing nations to impose stringent health and safety, environmental and labour standards because they are so desperate to attract investment.

This is the contradiction we have heard. This is the quandary in which they find themselves. I am not trying to imply the government of Peru is corrupt, although I did cite some sources that implied the current leadership is under a lot of stress because of bribery and corruption charges, but even in those countries where there is well-meaning leadership, they would look to the harmonization of labour standards and environmental standards as a huge benefit and a huge gain. However, there is nothing in these agreements that would make that so, other than the implied goodwill of the corporations.

As I said in my remarks, capital has no conscience. We have to impose a conscience on them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the NDP member referred to President Garcia as somewhat of a supplemental factor in this agreement. We know that the president is widely challenged in his country in relation to the indigenous people, who want to protect their environment and their biodiversity. Peru is signing multiple bilateral agreements in this regard. It will in fact be signing one with Canada.

As we know, this is somewhat like the agreement signed with Colombia under the Uribe government, when we had rather serious suspicions that that government did not respect union rights. We have seen the murders that have occurred. We went to that country with the NDP member and we met with community and grassroots groups. There are a lot of abuses committed against workers. From that perspective, another agreement signed with President Garcia has also been criticized, as the member mentioned.

Why does this Conservative government still want to sign agreements with rogue countries when we are trying to promote a healthy environment and a healthy planet? We want to combat climate change and preserve our water and land, but we sign

agreements that allow companies to degrade the land and jeopardize the quality of life and air and water quality in other countries. I would like to hear from my colleague on that subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct and these very things have been pointed out to us by labour leaders in the United States, who pointed out that in regard to the United States-Peru free trade agreement, which was about a year ago, we are following the U.S. almost step for step in Colombia and Peru. It seemed that when the Bush administration signed agreements with Peru and Colombia, all of a sudden it became necessary for the Conservative government here to follow suit with the same kind of substandard agreements.

A very prominent labour leader, the head of the teamsters union in the United States, pointed out that it was outrageous that Congress and the Bush administration had approved yet another job-killing trade agreement at a time when American families were seeing their jobs shipped overseas, their food and toys tainted, their wages on the decline, and their houses foreclosed upon. Workers here and in Peru deserve better.

If we take out the word America and insert the word Canada, the same applies to this country too. We could not possibly pick a worse time to impose a free trade agreement that will have downward pressure on Canadian standards because of harmonization. The globalization of trade has resulted in us lowering our standards, not developing nations raising theirs.

• (1810)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg Centre and I were criticized just a few moments ago by a Conservative member for being too diligent and taking our work too seriously, but of course we have actually read the agreement. I know the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has, and we have seen, as testimony has also indicated, that it is a vastly inferior agreement to that which the U.S. government initially negotiated, and which then was gutted, rebuilt and amended by U.S. Congress.

My question for the member for Winnipeg Centre, who is a wise member, one of the most active in the House, is this. The Conservatives blew it on the softwood sellout, costing us thousands of jobs. They brought forward this Colombia trade deal, which is essentially privileged access by a regime that is tied, cheek by cheek and jowl by jowl, with murderous paramilitary thugs and drug lords. Now they bring forward this bill which is considered an inferior version of bills that have been negotiated.

We have record trade deficits and most Canadians have actually lost real income over the past 20 years. Why do the Conservatives always seem to get trade issues wrong? Why do they not have an overall strategy that actually works for economic development, both here in Canada and abroad?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague poses a compelling question. I would only answer, in the brief time I have, by saying that the Conservatives seem guided more by ideology than by reason, logic, economics or empirical evidence.

Government Orders

There is a belief on their part that free trade will solve all of our ills the world over. What they fail to understand is that free trade benefits corporations. It benefits wealthier nations, but it even puts wealthier nations at risk in that the harmonization that has taken place has been terribly hard on our manufacturing sector. It has been dragging us down, frankly.

Unfettered free market capitalism is passé. It has gone the way of the dodo bird. We need regulation. We need guidelines and objectives. We need that triple bottom line, if you will, for everything that we do that will elevate—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are discussing the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru. I want to start by saying that the Bloc Québécois will oppose this bill and this agreement because we have no guarantee that the agreement is worded strongly enough and contains a framework to protect the environment and human rights in Peru.

The third point I want to make is that this free trade agreement with Peru contains a similar clause to chapter 11 of NAFTA. This chapter, which relates to investments, allows investors from member states in the North American Free Trade Zone to claim compensation from the government of another party to NAFTA when they believe they have incurred a loss as a result of the adoption of regulatory measures that modify existing business operating conditions. What does that mean? It means that if, for example, a country decides to introduce legislation that would force a company doing business in that country to adopt other procedures that might seem harmful to the business, it could sue the government of that country.

NAFTA is the only major free trade agreement to which Canada is a party that contains such broad provisions regarding the treatment to be granted to investors from other parties. The provisions of chapter 11 of NAFTA governing investments have been called into question. They are the source of numerous proceedings that have been brought against various governments in Mexico, the United States and Canada. They sometimes result in several million dollars in compensation being awarded.

I said earlier that chapter 11 defines a complete scheme to govern investments and that the definition of investments is very broad. That is why the provisions of this chapter have given rise to many lawsuits pertaining to the concept of expropriation.

In a way, the NAFTA provisions laid the groundwork. They are similar to the provisions in the proposed Canada-Peru free trade agreement, which will give companies a great deal of power. Ultimately, we are concerned about the sovereignty of governments and their ability to take measures to protect the health of people and the quality of the environment. Will it be possible for Peru to protect people's health and the quality of their environment? We doubt it.

The Bloc Québécois is well aware of the need for free trade. We support investment protection agreements, but we are not prepared to

accept bad agreements at any cost, and we feel that this agreement is a bad one.

• (1815)

Foreign direct investment is soaring.

Every now and then, a Canadian company decides to settle abroad, where the government may decide to nationalize it. In order to create a predictable environment, to ensure that a foreign investor will not lose his nationalized business without compensation, and to give some assurances to companies, states sign treaties to protect investments. We think this is perfectly normal, and we accept that such provisions be included in these treaties.

However, over the past few years, we have seen such an incredible shift, because of NAFTA's chapter 11, that we are now wondering. We are very cautious with processes, chapters and clauses that may look like the provisions in NAFTA's chapter 11.

Under that chapter, foreign investors are allowed to go before international tribunals and challenge the expropriation, which may reduce their profits and result in a court action. If investors can prove that they are losing money because of a new act, or a new way of doing things by the government of the host country, they can get compensation by going before the courts. The important thing here is that the amount of the suit is not limited to the value of the investment, but includes all possible future profits. In other words, these investors can literally ruin a government, and that is totally abusive.

This chapter has been condemned time and again by many countries, by various organizations, and by the Bloc Québécois. Still, Ottawa continues to sign bilateral agreements that are patterned on this infamous chapter 11 in NAFTA. The government is on the offensive again and is negotiating numerous such agreements. We believe that the Conservative government is headed in the wrong direction and should instead take better care of the public good and of human rights.

A few years ago, the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries took place. Many Canadian mining companies are responsible and respectful, but quite a few, many of which I could name, are not. While negotiations for the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement were underway, it was clear that plenty of Canadian mining companies could not have cared less about aboriginal rights, environmental rights or human rights. They set up operations in various countries, take advantage of conditions there, such as military juntas and corrupt governments, and exploit those countries for profit.

We also have to consider human rights in Peru. Peru is one of Canada's smaller trading partners, and the mining sector is the primary trade driver. We know that Peru has a pretty poor track record when it comes to protecting workers in that industry.

Government Orders

Earlier, I mentioned the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries.

● (1820)

The national roundtables reported on what was going on. We all know the Canadian mining companies. We know their names. We know that a book has been written about their activities. They did everything in their power to get the book off the market; they even sued the authors in the hope that their activities would not be made known to the general public.

Canadian mining companies are the biggest foreign investors. Canada does not have any rules about what responsible companies should do, so they do as they please. We know that. We want to know what will happen if we have a bilateral agreement that does not impose any restrictions whatsoever on mining companies, an agreement that allows them to do whatever they like in countries like Peru, which do not have the means or even the ability to set rules and standards. Given the context, we cannot accept a country-to-country agreement with no guarantees.

One of the main reasons Canadian investors are attracted to Peru is the country's natural resources, particularly its mining resources. Canadian investment in Peru's mining sector is \$5 billion, give or take. More than 80 Canadian mining companies are doing mining exploration in Peru. Canada leads investment in mining exploration and exploitation in Peru.

It was asked earlier why Canada is concluding a free trade agreement with Peru. It is very clear. It is to protect Canadian mining companies. It is not simply to do the right thing or for philanthropic reasons. It is to cover its own behind, to protect its own interests. We have nothing against that. However, the framework is too general. The free trade agreement with Peru gives greater protection to Canadian companies that invest in the mining sector. However, our fear is that the investment protection measures provide disproportionate protection to investors at the expense of local populations and the environment.

How many times have we watched as Canadian mining companies have displaced local populations, preventing them from reuniting, and polluted rivers? In Colombia in particular, rivers have run pink.

We know that Peru can protect itself, but it is still considered a developing country. It does not have the ability at this time. Also, not protecting workers' rights is standard practice in certain countries. The workers are small fry. They are considered worthless. Child labour often exists in these kinds of countries.

The Bloc Québécois would like to see mandatory standards and accountability measures imposed on the activities of mining companies working abroad. We would have liked to see the formation of a committee to advise the federal government, just as the national roundtables advisory group recommended. The minister at the time, the current international trade minister, practically refused and stonewalled.

● (1825)

It was recommended that a multiparty committee be formed, made up of representatives from the mining industry, to advise the federal government. I say "advise" because this government continues to do whatever it likes, no matter what anyone says, no matter what Canadians say. It stubbornly pursues its agenda without thinking about the fact that some people might be able to suggest a more acceptable approach. These people were calling for mandatory standards.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Terrebonne—Blainville will have four minutes to finish her speech when the House resumes consideration of this bill.

* * *

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-20.

Call in the members.

● (1855)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 72)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Aglukkaq
Albrecht	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Anders	Anderson
André	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
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Bigras	Blackburn
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Block	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boucher
Boughen	Bourgeois
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Byrne
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
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Devolin	Dhaliwal
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Dorion	Dosanjh

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 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
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 Van Kesteren
 Verner
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Watson
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 Thibeault

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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.
 (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, I asked a question in this House, and the answer did not convince me. In fact, it was not convincing for anyone. I asked the government how it could justify its refusal to repatriate the young Omar Khadr after the testimony that has been gathered about torture practices in Guantanamo. We know that the United States Division Court for the District of Columbia ruled that American authorities did use torture to obtain information from prisoners. In addition, an American prosecutor in Guantanamo says that prisoners, including Mr. Khadr, have been subjected to severe abuse.

The response was the usual insensitive Conservative tape: Mr. Khadr faces very serious charges in the United States.

It is striking to hear such a response when Canada is the only western country that has not taken steps to repatriate its citizens jailed in Guantanamo. What is worse, we know that, on June 24, the Federal Court confirmed that Omar Khadr's detainment was illegal under international and American law. Canada must repatriate Omar Khadr in order to uphold the fundamental principles in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The ruling confirms that Omar Khadr's detention is illegal. When will the government respect the rulings handed down here, by our own courts? That is shameful. It will be a black mark on Canada's international reputation.

We also know that the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, during the second session of the 39th Parliament, recommended that the protocol on child soldiers be respected. Mr. Khadr was arrested when he was only 15 years old. The rights of child soldiers should apply to him.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is shameful that Canada, in addition to reneging on the treaties it has signed, is also no longer honouring the motions that we parliamentarians have adopted in this House. On March 22, a motion was adopted that called for the repatriation of Omar Khadr so that he would stand trial in Canada. However, in addition to thumbing their noses at the decisions made in the House, the Conservatives, as I was saying earlier, are ignoring decisions made by Canadian courts.

I would like some clarifications about that and, above all, some answers. Why are the Conservatives digging in their heels when Canadian courts, parliamentarians and the treaties they signed indicate that Omar Khadr is a child soldier? Why has Omar Khadr not been returned to Canada?

● (1900)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to children under 18 years of age, the Bloc just will not listen to reason.

As we all know, Omar Khadr was arrested by U.S. forces in 2002 because they believed he had been recruited by al-Qaeda and had participated in the armed conflict in Afghanistan as a combatant.

The United States has accused Mr. Khadr of serious crimes, including murder and attempted murder, and of other terrorism-related crimes.

Any court, including American courts, would consider these accusations to be very serious. That is why our government's position has always been based on the fact that it is up to American authorities to decide what they believe to be the most appropriate way to handle Mr. Khadr's case.

We understand that President Obama has asked for an extra 120 days in all cases, including Mr. Khadr's, to finalize military commission reforms.

That decision is just one more example of the Obama administration's efforts to resolve the Guantanamo detainee situation. The United States is continuing to debate whether, among other things, the detainees should be freed or transferred, or whether they should be tried and, if so, before which courts.

It would be inappropriate for Canada to disrupt the action taken by President Obama about this, by jumping ahead of the process taking place. We have no intention to prejudge what the final conclusions of the review of Mr. Khadr's case will be and how it will be resolved afterwards.

On April 23, 2009, the Federal Court of Canada made a ruling about the repatriation of Mr. Khadr. After carefully reviewing the legal merits of an appeal and the grounds of the ruling, the government decided to appeal the ruling. Our decision is very much consistent with the approach we have always adopted about this case.

Moreover, our decision is in line with the respect our government has for the sovereignty of American courts. It allows for the procedures ordered by President Obama to take place without undue interference on our part.

Canadian officials in Guantanamo regularly visit Mr. Khadr to inquire about his well-being. These visits allow us to constantly

assess the conditions of his detention and to bring him some form of support.

In addition, Canadian officials play a tangible role to help him obtain items which improve his comfort in Guantanamo. The government of Canada also requested on several occasions that Mr. Khadr be offered opportunities for education during his detention and that he be submitted to an independent medical and psychological assessment. Finally, the government insisted that Mr. Khadr must benefit from the services of a competent lawyer of his choice and helped him gain access to a Canadian lawyer.

● (1905)

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault: Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives are playing the same old tape. I mentioned three things. I only have one minute and I will be brief. The government decided to appeal. Ignoring the rights of children is quite in keeping with the right-wing ideology of the Conservative party. A treaty that protects child soldiers does exist and it is important.

My colleague spoke of American justice. She is saying that the laws and rulings of Canadian courts are not as strong as the laws upheld by American courts. She spoke of the sovereignty of the United States, but I would reply that a ruling—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, it always makes me laugh to see the Bloc members shouting so loudly.

They are the only ones in Parliament who voted against Bill C-268, which would have protected our own children from sex offenders. And they are the ones lecturing us. I am sorry, but Bill C-268 was very important. All the parliamentarians supported us.

The treatment of Canadian children is just as important as the treatment of children elsewhere.

[*English*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question about the cuts to research funding, and I did not receive an answer to my question. I was speaking about Katrin Meissner, an accomplished B.C. climate scientist, who is packing up and moving from Canada to Australia because of the cuts to science funding.

There was \$365 million cut from science and technology when one adjusts for inflation. That is a substantial withdrawal of support for this very critical activity. Two thousand top researchers recently signed a petition calling for urgent federal action to stop the brain drain. Why, in 2009, do we have a government whose policies are driving our key researchers out of Canada? In fact a minister from the other side called it absurd that there would be continuing funding by government for science and research. This is very difficult for people to understand in my community, where I have the University of British Columbia and research is a key part of the economy and the well-being of people in the future.

Adjournment Proceedings

The person who is moving is a climate scientist. It is particularly concerning that the government is eliminating its capability to do what needs to be done to reduce greenhouse gases. It does bring into question whether the government has any intention to reduce greenhouse gases or do anything to take action on climate change.

I would suggest that the record to date would lead to the answer of no. It has absolutely no intention or commitment to this issue. Three years, three ministers and three plans, with zero results. I will point out that the government is led by a prime minister who made this statement only a handful of years ago. He said:

We will oppose ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and its targets. We will work with the provinces and others to discourage the implementation of those targets. And we will rescind the targets when we have the opportunity to do so.

That is pretty clear. The government has no intention of reducing greenhouse gases. In contrast, when the Liberal Party was in government they were leaders on that issue. The Liberals ratified and negotiated Kyoto, and they went to work to bring industry and the public on board. We saw emissions drop between 2004 and 2006 under the former Liberal government. There has been a pathetic recidivism on this issue since the Conservative government took charge.

Surprisingly enough, the Conservative government did agree to a target. Let us look at how it is actually doing. We will turn to the report from the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, in which it is clear that the Conservatives are a complete disaster on climate change. There is no honesty, no action, no tracking and no credibility. The commissioner said that the plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are missing information required by law, that the plans overstate expected emissions, and that the plans are not transparent and there is no system to monitor and report results.

The commissioner himself asked if the environment department could explain why it could supposedly estimate emission reductions in advance but could not actually measure these reductions after the fact.

● (1910)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure exactly where to begin. The hon. member's question is replete with misinformation and falsehoods, both on science and technology and on the Liberal record regarding the environment. Of course, the record of the Liberals regarding the environment was that they increased greenhouse gas emissions by 35% over the time they were in office.

In terms of science and technology, we have indicated many times before, Canada continues to be a world leader in terms of its support for post-secondary research. We rank first in the G7 and second, after Sweden, among the 30 OECD countries in terms of higher education R and D expenditures as a percentage of GDP.

Through the federal S & T strategy, announced by the Prime Minister nearly two years ago, the government has demonstrated its commitment to build on this strong record.

This strategy has been backed up with strong action, with investments of over \$7 billion in S & T funding, much of this geared to supporting world-class research.

For example, new funding totalling \$240 million was provided to Genome Canada in budgets 2007 and 2008, allowing it to fund its operations and current research support until March 31, 2013. In fact, Genome is now running a major new competition, the results of which will be announced later this year.

Budget 2007 provided \$50 million to the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics to support its leading research, education and public outreach activities. In this same budget, we set aside \$195 million to establish the centres of excellence in commercialization and research program to create world-class centres to advance research and promote commercialization of technologies, products and services.

A further \$105 million was earmarked to support the operations of seven existing centres of excellence, such as the Brain Research Centre at the University of British Columbia, the Life Science Research Institute in Halifax, and the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

We also continue to invest in research and science infrastructure through the Canada foundation for innovation, with investments of \$510 million in budget 2007 and \$750 million in budget 2009. This support, aimed at modernizing research facilities and equipment in post-secondary institutions, is complemented by the massive \$2 billion investment in university and college infrastructure outlined in budget 2009.

Most recently, budget 2009 invested \$50 million to support the construction and establishment of University of Waterloo's Institute for Quantum Computing, a new world-class research facility in this exciting field with considerable promise.

In addition to the preceding targeted investments, we have provided significant funding increases for the federal granting councils to support their core programming, with increases totalling \$205 million per year through actions taken in budgets 2006, 2007 and 2008. I should underline that these increases represent ongoing permanent increases in annual funding for the granting councils.

Our past investments and budget 2009 underscore our determination to help build a strong national competitive advantage through science and technology.

● (1915)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the government has failed Canadians on the economy, failed Canadians on research and failed Canadians on climate change, and all that member can do is read from a list of initiatives, succeeding to take credit for what the Liberal Party has done for this country in building world leadership on a range of issues.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canadians care about climate change. The voters in my riding care. They are organizing a huge event for September to bring the community out. Vancouver is a leader on this issue. British Columbia is a leader on this issue and the federal government is a zero on this issue.

It abdicated its responsibility and covered its absence of action with bluster, pretense and misrepresentation. It is an embarrassment to be a politician with this calibre of behaviour on climate change, one of the key issues of today on which our children and grandchildren deserve action, not this—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is aware of very well publicized comments made by her own leader in terms of the Liberal environmental strategy. I think the quote was, “We didn't get it done”. He said it over and over again, and we have seen that from time to time pop up in the media and different sources.

On the subject of the question that was originally asked which spurned on this late show tonight, which was investments in

research, I just want to read, if I could, from an ad placed in the *Globe and Mail* by the University of Winnipeg where Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, a former Liberal cabinet minister and now president and vice-chancellor of the University of Winnipeg thanked the hon. President of the Treasury Board and the hon. Minister of State for Science and Technology for their leadership and investment. The ad says: “Thank you to the Government of Canada for its generous contribution of more than \$18 million from the knowledge infrastructure program for the science complex and Richardson College for the Environment”.

The Deputy Speaker: Since the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)

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