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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 8, 2000

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1110)

[*English*]

VOICE MAIL SERVICE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the federal government should encourage the CRTC to establish regulations that require telephone companies to assist community agencies with providing affordable voice mail service to Canadians who cannot afford or do not have access to telephone service.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be in the House today to speak to my motion. The purpose of this motion is to mandate phone accessibility and phone service for low income and homeless Canadians who, as it stands today, have absolutely no access to this very basic service that most of us take for granted.

My motion before the House today was inspired by a project that was initiated a couple of years ago by a very well known community organization in Vancouver's downtown eastside, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, which started what was called a community voice mailbox system.

In starting up this system, the organization found that many low income and homeless people who had no access to phone service were incredibly limited in terms of being able to find employment or make contact with doctors offices or even family members. This organization worked very hard. It was approached by a young man who had developed a computer software program to create the program. For a very modest amount of \$1,500, it received the computer and the software program, the voice mail service.

The organization found that many people, not just in the downtown eastside but in other neighbourhoods in Vancouver and on the lower mainland, desperately needed access to phone service. As a result of providing this service over the last couple of years, about 1,200 people are now registered. The use of the service is increasing on a daily basis.

The statistics provided to me by the organization are quite interesting. They show that approximately 79% of the users of this service are single men and that 60% of the users have annual incomes of less than \$8,000. I would ask anyone in the House to imagine what it would be like to live on less than \$8,000. It would mean no money for bus fare, no money for a phone and no money for the basic necessities of life. It basically would mean scraping by and surviving day by day.

What is most interesting is that more than half of the users of this voice mail service have said that having a community voice mail and having one's own phone number has given them a starting point for having more control over their lives. I cannot emphasize enough what that means to an individual. Imagine what it would be like living on welfare and looking for work or maybe living in a homeless shelter and looking for work.

I experienced this last year when I travelled across the country and visited emergency shelters and spoke to homeless people and front line service workers. I was told many times by people that they felt humiliated when they did not have an address or a phone number. If they wanted to apply for a job and the prospective employer needed a phone number, they had to reply that they lived in a homeless shelter. They had no chance of receiving a phone call back from the employer.

Having a program that gave them access to their own phone number and their own voice mail messages enabled them to provide a possible employer with a phone number. When an employer called that number it would be their voice recording on the phone asking the caller to leave a message. They could then dial into that from any location by hopefully using a free phone.

Having their own phone number or voice mail gives people a sense of dignity, a sense of worth and a starting point for them to find employment and put their lives together. This is a very basic but important thing.

Private Members' Business

The sad irony is that the federal government has many job creation initiatives to help lower income Canadians. But it is provided on a very spotty basis. Industry Canada has spent millions of dollars getting Canadians on line. I know a lot of agencies that have accessed funds from Industry Canada to help set up Internet access for low income Canadians. That is something I agree with.

• (1115)

Is it not ironic that while on the one hand the government is doing that and sees it as a priority, on the other hand we have information from Statistics Canada which shows that 157,000 Canadians have no phone. That is a very conservative figure because it does not include the homeless people who are not listed in the census. Here we are in our modern society getting people on line, but there are still hundreds of thousands of people who do not have this basic access.

I was in the downtown east side in my riding on Friday and visited the DERA service. I met with the folks who run it and with people who use the service. It was really amazing to see how this operates. They can walk into the office and for a minimum cost of \$3 a month, which is what it costs, with no questions asked, they can sign up for their community mailbox.

In fact, I met a young man who had walked into my into my constituency office on Main Street. He came from Saskatchewan and moved into east Vancouver. He was looking for work. I said he was welcome to use my office if he wanted to send a fax or anything. He said he was really glad that at least he had a phone number. I said it was great that he had a phone in his place. He said "No, no, I have voice mail". Sure enough it was the DERA voice mail. He came to Vancouver looking for work and had somehow managed to find out about it.

The reality is that this service is only available in Vancouver. The Government of Manitoba has just announced a very good initiative where, with the co-operation of the Royal Bank and other private partners, it is setting up a province-wide community voice mail service. Other than that there is really nothing that exists. It seemed to me in bringing forward this motion, and based on my travels and talking to homeless people or people who have totally insecure or inadequate shelter, that to have a program that is mandated through licensing through the CRTC is something that could be easily done.

In this parliament we debate big issues. We debate things that are very complex. Yet, here we have a tool, something very straightforward that could help hundreds of thousands of low income and homeless Canadians by simply saying to the CRTC that we want to make sure that as part of the CRTC licensing the telephone companies, it mandates that there be funds provided or phone lines that are given over as access to local community agencies to set up these projects across Canada.

The DERA community voice mail system has 12 phone lines. I could actually see the information on the phone lines which were in

use as people were changing their greeting or accessing their voice mail box or dialling in to retrieve messages. Just think of what that would mean to Canadians from coast to coast who are living in communities where they feel isolated and cut off because they do not have that basic service.

The purpose of this motion is to say that here is an easy, straightforward, simple, logical, reasonable way of ensuring that Canadians have access to the most basic phone service that we all take for granted in this country.

I want to say that this issue is very much linked to people who are living in poverty. Because people are living way below the poverty line, they cannot afford to have the basic phone service. As I have mentioned, in many instances it is related to employment and the need to get employment that they need that phone number. Also, I have come across examples and instances where it is a matter of personal health and security.

The DERA folks told me of one instance where one of its clients was in hospital. The doctor phoned and said that he was ready to be released, but he would need to have a phone by the his bed so if he got into trouble there was somebody he could call. This gentleman did not have a phone so he faced the prospect of staying another six weeks in hospital until the doctor was assured that he was completely better before he went home.

As it happened, the DERA advocacy office spent countless hours dealing with the local welfare office trying to get this man a telephone. I believe it was eventually successful, but how much time and energy was spent to get one person a phone so he could go home from the hospital which was costing thousands of dollars a day. The contradictions and the ironies in these are just simply astounding. If it were not so serious it would be laughable.

• (1120)

I want to encourage members to think about the motion and to see the wisdom of supporting it as a way of doing something straightforward and simple that will actually help people in a real concrete way on a day to day basis.

In a few days time we will bear witness to the 10th anniversary of the Liberal task force report on affordable housing that was chaired by the now finance minister and then an opposition Liberal member. Ten years ago the Liberals in opposition wrote a darn good report with 25 recommendations talking about the needs of Canadians in terms of housing. Here we are now 10 years later and we know that during the period between 1984 and 1993 we lost more than \$2 billion in housing funds in the country. Then in 1993 the same member, who was the chair of that Liberal task force on housing, at the finance committee wielded the axe and ended the construction of social housing in the country.

It is because of that, because of increasing homelessness and because more and more Canadians, something like two million Canadians, are paying way more than 50% of their income for rent that people do not have enough money to pay for a phone.

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I draw that comparison because this issue of phone service is very much related to the issue of the housing crisis in the country and the shameful record of the government in abandoning a national housing strategy and abandoning the construction of desperately needed social housing.

I do not want to go to another shelter. I do not want to have to talk to another person who says "I want a good place to live. I want to go to work. I want to be employed. I want to have a phone so that I can have some sense of dignity".

That story is all too familiar for hundreds of thousands of Canadians. I urge members of the House to put aside the partisan politics. From time to time we come together and we say "Yes, this is the right thing to do". That is what we should do here. We should say to the CRTC "Get on this. Make it a requirement of licensing. Make sure that every telephone company across the country ensures that they require some lines or some funds that can be dedicated to a community organization to open up access to phone service for low income and homeless Canadians".

I ask for the support of members to do just that.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on Motion No. M-361 that was just outlined before us by the member for Vancouver East.

The member would like the CRTC to establish regulations that would require telephone companies to provide voice mail services to low income and homeless Canadians. My understanding is that voice mail service is something like an add-on, like power windows on a car. Basic telephone services is quite a different matter.

I understand that the motion was inspired by a very worthwhile project in the member's Vancouver East riding. The Downtown Eastside Residents Association project to provide a secure voice mail service for \$40 a year is an innovative program. By facilitating communication for low income residents and the homeless, I have no doubt the Vancouver project has increased their opportunities for employment as well as their access to community and medical services. It is a good idea.

Unfortunately, Motion No. M-361 is another example of the NDP's deep fondness for centralization and regulation as the answer to every problem. The Canadian Alliance on the other hand believes that the market is the best place to respond to the needs of individuals for telephone service, not top down government intervention from Ottawa.

If there is a need—and I understand in this case the member certainly demonstrated that in her riding—to expand this type of service in other communities, the Vancouver project can be a model for other communities wishing to assist the homeless and low income residents in their area. However, community groups, municipal governments and in some cases provincial governments

are much closer to the people and are best positioned to tackle these local issues, such as telecommunication services for low income and homeless Canadians.

• (1125)

I think she gave a good example of how the group in her riding served a need that was out there. I think there are many methods to address this concern. I would suggest that the one in her riding of Vancouver East that was serviced by the Downtown Eastside Residents Association is the best vehicle for this service.

In my opinion, the real failing of Motion M-361 is that it is not clear why another federal regulation governing the telecommunications industry is necessary for communities to launch similar projects. It can be done now. Therefore, I think that is the better approach. This motion flies in the face of the current trend in the telecommunications industry which is to move toward less regulation and more competition and I would endorse that.

In 1998 the CRTC's publication "Vision" stated that the agency hoped to reinvent itself and rely more on market forces to permit fair and sustainable competition and to move from detailed regulation to broad parameters. That certainly is something we in the Canadian Alliance support. From that perspective Motion M-361 would be a step backward.

With respect to the CRTC, I would love to debate the effectiveness and the necessity for much of the CRTC's mandate. I certainly would not fall for the blunt regulatory tool of CRTC intervention in this case, as in Motion M-361, for that purpose. The Canadian Alliance would like to review the mandate of the CRTC to see greater accountability and responsiveness in the CRTC.

Much of the CRTC's mandate is out of date and new developments in technology have made the CRTC irrelevant in many respects. My colleague, who is the deputy industry critic from Calgary Centre and who is our spokesman in this area, has pointed out on many occasions that the CRTC's bureaucratic pace makes it ill-suited to effectively respond to the needs of the fast moving telecommunications industry.

The Canadian Alliance would like to take this opportunity to call for a larger debate on the role of this agency into the 21st century in Canada rather than remaining stuck in the old mindset that more government regulation will solve every problem. I suggest that community organizations are also great vehicles, much closer to the people which can provide service that government may not be able to provide with the same flexibility. Therefore, I am not in support of this motion.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Motion No. 361 that the member from the NDP is bringing

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forward requires the CRTC to mandate the provisions of subsidized voice mail service to community agencies.

I would like to go a little more in depth and quote verbatim what Motion No. 361 is all about. It says:

In the opinion of this House, the federal government should encourage the CRTC to establish regulations that require telephone companies to assist community agencies with providing affordable voice mail service to Canadians who cannot afford or do not have access to telephone service.

That is exactly what Motion No. 361 says.

I took the opportunity to quote Motion No. 361 for the purpose of telling the House and through you, Madam Speaker, the country as a whole that this type of motion that comes forward, which is a non-votable motion, is not necessarily a step that has to take place here in the House. It is great that it comes to the House and is discussed, et cetera, but this government, previous governments and future governments are not the instrument by which this request should be put forward.

The commission could be asked by any individual, community, or organization to look into the possibility of having these services provided. As I have said in the past, this is an arm's length relationship. The member would do well to work as aggressively as I know she can and has in the past with the area, with the community, to bring this issue to the attention of the commission and indeed move positively forward to carry out the hearings. As we know, and I want to point out, on some of these avenues there has been public consultation on an ongoing basis to look at specific areas, the types of needs, et cetera, so that indeed if the commission and the findings are there, service can be provided.

• (1130)

I will not take up much more of the House's time but I wanted to clarify this issue. Without going into the details, our government will continue to make sure that each and every Canadian no matter where they live has the tools needed to carry on their daily lives. We will continue to address some of the concerns that communities and individuals face, whether they are health, community, business or personal issues.

I know that with Motion No. 361 the intentions of the member from the NDP are honourable and good and I commend her for that. However, there is a vehicle, a venue, and that is to bring this request to the commission so that it can have more consultations. As I said earlier, there has been a lot of consultation. If it warrants, it shall be done.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to participate in the opening discussions on this Monday morning. We are debating the important topic of providing basic phone services to those in our society who probably need them the most in terms of their own

personal security but also in terms of providing them with a very important vehicle to obtain employment opportunities.

For most of us in the House it is second nature to have a phone stuck to our ear, whether it is a cellphone, a regular phone or a headset. Most of us spend a good part of our waking day talking on the telephone to our constituents or receiving calls from people on various issues. We certainly know the importance of telephones.

Phone companies and the telecommunications sector in general have expanded greatly in the past number of years. As the economy globalizes and as society becomes much more of a global village, communication plays a crucial role in our everyday lives now more than ever.

My hon. friend from Vancouver East made the point that people now are online and have personal websites, e-mail and all sorts of sophisticated telecommunications techniques to communicate with others, but it is hard to believe that there are still hundreds of thousands of Canadians who do not even have a simple telephone in their homes. Why? Because they do not have the money to pay for it. Many Canadians simply do not have the income to afford basic telephone service.

For most of us in the House, it is hard to imagine a world without a telephone. Our house has three telephones and they seem to be busy most of the time. Of course anyone who has children can forget it if there is only one telephone line, because the chance of getting in touch with that household is minimal. That household might have two or three telephones as well.

At a time when society itself has appreciated the value and the importance of communication, as my hon. friend from Vancouver East has indicated, there are at least two million Canadians who use more than half of their income to pay for their housing. A good percentage of those households would not have additional funds to access basic telephone service. Tens of thousands of people who live on the streets do not even have homes. Obviously those people who do not have homes do not have telephones, and if they do not have telephones they are out of touch.

More important is when people apply for a job and make an effort to find meaningful employment. An application form asks how to get in touch with the applicant and if there is no way of doing that, it poses a problem. Not only does it pose a problem, but it is probably the end of the line. If a company cannot communicate with a person to come to work, it will probably go to the person who has a telephone number.

How can society level the playing field? A level playing field is a very apt phrase these days. This is fundamental New Democrat philosophy. We have always wanted to level the playing field so that everyone in society has an equal opportunity to be the kind of citizen they ought to be and to have the same opportunities, whether they are education, health care or employment.

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• (1135)

I congratulate the member for Vancouver East for putting the motion on the record this morning. In this motion we are saying, let us give all Canadians an equal opportunity, a level playing field to access the job market. To do that these folks have to have telephone access. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the federal government should encourage the CRTC to establish regulations that require telephone companies to assist community agencies with providing affordable voice mail service to Canadians who cannot afford or do not have access to telephone service.

Some may ask who does not have access to telephone service. They are looking at a member of parliament who has a number of constituents who do not have access to basic telephone service. They live in relatively remote areas or areas where there is simply no telephone line. It is hard to believe that in the most wired country in the world there are still a lot of people who live in areas that do not have access to a telephone line, but that is a fact. They also do not have access to cellphones because there is no cellphone service in these remote areas.

These people conduct businesses and they certainly live very full lives, yet they have no access to a basic telephone. We have to provide some assistance. The motion concerns just that and thus today's debate in the House of Commons.

Has this been applied anywhere? My hon. friend from Vancouver East has indicated that in her constituency, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association has a program where people in that area who cannot afford or are unable to access telephone service can have access to voice mail. Imagine the difference that makes in people's lives when others can get in touch with them. People can leave a phone number and they can get back to them with a message or important information. The association has found a way to do it at the local level.

As hon. members probably know, the Government of Manitoba has initiated a program over the past number of days which will encourage similar opportunities to exist in Winnipeg and other places throughout Manitoba.

The motion says that if it works well in Vancouver East and if the Government of Manitoba thinks it is needed, why not make it a national program? Will this be a major imposition on the telephone companies? The answer is clearly no. This simply sets aside a number of lines for community based organizations or others. It makes the case that these services ought to be provided by the various telephone companies across the country.

For example, I cannot imagine going to Telus, which is one of the telephone companies based in British Columbia, and it would not endorse this enthusiastically. It would be a great public relations exercise. That is one thing we ought to consider as well.

This is something the telephone companies ought to be offering people within their jurisdiction. I am sure the telephone companies would fall over themselves to initiate these kinds of programs, perhaps with a little encouragement by the CRTC.

Today in accessing employment opportunities, we all appreciate how important a telephone number is. The hon. member for Vancouver East has come up with a very creative solution.

I know my friends in the Reform Party have some concerns about the motion. My hon. friend who made the presentation on behalf of that party spoke in favour of the concept, that this would be useful for anybody, but that party has some concerns on the mechanism. I wonder if my friends in the Reform Party would not agree at least to this small measure that while we are debating this motion today, perhaps even all of us, not only the Reform Party—

An hon. member: The Canadian Alliance party.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Excuse me. It is the Canadian Alliance. My apologies to my friends in the Canadian Alliance.

Rather than simply let this issue die today at the end of this debate, which it will be destined to do, at least we should agree that the member ought to write to the CRTC to ask if it would be prepared to initiate further talks with the telephone companies or to take this issue to another level as opposed to letting it die here.

I have listened to all the political parties. We all agree with the intent. We all agree with the idea. Everybody says it is good. Let us face it. Who would not support providing telephone access to someone from a low income family who is trying to get a job or a homeless person who wants to get a job and needs a telephone number in order to qualify? There are also the personal security aspects my friend raised and health reasons and so on.

• (1140)

If we agree with this, I ask my colleagues in the House of Commons at least to consider not referring this motion to the committee as would be done normally, but that we encourage the member for Vancouver East to write to the CRTC and ask if it would consider this issue and find ways and means of resolving it. Maybe her idea is not the best one but it is a good one. Others have said there may be other ways but at least we should not let this issue die because I think all of us would agree it is an important initiative.

At the end of today's debate perhaps my colleague for Vancouver East could ask for the unanimous consent of the House to do that. All we are saying is that we would ask for permission of the House of Commons for the member to write to the CRTC. We are not endorsing anything.

An hon. member: What is stopping her?

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Mr. Nelson Riis: It would be nice to have the voice from the House of Commons. Let us get away from this mindless partisan bickering where we fight each other for no particular reason when there is a good idea. We could all share in this, that the House of Commons has encouraged the member to write to the CRTC. That is all we are asking.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of today's motion by the hon. member of the NDP that the federal government should encourage the CRTC to establish regulations that require telephone companies to assist community agencies with providing affordable voice mail service to Canadians who cannot afford or do not have access to telephone service.

The Bloc Québécois member responsible for this issue being on official duties outside the country, I will merely offer my support to this motion in his absence.

Access to the telecommunications system is not a luxury these days, but a necessity. In fact, the Telecommunications Act states clearly that access to telecommunications is in the public interest.

In these times of technological revolution, it has become indispensable for everyone to be connected to the world, in one way or another, via the telecommunications system.

The CRTC has adopted certain measures, including those to enable schools to have access to Internet services at lower cost. It must see that all Canadians and all Quebecers have access to the telecommunications system. Where community initiatives have been developed, particularly those to connect the homeless and the disadvantaged, these must be studied.

The Bloc Québécois is therefore open to the motion by the NDP.

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too take pleasure in speaking to the private member's motion put forward by my colleague the member for Vancouver East.

The initiative for this private member's motion comes from the Downtown Eastside Residents Association of Vancouver. The member represents her constituents in that area so well. It is a coming together in support. The motion calls on the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to assist with providing voice mail for low income and homeless Canadians.

As the member for Vancouver East said in her opening remarks, telephone companies should be required to provide community service as part of their licensing. Providing access to affordable

voice mail for homeless people and low income Canadians would be an invaluable community service.

The reference point for the private member's motion is the voice mail project of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association. It allows anyone in the lower mainland to set up a secure telephone mailbox that can be accessed from any phone.

• (1145)

The basic cost is only \$10 for three months, a mere pittance. It benefits more than 1,000 users, mostly based in the downtown east side. We are getting a tremendous potential return for a very modest outlay of funds.

The hon. member is calling in her motion today for the CRTC to act as a vehicle and a lobby toward the telephone industry, much of which has been privatized in recent years, encouraging it to come up with a voice mail project that would benefit people who do not have access to telephones in order to help them to get on their feet and to find employment.

It has made a tremendous difference in peoples lives in the downtown eastside. The executive officer of the DERA Voicemail project, Terry Hanley, has said:

Voice mail has made it easier for people to get in touch with potential employers, with family members, and to access community and medical services. It provides previously marginalized people with a way to reconnect. That's not only good for them—it's good for the community at large.

The benefits of voice mail should be expanded and made available to low income and homeless Canadians across the country. While governments and industry spend millions to get Canadians and Canadian households on line, some people are without very basic services in the 21st century.

We hear from the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Finance that the goal for the country is to become the most wired country in the world as quickly as possible. We on this side do not object to that, but at the same time we do not want to leave other people behind in this process. Folks who are without homes, basic shelter and telephone service are the folks who are most at risk. We see the disparities growing between the haves and have nots. This is a very modest attempt to try to bring those people along and get a minimal amount of service for people who do not have access to telephones at the moment.

I want to pick up on the valuable point my colleague from Kamloops made a few minutes ago. We in the House do not have the greatest reputation in the world if one listens to Canadians who sit in on Oral Question Period. They hear the bickering and the back and forth that go on all the time. It would behoove us to pay some attention to doing the right thing. If that means encouraging the CRTC to encourage the mostly privatized telephone companies

across the country to get involved and onside with a project like this one, I think it would be a benefit to each and every one of us. The motion before us states:

That in the opinion of this House, the federal government should encourage the CRTC to establish regulations that require telephone companies to assist community agencies with providing affordable voice mail service to Canadians who cannot afford or do not have access to telephone service.

I encourage all my colleagues in the House to support this very important motion.

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member for Vancouver Kingsway I wish to commend my colleague from Vancouver East on her Motion No. 361 to encourage the CRTC to provide affordable voice mail service to Canadians. However, the CRTC is an independent federal agency responsible for the supervision and regulation of telecommunications in Canada.

The CRTC has a process by which such suggestions are heard. The public consultation process is available to all Canadians, including the hon. member. It is the best and most appropriate way to address the relative benefits of providing voice mail service to community agencies.

The CRTC has already run a number of hearings on this issue. In October 1999, after an extensive consultation process involving public interest advocacy groups, telecommunications companies and the local community, the CRTC released its high cost service area decision.

• (1150)

In this decision the CRTC identified a basic level of telephone service to which all Canadians should have access and took steps to ensure that over time those few areas of the country that are unserved or underserved would have access to the level of service currently available to most Canadians.

The basic level of service is defined as individual line local service with touch tone dialling; the capability to access the Internet at a low speeds without incurring long distance charges; enhanced calling features and services including privacy protection features, access to emergency services and a voice messaging relay board services for the hearing impaired; access to operator and directory assistance services; access to the long distance network; and a copy of a current telephone directory.

This decision will require significant investment by telephone companies to upgrade networking in rural and remote areas. In addition the CRTC has implemented a local service subsidy based on contributions from long distance carriers along with other measures to ensure the continued affordability of basic telephone service. As well, the introduction of competition has benefited Canadians at all income levels through lower prices for telecommunication services, more innovation and more choice.

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The member for Vancouver East has a good idea for use by low income families, but I suggest that she should go through the public consultation process like any other group of Canadians.

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be brief today in full support of the motion put forward by my colleague from Vancouver. She has brought it forward based on the bedrock principle of our party that people in society should have, if not equality because we know that is not a practical possibility, equality of opportunity. We should do what we can to provide that for people in whatever ways we can.

It is absolutely surprising and incredible as the hon. member and other members have said that in a country which is probably the most wired country in the world thousands of people do not have even basic telephone service. We are not only talking basic telephone service but about the ability of people, even if they do not have a telephone. The member is not saying that everybody has to, because that is a practical impossibility, but access to voice mail which is becoming almost as basic a service for many of us as telephones are. The member is asking that we look at a creative and inventive way for people to have access to voice mail service, even if they do not have a telephone. She has given some examples in her city of Vancouver where a project like this is under way.

I do not have to add a great deal to what other members have said about the importance of staying in touch. Let us think how important it is now to be able to access and use voice mail service and how great a disadvantage it would create to anyone who does not have that opportunity.

We are talking about equality and accessibility for people who do not now have it. We are talking about their ability to make improvements in their lives, which most people want to do. We hear stories of people moving to cities where they are actually working but the housing is so expensive that they cannot purchase housing. Calgary is an example.

• (1155)

There are people who are actually working but cannot afford housing. From where will they get their telephone service? How will they have the opportunity, if they are looking for new work, to have messages left for them so that they might apply for that work? How will they have the opportunity to stay in touch with loved ones and take messages, if they have moved across the country from Cape Breton to Calgary to work but do not have a telephone?

My hon. colleague is trying to find a solution to this problem in an inventive and compassionate way. There has been mention this morning of various problems which might be associated with this kind of idea. I urge members, rather than simply looking at something and saying there are problems and asking how we can

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do it, to spend more of their time on the how and begin to talk and look at exactly how we might put something like this into place.

The motion as it reads is not prescriptive in that way. That would come later once members of the House pass the motion, as we hope they will. Then we can begin to work on approaches to the CRTC and perhaps approaches to telephone providers to see how such a concept might come into being.

Basically I find this to be a very exciting and inventive idea. I offer my hon. colleague my full support. I urge other members of the House to think about it again and to give that support as well.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank hon. members of the various parties in the House for giving their comments on the motion today.

By way of reply, when motions come forward it is easy for any one of us to say this bit is wrong or that bit is wrong, or this would not work and in effect shoot it down. The issue is whether we understand that this is a very basic issue affecting low income and homeless Canadians. I have heard all representatives who spoke basically say that they understood there was a problem in that hundreds of thousands of Canadians do not have access to basic phone service.

If we agree on that, the next question is whether it is a good idea to do something about it. Various comments have been made and some of the hon. members on the government side have said that we should go to the CRTC. I certainly will do that. I absolutely will follow it up.

As a member of parliament I want to get the support of my colleagues. This is about generating debate and support for ideas that are reasonable and sound and asking if we can work on it together. In that regard I reply to the Alliance members who say it is just another idea of centralization from the NDP. That is not what it is about.

I agree with the Alliance members who said that the DERA model is the way to go, but are we saying that small underfunded community organizations dealing with huge demands in their local communities should spend a year or two years trying to get a small project like this under way? Let us be realistic about it.

The issue of going to the CRTC and asking to make this part of the licensing requirement is to say that it could be easily done. Yes, we could go to a group in Saskatchewan, in Newfoundland or in Ontario and say to go ahead and try to set it up, but the fact is that the DERA organization is actually subsidizing the project.

What is being requested in the motion is to suggest to the CRTC that it should look for ways for these huge telephone companies to provide some support to local communities, for example by providing access lines.

The DERA project has 12 lines that are in constant use but it has to pay for those lines through Telus communications, which used to be B.C. Tel. It would be so easy for that telephone company to say that it is on board and will support it.

The reason for bringing the motion forward was to look at a creative way of asking whether it would be a good idea to ensure easy access to Canadians. It has nothing to do with creating regulations for regulation sake. It is about creating equity in society. It is about creating justice. It is about saying to organizations that we mandate, the CRTC, that part of its job is to ensure there are basic levels of service in the country, whether it is health care or education. Here we happen to be talking about phone service.

• (1200)

I urge all members of the House not to dismiss this issue but to agree that it is an idea that could be followed up with the support of members. I will certainly follow it up because I am very committed to doing so.

The suggestion by my hon. colleague from Kamloops is a very good one and is something the House could do. I thank the member who spoke from the Bloc who clearly understood what this issue was about and is willing to support it. I think other members obviously have some questions. Frankly, I was surprised to hear the comments from the member for Vancouver Kingsway because there are low income members in that particular riding who would love to have this kind of phone access. To say that the CRTC is already doing this is simply not the case.

I urge members not to let this go by the boards but to find a way to support this motion. I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to support me in writing to the CRTC asking it to give this matter consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member is asking for the unanimous consent of the House to support her writing to the CRTC. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): There are about three minutes left in the time for consideration of Private Members' Business. Is there unanimous consent to see the time as 12.04 p.m. so we may proceed immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The period set aside for the study of Private Members' Business is now over. Since the

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motion has not been selected as a votable item, the item is dropped from the order paper.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Call in the members.

• (1245)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 1280*)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

**CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
DIVESTITURE AUTHORIZATION AND DISSOLUTION
ACT**

BILL C-11—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That in relation to C-11, an act to authorize the divestiture of the assets of, and to dissolve, the Cape Breton Development Corporation, to amend the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill and, fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

Some hon. members: Shame, shame.

• (1205)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): In my opinion the nays have it.

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélaïr
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Catterall
Cauchon	Chan
Charbonneau	Clouthier
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cotler
Cullen	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dion
Discepola	Dromisky
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Harb	Harvard
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lee
Leung	Limoges
Lincoln	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
McCormick	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Minna
Mitchell	Murray
Myers	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan	Peric
Peterson	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Reed
Robillard	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora	Sgro
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	St-Julien
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault
Valeri	Vanclief
Wilfert—109	

YEAS

Members

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Alarie
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Brisson
Cadman	Casey
Chatters	Crête
Cummins	Davies
de Savoye	Debien
Dockrill	Doyle

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Duceppe	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Gauthier	Gilmour
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Gouk
Grey (Edmonton North)	Gruending
Hanger	Hardy
Harris	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lill	Lowther
Mancini	Marchand
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
Ménard	Muise
Penson	Picard (Drummond)
Proctor	Reynolds
Riis	Robinson
Schmidt	Solberg
Stinson	Strahl
Vautour	Venne—52

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Normand	Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the motion agreed to.

[*Translation*]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act to authorize the divestiture of the assets of, and to dissolve, the Cape Breton Development Corporation, to amend the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Madam Speaker, it is with some sadness that I address Bill C-11, an act to authorize the divestiture of the assets of, and to dissolve, the Cape Breton Development Corporation, to amend the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

• (1250)

I will explain why I feel this sadness. On January 28, 1999, the federal Minister of Natural Resources announced the closure of the Phalen coal mine and the privatization of the Prince mine, both located on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island and managed by a crown corporation, Devco.

At the time, close to 1,700 miners were working for the crown corporation. About 1,000 people find themselves out of work, in a region where unemployment is already at 25%.

At the same time, the minister announced \$110 million in assistance to be used for severance pay and early retirement programs for the miners, as well as \$68 million for economic development in the region. The Government of Nova Scotia

announced in the fall that it would be investing \$12 million in the long term economic development of Cape Breton.

It is important to understand that Devco workers are not pleased with the severance package and with the proposed payments. For well over a year now, since February 1999, they have been making representations to the federal government, asking it to reconsider its decisions and to improve its proposals.

In fact, on December 23, a committee made up of representatives from all parties in the legislative House of Assembly of Nova Scotia called on the federal government to improve its offers and increase the amounts proposed to workers.

One million dollars is a lot of money, but when 1,000 people find themselves without work, one million divided by 1,000 is only \$1,000 each. This will not pay the grocery bill for very long, or the rent, and it will not put clothes on children's backs for very long either; \$1,000 will be gone very quickly. These 1,000 employees are going to end up on social assistance fairly quickly.

They are being offered more than \$1,000, but nothing that will really keep them going for much more than a year. These families will be in a very shaky situation.

I would like to depart from my prepared text and share with the House the conversations I had with those representing workers at the time last year when I myself was the Bloc Québécois' natural resources critic.

I had occasion to meet with mothers who had travelled here to Ottawa to make parliamentarians aware of the fate in store for their husbands, their partners or their sons if the Devco mine were to close. Let us look at the broader picture.

The Devco mine is basically a coal mine. Coal is less popular than it used to be. It is a fairly polluting substance. Therefore, planning to shut down a coal mine, when coal is less in demand internationally, for the reasons I have just given, is not, in itself, illogical. The problem is the approach being taken.

For some time now, the Devco mine has been run for the federal government. When we are dealing with a region like Cape Breton and more than 1,000 people who are going to lose their jobs, this is catastrophic in a community where there are not many employment alternatives. In short, the federal government is, with its good intentions of terminating operations for the extraction of a raw material, coal, no longer in fashion in the world market, committing the huge mistake of penalizing a region, with catastrophic results.

Quite simply, once the people have exhausted their benefits, their separation payments, the outcome will be despair and a complete lack of job opportunities.

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• (1255)

They will then have two choices: taking their families and settling elsewhere in Canada, in order to make a living, or remaining where they are, in most cases dependent on welfare.

By using this bill to close the mine under the present circumstances, the federal government is, to all intents and purposes, thrusting a region of Nova Scotia into a disastrous economic situation, one that will be very long term. This is not something that will be remedied in six months or a year. It will take decades to be rectified, if ever, because its very clear consequences will be an exodus of families and increased poverty in this region.

I mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to meet the wives of the miners and mine workers who are unemployed. The problem could probably have been lessened in various ways, and the unions made proposals—and it was not just the unions that made proposals—that, for the most part, meant that many of the 1,000 workers could have faster access to their pension.

There were a number of ways to go about it. The pensions could have been beefed up for those close to retirement, within two or three years of it—and there were several hundred of them—other workers could have been kept on working in the mine, while the facilities were being shut down. From what I understand, the facilities will be closed by an outside corporation, that may perhaps hire these people for a short while, but will not contribute to the pension fund they have already accumulated.

In short, there were solutions. They could really not have cost more in the medium term. They could definitely cost less in the long term. The government thinks it is only in the very short term that savings will be made, and making a saving in human terms in the very short term is really wasting human capital and thus wasting resources in the medium and long term. This is exactly the situation we are in with Bill C-11, to close the Devco mine.

I do not know how the House could influence the minister to change his decision. I have the impression that things are cast in stone. It is really with great regret and sadness that I realize that the representations made by the people of Cape Breton who came to explain the situation, by the union representatives and by the members of the House, have not had the results we had hoped for.

Again, the short term saving made by the government will be replaced by waste and numerous expenditures in the medium and long terms, particularly for the Province of Nova Scotia, which will have to support, through social assistance, families that will find themselves in a precarious situation.

The Bloc Québécois does not like this situation. The Bloc Québécois has a heart and it wants the government to also have a heart. I will conclude by expressing my sympathy and wishing the best of luck to those brave Devco workers, who, unfortunately, are being mistreated by the Liberal federal government, which has no heart.

[English]

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his comments and I thank his party for the positions it has put forward on behalf of the working people in Cape Breton. It is one of the few friends, other than the New Democratic Party, that the working people in Cape Breton have found to voice their concerns in this debate.

I have a couple of questions for the member. First, he talked about money. The government of course will say it is offering \$111 million as an incentive package for the miners who are leaving. I point out that in 1996 our gross domestic product was \$820 billion, and it is more today. While \$111 million may sound like a great deal, in relative terms it is not.

I also point out that the government will say it has offered \$68 million to Cape Breton for future economic development. I point out that the Minister of Canadian Heritage recently announced \$48 million to build the war heritage museum here in Ottawa. For the entire island of Cape Breton and its future economic growth, we get the value of about one building in Ottawa.

• (1300)

More important though, I would ask the member to comment on the following. This is not the first time crown corporations have been shut down by the government. In each and every case there were benefits offered to those employees as the government extracted itself from whatever industry it was.

There are a number of areas we could compare, but let us just take health care benefits. These people are miners for the most part. They have gone underground. They have suffered injuries. Let me just cite some comparisons.

When VIA Rail was shut down, the employees of the crown corporation not entitled to retirement benefits were eligible for 100% pension contributions and full health benefits packages for five years.

When CN was shut down, the employees were entitled to group benefits and life insurance for a maximum of two years and the company paid the full cost.

When AECL was shut down, there was an extension of benefit packages with Blue Cross for health, dental and life insurance costs which were covered by the company.

When Devco shuts down, which the government says is justified, the employees who suffer from a number of ailments because of the kind of career and work they did, there are no provisions in this government package for extensions of health, dental or life insurance benefits. Those who have sick children, those who suffer from illnesses that they received in the mines, those who suffer from lung cancer, those who suffer from black lung will not be afforded the rights that were afforded other employees of crown corpora-

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tions when the government withdrew from those corporations. That is just in health benefits. I could go on and compare others. I would be interested to hear the member's comments on those issues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Madam Speaker, the hon. member just mentioned a number of very real consequences relating to health. Indeed, this is what I pointed out earlier in my speech.

There seems to be a will to save federal dollars in the short term. Incidentally, these dollars come from the taxpayers' pockets. There is no Santa Claus in Ottawa that prints money. These dollars come from the pockets of those who pay taxes.

The government wants to save that money, but in 12, 24, 36 months and more, there will be families having a hard time putting food on the table and buying clothes for their children, with the result that these children may not do as well as they should in school. The federal government is sacrificing a whole generation to save a few dollars, primarily because of a lack of vision.

This is not just a dollars and cents issue. It is also a matter of heart. One must have a vision that comes from the heart but, unfortunately, the government opposite does not seem to have such a vision, a vision that would ensure that families can continue to live, grow and thrive on Cape Breton Island.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of debate about Bill C-11 that did not focus on Bill C-11, but on the fairness of the \$111 million human resource package that was announced in January 1999.

This funding was announced for a workforce adjustment program to deal with the loss of jobs associated with the closure of the failing mine. Unfortunately, the failing mine closed last September, about one year earlier than planned.

I think it is important that the House understand the status of this issue so that we can move on to deal with the issues surrounding Bill C-11 and the sale of Devco's assets.

In January 2000 Devco and its four unions agreed to form a joint planning committee, as per part III of the Canada Labour Code. Devco and the unions are continuing to follow the process as outlined in the labour code for resolving the workforce adjustment issues.

• (1305)

Recently this process led to the appointment of an arbitrator. Devco and its unions have agreed to a process to deal with the labour issues. The decision of the arbitrator will be final and binding on all parties. There is a process to deal with the labour issue.

Through a lot of effort, interest has been identified in Devco's assets. We are now at a stage where we should move forward with the process of considering Bill C-11. Now is the time to move the bill to the committee stage so that it can be examined in more detail.

The sales process announced by the government in January 1999 and initiated by the Cape Breton Development Corporation is at a stage where the private sector has come forward with definitive proposals for Devco's assets. Devco has a real opportunity to move its operations to the private sector and the step that is required by the House is to move forward with Bill C-11.

During this debate I have heard a lot of support for privatization from both sides of the House. It is important that we seize the opportunity to enable a private sector operator to acquire Devco's mining assets so that jobs can be maintained in coal mining. With the progress that Devco has made and the investments that prospective purchasers have made in carrying out their due diligence, time has now become of the essence in terms of moving forward with this bill.

The sale process will involve substantially all of Devco's assets. Subsection 90, part II of the Financial Administration Act stipulates that no crown corporation shall sell or otherwise dispose of all or substantially all of its assets unless authorized by an act of parliament. That is the reason for Bill C-11.

In addition to obtaining the authority to sell substantially all of Devco's assets, the bill will provide for the winding up of the affairs of the corporation and its eventual dissolution; provide for legal proceedings against Devco to be brought against the crown; maintain the general advantage of the Canada clause of the existing Cape Breton Development Corporation Act, thereby ensuring that the Canada Labour Code will apply to a private sector purchaser, and amend the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act to remove provisions that are no longer applicable.

This is a relatively simple straightforward bill. The first five clauses of the bill are the divestiture and dissolution authorization. Most of these clauses are standard for this type of legislation.

Next is a series of amendments to the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act that are of a housekeeping nature that reduces the number of directors on the board. Finally, there are consequential amendments to other acts.

It is now time to study these aspects of the bill in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Before recognizing the last speaker, I should have told the House that from this point on we are getting into 10 minute speeches with no questions or comments.

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Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak on Bill C-11. The issue of Devco and that of the whole coal mining industry in Cape Breton is one that has been grappled with by successive governments, particularly over the last 30 years when government involvement in Cape Breton coal mining reached a greater level in the late 1960s and Devco was formed as a crown corporation.

It has been a very difficult period in recent years with the decline in the coal industry and the resulting impact on Cape Bretoners, particularly in industrial Cape Breton.

We all recognize that we are in the midst of a transitional economy, from a resource based traditional industrial economy into, and we are well into it, a knowledge based economy where most of the opportunities in the 21st century will come not from bricks but more likely from clicks.

• (1310)

If we really look at some of what is happening in the global environment, we have to ensure that while we are preparing new generations to participate in the global knowledge based economy, we are not denying them the ability to take care of themselves and their families during a very difficult time.

There are several concerns about Bill C-11. We in the Progressive Conservative Party are supportive of the direction that the government is taking in a general sense in addressing the issue of the Devco situation. There are some significant problems with the compensation packages and some real fairness issues that have not been addressed in this legislation. If we compare the treatment of one coal miner to another depending on the length of time the miner has worked and the age of the miner, the formula seems to be in need of a significant amount of work. The fairness issue within the network of people who will be receiving benefits is clearly inadequate and wrong headed.

I have also heard some other members speak today of the comparative disadvantages of the pay out packages compared to similar situations with other precedents that have been set by government or crown agencies in the past. Again, as a member of parliament, I would hope, expect and demand that Cape Breton coal miners be dealt with fairly at this very difficult time.

I would also urge the government to do more work with the knowledge based economic players, whether it is the incubators like the University College of Cape Breton and Dr. Jacquelyn Thayer-Scott who is working with the University College of Cape Breton to create a greater level of economic opportunity in the new economy there. I would hope that the government recognizes the value of that very important incubation infrastructure for the new economy and continues to increase levels of support for it.

I would also hope that the government would look at ways to obtain a more competitive or advantageous tax structure. Tax advantage zones can be created within Canada in places like Cape Breton. Many people compare Canada with Ireland and the tremendous growth that has been seen there in recent years. Ireland has had a 92% growth in GDP per capita over a 10 year period. This is not really a very good comparison.

If we compare Ireland to pockets in Atlantic Canada, particularly Cape Breton, and consider Ireland's relationship with the EU in the context of Cape Breton's relationship with other parts of Canada through the equalization system, I think we can quite quickly see a parallel of opportunities. If the government were to develop some type of tax advantage for companies to locate in places like Cape Breton, a similarly advantageous tax structure to what has been accomplished with Ireland's economy using some of the funding from the EU could be created. These are the types of things we should be looking at. The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council and the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies have done some very credible work on some of these areas and alternatives in the new economy.

There are some significant flaws in the fairness issue related to Bill C-11.

• (1315)

I urge all members of the House to be vigilant in not putting on any logical blinders when dealing with these kinds of issues. It is a difficult time for the coal miners of Cape Breton who are losing their jobs. We must ensure that they are dealt with as fairly as those in previous situations in other precedents in Canada with crown agencies.

I further urge that we continue working toward creating an economic environment for Cape Breton and all Canada where people can find greater levels of economic opportunities and prosperity within some of the new emerging industries as we begin the 21st Century.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today in the House with the same sense of outrage and frustration that has been expressed by other members. We are debating a bill that is of vital importance to the people of Cape Breton, to the people who have worked in the Devco mines and to the people who live in the communities that have supported those mines, and, I think for the 66th time in this parliament, we are facing closure on yet another bill. This will cut off debate and the life line that those miners have to voice their expressions of concern in this parliament about what is happening to them and their communities.

We are here in parliament to defend and uphold democracy. Whenever we have closure on debate and whenever debate is cut

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off and opposition members are cut off from holding the government accountable for the legislation it brings in, it is a sad day not just in this parliament but for all Canadians and something to which we should pay attention.

We are debating Bill C-11, the bill that means the death and dissolution of Devco, a program of this government to carry out policies that will have a very dramatic impact on the people of Cape Breton.

My colleagues in the federal NDP from Nova Scotia but particularly from Cape Breton, the member for Sydney—Victoria and the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, have stood up in parliament and in the community in solidarity with the people of Cape Breton to fight this closure.

I will deal with two issues in my comments. One is the myth that surrounds the mining operations and what has taken place over many generations. Second, I will talk about the impact that this closure will have.

It is a myth that this mining operation is somehow a losing proposition and the government had no alternative but to step in and shut it down. The reality is that for over 300 years mining has been a part of this community. For over 300 years mining has sustained good paying union jobs for which miners in many cases have fought and died, for health and safety, for better wages and for better working conditions. In many instances they have given their lives to that community by working in these mines.

Over the years these mines have also provided great economic benefit. I am not from Cape Breton. I am from Vancouver East. I am from the other coast, the west coast. Yet the story that I see in Cape Breton is a story that is all too familiar across the country. In my own community of East Vancouver we have seen the government set up the proposition that somehow a community economic development operation that is getting a government subsidy, it is too late, it is too bad, we have to take the subsidy away and we have to somehow make it profitable.

The fact is that over the past 30 years the government has invested about \$1.7 billion into the Devco mines. What has been put back into that local economy from spin-offs and the support that it has created in local communities has been more than \$5 billion.

I know from watching the news reports on television and listening to my colleagues from Cape Breton that in the local community they know the truth. They know this mine could continue to be profitable and that the decision by the government to withdraw from this operation, devastating the lives of the local communities, is one of the worst things that has happened in this parliament.

• (1320)

In terms of the impact, I have to ask myself what would happen to a local community where there is an employment environment, whether it is a mine, or a fishery, or the woodworking industry in British Columbia, if that was suddenly withdrawn. I think last Christmas we saw an inkling of what that impact would be. Many of us were back in our ridings. I was paying attention to issues that were going on in Vancouver East and dealing with many important things. Every day I watched the national news and watched the miners who, in desperation, were trying to draw the attention of the government to their plight and what would happen as a result of these mine closures. It was really awful to watch.

The miners wanted to be home with their families. They wanted to get ready for Christmas, to buy Christmas presents and to celebrate with their families and friends. What were they doing? They were holding sit-ins and taking desperate measures because they felt like they were at the end of the line and had no options left.

I am proud to say that our members in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton were there standing in solidarity with those miners. They understood what was going on.

A lot of times in the House we debate issues around poverty, child poverty and the 1989 resolution to eliminate child poverty that was passed unanimously in the House. It seems that on occasion there is a sense of goodwill from the House that this is an important Canadian priority. We do not want to see children go hungry. We do not want to see children living in communities where there is economic and social devastation. However, with this bill, through deliberate conscious public policy, the government has created that kind of social and economic devastation. There will be more poor children in Cape Breton, a community that is already suffering.

My colleague from Bras d'Or—Cape Breton told me that to even come close to the level of what is happening on the mainland, Cape Breton will need another 13,000 to 14,000 jobs. Why would this mine closure make any sense? Why would this bill make any sense? Even the terms of the closure are disastrous in terms of not involving the miners and not developing compensation packages.

A few minutes ago we heard from our colleague from Sydney—Victoria who said that the miners, who have worked there for decades and who have literally given their working lives to this industry, will not be compensated, recognized or acknowledged in terms of their own health. They will leave this industry with no job, no protection for them or their families in terms of health care, no dental plan and no ongoing training. What a catastrophe. What does it say about the priorities of the government?

In terms of the impact on this community, I am sure there will be increasing anxiety not only about the closures but about what will happen at this point. We have already heard speculation and

rumours that one of the mines might be up for sale and that it might be bought by a multinational corporation. It is insane that we have a government that is not willing to sit down in good faith with the local community, with those workers, their families, community leaders and the local members of parliament to find a way for this operation to continue. The miners were greatly interested in getting together and forming co-operatives and associations that would have allowed the mine to continue. They wanted to ensure that there was local control.

We talk a lot about community economic development. Here was an instance where the people in the community were committed, had the knowledge and the expertise. Did anyone else have more expertise than those coal miners to know how the operation should run and how it could be profitable? They were completely ignored by the federal government. We are here today debating the dissolution of these operations under an order of closure to cut off debate with speculation about a multinational corporation moving in.

• (1325)

The federal NDP wants to know what the federal government is doing to investigate potential buyers who may be there and come forward. We understand that there are multinational corporations looking at this particular operation and may want to put in a purchase offer. One of the rumours we have heard is that one such corporation buys its coal from Colombia. What we need to know is who will be mining that coal. Will child labour be used? Has the government done any investigation to assure the local community that whatever buyers are there are actually organizations and corporations that have legitimacy, credibility, a track record and are not using child labour in other countries or violating environmental standards?

The worst part is that we should not even be considering foreign buyers. We should be investing in this local community. We should be saying that these jobs have value and meaning and that the people of this local community have a right to come together to determine their own economic future. That is what we stand for in this party.

I want to move the following amendment:

That the amendment be amended by deleting the words "Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations" and inserting the words "Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities" following the words "subject matter".

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): At this point, I will reserve my ruling on the amendment as there may be a question of wording that may not be receivable. I will get back to the hon. member.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to again stand in the House to debate Bill C-11.

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Since I last spoke to the bill on November 15, 1999, I have had an opportunity to visit Cape Breton and talk to the stakeholders in this issue. I met with union representatives, as well as two local bidders whose bids were rejected by Nesbitt Burns Inc. I also visited the mine sites, the coal wash plant and the old Sydney steel mill site. The visits certainly gave me a more indepth understanding of the issues surrounding the sale of Devco and how it will affect Cape Bretoners.

Despite the government's stated commitment to a speedy process for this bill, Bill C-11 seems to have totally dropped off the government's legislative radar until today. Everything else seems to be a priority for the government except for a bill that has so far-reaching and drastic effects on the lives of Cape Bretoners.

• (1330)

We might also suppose that a bill of such importance would be given due process and time, but no, yet again the government has decided to wait until the last moment before invoking time allocation to run the bill through the House of Commons as fast as it possibly can. After all, the government does not care to allow all members the opportunity to rise in the House and speak their concerns, or more important, the concerns of Canadians.

I can only wonder why the government is suddenly in such a hurry to speed Bill C-11 through the House. After all, it has always been acknowledged that before the sale of Devco could proceed, this bill had to be passed.

It makes me wonder if the rumoured American buyers are getting impatient to claim their prize. We know how chummy the Prime Minister likes to be with anyone south of the border. What else would motivate the government to suddenly move so quickly? Certainly it could not be the interests of Cape Bretoners and Canadians.

I am fully aware that Devco was created as a vote getting measure, despite the fact that as far back as 1957 it was recognized that the coal industry alone simply would not be sufficiently viable to sustain the entire economy of Cape Breton on a long term basis.

In 1966 the government announced a \$55 million package to phase out coal mining in Cape Breton over 15 years, yet in the very next year massive expansion occurred within the region with the creation of Devco. Even as Devco was being created it was obvious that the coal mining industry in Cape Breton would not be viable if Devco had to accept the full liability of past generations of Dominion Steel and Coal Company employees who were abandoned when these ventures went into receivership. So began the government's involvement, what I would call interference, into the economy and viability of Cape Breton.

For the next 30 years the government continued to support Devco through a variety of subsidies and grants until finally in

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January 1999 the government announced that it was putting Devco and all its assets up for sale. That is 30 years of families coming to rely on the industry they believed would support them as they had supported Devco.

We are not just talking about a nine to five job that the miners can walk away from without any costs. A well known fact is the toll that coal miners pay with their health to work in coal mines.

Despite the costs, the miners went ahead and did their jobs believing they would have jobs in the industry which is all many of them have ever known. Yet the entire time the government has known differently.

Over the years through different governments which have come and gone, one thing has not changed regarding Devco. It simply was not working.

To sustain the economy, one could suggest to flow votes from Cape Breton to the government, the government continually sunk more and more money into Devco with the expressed intention of making the industry work. At the same time, an examination of the annual reports of Devco indicated that the government was intentionally manipulating the shutdown of Devco.

Because of that manipulation, Devco families have faced numerous shutdowns, failures to meet production targets, and stunning financial losses. It is those families in the Cape Breton community as a whole who are suffering from devious management manipulation.

When I first rose in the House to speak to Bill C-11, I raised a number of concerns regarding the accountability measures included within the bill. As I have just mentioned, governments over the years have done little to ensure that Devco was not used as a patronage plum. I would hope that in the final days of Devco, the government could at the very least assure Canadians that their hard earned money was not going to waste in some Liberal crony's pocket.

On March 20 a committee established to suggest ways to spend the \$80 million set aside to cushion the collapse of Cape Breton's coal industry released a report which stated the following:

Cape Breton Island has experienced poor economic conditions many times. . .but none can compare to the present day. People are showing a lack of confidence in the future. Immediate action is required to both illustrate government's understanding of the problem and its potential to help.

I would like to remind everyone that such a situation is exactly what was predicted back in 1957. Here we are on May 8, 2000 and we are still looking at second reading of this bill, albeit in a rather drastic hurry.

The report was released almost a month and a half ago and the government is just now realizing it had better hurry up and do

something about the situation in Cape Breton. After all, the Prime Minister has promised an election within the next year. I question the timeline of the government and its dedication to providing due process and consideration for the miners and Devco employees affected by the sale of Devco.

• (1335)

Speaking of the sale of Devco, I have a few questions regarding exactly how the sale is taking place. Let me provide a bit of background.

Clause 2(2) calls for subsections 99(2) to (5) of the Financial Administration Act not to apply to the disposal or sale of Devco assets. Back in November when I originally spoke to the bill I voiced my concerns as to why the FAA needs to be suspended for this sale to go through. More important, what will replace those controls? The FAA ensures that a sale such as this happens in an open, accountable manner. If these restrictions are removed, what will control such issues as who gets the successful bid, was a reasonable amount paid for the assets, was the transaction made in the best value for money interests and will the money return to the public coffers?

Another concern I raised in November was that only bidders and cabinet will have access to the bidding process. No one else can get information about how much the assets are worth. How will we know if the final price truly reflects the value of the assets? The reality is that whoever takes over the assets will not just get non-viable leftovers. After having invested millions of dollars over the last 30 years and thanks to governments never seeing any kind of return on investment, Canadians at least deserve to know the terms and conditions of the sale.

I am sorry to state that I believe many of my fears regarding the process of the sale of Devco are being realized. Mr. Joe Shannon, currently on the Devco board of directors, was first appointed by cabinet on July 4, 1995 to be the chairman of the Devco board for a three year term. On July 26, 1995 cabinet authorized the board's decision to have Joe Shannon act as president of Devco. Mr. Shannon was reappointed to the board of directors for another three year term on August 26, 1998.

Mr. Shannon has obviously done fairly well through his appointments. At the same time he was leading Devco he was also president, director and chief executive officer of Seaboard Transport. While Joe Shannon was head of both companies, Seaboard Transport received a multimillion dollar contract to transport coal from the mines to the Nova Scotia power plants and the wash plant, a clear conflict of interest.

That is not the end of the story of Mr. Shannon. He is currently participating with Nesbitt Burns assessing bids for the sale and divestiture of Devco assets. Mr. Shannon clearly has a vested interest in ensuring his own interests are considered by whoever

takes over. Judging by his lack of qualms in sitting on both the Devco and Seaboard Transport boards, I am doubtful that Mr. Shannon will suddenly find himself a conscience and act on what is truly in the best interests of Devco, Cape Bretoners and Canadian taxpayers.

Not only do I have concerns regarding the goings on in the boardroom, I have serious doubts regarding the bidding process for Devco and how decisions are being made as to who is seriously considered. In the March 20, 2000 edition of the Cape Breton *Post* a letter from Kevin Murphy, vice-president of the Cape Breton Miners Development Co-operative Limited, stated the concern of many Cape Bretoners that the bidding process for Devco is freezing out local bids. Mr. Murphy stated the following:

We feel that handing off the Nova Scotia Power Inc. supply contract to foreign suppliers is an unacceptable situation and we decided back in May to do something about it by forming a workers co-op and subsequently submitting a bid for the Devco assets through the Nesbitt Burns process.

Our bid was rejected, as was a bid put forward by Donkin Resources Limited, which is determined to press on with opening the Donkin mine with the support of the community and groups such as our co-op, which is ready to invest in the project to ensure that at least some of the NSPI coal is supplied by Cape Bretoners.

Mr. Murphy went on to question why the federal government would rather hand over a lucrative contract to a foreign company when the coal could be supplied locally. He concluded that “there is money to be made in the industry and that it should be reinvested here for the future of our people”.

I quoted extensively from Mr. Murphy because I do not think it could be said any better. Cape Bretoners are ready, prepared and anxious to rebuild their economy—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Order, please. I must interrupt the hon. member. Ten minutes has elapsed, unfortunately.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to speak to this very important bill, Bill C-11. It deals with Devco, the Cape Breton Development Corporation divestiture authorization and dissolution act.

• (1340)

It is important to put this matter into some context in the sense that subsection 90(2) of the Financial Administration Act stipulates that we need to go through this process in order to meet the requirements under that act. It is very important that we proceed accordingly.

I was somewhat heartened by the member for Kings—Hants. He spoke in very reasoned tones and appropriately so. It was important that he went on record as indicating that the party opposite was in

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agreement with how the government was acting. It certainly made a great deal of sense to me. It is important that we proceed accordingly.

I was a little disappointed with the Canadian Alliance member, the member for Athabasca, who talked in terms of the Americans and how they interact with Canada. If anyone should be looking in the mirror when it comes to the Americans it is the alliance party. That party is in favour of a two tier American style health system. Members of the Canadian Alliance should be the last people in the House to talk about Canada's interface with the Americans.

The member for Athabasca seemed to drag a few people and the process through the mud today. I take exception to that. It is inappropriate and not very beneficial to the debate. Quite frankly it is typical of those alliance members in what they do, how they say it, and the kind of actions they seem to take delight in making.

Having said that, I have been to Cape Breton a number of times, at least three times and most recently twice. It is very important to meet with the people there. I have met with people in the area, union people, local officials, families. It is important that we on the government side listen carefully.

I was astounded by the NDP member for Vancouver East and the outrageous things she said about bringing in the end to this debate and proceeding forward. She knows full well, as do all the NDP members opposite, that we have had a number of hours of debate in the House on this very important bill. Instead the member said that we are somehow abusing the system when in fact it is the contrary. What we are doing is bringing closure to this very important bill.

Instead the member talked about poor children. She talked about child labour in other countries. She talked about rumours that she had heard. Imagine, in this great parliament of ours members opposite, especially the NDP who should know better, getting up and dealing in rumour and innuendo. Is that not typical of the NDP members who always are delighted in throwing tons of money at everything. Instead of taking a reasoned, natural and good rational approach to things, they always throw money at them, which is a typical NDP philosophy.

Instead we on this side of the House are putting a process in place for the benefit not only of the good people of Cape Breton, of Devco and those people who are in need but by extension for all Canadians. That is important to note. It underscores the commitment of the Government of Canada in this all important area.

The NDP members in this debate have been twisting this fact and I find it reprehensible that they would do it. I want to point out that on October 1, 1999 the Cape Breton Development Corporation advised the federal Minister of Labour that it would be terminating

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the employment of approximately 600 employees due to the closure of the Phalen colliery.

On January 13 the company and the four unions representing Devco employees agreed to form a joint planning committee as per part III of the Canada Labour Code. The committee met in an attempt to reach agreement on the terms of an adjustment program that was unsuccessful, which was unfortunate.

The employee representatives on that committee notified the Minister of Labour of their inability to reach agreement with the company. On March 14 the Minister of Labour appointed a person as mediator to assist in the negotiations and failing agreement, to advise her on the matters appropriate for arbitration pursuant to section 224 of part III of the Canada Labour Code.

• (1345)

We are now at that point and into binding arbitration. As most members of the House know, it will be binding not only on the company but on the members and the employees involved, as well as on the Government of Canada. We expect that report some time in the very near future and some talk as early as the end of May. We need to proceed in that fashion. It is important and it makes a great deal of sense.

It astounded me when I heard the Alliance member, the hon. member for Athabasca, talk in terms of little or no consultation. That really is an out and out falsehood.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lynn Myers: Members from the NDP know that as well. Listen to them caterwauling instead of listening to the speech. They are caterwauling and trying to stir things up. They should listen. What I am about to say is worth listening to.

The minister met with all kinds of officials in that part of the country. He met with management. He met with unions. He met with business and community leaders. He met with local clergy, for that matter. He met with representatives of the provincial government. He has gone out of his way as have other members of the government, instead of stirring things up, trying to undermine the process and trying to act on rumours, innuendo, falsehoods and myths like members of the NDP. Instead of doing that, we on the government side got our facts and listened to the people to ensure that we were involved in great consultation by way of process and how best to deal with the good folks in that part of Canada.

At the end of the day, is it perfect? I do not think so. However at the end of the day we have put in place a great process which makes sense ultimately. It will assist that part of Atlantic Canada and, more to the point, Cape Breton. It will do so in a manner consistent with the values of people in not only that part of our country but Canadians wherever they live in our great land.

It is important that we have done it in a methodical, wise and reasoned way, instead of operating as some members of the opposition have, that is by way of falsehoods, stirring things up and making mischief, quite simply, which I think is absolutely inappropriate.

The plan is in place in a way that Devco has now received definitive proposals for its assets. The corporation is at a stage of evaluating and clarifying one of the proposals with a view to finalizing the broad terms and conditions of the sale. Hopefully that will be done in the very near future, and again there is talk of as early as June. Negotiations concerning a final detailed purchase and sale agreement would follow accordingly, as would be the normal course of events.

This is following what the minister, the officials and government have seen as appropriate in terms of this important issue which strikes to the heart of a great many people in that part of Canada. We understand that. We respect it and we have tried to deal with it in a sensitive and reasoned way.

The prospects for transferring the assets of Devco to the private sector and for maintaining coal mining jobs in a private sector commercial operation are very real. That has been a goal of the government from the outset. Instead of trying to create mischief and doing those kinds of things, with a steady hand the government is trying to ensure that we can carry on with employment in an area that requires our assistance. We as a government have always tried to do the right thing, which is to assist people.

Unlike others in the House who might try in a Darwinian economic sense to let people hang out to dry, we have never done that, not through history and certainly not now. We will do the right thing to ensure that the transition from the jobs of the past to the new economy will take place in a way consistent with the values that are appropriate to Canadian society. So it is that we proceed in this important area.

I have great friends in Cape Breton with whom I have talked repeatedly. I have visited there on a number of occasions. It is important that we deal with the matter in a way consistent with not only what those people want, because obviously they are important in this equation, but in the best interest of the country as a whole. It is with great honour that I say we will now bring the bill forward, vote on it and get on with the business at hand. Why do we do that? We do it because it is ultimately not only in the best interest of the people of Cape Breton and specifically the employees of Devco, but it is in the best interest of Canada as a whole.

• (1350)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): At this point I would like to advise the House and the member for Vancouver East that the amendment to the amendment she proposed earlier is not in order because it would render the amendment unintelligible.

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Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Devco. I wanted, especially after the last speaker, to put before the House and others who may be listening what is at stake.

We are talking about the direct loss of close to 1,500 well paying jobs. We are talking about the loss of almost \$80 million per year in wages and salaries to that region. We are talking about the loss of \$28 million a year in Canada pension, employment insurance and income tax. We are talking about a total estimated annual economic loss, direct and indirect, as high as \$300 million for the region of Cape Breton.

The previous speaker would have everybody think that this is a very minor bill that will through and what is the problem. As I understand it this is the 65th time the government has introduced time allocation or closure, as most Canadians know it. Not everybody, but most of us know that 65 is the age of compulsory retirement for humans in Canada. We think it is time to retire this kind of time allocation and allow debates to be held in the House on a timely basis.

In February we on this side of the House endeavoured to have an emergency debate to discuss the matter, and of course it was denied. Here we are two and a half months later and we have time allocation.

Leading up to the debate in February there were newspaper stories that Canada Steamship Lines had expressed interest in purchasing the Cape Breton Development Corporation, and we know who heads Canada Steamship Lines today. The story in the newspapers is that Canada Steamship Lines is now purchasing new ocean freighters from a low wage Chinese shipyard. This is just days after a ship was launched in Saint John, New Brunswick. Many workers there feel it is the last ship that will ever be built at those docks.

What we are talking about and what members opposite do not want to talk about is almost certainly the imminent sale of Devco. They say they have to get on with it, but they are not saying who is the prospective buyer. We know almost with certainty that it will be a foreign buyer, almost certainly an American one.

I want to spend a few minutes telling the House what has been happening in the last few years in Canada with regard to foreign ownership. The fact of the matter is that for a relatively stable number of years, several years, the inflow of foreign ownership into this country roughly matched the amount of Canadian investment overseas.

However, in 1998, foreign ownership in this country jumped fourfold to \$24 billion. In 1999, according to Statistics Canada, the figure was \$36 billion or six times what it had been three or four years earlier. We are seeing the selling off of the country, the

takeover, the buying out of our low dollar that has now dropped below 66 cents. This, coupled with the surging American economy, has made Canada a haven for buyouts.

We will see it again with Devco. We see the figures indicating that it has been losing money in the last number of years. Where did we hear that kind of story before? Canadian National was losing money on paper until it was taken over. Now 75% or 80% of it is owned by Americans and, wonder of wonders, it has turned the corner and is making a handsome profit. We will see absolutely the same scenario with the Devco operation.

• (1355)

The most telling of points for Canadians would be the very graphic television images of people who went underground to protest what was happening around Christmastime last year in Cape Breton Island. They stayed there until we thought a deal could be sorted out. These are the images regarding this issue that will stay with Canadians for a long time.

A number of other costs cannot be calculated. They include an increase in out migration from Cape Breton, a region that over the past decade and a half has seen a population decline of over 7% and a drop in employment opportunities resulting in the closure of Devco. The \$68 million that have been committed by the government to encourage sound, long term economic development in Cape Breton is far less than the close to \$300 million generated in the Nova Scotia economy annually by Devco.

The federal government's commitment to work closely with the province and the community to identify strategic investments for the \$68 million is a farce. After more than nine months of silence and inaction, the few weeks of public consultations is an absolute insult to the community.

The government has repeatedly stated that no decision on the future of Devco would be made without prior consultation with the stakeholders and the community. Yet no meaningful consultation has taken place to date. That is what we have been after. That is what my colleagues, the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton and the member for Sydney—Victoria, were demanding when they asked for an emergency debate in the middle of February that was denied by government members.

It is correct to say that the federal government has put more than \$1.7 billion into Devco over the past 30 years, but Devco has generated over \$5 billion in return into the economy. It has been a very happy and convenient arrangement for the people of Cape Breton. Before I sit down I move:

That the amendment before us be amended by deleting the words, "Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations" and inserting the words, "Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities".

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The Speaker: I find the amendment to the amendment to be in order. We will take up the debate after question period. This theme encapsulates the guiding principle of all Red Cross work which is the rehabilitation of people suffering the consequences of war, violence, natural disaster and malnutrition.

The government finally acknowledged the assault that was committed on the lives of these men in a Suffield ceremony on May 5, 2000, but many are still battling for some form of compensation. This is outrageous. Not only should these experiments never have happened, but the victims should not have to fight veterans affairs today. Surely they have suffered enough indignity, personal loss and injustice.

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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[Translation]***RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT**

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to inform the House that today, May 8, is World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day.

This day celebrates the humanitarian work of millions of Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers worldwide.

The Red Cross provides assistance to countless victims of conflict and disaster. Last year alone, the Canadian Red Cross Society helped victims of earthquakes in Turkey, Taiwan and, just recently, in Mozambique.

[English]

In honour of the millennium, the international family of the Red Cross is celebrating the theme, power of humanity. This theme encapsulates the guiding principle of all Red Cross work which is the rehabilitation of people suffering the consequences of war, violence, natural disaster and malnutrition.

● (1400)

Please join me in recognizing the Canadian Red Cross Society for its work and in wishing a very successful World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day.

* * *

VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on this anniversary of Victory in Europe Day we reflect on the courage of our war veterans who fought so that we could be free. It is also necessary to acknowledge some veterans who were abused and forgotten.

For years, some military personnel were used as guinea pigs by the Department of National Defence for mustard gas experiments. This is a source of national shame, a tragic example of bureaucratic immorality and a story of human suffering. Yet the government has never apologized to those it deemed fodder for chemical warfare tests.

NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the members of the House and all Canadians that May 8 to May 14 is National Palliative Care Week.

Hospice palliative care is aimed at relief of suffering and improving the quality of life for persons who are living with or dying with advanced illness. This type of care includes the person and his or her family in planning treatment and care so that they can make choices based on knowledge and understanding. This kind of care offers social, emotional and spiritual support to the person as well as their family by members of a very diverse team.

The Canadian Palliative Care Association is a national association which provides leadership in hospice palliative care in Canada through collaboration and representation, development of national standards of practice, support in theory, advocacy for improved policy, research allocation and support for caregivers.

It is very important that we join them in commending the dedicated professionals, caregivers and volunteers who provide palliative care and to the Canadian Palliative Care Association and its affiliates for the good work they do.

* * *

*[Translation]***AUTOBUS AUGER INC.**

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1992, retired unionized employees of local 512 of the northwest division of Autobus Auger Inc. have been having trouble with their pension plan.

The Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions has had the file on the claims of retired employees for several months now.

I get the feeling that Investissements Richard Auger of Châteauguay is cooking the books with respect to the financial situation of retired workers for Industrielle Alliance and for William M. Mercer, to the advantage of Autobus Auger Inc.

There is one unacceptable practice in this pension plan. The employer, Autobus Auger, and Investissements Richard Auger did not have certain expenditures of this employee pension plan

approved. Where are the surpluses? They should comply with the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to remind the members of the House and all Canadians that May 8 to May 14 is National Nursing Week. This year the Canadian Nurses Association has partnered with Health Canada to organize activities in support of Canada's physical activity and health strategy.

As members know, the federal, provincial and territorial governments have joined in setting a goal to reduce the number of inactive Canadians by 10% by the year 2003. Today there are 255,000 registered nurses in Canada who help patients and clients with information, advice and support on how to improve their health by including physical activity in their daily lives.

The theme of National Nursing Week 2000 is "Challenge Yourself-Get Active". Please join me in recognizing the important contributions of the nursing profession in Canada.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to give recognition to two very special Canadians.

On May 3 Joey Hache received an honorary recognition for his continuing fight in an effort to bring equal compensation to all victims of Hepatitis C. Joey was recognized at the Third Annual Spirit of the Capital Youth Awards.

Hon. members will remember Joey and his cycle of conscience. After the government refused to offer compensation for all victims of Hep C, Joey told the Prime Minister that he would be his conscience. In June 1998 he started a bike ride across Canada with the goal of raising awareness about those who suffer from Hep C. Joey has worked long and hard to achieve this goal.

• (1405)

On Monday, May 1 of this year the first annual Hepatitis C candlelight vigil was held across Canada and into the United States. It began with the dream of one person, a very special lady in my own riding, Sue White. Sue has Hepatitis C and wanted to recognize the many victims who have died since this tragic disease has spread across this land. The purpose of the ceremony was to create awareness, provide education and promote the prevention of Hep C.

I salute these two special people who face personal challenges far greater than any of us.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

HÉLÈNE MARCHESSAULT

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 26, a young woman from my riding, Hélène Marchessault, of Saint-Guillaume, was awarded a bursary of \$500 by the Quebec Department of Education in its "Chapeau les filles" competition.

The purpose of this program is to recognize the efforts of dynamic young women who dare to follow non-traditional career paths.

Hélène certainly qualifies as such, as she studied swine production and worked for one of Quebec's biggest swine producers, and is now returning to school to study animal husbandry, another non-traditional field.

Hats off to you, Hélène, from all the people of Drummond riding, myself included.

* * *

[English]

HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, heart-related diseases kill more than 77,000 Canadians every year. The Heart and Stroke Foundation estimates that one in every four Canadians has either some sort of heart condition or a disease of the blood vessels such as high blood pressure or stroke-related illness.

From May 7 to May 10, the foundation is holding an event called "Big Bike for Stroke" in my riding of Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale.

I wish to join my colleagues in the House in encouraging all Canadians to reduce the risk of heart trouble by having a healthy diet and being physically active.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCO-ACTION TELETHON

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second edition of the Franco-Action telethon was held yesterday afternoon on Rogers community television, in the Ottawa region.

The organizers of this event exceeded their objective, collecting close to \$105,000. These funds will be going to the Montfort Hospital Foundation, the Fondation Pauline-Charron to benefit seniors, and the Ottawa District Boy Scouts.

On behalf of all of my colleagues in the House of Commons, I wish to congratulate the organizers of this telethon and all those

S. O. 31

who participated in it, and to express particular thanks to all those who pledged a donation to the Franco-Ontarian community.

* * *

[*English*]

PRINCE GEORGE COUGARS

Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, you just had to be there to experience the excitement, the electricity, the fever pitch, as night after night the Prince George Cougars took to the ice in Prince George during this last hockey season. You had to be there to see the roof come off the Multiplex as our young Cougars played their hearts out before 6,000 fans every single game this season, game after game.

I want to pay tribute and give thanks to owner Rick Brodsky, the management, the staff, the coach, Ed Dempsey and most of all the Cougars players for such a fantastic season and making the finals of the WHL western division playoffs.

On behalf of all the Cougar fans, myself and the Cougars' biggest fan in all the world, my son Mike, I want to thank the Cougars for all the excitement and the enjoyment they gave us this season.

* * *

HUMBER RIVER

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last September the Minister of Canadian Heritage designated the Humber River as a Canadian heritage river. On Sunday, May 7, I had the great pleasure of attending Humber Heritage Day in Etienne Brulé Park and participating in the unveiling of the permanent heritage monument.

The Humber River has shaped people's lives for hundreds of years and continues to define our landscape today. This river watershed system provides recreational and educational opportunities as well as a spiritual retreat for thousands of people of many different cultures.

It is because of its importance that governments, communities and watershed residents have worked in partnership to ensure a continued protection and enhancement for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations. The Humber Watershed Project which received a \$400,800 contribution through the Canada millennium partnership program will be working to improve the area along the river through planting and clean-up events, the construction of new trails and the upgrading of existing ones.

The Humber River system is truly a priceless gift which must be preserved for future generations.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S AGENDA

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the first anniversary of the National Children's Agenda. Unfortunately, Canadian kids and their parents have absolutely nothing to celebrate. No national child care plan, no new housing initiatives, no new money for education but a lot of hype about a so-called children's budget that turned out to be a big bust for kids.

• (1410)

Instead, the children's agenda has amounted to a few glossy brochures, a few high priced consultants and some invitation-only consultations that have so far led nowhere.

The situation for far too many Canadian kids and families demands attention. It is time for action. Almost one million Canadian children are on social assistance, 40% of food bank users are children and the fastest growing homeless populations are families and youth under 18.

It is time for the federal government to take the lead, to come to the federal-provincial social union table with meaningful proposals like a national early child care and education fund that puts child care centre stage. It is time for the federal government to come to the table with funding commitments—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, a group of *Newswatch* supporters gathered in Montreal to prevent the cancellation of the CBC's English news in Quebec.

Newswatch is a program watched by thousands of Quebecers. It is important for these people to have access to local news in English.

I put four questions in the House on these closures. The Minister of Canadian Heritage said she was not aware of plans to cancel *Newswatch*. Then she said certain options were on the table.

[*English*]

The government has been scared to make a commitment to saving Montreal's local English newscast. The minister has emphasized the arm's length relationship between the government and the CBC. I respect that relationship, but it is the government that provides the funding and it has cut the CBC's budget by more than \$400 million in the last five years.

Oral Questions

Will the minister stop trying to pass the blame on to the executive and guarantee funding so that the CBC can truly reflect Canadian society?

* * *

NORTEL NETWORKS CORPORATION

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Nortel Networks on its celebration last week of independence day.

On May 1 Nortel Networks Corporation emerged as a widely held independent company as BCE Inc. released a plan to distribute virtually all of its ownership interest in the company.

Nortel is a global company with deep roots in Canada and in particular in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean where it had its beginning decades ago as Northern Electric. The Ottawa region has the largest concentration of Nortel employees in the world and is the focal point for advanced research in all its business lines. It is the largest private sector employer in the national capital region.

In just the first four months of this year Nortel added more than 2,500 new employees and has now announced a new investment to create space for another 2,500 R and D staff in the national capital region.

I wish Nortel Networks continuing success as an independent, widely held global powerhouse.

* * *

LEIGH MORRISON

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of this week I am going to be in New Brunswick to attend the preliminary hearing of Leigh Morrison.

The House will recall that Leigh Morrison was one of the New Brunswick lobster fishermen whose truck was burned at the Burnt Church wharf. Later that day the large shed where he kept his boat and fishing gear was vandalized by hooligans.

Mrs. Morrison had received death threats that day and had sought police protection. The police refused to protect the family. For doing the work of the RCMP of protecting his family and property, police charged Leigh with three counts of assault.

Those who threatened the Morrison family were charged with break and enter and intent to commit an indictable crime. Their sentence, a conditional discharge and order to pay \$1,200, was in my view insufficient.

This violence against the Morrison family was fueled by a flawed supreme court decision and the government's refusal to seek an immediate stay and rehearing. This government, and not

Leigh Morrison, a fine and honourable man, should be on trial for mishandling this critical issue.

* * *

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Canadian shipbuilding industry has been dying for the past several years, we discover today in the *National Post* that one of the Minister of Finance's companies is having two new ships built in China at a total cost of \$90 million.

This generous contract will expand the fleet of the Minister of Finance, which already has in it a number of ships built outside the country.

As if this were not enough, a number of ships belonging to the Minister of Finance are registered abroad, a loophole enabling the minister's companies to avoid income tax and payroll taxes. A fine example set by a man who would be Prime Minister.

● (1415)

One thing is sure: in the next elections, Quebec and Canadian taxpayers will remember this Minister of Finance who taxes the most disadvantaged and then saves several million dollars thanks to a fleet of ships flying foreign flags.

Sail on, he who amasses millions of dollars. Sail on, until the next election.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ATLANTIC CANADA

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister meets with the Atlantic premiers today perhaps he could explain to them why he is killing jobs in their provinces.

The Clarenville regional sportsplex was a \$1.2 million election time windfall in a Liberal member's riding in Newfoundland. The ACOA grant was supposed to create 40 full time long term jobs. Guess what? In two short years the centre drove a competing restaurant right out of operation. It angered most of the other business people in town. Now it is closed due to "mechanical problems", whatever that means.

Why are taxpayers on the hook for another Liberal boondoggle?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is the hon. member attacking the three Conservative premiers

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in the Atlantic provinces? They are the ones who invited the Prime Minister to take part in the trip to promote trade with the Atlantic provinces. They said they were delighted to have the Prime Minister go with them. They feel he is a real plus.

I do not know why the hon. member is asking this question. That is no way to get support for the alliance in the Atlantic provinces, by attacking Conservative premiers.

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, meanwhile back at Clarenville, remember that the Deputy Prime Minister and the minister responsible for ACOA were two guys who voted against ACOA when it was brought in by the Tories. I am sure they had visions of this sportsplex or something like it in mind when they did.

Bren Powers was the mastermind behind this particular scheme. His longtime Liberal connections clearly paid off again; \$1.2 million for a facility even though it drove competitors right out of business and ended up crashing itself less than two years after it opened.

Why is it that taxpayers should finance these boondoggles when they help nobody but Liberals?

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the official opposition does not understand exactly what ACOA does. Since the Liberals took over in 1993, ACOA only gives out loans and not grants in its core funding. It is not the same.

This is what the official opposition said last time I mentioned this. It said that a grant is like a loan. It is not. If it were then we would have no national debt. We could just say all those loans were grants. Maybe that is why they call themselves the alliance party, the al-li-ance party.

The Speaker: Please be very judicious in our choice of words, my colleagues.

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for ACOA can chuckle it up all he likes but he knows he was the very member who called it the Atlantic Canada overblown agency. I would like to know why he is defending it so much now. In fact, he forgot to mention also in his discussion a few moments ago that it is not a loan, it is a non-repayable loan. That to me equals a grant in my thesaurus.

I again ask the minister, why is it when there is a Liberal in need to win an election, we just cut the cheque when an election is going on? Who cares if it drives another business out? Who cares if the project will fail anyway? Why is it so important for this government to pay bucks for ballots?

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, that was an exact quote from what I did say when I was in the opposition and the Tories ran the ship. When the Liberals took over, the program was completely revised.

There is a byelection going on in Newfoundland. That is why there are these questions today. Imagine running being opposed to ACOA, being opposed to direct transfers, being opposed to everything and wanting to cut money from senior citizens grants. What planks in a platform; in Newfoundland they are just plain rotten.

• (1420)

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, first it was the Tories and now it is the Liberals. Nothing has really changed.

The government House leader, the heritage minister, the minister of public works and the Deputy Prime Minister all voted against the creation of ACOA. Even the minister who is now responsible for that program mocked it when he was in opposition. Yet after seven years in government, they are still writing ACOA cheques.

The minister claims that the program no longer hands out grants, just non-repayable loans. In fact, ACOA handed out 123 grants totalling more than \$12 million in the past three years alone. Maybe the minister can explain why taxpayers' money goes to job killing projects.

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, when the Liberals took over we changed the grants to loans. That was the first thing we did. Why? Because the auditor general had pointed out that was exactly what we should do. The second thing we did was we put a limit on those loans. The limit today is \$500,000. That is why ACOA has a better record in Atlantic Canada in its program than the chartered banks.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, of course the minister forgot to mention that there was a 1997 election to win in the process.

This is not about creating jobs. In fact, the Clarenville sportsplex killed lots of jobs. And it is not like the Liberals believed in ACOA. They tried to stop its very creation. Even the minister responsible for Shakespearean responses cannot hide the fact that he himself condemned ACOA when in opposition.

Why can the Liberals not resist the siren song of patronage at election time?

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding the so-called blip that the official

opposition refers to and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation I think refers to which goes up in 1996 and 1997, the figures for ACOA core funding actually went down. The blip was caused by the TAGS program from the previous year.

The alliance party should align itself with some chartered accountants.

* * *

[Translation]

CINAR

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, the RCMP officer responsible for the criminal investigation into the CINAR affair said that, if co-operation between the RCMP and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency did not improve, his investigation would be compromised.

How can the Minister of National Revenue justify his department's absence of co-operation, which will allow people who may be guilty of fraud to get off scot-free?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, at the risk of repeating myself, because this question is becoming a bit redundant and I have told the House this several times, when a question concerns a specific file, as the minister responsible for the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency I am unable to comment.

As for the co-operation between the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the RCMP, I have always told the House that co-operation between the two organizations was exceptional in all files and that this co-operation must take place within the framework of the Income Tax Act, which protects confidentiality.

Finally, I wish to draw to my colleague's attention the press release—

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the House's attention to the statements of the investigator in the CINAR affair. This person had the courage to appear on television and say everything he did about the absence of co-operation, despite the possibility of reprisals.

I ask the minister how it is that there were memoranda of understanding between the RCMP and Revenue Canada for certain investigations but not in the case of CINAR?

Why are there no such MOUs in the case of CINAR? Who do they want to protect? Who is hiding behind this whole business? Who is the minister helping?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada

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for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit sad to see the opposition trying to make political hay of such important matters as the confidentiality rules of the Income Tax Act.

I repeat: there is still good co-operation between the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the RCMP.

Also, and this is important, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency has general authority for tax investigations in Canada and only rarely do we turn to outside agencies.

• (1425)

Finally, I would again like to draw the House's attention to the press release issued by the RCMP last week, which speaks for itself.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to RCMP Staff Sergeant Carrier, the best way to ensure that the copyright fraud investigation can continue is to make Revenue Canada a full partner with the RCMP in the CINAR investigation.

How can the Minister of Revenue tell us that he is co-operating with the RCMP, while at the same time refusing to enter into an agreement with it, which would allow access to Revenue Canada records?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my response will no doubt sound redundant, but it is really the question that is, rather than the response.

I cannot comment on a specific case, because of a fundamental rule, the rule of confidentiality, which the government will always protect and which all Canadian taxpayers wish to see protected as well.

Second, in relation to this question, I have the impression that those on the other side have not looked at the RCMP press release of May 4, 2000. This press release states that there is a strong collaborative relationship between the two organizations, that the CCRA is co-operating with RCMP investigations according to the provisions allowed by the law, and that the RCMP is following the parameters—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the minister telling us that Canada's tax cheats are protected from police investigations under the pretext of confidentiality imposed by the Income Tax Act?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two elements here.

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What I explained to this House, and to all of the Canadian public, is that there are two elements to this. The first is that, on the one hand, we must protect the principle of confidentiality.

The second is that, when there are problems relating to taxation, investigations are carried out, very competently, by CCRA officials. This is very simple.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in Boston. The Atlantic premiers want to talk health care but the Prime Minister wants to talk trade. So let us talk trade, because it is the trade agreement signed by the government that is triggered by Alberta's bill 11. The bill is now in its final form, the government has had seven months to study it and Canadians want an answer from the government. Will the government finally acknowledge that bill 11 triggers NAFTA? Yes or no?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have assured the House time and again that we will do what is necessary to protect Canada's health care system. If and when bill 11 is adopted and implemented by the Government of Alberta, we will be vigilant to ensure as the Prime Minister has said that the principles of the Canada Health Act are respected. As the Minister for International Trade said last week in the House, we will ensure that Canada's health care system remains its own regardless of international agreements.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, back to NAFTA, the health minister says that he has raised NAFTA concerns with the province of Alberta. The trade minister says that there are no NAFTA concerns to raise.

It is the federal government that is responsible for NAFTA, yet it still appears to have no position. We are now days perhaps hours away from the passage of bill 11. Why has the minister not prepared a NAFTA response? When will the government come clean on NAFTA?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister said last week clearly that NAFTA provides the opportunity to Canada to protect its own health care system. Indeed that is what we are doing.

In terms of the Canada Health Act the principles are there to be respected. The Prime Minister has made it clear that if and when the bill is adopted and implemented, we will monitor to ensure that there is no threat to the principles of the Canada Health Act.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, a report obtained under the Access to Information Act confirms that the chief of the defence staff visited Canadian troops in East Timor and he had to be flown around in an Australian helicopter because our Sea Kings were not safe enough to fly him. This is despite the fact that the same helicopters have been used in theatre and despite the minister's repeated assurances to the House that the Sea Kings are safe.

Can the minister explain why the Sea Kings are safe for the lower ranks but not for generals, not for ministers nor the Prime Minister?

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

I would point out, as the minister has mentioned on a number of occasions, that the maritime helicopters project remains our top priority in terms of materiel.

We are developing an appropriate procurement strategy that will allow us to buy materiel that meets our needs and to get the best value for money for Canadians.

[English]

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in the House the Minister of National Defence told the House "We have a timeframe for replacement of the Sea King helicopters". He is talking about five more years down the road, and we have already had people who have been flying those helicopters and losing their lives.

On what date specifically along the minister's timeframe will the government make a final announcement and call for industry bids? Is it today, tomorrow or next week? When?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the hon. member that we have—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. We want to hear the hon. parliamentary secretary's response.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand: I want to tell the hon. member that, since last year, an additional \$50 million was provided, precisely to deal with the Sea King helicopters.

Oral Questions

As I mentioned in my first reply, we are making good progress and things should be finalized very soon.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, completely contrary to the human resources minister's claim of transparency, we keep finding examples of her hiding information critical of her department.

The latest example is that six pages of an audit by a respected accounting firm pointing to gross negligence by HRDC were censored, taken right out before the report was released. How can Canadians trust a minister who has been repeatedly discovered hiding evidence of her failures?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the question of trust I would just like to refer back to questions that were asked over and over in the House by that party with regard to our six point plan last week. I was perplexed at how they got all their facts so wrong, but I discovered they had never even read the full and complete action plan.

It was on Friday of last week that a senior researcher from that party called and asked for a copy of the final report. They had never read it. They had not listened to me in committee as early as February 10. I must ask that party over there how the Canadian public can have any confidence in the questions they ask.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, considering that the entire report was released to the HRDC committee weeks ago, I am not quite sure why the minister thinks we have not read it. We have had it for weeks and we have read it.

Here is what the minister tried to hide in the six pages that she censored: HRDC paid claims without proper verification; its contracts are vague and ambiguous; cash balances and expenses are not monitored; financial statements are not reviewed regularly; and, most serious of all, the law of the land, the Financial Administration Act, was not upheld by the minister's department. Is the minister surprised that she has a \$1 billion boondoggle on her hands?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this particular regard the hon. member is making reference to an audit of the Business Advisory Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth.

It was the Department of Human Resources Canada, along with its provincial and municipal partners, that decided to do the audit of

this sponsor. It is the department that discovered an overpayment. It is also the department that got the money repaid to the government. What more does the hon. member want?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is yet another case in the long list of scandals at the Department of Human Resources Development.

A grant of over \$700,000 was paid to a business, Modes Conili, to create 160 jobs. However, it appears that most of the jobs were simply transferred from an existing business to Modes Conili.

● (1435)

How can the minister justify the payment of a grant of over \$700,000 from the transitional jobs fund, when jobs were merely transferred from one company to another?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that as a result of the undertakings of the internal audit the department is looking at all its grants and contributions.

It is clear that this department is taking very seriously our role in ensuring that Canadians get the benefit of Canadian tax dollars to make new jobs and to ensure that Canadians who need help with literacy and young people to find employment get it. In this particular case, if the hon. member wants to bring forward details I will look at them.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, here are some details for the minister.

The contract signed between the department and Modes Conili provides that no payment will be made for employees recruited from another company for an equivalent position.

Can the minister explain why the contract was not respected?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to look into the details of the particular case.

* * *

CIDA

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, according to a May 3 CSIS report the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils is one of the more active umbrella fronts for the Sri Lankan terrorist group, the Tamil Tigers. Just

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three days after that report was released, the finance minister and the minister for CIDA sat down for dinner with this group.

Could the minister explain why she and the finance minister attended a dinner last weekend for an organization which both the U.S. state department and her own security agency have labelled a terrorist front?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the ministers attended a cultural event to celebrate the Tamil new year and to celebrate the contributions of Canadians of Tamil origin to Canadian life, and there are over 150,000 Canadians of Tamil origin.

Also attending that dinner were cabinet ministers from the Harris government, Toronto city councillors, the mayor of Mississauga and the managing editor of the Toronto *Sun*.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is nice but it is irrelevant. The point is that the Prime Minister is on record as saying that those people who—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said on record that those who raise funds for these terrorist groups are just as guilty as the terrorists themselves.

CSIS claims that Tamil Tigers are funded in part by supporters in Canada who collect money by fundraising drives, front businesses and criminal activity like extortion, drug smuggling, and immigration and passport fraud. CSIS says that this federation is a front for the Tamil Tigers. Why were the finance minister and the minister for CIDA breaking bread—

The Speaker: The hon. minister responsible for CIDA.

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find this very offensive. I had dinner with 600 law-abiding citizens and residents of Toronto. In my speech that evening I said that I supported the Government of Sri Lanka in negotiating a peaceful resolution to the conflict. I said that I supported the Norway attempt at finding a peaceful resolution, and I got a standing ovation.

The people who were in that room want peace to be negotiated in their homeland. They were not there for any other reason.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the Modes Conili file, Human Resources Development Canada continues to collapse under its poor administration.

We are a long way from the few files and the \$500 the Prime Minister referred to in summarizing the scandal at Human Resources Development Canada.

• (1440)

I ask the minister: since she is carrying out audits in her department on the Modes Conili file, would she not like to tell us at the same time why her department paid out two grants, one in 1997 and one in 1998, knowing full well that jobs were being transferred from one company to another and not created?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that is not the case. I am pleased to say that there were an expected 160 employees that were to be able to find work as a result of this transitional jobs fund, and there are actually 162.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister got off to a better start earlier, was a bit more cautious, saying “I will look into the details”. I would not want her to answer today because she would put her foot in it again.

I would ask her simply is she could not at the same time check in her department whether the person serving as intermediary between her department and Modes Conili was not the same person serving as intermediary in the file in which a business was transferred from the riding of Rosemont to the riding of the Prime Minister, a man working for a business called Golf and Grants, in French, Golf et—

The Speaker: Minister of Human Resources Development.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been advised in this case that indeed there was a third party representation and jobs may have been moved. An internal investigation was undertaken and this was not confirmed. As such, the project has continued, and I say again that 162 men and women are employed.

I would also remind the hon. member, as I always do, that in this project it is not just the federal government that is a partner but also the province of Quebec which supported this project.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, 20 year old David Trott, described by his stepfather as a dangerous loose cannon, a drug user with a

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history of violent rampages including guns, stabbings, stealing cars, police chases, assault and uttering threats, was released on probation by Judge Susan Antifaev.

Pratt is now the prime suspect in the slaying of nine year old Jessica Russell just two days after his irresponsible release from jail.

Given the judge was made aware of Trott's psychological and psychiatric background, will the Minister of Justice intercede with the Attorney General of British Columbia and have Judge Antifaev suspended pending an investigation of the judge's irresponsible decision?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very tragic and sad situation. It is also a matter that I think is better taken up by the Attorney General of British Columbia. If the Attorney General of British Columbia wishes to speak to me about this or any other matter, I am happy to do so.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Attorney General of British Columbia would like to see some leadership from the Minister of Justice for Canada.

This is a very serious issue. Nothing will bring Jessica Russell back, but the minister should show leadership by speaking to the Attorney General of British Columbia and letting him know that people in the Parliament of Canada are very upset with this terrible crime. We cannot have judges treating criminals as more important than common people in society. This judge messed up and the provincial government—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt whatsoever that the Attorney General of British Columbia is as concerned about this matter as all Canadians.

As I have said already, I think that if the Attorney General of British Columbia for any reason wants to speak to me about this situation or any other I will be happy to speak to him.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the Placeteco affair, the minister's entire defence relies on the existence of the supposed invoices.

My question is a very simple one. Where are the invoices? We want to see them.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Bloc has made an access to information request in this regard. I think we would all agree that the responsible approach when we are dealing with individual information on Canadians or Canadian companies is to use that process.

I am glad to see that they have made the request, and I am sure all information that can be made public will be made public.

* * *

• (1445)

HEALTH

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year Health Canada released a research plan for marijuana for medicinal purposes. It made clear that a made in Canada policy for the medicinal use of marijuana would require the establishment of a domestic source of quality, research grade marijuana.

Could the Minister of Health advise the House what is going forward with this plan and how far we have come?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for London West has been among the most outspoken in the change of government policy which has led to making medical marijuana available on a compassionate basis for those who are very ill.

I am pleased to announce that last Friday there was a request for a proposal for quality research grade, affordable, medical marijuana, a safe and lawful source for those with exemptions and a real help with the clinical research we will be undertaking.

* * *

LOBBYIST REGISTRATION ACT

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Indian affairs.

It seems that a Liberal lobbyist has found the road to his own personal gold mine in the minister's riding. Rick Smit, the former president of the minister's riding association, has been lobbying outside the law to get the government to pay for a \$3.5 million mining road in the minister's riding.

Mr. Smit has failed to register as a lobbyist as required by law. This is not the first time that laws have been bent or broken in the minister's riding.

Why do federal laws apply to all Canadians except friends and insiders of this Liberal government?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Lobbyists Registration Act applies to to all Canadians. The matter has been raised and it will be investigated by the ethics counsellor.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was a good non-answer.

It is really interesting to note that in the minister's riding alone, 18 companies and businessmen, who were the recipients of millions of dollars in HRDC grants, donated more than \$16,000 to the minister's personal re-election campaign in 1997.

How much money will Mr. Smit donate to the minister's next election campaign? Does—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The question is out of order.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister who will be aware that last week Statistics Canada released a study revealing a significant increase in foreign ownership and foreign control of our economy over the past 10 years. He will also recognize that the trend continues and, with our low dollar, it is in fact accelerating.

Canada now has one of the highest levels of foreign ownership in the OECD. As research and development and top executives transfer to corporate headquarters in United States, at what point will the government intervene and say that enough is enough and call for a national debate on this very crucial issue?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can have a national debate at any time. The real point is that what we see in those numbers is a continuing global trend. Not only are there more international acquisitions of Canadian companies but more than ever Canadians are acquiring interests abroad.

For the last several years, as a real measure of its maturity as an economy, Canada has been an exporter rather than an importer of capital as more Canadian investment has flowed out than foreign investment has flowed in. That is an example of the fact that Canada is very much in the forefront of globalizing trends.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a small difference. When Canadian investment goes into the United States it is like a pebble going into a pond. When American investments come into Canada it is like an avalanche of boulders coming into our country.

The difference today is that now CEOs of major corporations are indicating their concerns. Peter Lougheed, the CEO of Manulife, Willard Estey and many others are now saying that this has reached significant proportions and some action is now required.

Will the Minister of Industry at least join with his corporate colleagues and say that enough is enough and initiate a national debate on this very crucial issue?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member from Kamloops is glad to have found something upon which he agrees with those individuals he mentioned.

In the meantime, let us think about some of the things that have happened over the last few years. Nortel acquired Bay Networks. Now, there is a pebble. As a result, in the last few weeks a Canadian company was named by a British research organization as the world's top multinational corporation. That is what Canada can benefit from. Yes, there are reasons for us to be concerned but it also provides an amazing opportunity for Canada to succeed.

* * *

• (1450)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

I recently had the opportunity to view some federal documents obtained under the Access to Information Act. In these documents the federal government is estimating that between now and the year 2020, Newfoundland's electrical needs will only grow by seven-tenths of 1% per year.

Is the minister saying that the federal government has written off the possibility of a smelter being built in Newfoundland at Argentina, a smelter to process ore from the Voisey's Bay nickel mine?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member would know, matters relating to the ownership and management of resources, such as this one, are matters that are entirely within the prerogative of the provincial government. It is up to the province as the owner of the resource to work out the appropriate arrangements with the developers of the resource.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, these are federal forecasts. These are documents obtained under access to information from the federal government.

The minister knows that a nickel smelter would be a heavy consumer of electricity and that should figure prominently in electrical demand forecasts.

Is the minister saying that the ore from Voisey's Bay would best be smelted at facilities already located on the mainland of Canada?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr.

Oral Questions

Speaker, again, the hon. gentleman is inviting the federal government to intervene in a matter of provincial jurisdiction. It is entirely within the prerogative of a provincial government as the owner of the resource to work out the arrangements with the potential developers of the resource. The Government of Canada cannot intervene in that situation.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

There are reports today of demonstrators being killed and wounded in the streets of Freetown, Sierra Leone while hundreds of UN peacekeepers are being held hostage by RUF rebels.

Can the minister tell the House what the government is doing in response to this very serious deterioration in the security situation of this West African country?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to report that for Canadians in Sierra Leone we have made co-operative consul arrangements to ensure their safety and security.

On the broader issue, just having been in that country a week ago, I can report that valiant efforts were being made to secure the situation, to help children and to move toward elections but these efforts were wilfully being broken by rebel units.

Canada is now working actively at the Security Council and in other fora directly with other countries to see how we can provide serious options to ensure that the UN mandate to keep the peace and protect the people is maintained.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence is unable to find the words that would reflect the government's inaction regarding the replacement of Sea King helicopters.

We heard again today empty assurances that the defence minister will replace the ageing Sea Kings. There are no deadlines and no timelines. It has been seven years.

How much longer will Canadian military personnel have to bum rides from our allies to get the job done?

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure my hon. colleague that the minister has stood in the House and said that we would have replacements for the helicopters by the year 2005.

I want to go back to why the CDS had to take another helicopter. It had nothing to do with mechanical problems on the Sea King helicopters. It was purely weather and operational considerations. I hope the member takes that into consideration.

* * *

[Translation]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Ms. H  l  ne Alarie (Louis-H  bert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the plans for reorganization of the federal Department of Health, released this past April 17, there are no specific provisions guaranteeing the safety of genetically modified foods?

Despite the crying lack for expertise relating to GMOs, the Deputy Minister of Health has announced federal government plans to approve 500 new GMOs over the next five years.

• (1455)

How can the Minister of Health plan to approve more than 500 new genetically modified products when his own department does not have the capacity to guarantee the safety of GMOs?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all genetically modified foods must be submitted to Health Canada for evaluation and determination of whether they are as safe as other foods available in Canada.

As well, Health Canada has struck a committee of experts to examine Health Canada regulations in order to ensure that we are acting in an appropriate manner.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has moved closure on Bill C-11 denying many mining communities in Cape Breton hope, but there is another group of Cape Bretoners looking for a hopeful sign from the government.

On Friday, Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians and Elizabeth May of the Sierra Club launched their book, *Frederick Street: Living and Dying on Canada's Love Canal*. It is a condemnation of government inaction on this national environmental disgrace.

Will the Minister of the Environment show some leadership here? Will he explain where this is on his list of priorities and what he might do in the future?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member should be aware, but apparently is not,

Oral Questions

there is a citizens' group of the local residents that is working to put together the plan for dealing with the Sydney tar ponds problem. The problem is very serious. There are health risks. It is perhaps the most polluted single site in Canada.

However, I do not think it is appropriate for me to step in and overrule the work being done by the citizens' group. We tried before to interfere and impose a solution, first in Ottawa, then in Halifax and then both together. None of those efforts worked despite the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars.

This time we want the local people to agree that they have the right solution.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The minister is aware that certain rural areas, such as the counties of Albert, Petitcodiac, Hillsborough and Salisbury, are part of an urban economic zone, when they are in fact rural communities with high rates of unemployment.

Will the minister tell the House when she is going to begin the process of consulting members with a view to redefining economic zones? I remind the minister that workers need an answer before next fall.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House that by statute every five years the Employment Insurance Commission must review the economic zones, the data from which are used to establish employment insurance benefits. This process is underway.

I am hopeful that in the very near future the proposals of the Employment Insurance Commission will be made public so that the MPs can review them and other Canadians can comment on them.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend marked the beginning of International Youth Week. What is the Minister of Human Resources Development doing to help Canada's youth get the experience necessary so they can find decent and meaningful jobs.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to tell all members of parliament that this is indeed International Youth Week. We should thank the youth action network for preparing opportunities for all of us to celebrate our very important human resource, our Canadian youth.

What is also interesting is that for the 32nd year in a row Human Resources Development Canada will, in this timeframe, be opening the centres for Canadian youth. This is where we have youth advisers working with their counterparts, young people, to find very often that very important first job. They connect employers with employees.

We anticipate over 400,000 young people to go through these centres. I would also note that as a result of our Canada youth strategy—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it seems every time the minister is asked about the Sea King replacements he says that the decision is coming soon. Those words are beginning to ring hollow. In fact they have been ringing hollow for seven years now and with this particular minister three years and we still do not have any Sea King replacements.

The truth of the matter is that this government has politicized the procurement process and has paid no attention to the needs of the military.

How much more embarrassment and unnecessary danger must our armed forces endure before the government acts to replace the Sea King helicopters?

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I told the member earlier, the file is proceeding very well. However, we must look at the whole picture.

[*English*]

We have bought new equipment for our Canadian armed forces. We have got new Cormorant helicopters for search and rescue. We have got submarines. We have got the Coyote reconnaissance vehicle.

I would like to add as a final comment that this is the party that was going to cut \$1 billion from the defence budget.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 41 petitions.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF GRANDPARENTS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present this petition from numerous people in Peterborough and elsewhere who point out that family life is becoming more complex, that the breakdown of marriage is producing more complex family arrangements, that the role of grandparents is becoming more, not less, important in modern times, and that whereas some parents are moving to strengthen the legal position of grandparents, some other grandparents are denied access to grandchildren due to death or divorce.

Therefore, these petitioners call upon parliament to grant through legislation visitation rights to grandparents and use its power and influence to strengthen the position of grandparents so that they can help children in need.

• (1505)

NATUROPATHIC PRACTITIONERS

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House today and present on behalf of 275 constituents both in my riding and across Vancouver Island a petition which says that many people receive health benefits from naturopathic practitioners and medicines. The petitioners believe these people are basically discriminated against and while they save the government a lot of money, these people must also be financially responsible for their own medical expenses.

The petitioners request that parliament pass some kind of legislation recognizing naturopathic practitioners as equal to members of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is my pleasure to present this petition on the petitioners' behalf.

[Translation]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to table a petition from the

Routine Proceedings

residents of my riding on the retention of the definition of marriage and recognition of the unique status of the institution of marriage.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and indeed an honour to stand pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a huge petition on behalf of the residents of Blue River, Vavenby, Little Fort, Birch Island, Avola, Clearwater, Barrière, Knouff Lake, Paul Lake, Pinantan, Valemount, Whitecroft and many of the smaller communities of the North Thompson Valley as well. The petition contains literally thousands and thousands of signatures.

The petitioners point out their concern about the Canadian tax system, feel it is unjust and unfair. The petitioners feel that it is biased and discriminatory and ask for a complete overhaul of our tax system. There is much more in this petition but I will not read some of the finer details.

[Translation]

AIR TRAFFIC

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot in my riding, I would like to present a petition.

These people are complaining about all the planes that fly over their houses, some times at about one in the morning, and others after six in the morning. The petitioners would like these planes to change their flight path so as not to disturb the peace of the residents of this municipality.

[English]

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present petitions from Canadians who are very concerned about the fact that one in five Canadian children lives in poverty. The petitioners want to draw attention to the fact and remind us that in 1989 the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution to eliminate child poverty. The petitioners urge parliament to fulfill its promise and to end child poverty in this coming budget.

HOUSING

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to present petitions from people who are very concerned about homelessness and the lack of adequate, safe, affordable housing in this country. These are petitioners from right across the country who support the campaign for 1% for housing and call on the government to commit an additional 1% of the federal budget to meet the most basic human need in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have petitions that I would like to table from Canadians who are very concerned about the World Trade Organization, what it is doing to our sovereignty and the fact that it is giving more and more power to multinational corporations. The petitioners call on parliament to ensure that there are binding and enforceable rules to protect human rights, core labour standards and cultural diversity, our education and our environment.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. Q-91 and Q-98.

[Text]

Question No. 91—**Mr. Svend J. Robinson:**

With respect to the APEC summit of 1997 in Vancouver: (a) did the Prime Minister discuss security arrangements with then director of operations Jean Carle either prior to or during the summit; and (b) was the Prime Minister aware of Mr. Carle's plans to displace security barriers in order to avoid embarrassment to visiting heads of state?

Mr. Gar Knutson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Commissioner Hughes made it very clear in a written ruling on whether to call the Prime Minister to appear as a witness before the APEC inquiry that "the simple fact of the matter is that evidence produced to date regarding the alleged involvement of the Prime Minister in the RCMP security operations does not indicate that his testimony is 'requisite to the full investigation and consideration' of the matters currently before me".

The commissioner also wrote in this ruling, after hearing more than 130 days of evidence, including from two senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office and a number of senior RCMP officers, that he "cannot see that the voluminous evidence produced to date points to or suggests that the Prime Minister may have given improper orders or directions to RCMP members respecting security at the APEC conference.

Any further comment on matters before Commissioner Hughes would be inappropriate. A responsible process is in place and should be allowed to complete its work.

Question No. 98—**Ms. Pauline Picard:**

With regard to the former program for older worker adjustment, could the Minister of Human Resources Development indicate: (a) which measures or actions were taken between 1996 and 1998 inclusively to establish a strategy for older workers; (b) what are the parameters of this type of pilot project and the eligibility criteria; (c) what projects are currently part of these pilot projects and what are their

parameters; (d) what are the passive measures, such as income support measures, currently under study and are these measures eligible through the pilot projects announced in 1999; (e) what type of pilot project could be eligible in the case of Celanese employees, including income support measures; (f) what are the procedures to propose the said project?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): (a) The Government of Canada is aware of the special difficulties experienced by older workers in the labour market. The Government of Canada takes seriously its responsibilities toward older workers and is taking action on several fronts.

(1) First, concern for older workers has been frequently raised in the federal-provincial arena. At the 1998 annual premiers conference, premiers agreed that "the situation of older workers should be addressed".

The Forum of Labour Market Ministers, FLMM, established an ad hoc working group on older workers composed of representatives from the Government of Canada and from provinces and territories in December 1998. Quebec and Canada co-chair the ad hoc working group.

This ad hoc working group on older workers is responsible for developing a diagnostic of labour market adjustment issues faced by older workers, including issues specific to each province-territory. The ad hoc working group also co-ordinates pilot projects.

(2) Second, the Government of Canada underscored its commitment to assist older workers who lose their jobs and have a difficult time finding new employment by announcing the older worker pilot project initiative on June 18, 1999.

The Government of Canada committed \$30 million over two fiscal years, 1999-2000 and 2000-01, to help older Canadians who want to stay in the workforce but who are facing difficulties. This money has subsequently been reprofiled to accommodate provincial-territorial starting dates.

At the Forum of Labour Market Ministers meeting on September 30, 1999, ministers agreed to put in place pilot projects to assist older workers to get back into the labour force.

The older worker pilot project initiative is a partnership approach between the Government of Canada and the provinces-territories in searching for innovative approaches to assist older workers.

(b) The parameters and key features of the older worker pilot projects initiative include the following: test innovative measures designed to reintegrate displaced older workers aged 55 to 64 who have an attachment to the labour force or older workers threatened with displacement into sustainable employment; focus on active measures; a variety of approaches designed to meet older workers specific labour market needs, to be tested: awareness, promotion,

prevention, adjustment, and labour force participation; and that all pilots will be evaluated.

Pilot projects will be developed and implemented by provinces and territories expressing interest in participating in the initiative. Participating provinces and territories will also commit resources to the pilots. Projects will not duplicate or overlap existing federal or provincial employment programming.

(c) Currently, as of April 14, 2000, several jurisdictions have entered into negotiations with the federal government. However, jurisdictions vary widely in terms of where they are at with developing their pilot projects. Some provinces are still fleshing out ideas they have for pilots. Some provinces have developed their proposals and have submitted them for review, while still others are close to finalizing their agreements. It is anticipated that jurisdictions close to finalizing their agreements will be able to undertake their pilots in the near future.

The parameters of all proposals are to fall within the guidelines described in the key features. See answer to part (b).

(d) The Government of Canada is not currently studying passive measures such as income support measures.

The Government of Canada has been adopting active employment measures in assisting Canadians. The older worker pilot project initiative is designed to assist older workers experiencing a difficult time to find new employment. This initiative is intended to actively assist older workers back into the labour force. See answer to part (b) for details. Passive income supports are not featured in the older worker pilot projects.

(e) Pilot projects will be developed and implemented by provinces and territories. Projects that are proposed by the Quebec government, once approved that they adhere to the key features developed by all jurisdictions, would be available to older workers in Quebec that are interested in participating. Potential candidates could express their interest to the appropriate representative in their jurisdiction.

(f) The province is responsible for proposing and seeing the pilots implemented. The procedures to propose the projects have been described above. See answer to part (b).

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION DIVESTITURE AUTHORIZATION AND DISSOLUTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, an act to authorize the divestiture of the assets of, and to dissolve, the Cape Breton Development Corporation, to amend the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee; of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill C-11 which relates to the sale and dissolution of assets of the Cape Breton Development Corporation.

• (1510)

I wish today that I could say that it was my pleasure to rise to speak on this motion, but it is really not so. This motion really sounds the death knell for the jobs of many people in the community of Sydney in Cape Breton. It is never a pleasure to talk about that. Also, today the government introduced closure on this debate. It is never a pleasure to rise to talk about that and to talk in circumstances where the government has put us under the gun for the 65th time in this parliament.

My colleagues in the NDP caucus have detailed the situation in Cape Breton. I am not going into that in much detail. They talked about the history of mining there. They talked about the importance of mining to the local economy and to the provincial economy. They talked in some detail about the sordid history of how the government conducted itself in putting these mines and assets up for sale. On one hand the government wants to walk away from its responsibility of many years and sell off these mines to the private sector. On the other hand the government wants to do so in a way which does not fairly compensate the people who have worked in those mines for many years.

As a member for a constituency in Saskatchewan in the prairies and parklands area, I have not followed this debate perhaps as closely as I might have if it were grain transportation or the wheat board. I have left much of the heavy lifting to my colleagues in the NDP caucus, particularly those from Cape Breton. They have done a fine job of bringing the situation to light, holding the government's feet to the fire and standing shoulder to shoulder with the workers in the mines in Cape Breton.

Upon closer examination recently, I was actually shocked at what the government has done and what we often call the process. The process is often as important as the results.

Government Orders

Let us talk a bit about what happened. One of my colleagues has described what the government announced in January 1999 as a drive-by announcement, saying it was getting out of the coal business and closing the Phalen mine by the end of 2000 and beginning a process to sell the Prince mine as well.

My colleague from Sydney—Victoria made a convincing argument that the federal government already knew what it was going to do in 1995. It might well have delayed its announcement because of an impending election in 1997, but it knew what it was going to do. It had all sorts of time to consult with the community rather than engage in what my colleague called a drive-by announcement which pretty well took everybody by surprise.

Clearly, the government's severance and training support package is inadequate. The economic development package that came along with it which is in some way supposed to make up for the loss is inadequate. It was put together without consultation with the stakeholders despite the fact that the government said after the fact that it was going to do that. In fact, it appeared that the Minister of Natural Resources was not interested in meeting with the miners or with people in the community.

Let me briefly review, after about a year of frustration, what happened so that things could finally start to move a little. Last December there was a shutdown of the Phalen colliery. This resulted in a protest. A little later on in January there were wildcat strikes. The miners had finally had enough. They stopped operations and blocked coal shipments to Nova Scotia Power.

On January 8 several miners went underground and stayed there. It took that for the Minister of Natural Resources to start meeting with these people and getting serious about negotiations. That was more than a year after the announcement that the mine was going to be sold. We can imagine and understand why people in Cape Breton were so frustrated. It was that kind of heroic action that finally forced the minister to begin negotiating a pension settlement and agree to go to binding arbitration in the case of conflicts. It was said across the floor this morning that they had gone to binding arbitration. Yes, they did after the miners sat in, stayed in the mines and said they were not coming out.

I want to move on to something that I find particularly disturbing. I am going to focus my remarks for the last few minutes on this. Late in January this year reports surfaced that Canada Steamship Lines was hauling coal from Colombia and the United States to Cape Breton and that it was interested in Devco's assets. People in the House and in the country will be familiar with the owner of that company, a rather high ranking person in the House.

• (1515)

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Ask the Minister of Finance why.

Mr. Dennis Gruending: That is true.

I want to talk a bit about the fact that coal from Colombia is coming into Cape Breton. If we are importing coal, what about the mine in Cape Breton which has not yet been mined out and could produce a lot of coal, the Donkin mine which is shut in?

Canada Steamship Lines is delivering coal to Nova Scotia Power from Colombia. I have two things to say about that. Let us talk about the Colombian side of it first.

Last weekend the leader of a miners union in Colombia, Francisco Ramirez Cuellar, the president of Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Nacional Minera, was in Canada meeting with our party and the labour movement. He told us about the coal coming in from Colombia. He told us that coal miners in Colombia earn wages as low as one-tenth of what coal miners in Canada earn. He talked about Colombia's environmental protection laws which if they exist at all are not enforced in the coal mining industry. He talked about the labour which is used. The equipment is very old so people have to work very hard under very unsafe working conditions, which many of us simply could not think of working under. We take safety for granted.

As a result of all this, Colombia can sell coal at about half the price of what it is produced for in Canada. That is one thing. The conditions under which coal is mined in Colombia would make it rather attractive for a company which is going to buy the Devco assets but which would not mine the coal nor produce jobs in Cape Breton, to import the coal mined by people who earn effectively starvation wages. It gets worse. We were told that 80% of the union leaders assassinated in the world each year are Colombian union leaders. Government sponsored paramilitary squads frequently displace workers who continue to express an interest in organizing.

The situation here is that the Devco assets are up for sale by the government. There may be a company which is going to purchase those assets, but there is no guarantee that hole is going to be mined in Cape Breton. We may well see a further devastation of the coal mining industry in that province. Why? So that a private company which buys the assets from the government can simply purchase coal offshore to supply Nova Scotia Power.

This is the kind of thing which has not received the attention it deserves because the government has not been interested in having a full scale inquiry into what is happening. Rather, it has tried to write very circumscribed legislation and push it through the House as quickly as possible into committee where we would look at the legislation it has written but not at the wider context of what has happened and what is happening in Cape Breton. When I talk about the wider context, an example is what I have just been speaking about, Colombia.

It has been the contention of our caucus, ably represented by the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria and others in Cape Breton and

Government Orders

Nova Scotia, that we should have a real inquiry and a real look at this industry. We are extremely disappointed that has not happened. We are even more disappointed that the government, rather than have this issue debated fully, has moved closure for the 65th time in this parliament.

The coal mining industry has had a long and illustrious history in Cape Breton. There is a lot at stake here, people's jobs, their lives, their dignity, the health of their communities. The government has not consulted with them although it said it would. It has manipulated people and the process aimed at dissolution and divestiture.

This is why the NDP caucus is so opposed to closure and to what the government is doing. That is why we feel so strongly that the situation has to be studied. This goes beyond the rather narrow confines of the bill as the government has outlined it.

• (1520)

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned 65 times for closure in regard to different bills is getting beyond the point of being ridiculous. Anyhow we are here to discuss Bill C-11 and the impact it will have on the eastern part of Canada.

This is the government's latest attempt to ruin the economy of Canada's east coast, especially Cape Breton. Let it be clear that I am not in favour of government running much of anything, especially a mining company. This has been proven time after time after time by the utter failure in results when government gets involved in things.

The Prime Minister's latest so-called success story is to travel there to announce the creation of a new call centre. Does he seriously believe it makes good use of the talents and skills of Canadians and of the natural resource of coal to ask the miners of Cape Breton to become telephone operators? Or should the miners sit at home and let their wives earn the family bread and butter? These are some of the questions that are being asked down there.

Since I first came here in 1993 when the constituents of Okanagan—Shuswap sent me to Ottawa, delegations from Cape Breton have been asking parliament to do something to save the coal mining industry. Studies show there is plenty of coal in the ground. The location and facilities on hand for export are great. Skilled workers are on hand. There is a long tradition of mining coal and a fully developed community infrastructure.

The only thing B.C. had for its northeast coal was the coal itself hundreds of miles from the coast, but B.C. has been exporting to Japan. It built the infrastructure from scratch and had to convince workers and families to move there. Cape Breton had all of that but government has done such a poor job of managing the mines that the taxpayers have been on the hook.

I want to talk about that just for a second. Let us look at the money that has been poured into Devco. The miners have not seen any result of that. The mine is being shut down. Taxpayers and members in the House of Commons would like to know what happened to all of the funds and what is happening to all of the assets. Let us have a public inquiry. Let us see where the money has been going. Let us see who has really benefited. Let us find out to whom they are related. Let us find out what has been going on at Devco because for sure the miners have not been getting it.

The Senate has held hearings and studies have been done but the government has ignored the most basic thing, running the business well. Even excellent businessmen have a tough time with today's high payroll taxes and red tape business climate in Canada.

The government decided to appoint its own mismanagement team and had that team send one year plans and five year plans to Ottawa for approval. In some of its decisions, despite building great port facilities and having a unique location beside the ocean, it chose to abandon all foreign markets. Let us look at it. We spend years to develop foreign markets for customers. When a conscious decision is made, as the people the government appointed to run Devco made, to let the foreign markets go, to let those markets slide and not care, the markets turn away. When we go back to them, those markets have already found other countries that will supply the coal that we denied them. Try to get those markets back. That is not the fault of the miners; it is the fault of those the government put in charge.

For example, union representatives went along with management to visit Mexico. The united mine workers promised there would be no work stoppage if Mexico would buy Cape Breton coal. Mexico signed on but the government team signed off. Union workers even agreed to take significantly less than standard coal mining wages. It is a tough, dirty, dangerous job but they agreed to take lower wages to ensure our coal could compete and the community could keep the jobs.

With regard to Devco, I have never seen management-labour relations so bad. In fact, they are the worst I have seen. Devco even refused to show the union its books to work out acceptable contracts.

• (1525)

I have to admit on some grounds the work was tough. They had problems in some spots, particularly in the hanging wall, the roof of the tunnel. They kept shutting down time and again. It was run so badly they finally had to eliminate all customers except Nova Scotia Power.

The supply of coal got so low that Devco agreed to allow American coal to be imported directly by Nova Scotia Power. It was raised already in the House, but I really have to wonder when we have the coal and can supply the coal but somebody makes the

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decision that we have to import the coal, we have to look at who is involved and how much money is involved in the transportation of the coal. We know it is not from people in Canada. We know the coal is coming in from offshore so we have to stop and think who would haul that coal for Canada.

An hon. member: The NHL?

Mr. Darrel Stinson: No, it is a shipping firm.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill: Is it CSL?

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Yeah, it would be CSL. That is held by, what is his name?

An hon. member: The finance minister of the Liberal government.

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Yes, the finance minister of the Liberal government.

Naturally, being nice, honest and hardworking people, I have to wonder when we talk about job creation and helping out the miners just exactly what the government has been doing. I would say that it certainly gave the miners the shaft while it closed the mine down. That would be my way of looking at it. I do not think I am wrong but I am willing to accept that maybe I am.

Meanwhile out in Alberta, to comply with the government's promises made at Kyoto, Japan without adequate consultation with business and industry here at home, at least some great experiments are being done to reduce carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. In Alberta technology has been invented that can actually bury carbon dioxide in the coal seams so that for every molecule of carbon dioxide taken out in order to clean up our air, we get back two molecules of usable methane gas. Experts predict this will allow Alberta to bury, they call it sequester, all carbon dioxide from all the coal they export and expect to burn in their coal fired power plants in the next 500 years and make money while doing it.

Where is the new technology for coal back east? Instead of technology it brings in call centres. I go back to what I originally said. The government is trying to force the miners of Cape Breton to become telephone operators. I have to wonder exactly where the government got the brilliant idea to go this route.

Eventually the government got the brilliant idea to privatize the coal mining operations. Would we not expect the privatization to be completed before it did a shutdown, before the workers left because they lost hope of making a future for themselves and their families in that part of Canada, before they gave up their foreign markets? That was so tough to get in the first place but the government gave it away lock, stock and barrel. Here we are today looking at Bill C-11 which is trying to get the government off the hook after so

many years of mismanaging one of the country's greatest natural resources, the coal of Cape Breton.

Men who went down to the mines as teenagers still do not have enough years of service combined with their ages to qualify for any pension under the plan because they are still too young. These men are supposed to be retrained. Maybe they will become telephone operators at the Prime Minister's new call centre but I doubt it.

Maybe the Liberals will move in some other centre, like New Brunswick's role as the registration centre for all Canadian firearms, and the Prime Minister can turn Cape Breton coal miners into federal bureaucrats. Maybe that is the game plan, I do not know.

• (1530)

Before I close I would like to quote Mr. Murphy:

We feel that handing off of the Nova Scotia Power Inc. supply contract to foreign suppliers is an unacceptable situation. We decided back in May to do something about it by forming a worker's co-op and submitting the bid for the Devco assets through the Nesbitt Burns process. Our bid was rejected, as was a bid put forward by Donkin Resource Limited, which is determined to press on with opening the Donkin Mine with the support of the community and groups such as our co-op, which is ready to invest in the project to ensure that at least some of NFPI coal is supplied by Cape Bretoners.

Mr. Murphy also goes on to question why the federal government would rather hand over a lucrative contract to a foreign company when the coal could be supplied locally. That is the question. Why would the government do it, unless there is something for somebody else's pocket?

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-11. When I spoke to the bill originally I said that it was a day of shame in the House, that the Liberal government should be ashamed because it had betrayed the legacy of Lester Pearson. I say today that Lester Pearson would be shamed again, as the government closes down debate on the issue and forces it through the House of Commons without appropriate debate.

It is a legacy. The Liberals who are watching the debate today and those who will be reading *Hansard* should write to their members of parliament and to their party presidents to ask what happened to what was once a democratic party.

Let me talk a bit about the agreement because that is the substance of the debate. Why should this matter not be voted upon but go to a special committee or to the human resources committee? Let me begin by explaining what the negotiation process was.

I would like to explain the process, but first I suggest that I do not think we have quorum in the House. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to call in a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

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The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum.

Mr. Peter Mancini: I am surprised the minister responsible for ACOA did not rush to his seat to hear what I have to say when he saw me on the television screen,

Let us look at the agreement. Members on the other side of the House will say that there is a fair and final settlement for the workers at the Cape Breton Development Corporation. There is a history of some fair settlements for crown corporation workers as crown corporations have been folded by the government. Let us look at what happened in some of those cases and compare them to the workers at the Cape Breton Development Corporation to see if in fact it is a fair agreement.

Let us start with how this crown corporation was wound down. The Minister of Natural Resources came to Cape Breton in January. He walked into the Delta Hotel and basically said that it was the end of the process, that they were getting out of the coal industry and would have some consultations that would last for about a week or two.

When Marine Atlantic was folded as a crown corporation there was a special workforce restructuring agreement negotiated between the unions and Marine Atlantic. When portions of CN were folded as a crown corporation there was a special workforce restructuring agreement negotiated between the unions and CN. When VIA Rail was folded as a crown corporation there was special workforce restructuring agreement negotiated between the unions and VIA Rail. When Transport Canada's work was taken over by Nav Canada there was a special workforce restructuring agreement negotiated between the unions and the corporation.

Why not for the Cape Breton Development Corporation? Why not for the miners of Cape Breton? Why was the same negotiation process not used for those workers when there is a precedent?

Let us look at some of the other comparisons. I have already mentioned in my questions today the extension of medical benefits and what was provided to other employees of crown corporations and has been denied the miners of Cape Breton.

• (1535)

Let us look at the education allowance. In many situations when crown corporations were shut down the employees were entitled to an education allowance. For VIA Rail the corporation paid up to \$4,000 in tuition to a recognized institution. The employees could receive up to 90% of their salary and full benefits for 24 months. They also received a relocation allowance.

The miners in Cape Breton will get \$8,000 if they do not get a pension. That is both their relocation amount and their training amount, \$8,000 to go and find a place to live in another part of the country if they are lucky enough to get a job mining or to go back to

school. I do not know what kind of retraining that will pay for in this economy, but I can indicate to the House that it will not be retraining that will provide a job.

In the early retirement plans again there was discrimination against the people who worked in the mines in Cape Breton. At VIA Rail there was a transition retirement for eligible employees with five years early retirement. The employees were eligible for benefits of between 90% and 70% of wages. There is no such consideration for Devco.

Home purchase plans were provided to employees of other crown corporations, not provided to the miners in Cape Breton. Special termination incentives were provide to other crown corporation employees, not provided in Cape Breton. The list goes on and on.

Those are some of the reasons we think that if the government were fair, and that is all we are asking, it would look at what it has done in other situations. It would look at precedent. One of my colleagues across the way who is a lawyer and knows about precedent should know that there is nothing wrong with looking at other crown corporation agreements and applying them in the same case. He knows that from his law school days.

Let us look at why the government is in such a rush to push this matter through. We have until December 2000 before the government withdraws. I will tell the House why it is in such a rush. I think it is because it has a foreign buyer. I am not a young man. I am in my forties.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Peter Mancini: That comes as a great shock to members in the House, but when I was a young man the Liberal Party actually talked about things like Canadian ownership. Let me tell the House what we are facing on Cape Breton Island today.

The government has plans to sell the Cape Breton Development Corporation and its most useful asset, a contract with Nova Scotia Power. The government is to sell it to a foreign company. Do we know what that will mean? It will mean that ships will come into Sydney harbour with foreign coal while there is a reserve worth a billion dollars at the Donkin coal mine. Cape Bretoners will not mine that coal. That foreign coal will feed the contract with Nova Scotia Power. The provincial government is looking at selling the steel corporation to foreign ownership. While we were happy to have EDS locate in Cape Breton and bring some jobs, it too is a foreign corporation.

Again we talk about betrayal. I remember when the Liberal Party once believed that Canada should belong to Canadians. Here we see a complete reversal, a sell off of assets so that foreigners and foreign companies will once again control the economy of Cape Breton. The miners and steelworkers in Cape Breton died fighting foreign ownership. For 30 years we made some progress. In the

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stroke of a pen and by bringing in closure the government is undoing that.

There are some very other important issues. For example, there is the pre-existing pension plan. There is money now. Many retired miners are receiving their pension. Who administers that pension? One might ask the Liberal members of parliament if they know that since they are so anxious to vote on closure. I challenge them. If they do not know the answer to that question, I challenge them tonight to vote against closure. If they do not know the details of who administers the ongoing existing pension fund, if they do not know the details of who is the buyer, if they do not know where this corporation will be at the end of the day, I challenge them to vote against closure, to be responsible members of parliament and to ask the hard question. I do not think they will do that.

• (1540)

An hon. member: Right.

Mr. Peter Mancini: I know I am right. I have one minute left and I have much to say. Maybe I will move another amendment to the amendment so that we can move on with it. Let me just say it is a sad day for Canada. There is a future in Cape Breton and we can build on it, but we cannot build when we are discriminated against by the government in the way we have been discriminated against. If anybody wants the proof, as I have said, they need only look at the other crown corporation agreements and compare them to this one. It is not fair.

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity to engage in this debate. Essentially the point I want to bring before the House is that enough is enough.

I want to engage hon. members in the summary of the bill which says that this is an act to provide for the disposition of substantially all the assets of the corporation and for the dissolution and the winding up of its affairs. The purpose is to enable the private sector to acquire the mining assets so that the government can exit from the coal mining business; to provide for the continuation of existing jurisdiction with respect to labour relations, occupational health and safety, et cetera; and to permit legal actions to be brought against the crown, which is no small matter.

The most relevant clauses are clause 2 which provides for the sale or otherwise disposition of all or substantially all of its assets and to do everything necessary for and incidental to the closing out of the affairs. Clause 3 has to do with the continuing liability of the crown for outstanding issues relating to the corporation.

I am rather hoping that *National Post* is not listening to the debate, because those who say the issue is that the government has no business in these kinds of enterprises may well have a case with respect to the particular enterprise. I am not one who simply says

that we walk away from all our social responsibilities to communities, but there are points at which we say enough is enough. Surely we have come to a point in our history where government cannot or should not continue to support businesses that are no longer viable. Surely enough is enough.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you would find that we do not have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1545)

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: There being a quorum, the debate shall continue.

Mr. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention of the member opposite who has now produced an audience for us.

My essential point was the question as to when is enough enough? To listen to members opposite, one questions whether enough is ever enough.

In the course of the last 30 years, the Government of Canada has put \$1.6 billion into this enterprise. In addition, the Government of Canada has put in an additional \$44 million in the fiscal year 1998-99, another \$86 million has been allocated for the year 1999-2000 and an anticipated \$86 million is set aside for the fiscal year ending in the year 2001.

The Canadian taxpayer has a legitimate question: When is enough enough? When should the government get out of this business? When are the good people of Cape Breton, the capable people of Cape Breton, going to recognize that this is no longer a viable enterprise, recognize that there is a new economy, that they can participate in the new economy and enjoy the prosperity seen in many other parts of Canada?

The point of the bill is to organize the affairs of Devco so that it can be sold. The member opposite is concerned about the issue of whether it will be sold to a foreign buyer. I suppose if this was such a viable enterprise, there presumably are Canadian buyers available to purchase the assets.

The hon. member also mentioned the fact that there is \$1 billion worth of coal. There may well be \$1 billion worth of coal—I do not dispute his figure—but if it costs \$2 billion to get to \$1 billion of coal, then it does not make a lot of sense.

In order to make this as viable a transition as possible, the government engaged the services of Nesbitt Burns Inc. to sell the saleable assets. The assets include the Prince and Phalen collieries, the Donkin mine site, the corporation's coal pier and railway, its

coal preparation plant and related mine infrastructure. Hopefully the purchase of these assets will occur sooner rather than later.

In order to make this a viable sale, the government has acknowledged that Devco has liabilities and is transferring the liabilities unto itself. There is something in the order of an expectation of \$100 million environmental cleanup. No purchaser is going to purchase this mine with that liability. The government has taken on that liability.

In addition, the government has set aside something in the neighbourhood of \$100 million for workmen's compensation claims. Again, no purchaser, whether Canadian or foreign, whether there is \$1 billion in the ground or not, is going to take on that kind of liability.

Also, the government has set aside something in the order of \$200 million plus for future pension liabilities. Again, no purchaser is going to take on these kinds of liabilities.

• (1550)

The numbers get to be a little staggering after a while. We talk about \$1.6 billion over 30 years, then add in another \$44 million in 1998-99, another \$86 million in 1999-2000 and another \$86 million in 2000-01. We set aside another \$400 million or \$500 million for liabilities which may arise by virtue of environment or workmen's compensation or future pension liability, but apparently enough is still not enough.

In addition to what the government directly takes on, there are additional issues that the government takes on in an indirect way through such organizations as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or ACOA as it known so well by members opposite.

Since 1987 ACOA has put \$249 million into the riding. It is anticipated that it will put another \$39 million into the island over the course of the next four years. Again, it is a considerable sum of money to adjust the living conditions of those who will be affected by this closing.

Then we have the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, or ECBC. In the past 10 years ECBC has put \$97 million into the island. It is anticipated that it will put a further \$36 million into the island over the course of the next four years. Again, what is enough? Apparently to members opposite it is never enough. There is never enough.

I thought that in the last election and in subsequent polling the taxpayers were pretty darn clear with the government that these kinds of things cannot continue.

We are quite prepared to be responsible with assistance. We are prepared to be responsible with assistance so that people can enter into the new economy, but this will not continue to be a continuous gravy train and a continuous drain on the resources of the government and the taxpayers' generosity. I would submit that in fact the

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taxpayer has been extremely generous with this situation for some arguably legitimate reasons, but there are times when one has to bring things to a close.

I was kind of perplexed when one of the previous speakers from the Canadian Alliance said that that the moneys which were recently put in, something like \$12 million recently announced for a call centre, was a total waste of money, yet the member for Sydney—Victoria who spoke immediately prior to me was quite praiseworthy of the government's initiative in his riding to put that call centre there.

While a call centre may not be the leading edge of high technology, it is, however, a significant response to people who are needful of jobs. It may even be arguable that people who have been in coal mines for 20 or 25 years may or may not be suited to working in a call centre, but I suspect and I submit that not all people are coal miners and that the people of Cape Breton, in particular the children of the coal miners, might like the alternative of working at a call centre or the spinoff industries which result from the existence of a call centre in the area.

In conclusion, the Government of Canada has been most generous in this area. May I say that that has spanned a period of 30 years, that has been Liberal governments and Conservative governments, and that substantial commitment to the area has been an effort to make this kind of industry viable.

• (1555)

However, I submit that there are points at which one has to say enough is enough and \$1.6 billion over 30 years is, in my submission, enough; \$44 million in the fiscal year 1998-99 is enough; \$86 million in the year 1999-2000 is enough; \$86 million in 2000-01 is enough; \$39 million for the Cape Breton Development Corporation is enough; and \$36 million for ECBC over the next four years is enough. Those moneys are substantial. They reflect an enormous commitment on the part of the Government of Canada and in my view this bill deserves support from all members of the House.

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this debate sadly is faced with closure and that really has been eating at me because democracy is about talking. It is about working through issues. It is about taking the time. Every time the government invokes closures, it is like being told "Sit down and be quiet". It is really tiring. There have been so many debates in which I have not been able to participate because the government has invoked closure. That is not what democracy is.

There are times when one can understand that possibly a debate should be closed, but not after two hours, not after two days, not after two weeks. We are here, elected to represent the people who put their faith in us and every time we want to say something we are cut off. I had the good fortune to be able to make it in on this debate, but on so many others I have not been able to.

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This afternoon in Oral Question Period I listened to the Minister of Industry talk about all the benefits of globalization and how Canadians should be so thankful for globalization and the fact that foreign investment is at an all time high in this country. What the people in Cape Breton are facing is globalization. Their mine is going to be sold and the people who live in that community, who wanted to put together a co-operative approach to buying out the coal mine and using it for their own benefit to benefit their community, are not even being considered. We do not know who is being considered, but it is certainly not the people of Cape Breton Island.

The Atlantic provinces and Cape Breton have a long history of driving their people out, of having no place for their children to stay to work and live.

My father was born in Cape Breton and had to leave. He came from a big family of 21 children. There was nothing for him to stay for in his home province. He had to leave and go to the Yukon where he lived out the rest of his life, but his heart was always in his home. It was always in Cape Breton and it was a place he saw only once again after the end of the second world war in which he served.

I do not believe our country should be doing that to its citizens, making efforts to drive them out rather than keeping opportunities within the places where they were born. This is a huge country and it is very culturally diverse. People from Cape Breton are very different from people in the Yukon. The people of the eastern Arctic are completely different culturally from those people in the prairie provinces.

We have mobility in this country but it still does not make it easy to be able to afford to move. It does not make it easy to be humiliated and driven out of one's own province to seek work elsewhere, probably with barely a penny in one's pocket.

What we are facing is a possibility of Colombian buyers purchasing this mine. What would that mean for the people of Cape Breton? Certainly not putting their own people to work in these mines, if the mine even stays open.

So far the Canadian government has spent about \$1.6 billion or \$1.7 billion on the mine. That is not a small amount. It is a very significant amount and it has meant that people from that area had a chance to work and live. But the mine gave back as well. Up to \$6 billion over those years went back into the community, back into people's lives, funding schools, health care and post-secondary education.

Should we have before us a bill that will shut down the mine and deal with the assets? How is it dealing with the employees, the people who have put their lives, blood and health into the coal mining industry which has a very proud and long tradition, not only in Cape Breton but through the Yukon and the north of Canada?

Miners have a tradition. They know that when they go down into the ground, their lives are at stake and they do that often not for extraordinary wages but to put food on the table for their families. These people who have worked and lived and put their souls into this industry are not going to get the same benefits as other Canadian agencies that have been sold off.

• (1600)

VIA employees will get a five year deal of 100% of their pension and health benefits for their families, but why are the Devco employees not getting those same benefits? Is this returning to the whole idea of globalization just to get away with whatever we can, to give our citizens, our employees the least that we possibly can so that those who would benefit from globalization, the very rich, get everything and the very poor get a few scraps that come from the table?

The people of Cape Breton, the men in those mines, have had to stand up over and over again to demand even basic courtesy for the work they have done. They have had to go underground in protest and say that they will not come out until they get fairness. They have had to go on illegal strikes to even have ministers listen to them. It took ages and ages for even the basic courtesy of a meeting to go ahead.

These decisions were made in 1995. It was only made public in 1999 that these families, the people of Cape Breton, would be facing the loss of their jobs and again an out-migration from their communities. They would have to watch their children and grandchildren leave and not stay to build their communities.

In summary, I want to stress that I am really upset that the government has again invoked closure. It is becoming a routine practice. At one time it was considered absolutely extraordinary for closure to be invoked on a debate. I am tired of being told to sit down and be quiet, that I have said enough and that they do not want to hear from me.

I was elected to come here and to be a part of a democracy. Whether the government wants listen to me or not, I have the right to have a say, which is what democracy is about. However, it is being taken away from us over and over again because the government does not want to listen. It does not want to hear. It does have the power to say sit down and be quiet but that goes against our tradition of democracy and a fair hearing.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate. I find it a very tough issue.

When I decided to become a member of parliament 13 years ago, one of the things I said I would try to do as a member of parliament from downtown Toronto was not just to talk about issues or concerns that were specific to my community or my region, but to attempt, from time to time, where it was appropriate, to speak on

issues that concerned every region of the country and especially speak on issues where people's voices really needed to be heard.

I think that is the essence of this Chamber. We respect, we admire and we do not want to hold back those in our community who are advantaged. Ultimately we are here in this Chamber to speak out for those men and women in our country who are experiencing a moment when they are truly disadvantaged. That is why I am in this Chamber. I am here for no other reason.

We have in front of us today a situation where we have 1,500 families whose voices need to be heard. I applaud and I want to let the member for Yukon and other members know that we on this side of the House have a duty and a responsibility, even though we are in government, to listen and to care about what is happening to those 1,500 families.

We should let Canadians know that after the debate in the House today this bill will go to a committee of the House of Commons. We all know that in committee the government has the opportunity to amend, alter or change legislation if constructive and creative ideas are put forward that can meet not only the local interests but also the national interests. It is important for us today to let Canadians know that when we go into committee that some of those creative and constructive options can be explored.

• (1605)

I want to put on the floor of the House of Commons two ideas today that could be explored in committee and which the government might consider the possibility of accepting. The first idea has to do with the board of directors that will be managing the pension fund for those 1,500 miners, those 1,500 families that are involved in this.

I come from downtown Toronto where pension boards and pension situations are constantly being upgraded and renewed in this day and age. I do not think it is an unreasonable request, an unreasonable consideration that we have a representative from the coal miners on that board. If that is an instrument by which we can create hope, transparency and some feelings for those families, then we should debate and explore that idea in committee.

The other idea that I believe needs consideration has to do with the tar ponds, the environmental disaster with the toxic pool that exists in that community. There is a real environmental opportunity that might exist in this disastrous situation that we are facing. Why could we not consider the idea of giving many of those miners, those who want to be involved in environmental renewal and environmental change, the opportunity of working on the tar ponds disaster?

We will have to deal with this crisis sooner or later. Why could we not begin considering using some of that highly productive and

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useful workforce from that island? Why could we not employ them as part of an environmental force?

Quite frankly, when that disaster is ultimately cleared up, it could give them a capacity to work not just in their own community but it would give us an expertise that we could use in other regions, not only of Canada but other regions of the world. In other words, we could use that environmental disaster as a test case where once we do clean it up, the men, the women, all the environmental engineers and so on who were focused on dealing with that problem could be an export possibility in terms of the human capital.

By the way, some of these ideas are not my ideas. They are thoughts and ideas that have come from members of parliament who have served that community and served that region.

In the three minutes I have left I want to tell a story about an author I have grown to love over my years as an MP. His name is John Howard Griffin. He wrote a book entitled *Black Like Me*. He was a white author from southern Texas who wrote in the mid-forties. He specialized in discrimination and racism. One day some of his black neighbours and friends said to him "You will never understand what black is about until you are inside our skin".

• (1610)

John Howard moved to New Orleans where he had his skin pigmented. He lived and worked in a very tough situation. Six months later he went back to his own community where he used to do the Sunday mass collections. His own best friend rejected him because he did not recognize him.

We in the House have to understand the difficulties faced by those 1,500 families in Cape Breton. We have to use the House and the committee of the House to come up with constructive and creative opportunities so we can continue as a nation to always be there for the people who really need a voice when they are up against difficulties.

When we take this bill to committee, I appeal to members to design some constructive and doable ideas so that the people in Cape Breton will feel as proud, as excited and as hopeful about their community as any other community in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I speak on this issue with a degree of knowledge, since I was the Bloc Québécois critic for natural resources for a while, in fact, at the time the government decided to shut down Devco's operations.

I listened carefully to the Liberal Party member, who hopes that the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations, or perhaps it will be the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, will review this bill and propose amendments.

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A major problem here is that a committee, and I say this with all due respect for committees, will sometimes come to certain conclusions. However, if cabinet and the Prime Minister do not agree, the committee will unfortunately have to forget about its good recommendations and go in the direction shown by cabinet.

Therefore, since money is involved—the amounts are important but not exorbitant; on the contrary, they are too small—I am afraid that the minister's directives will be rather strict and the committee will have little leeway.

The Liberal Party member suggests, among other things, that the miners could be represented on the board, perhaps by a union representative.

We all know that a single representative on a board may be listened to but, no matter how well informed the representative from the mining sector may be, he can never convince the board to overstep its mandate, which will be defined in the legislation, since the act specifies the amounts involved. It cannot increase the moneys that would otherwise be available to the miners who are being laid off in this sad episode.

• (1615)

There are already some lessons to be learned from this situation. For years the federal government has been meddling in regional development. As early as 1960, it was recommended to diversify the economy of Cape Breton, which was essentially based on coal mining.

Unfortunately, these recommendations were never implemented and the federal government kept on pouring money into coal mining. Hundreds, thousands of jobs were created this way, but strictly in coal mining.

Today, as the government is getting ready to stop supporting this industry, which sadly has not been profitable for years, we can see the economy collapsing in the area because the diversification announced and expected 40 years ago did not take place.

This is by no means the only misguided example of the federal government's interference in regional development. A case in point is Atlantic groundfish. There is no more cod. Sadly, it was over-fished while the federal government was responsible for ensuring the sustainability of the stocks.

In many cases, the federal government may not be the best actor, it may not be in the best position to know what is important for a particular region. Here in Ottawa, everything is fine, of course. We look around us. The economy is relatively prosperous; the number of research centres is increasing. Just because things are going well in this bubble all around Parliament Hill does not mean the same is true everywhere. The Gaspé is another place with a number of

problems which have made the headlines in recent weeks. Today, we are talking about Cape Breton.

There are not just the laid-off workers to think about. These 1,000 workers have families. If we look at the impact of the economic collapse resulting from the Devco shutdown, we are talking about approximately 6,000 people—men, women and children—who will suffer the consequences. This is tragic in an area where Devco held up the whole economy.

Earlier, the Liberal Party member mentioned that these employees could perhaps be put to work cleaning up the ecological aftermath. This labour force could indeed be used, but this is to lose sight of what should have been done and what the unions suggested at the time.

Devco employees have vested rights. For one thing, they have been paying into a pension. Some of these employees are a few years away from retirement; others have much longer to go. If Devco itself had made an effort to do something about these clean-up operations, Devco employees would have been assigned to these duties as part of their regular duties. Their pension would have continued to grow and at some point these people could have retired.

At the time, the union had done some fairly specific calculations showing that retirements would be staggered out over the period between now, when the mine is being closed, and the time the clean-up was complete. The work force could thus be gradually reduced to a minimum. All these employees could have retired with a reasonable pension, with families looked after, with children who could have continued to grow up in their community.

• (1620)

By abruptly pulling the floor out from under these workers, the security they have accumulated has just disappeared. Even if they are given jobs, they will not have the assurance of a decent retirement on a reasonable retirement income, no matter how hard they work.

If the committee could manage to convince the minister that he needs to sweeten his offer so that the workers can remain with Devco, this would be a considerable improvement, and the ecological cleanup referred to by the Liberal member could be carried out.

I trust that the committee will manage to do so, but I sometimes lose hope when I see the best ideas and the best initiatives running headlong into a wall of misunderstanding, for reasons that we do not know and cannot understand. The plan may seem to make some economic sense in the short term, but in the medium and long term it will result in personal disasters on an unacceptable scale.

I see I do not have much time left. Hon. members will have understood by now that Bill C-11 is unacceptable to the Bloc

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Quebecois, both from the legal point of view—and we will be coming back to that—and from the human point of view. This bill is, first and foremost, unacceptable in the way it treats human beings.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to begin my remarks by commenting on the terrible state of affairs in the House of Commons when the idea of time allocation and closure is entered into so lightly and so frequently. Instead of being the exception to the rule, it has become the norm, at least in the short period of time I have been in the House of Commons.

I cannot tell the number of times I have had to stand here and criticize the government for abusing the idea of free and open debate in the House of Commons by invoking closure and time allocation anytime it is convenient for the government to do so or anytime it is worried about being politically embarrassed by the subject matter at hand. Since 1993 I believe it has been over 60 times that the Liberal government, the ruling party, has invoked the idea of limiting debate in the House of Commons. We came here to take part in the democratic process, to speak freely and raise the issues we believe are important and not to be silenced every time we turn around by a heavy-handed ruling party that sees fit to silence people when debate is clearly so important.

Having heard the members who actually reside in Cape Breton speak passionately about the bill earlier today, the people of Nova Scotia do not want the debate to be terminated. The people who live in the communities in Cape Breton want their voices to be heard. They want a free and open debate that explores all the aspects of the closure and the bill which will oversee the shutdown of the Devco corporation.

In what limited debate there has been we have heard from the government side misinformation that borders on negligence in not having had the courtesy to find out what the true facts are about Devco before the government invokes measures that will see its termination. We heard speeches earlier today that border on being intellectually dishonest.

I heard a member say that the government has poured \$1.7 billion of what he called taxpayer generosity into these coal mines and that enough is enough, that we have to terminate this flushing good money after bad. The hon. member failed to point out, whether deliberately or through naivety and if it was through naivety it would be irresponsible naivety, that the Devco corporation was not just a coal mine.

Does anyone who does not live in Cape Breton realize that Devco was not just a coal mine? When it was founded Devco was a coal mine and an economic development corporation. The coal

mine in fact was successful as a stand alone enterprise. For many years it showed a profit. It served a valuable function by providing coal for the Nova Scotia Power Corporation and it operated in a viable manner.

• (1625)

The other side of Devco in the years from 1967 to 1980 was economic development. All kinds of things were tried on the island to stimulate and diversify the economy. Some of those ventures succeeded and some of them failed. Not all of that \$1.7 billion went into coal mining.

It would have been a lot more honest had that been pointed out at the front end. We would have expected someone from the government side at least to have been honest enough to portray those figures in an accurate way. The government also failed to point out that in that same period of time, the coal mining aspect of Devco produced \$5 billion worth of product and economic activity in Cape Breton, \$5 billion with a spinoff effect. Everyone knows that a dollar spent in today's economy gets spent four times before it reaches its final state of repose, which is usually in some American shareholder's pocket.

I am in the middle of my speech and a lot of the comments I am making are being addressed to the government side. I cannot help but note there are virtually no government members in the House of Commons. It would be irresponsible for them to push this legislation through and not even have the courtesy to be in the House of Commons to listen to what little debate we are going to have.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member said that there are virtually no government members listening to or participating in the debate. The record will show that is not accurate.

The Deputy Speaker: What is a problem is when members make these references to the presence or absence of members. We do get into trouble. It is against the rules to do that. I can only admonish all hon. members to comply with the rules and avoid reference to the fact of who is not here.

Members have other things to do besides sit in the House. I am sure there are committees sitting as we speak. Members have other obligations. To point out absences is not helpful and, I would point out to all hon. members, is contrary to the rules of the House. We will avoid that, I know, in future remarks. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor and I know he will want to get away from that topic.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, the only reason I raised the relative shortage on the other benches was by way of introducing the calling of quorum.

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The Deputy Speaker: I will certainly be glad to call quorum, but the way to do it is to avoid reference to who is here and who is not, because then we get into disagreements.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Mr. Pat Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for at least going through the exercise.

I began my remarks by talking about what a shame, what a tragedy and what a travesty it is to limit the debate on such an important subject. What I was getting around to was not just the face value of the argument about the closing of the Devco coal mines, but the fact that this is an issue of much larger significance.

Many things have not even been raised. The secondary impacts of shutting down Devco have not been dealt with and they will not be dealt with in any detail in the House because the debate has been limited by moving time allocation.

One of the natural things which comes to mind, one of the obvious consequences of selling off Devco and closing Devco is the whole issue of foreign ownership, economic sovereignty, loss of control of our own industries and our inability to control our own destiny when it comes to matters regarding the development of our natural resources.

One thing we have seen in this country in recent years is an absolute epidemic of foreign takeovers. In part a low Canadian dollar has led to this, and in part it is because there are people lurking just across our border who are willing to gobble up any aspect of our natural resources they possibly can. This is one of the predictable consequences we are going to see, I believe, as we divest ourselves of the Devco operations.

An even more frightening spectacle in my mind is that the whole idea of Devco was to feed coal into the Nova Scotia Power Corporation to generate electricity and to have a vertical integration. We would enjoy that benefit and the secondary benefit of the labour created by the mining of coal, that we could create electricity with that coal. There was a natural customer for the product.

● (1630)

Nova Scotia Power Corporation will now be in the unenviable position of trying to buy its power elsewhere. Where? It will probably be from the eastern seaboard of the United States. Mr. Peabody will supply the coal, I presume, to Nova Scotia. Who will ship the coal from the eastern seaboard of the United States to Cape Breton? It will be Canada Steamship Lines. The Minister of Finance and steamships will be going into Sydney harbour loaded with American coal to burn in Nova Scotia Power Corporation. If

this seems shortsighted, if it seems economically perverse, I put it to members that it is. That is why this needs to be debated and that is why we need more time in the House to deal with some of these predictable consequences of shutting down the whole Devco operation.

I am a trade unionist and have been a union representative for much of my working career. I find in cases like this the best way to convey the true impact of this sort of economic move is to try to personalize the issue by looking at the actual people involved. If we try to visualize in our minds the actual families and workers who are being displaced by all of this, it is useful to look at a profile of the Devco employees.

If we try to get in our minds who these people of the United Mine Workers are, and there are four unions involved, of the actual members of the United Mine Workers of America union, 414 out of 500 or so have grade 12 or less education. The average age is 44.5 years. They have industry specific skills that make it very difficult to relocate into other industries. I raise all these factors to point out the difficulty of trying to reintegrate the displaced employees into other industries, et cetera, et cetera.

One of the reasons we see such an overwhelmingly low level of education in people who are fairly my contemporaries, where it is not usual for there to be over 80% of them with grade 12, is that they were seduced into quitting school and going to work at Devco. They were told the big lie. People came into their classrooms and virtually said "You can sit here and finish high school or you can go to work tomorrow with a good \$12, \$14 an hour job with grade 8 or grade 9 and we will keep you employed for life, until you retire, working in the Devco coal mine operation". That was bad advice and it has complicated the reintegration of some of these displaced workers into alternative lines of work.

One of those lines of work ironically will be the next subject that we debate here today because we have been told that the government side will not put up any more speakers on the subject because it wants debate to collapse on the subject so that we can move on to the next subject which is tourism. What it really wants all the Devco miners to do is grow long, red pigtailed like Anne of Green Gables so they can be cute little tourism oddities maybe. If they can learn to play the banjo or something they could entertain American bus loads of tourists who drive to Cape Breton to see them because there will be very little else for them to do, given the callous way that this whole issue has been treated.

Had we had more time and had we been given the opportunity to debate this issue further, I am sure other important subjects would be raised. But as it is now, once again we can hear the jackboots marching to the drums of closure and time allocation.

The Deputy Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 38 it is my duty to advise the House that the item to be taken up at the

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hour of adjournment later this day is the following one: the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, The Environment.

Mr. Peter Mancini: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have already raised this point a couple of times. This is an important debate to the people of Cape Breton and I would call quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I see a quorum.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise once again on this bill. Considering that I did not have an opportunity to finish my comments this morning on this issue, I would like to have a few minutes to further investigate the whole issue.

Certainly I think it is absolutely imperative that the bill be given time for adequate debate in the House and also time for adequate investigation of the whole issue in committee and to call all the witnesses that we need to call simply because of some of the mystery surrounding the whole bill.

• (1635)

There is a huge number of unanswered questions on the issue of the disposition of Devco's assets and the rumoured purchase of its assets, particularly by American interests, which seems curious. Clearly, Nova Scotia Power has the need for huge amounts of coal for the foreseeable future.

In spite of the need for coal and that coal exists in Cape Breton which will last for as long as Nova Scotia Power could probably envision using it, it makes no sense to me to shut down the mines in Cape Breton and essentially sell the contract to supply coal to Nova Scotia Power to an American interest, aside from the fact that the finance minister's ships are hauling this coal. Why have the Americans supply coal and have it transported to Cape Breton when the coal is in Cape Breton and can be mined as economically as it can be in other parts of the world? There is something really rotten about this whole deal.

There is not only the issue of whether whoever buys the mines would operate them for any length of time, but there is some real question about the intentions of the people buying it. What about the coal reserves that are available and strip mineable in Cape Breton and Nova Scotia? There is a substantial reserve of coal which is available without the undersea mining process that is taking place in the Prince mine and proposed Donkin mine. Those questions have to be answered.

There are the questions of drilling rights for the gas that is available, not only the methane gas in the coal seams in Nova Scotia but the other natural gas reserves that are rumoured to be available as well. All of those questions have to be asked.

There is the question of a lawsuit that is currently before the courts. It has been brought in by Donkin Resources Limited because of promises the government made to those people who were doing an assessment of the feasibility of opening the Donkin mine. It cut them off at the knees. There is that whole issue. How can it sell Devco before it settles the whole legal issue?

I found the suggestion by the member for Broadview—Greenwood interesting. He suggested that they set up a government board to oversee the pension fund and give Joe Shannon the chairmanship of the pension board on top of everything else. That was really interesting and really made a lot of sense. He did make some sense in the suggestion that a lot of these issues could be explored in committee with witnesses if the government allows us time in committee to do that. That is the question and one that has to be answered before we can accept that idea.

Because of all those reasons, the limited time of debate and the secrecy surrounding the suspension of the Financial Administration Act that guarantees us some transparency in this whole thing, it is imperative that we have the opportunity to get answers to these questions at some point in the process. It is the only way Canadians are ever going to understand what this deal was all about.

When I was in Cape Breton I met with the mine workers union. It showed me in black and white that obviously over a number of years the management of Devco was deliberately sabotaging the operation of the mines. We could quite clearly see from year to year where it cut off capital investment. Machinery was not replaced or repaired. There was down time from poor equipment. We could clearly see that, instead of preparing another coal face to be mined when the one that was currently in operation was completed was not done. When the operating face was mined out, the whole mine had to shut down while they moved and set up to do the process of preparing another face.

• (1640)

Why did the government do these things? That is not an efficient operation. That, in my view, was a deliberate attempt to make Devco appear to be as uneconomical as it possibly could, so it would be easier to shut down when the time came. Someone has to answer for those things. We have to have a committee. Joe Shannon, the chairman of the board of Devco, has some serious questions to answer about his role and how he got a multimillion dollar contract to move coal as he sat as chairman of the board of Devco. That has to be a sweetheart deal. I do not know how he possibly could do that. He also has to answer why as chairman of the board with a vested interest like he has he is sitting and assessing the bids with Nesbitt Burns Inc. in Toronto. He again is clearly in conflict of interest.

We have to hear from the Donkin Resources group that put a bid in and was rejected, in their words, because it was a Canadian bid.

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Being a Canadian bid should not be the reason to reject it. It should have been the reason to move it to the top of the list.

I had breakfast with another individual who put in a wholly owned Canadian bid that was rejected for similar reasons. He had some very interesting proposals tied in with his bid for Devco in dealing with the Sydney tar ponds and a lot of other things we have heard talked about today. I would like to hear from that side of the issue at committee.

I think there is so much being hidden that needs to be revealed and needs to be discussed about the whole Devco issue and what the government has been doing and what the government's intentions are with this that I certainly support the NDP motion to hoist the bill and move it into committee before we are finished second reading. I think it is a valid proposal.

I do not really care which committee it goes to. As far as the amendment to the amendment, I am ambivalent on that. However, the idea of getting it into committee and having a thorough study of the issues that surround this I certainly would support. I think the whole issue has a bad smell about it that needs to be clarified. I hope the government will allow us to do that.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to again discuss the issue of Devco. Some may wonder why I am interested in this issue. It is because I have had the opportunity to visit Sydney—Victoria and the great island of Cape Breton.

I talked to the people when I was there about a year ago. They were upset about the passing of a part of their history. They also looked at the future with a new challenge of what they could do to once again make a viable economy on the island of Cape Breton.

I heard some of the members say "We don't want to make telephone operators out of all of these miners". Indeed that is not the intention. When a company like EDS wants to invest money in Cape Breton, it is a positive and good thing. It tells us that company thinks there is a future in Cape Breton as the people themselves think there is a future in Cape Breton.

There has been a lot of discussion about abandonment of the workers. It is interesting to note from statistics that the number of miners is divided into three groups, as I understand. We have one group which has made 75 pension points and they are over 60 years of age. Approximately 140 of them are going to benefit from an early retirement program with pensions over \$20,000 a year.

A second group who are approximately 49 years of age with less than 25 years experience are going to have work. This seems to be the essence of the problem. Apparently some in the opposition would prefer these people to be pensioned off. It is assured that

there will be at least 500 jobs for these people, so there is no unemployment. In fact there are jobs to go to.

Finally, there is another regrettable group, 42 years of age and under, the last people hired by the pit. They are receiving three weeks salary for every year that they worked. Plus, if they worked over 20 years, they get four weeks salary for every year over 20. Quite frankly this is better than almost any severance plan in the country. The government has been generous.

• (1645)

We are very concerned about the people of Cape Breton and their ability to change their economy. Often speeches in the House have been on how to keep the past going, how to keep the mines open just one more month or one more year, how to keep a way of life going that in fact has changed. The reality is that the coal industry in Cape Breton, as is the case in Britain which I visited recently, has gone by the wayside. The same members speak in the House about the terrible aspect of fossil fuel emissions and the environment and maintain the importance of keeping a coal industry. In my opinion these comments are terribly inconsistent.

It is not just about coal mining in Cape Breton. One listening to the debate in the House would think that is all that goes on in Cape Breton. However in Cape Breton approximately 3,000 people are employed in the forestry. Close to \$1 billion of private money is invested in Stora in Port Hawkesbury. In 1999 tourism witnessed the strongest year in its economy with \$230 million being gained in tourism in Cape Breton alone.

What about knowledge based industries? Some 44 businesses have set up on Silicon Island, employing 300 people. What about Precision Finished Components in North Sydney? It is making money and expanding. Also located on the north side is a company that manufactures plastic for markets in Canada and the United States.

The list goes on and on. Poly Tech Windows in Baddeck employs 40 people and exports its products to the United States and all over the world. Finewood Flooring in Middle River employs 20 people and exports its products to Germany and the United States. MacPherson Bros. in New Waterford exports prefabricated homes to Spain and Germany. The list goes on.

This tells me that the people of Cape Breton are adaptable. In fact the people of Cape Breton have changed their economy. It may well be that members of parliament do not seem to realize this. We should be happy that Cape Bretoners have turned their efforts to creating a new economy in Cape Breton. They went back in history. They went back to the mines and kept the mines open just one more month, just one more year.

It seems strange to me when I hear members of the Canadian Alliance Party complaining about the system. They should be celebrating that Cape Bretoners have found the courage to deal

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with their misfortune and the ability to go forward. Certainly it was not without some unease. The industrial revolution was not easy on a lot of people. People had to make significant changes, which is not easy to do midway through life. I would be the first to admit that.

To keep on going with something that is not working is not reality. The reality is that they require change. As I understand it, more people in Nova Scotia are engaged in teaching today than either the fishery or the forestry industries. Economies change and they change with the times.

The people of Cape Breton are up to that change. They have accepted the fact that their economy cannot continue to rely on coal as a basis of sustenance for them. As a consequence, they have tried to experiment and they will continue experimenting. The government, in spite of the discussion about turning miners into telephone operators, will continue to find ways to encourage private industry to establish in Cape Breton to the betterment of the people there.

I am happy to be part of a government that has made a tough decision to dispose of the coal mining operations, but it is the right decision. All of us realize that governments are not the best operators of coal mines whether in Cape Breton or anywhere else. It is time to move on. It is time for a new future. The people of Cape Breton realize it and the government realizes it.

• (1650)

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of both sadness and anger that I rise to participate today in the debate on this important bill, Bill C-11.

In rising to participate in the debate I want to make a couple of preliminary points. First, as my colleagues from the New Democratic Party have noted during this debate, particularly today, it is absolutely shameful that once again on legislation this fundamental, this significant, the government is bringing down the hammer of closure before there has been any significant movement for dialogue with the workers who are affected and the communities that will be devastated by the results of the decision of the government. This is becoming a habit with the government.

As a member of the House for almost 21 years, I vividly recall Liberal MPs standing when they were in opposition and condemning the Conservative Party in the harshest of terms for its recourse to closure, to time allocation. This government, particularly in this parliament, has resorted to closure far more times, and who would have ever imagined over 60 times, than the Conservatives ever did. What we see is blatant hypocrisy and an attempt to more and more marginalize democracy itself.

We know best is the attitude of the government: we know best for the people of Cape Breton; we know best in real terms for the corporate interests that are just waiting to get their hands on the

resources that are the vital part of this decision. I want to condemn the process the government has embarked on to shut down this debate.

Second, I pay tribute to my colleagues, particularly my colleagues from Cape Breton, for the tireless campaign they have waged both within the House and across the country in their home constituencies of Sydney—Victoria and Bras d'Or—Cape Breton to make Canadians more aware of just how significant and how important the issue is for all of us.

I represent an urban community on the other side of the country. I have the great privilege and honour of representing Burnaby. I have visited Cape Breton on more than one occasion and have been tremendously impressed by the strength and the resilience of the people of Cape Breton in the face of incredible adversity. That strength, that resilience and that eloquence are certainly reflected in our caucus in the representation from Cape Breton by the member for Sydney—Victoria and the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton.

I note as well the extent to which many of us were moved by the writing of another Nova Scotia member, a member of our caucus, the hon. member for Dartmouth, in her powerful play *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum*. She wrote about some of the impact in intensely human terms of the uncertainty and despair that affected many families as a result of the corporate decision making, the insensitivity and the inhumanity of decisions that were made solely on the basis of the bottom line.

We saw the ultimate obscenity of that approach with the death of the Westray miners, death which was clearly attributed to corporate greed. I hope the House will in the very near future adopt the amendments the leader of the New Democratic Party proposed which would make it very clear that we view it as criminal wrongdoing when corporate interests are put ahead of the lives and the safety of workers in mines and elsewhere.

I speak today with some albeit very limited knowledge of mining myself, having worked as an underground miner at a very young age, as a young university student, in northern Ontario at the Dickenson gold mine. I worked underground in Balmertown, Ontario, in a mine which had an appalling safety record. Certainly in a very small way I can relate to the uncertainty faced by miners as every day they put their lives on the line when they go underground. All they are asking for is some sense of being treated with some dignity and some respect. Instead of that we see the government railroading the legislation through the House of Commons.

• (1655)

As opposed to the original legislation tabled in the House, the original Devco Act, we know there is no provision in the bill that would compel the government “before closing to ensure that all

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reasonable measures have been adopted by the corporation”, that is by Devco, “to reduce as far as possible any unemployment or economic hardship that can be expected to result therefrom”.

That is not radical. That is not revolutionary. All it is asking is that there be an assurance that Devco, which has been in existence for over 30 years, shows some respect, consults, and engages in dialogue with the workers and the communities affected by its decision to make sure that the unemployment, the loss of jobs and the economic hardship are minimized. Why is the Liberal government not prepared to even make that commitment to these communities on Cape Breton? It is absolutely shameful.

My colleagues in the New Democratic Party and I are attempting to ensure that when the bill goes to committee we put back that basic commitment to the workers, to the people and to the communities of Cape Breton.

We know that there is a great deal of uncertainty in those communities. There is currently an arbitration process under way. Instead of the government respecting that arbitration process and putting the bill on the back burner while the process proceeds to its conclusion, what does it do? It rams through the legislation and says to hell with the arbitrator. The Liberals say they know what is best for the people of Cape Breton and they know what is best for their communities. The reality is that they know what is best for the corporate interests that stand to gain from the dismantling of this corporation.

I find it shocking, as my colleague from Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, my colleague from Sydney—Victoria and others have made very clear, that there are big corporate interests just waiting to move in and dismantle the corporation, to pick up the pieces and to profit from this misery. We know that foreign ownership of these resources is a very real possibility. More and more, as my colleague from Kamloops pointed out today during question period, we are losing control of our own economic destiny, our own future, our own ability to make decisions about the best interest of the people of Canada. We see that now in the case of Cape Breton as well.

This is not a debate about figures or statistics. It is a debate about flesh and blood people and families who look to the future and feel a tremendous sense of uncertainty. They are asking to be treated with some dignity and respect. Folks who are perhaps in their fifties and sixties know that it will be almost impossible for them to find another job but they at least want a decent pension. They do not want a job at a call centre. They want a decent pension and they want a future for their kids. They do not want their children to have to leave that beautiful part of our country to find a future, and they should not have to do so.

That is why we in the New Democratic Party are appealing to the government even at this late time to reconsider its approach, to pull

the bill back, as my colleague for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton suggested in an amendment that she proposed in February 2000, to give the government and Devco an opportunity to enter into that dialogue with the people of the communities affected.

As I said, what those communities face with the closure of all Devco mining operations and the eventual gutting of the corporation is devastating. They face the direct loss of about 1,500 good quality, well paying union jobs. Spin off jobs will be lost as well. Two or three times as many small businesses will be hit particularly hard. They face the loss and the expenditure by Devco of as much as \$50 million annually in that region to contractors and suppliers. They face the loss of almost \$80 million per year in wages and salaries. In a community that is already economically depressed, imagine the kind of impact this has. Yet the Liberals insist on just ploughing ahead. It is a loss to Ottawa and to taxpayers of some \$28 million a year in Canada pension, unemployment insurance and income tax. It is a huge economic loss of over \$300 million to that region alone.

• (1700)

Mr. Speaker, I see you signalling me that my time has come to an end. I am quite prepared to continue for another half hour or 45 minutes if the House would give me leave.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has asked for the consent of the House to extend his time for debate by 30 minutes. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would have been very pleased to listen to our colleague from Burnaby—Douglas, whose eloquence and concern for workers is well known.

I am very pleased to rise today, although the topic at hand is of grave concern to us. I say that I am pleased because workers across Canada know that, historically, they can count on the Bloc Québécois. We have given them our support both through our colleague, the member for Portneuf, our natural resources critic when the issue was first raised a year ago, and the tireless dedication to workers shown by our colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, our human resources development critic.

I want to draw a parallel with a situation I experienced in 1993 as a young MP. My colleagues may remember that in those days Montreal was undergoing a process of industrial obsolescence that

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had started in the 80s. There was a program called POWA, which was totally inadequate for Montreal workers.

We will recall that in those days, in Montreal, there was the Vickers shipyard, at a time when there were 30% too many ships on the seas and workers in my riding had to be retrained. It was a time also, in the late 80s and early 90s, when the whole textile industry in Montreal was in trouble due to its obsolescence. It has since picked up.

I must once again draw a parallel between my experience in the 90s and what is happening in Nova Scotia. With Bill C-11, the government is getting ready to privatize Devco, turning over two coal mines to the private sector, and putting close to 1,000 workers out of work.

This causes us to wonder what our duty is, what our responsibility is, as parliamentarians, when this sort of thing goes on in regions we might describe as one industry regions. The coal industry, the mining industry, the coal mining industry is not marginal in the Cape Breton community.

I have seen the figures on this. I am told that it was a really major industry. This is all the more of a concern since the government is saying today "It is no longer as cost effective as we would like it, as we think it ought to be, we will privatize it. We will let the private sector take over this industrial sector, but we do not want the responsibility of knowing how these workers are going to go about finding a second job".

Members will say that the government set aside a certain amount for separation bonuses. According to our information, and the members of the government side will correct me if I am wrong, there are some 230 miners with 25 years' experience.

• (1705)

It is not easy. When you have 25 years of experience, of seniority, when you have worked have worked in the same firm for 25 years, you have a certain know how, knowledge in an industrial sector. It also means that you may be 45, 50, 55 or perhaps even 60, and it is then not easy to relocate or to find another job.

Bill C-11 does not resolve the problem of 225 or 230 miners with 25 or more years of experience with Devco, who are excluded from early retirement programs as currently defined. This is where our parliamentary responsibility calls out to us.

I ask Liberal members: what if it were your brother, your father or your best friend who had given 25 years of work to a company and who, all of sudden, found himself without an income because a government has decided to withdraw from that industrial sector?

Even more disturbing—and the hon. member for Portneuf alluded to this earlier—is what is happening now, this relative loss of momentum in the coal industry. We understand that anything

related to the primary and secondary sectors of our industry is experiencing difficulties of one degree or another. This is what we call the "tertiarization of the economy".

The economy is increasingly a service economy. This means that certain sectors including the coal industry, that used to be very important are now experiencing problems. Earlier I mentioned the textile industry, but I could have included the leather and linen industries, Vickers in Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, and the shipyards for which the hon. member for Lévis fought hard and even introduced a bill in the House.

What do the fight led by the member for Lévis, the representations being made by the NDP members for Dartmouth and Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, and the battle that I fought as a young member of parliament regarding POWA, in 1993-94, have in common? They all illustrate the responsibility we have as parliamentarians not to let older workers down, because it is harder for people who are 45, 50, 55 or 60 to find a new job. That is what I cannot understand about this debate.

As has already been said, once again we are dealing with an extremely authoritarian manner of carrying out House business. What is the procedure which characterizes the most dictatorial of governments? Let us not mince words, it is imposing gag orders.

For our audience, who are less familiar with the way the House works, what does this mean? It means that, with a cavalier gesture, without regard for the freedom of expression of parliamentarians, which is part of our mandate from the public to rise to speak in this House on behalf of the best interests of our fellow citizens, the government, the Liberals, these pharisees, these whited sepulchres, have decided through their parliamentary leader to impose a gag order so as to limit the speaking time of the members of the opposition.

Let us not forget that we are speaking today of the immediate and future earnings of the mine workers. When we are dealing with the income of the family wage earner, we are of course dealing with the situation of entire families who would, if it were not for the vigilance of the opposition parties, be in difficulty. This is unacceptable.

Today we shall be adding our voices to that of the NDP because we are an enlightened opposition and understand that Bill C-11, while it does not concern Quebec directly, obliges us to solidarity. We have always been there in solidarity when workers were being threatened.

• (1710)

I am grateful to the NDP members for waging this battle today. I want to tell the workers of Cape Breton that we are with them and that we care about their destiny and their future.

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What do we want done? We want the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations to give some thought to the fate of the part of Canada known as Cape Breton, which relies on a single industry, or just about, and we want better solutions to be found to this industrial transition, which has meant that the coal industry is not as important in the year 2000 as it was in the 1960s and 1970s.

We say that this industrial transition cannot be achieved without serious support from the government. We understand that jobs will not be found as easily for some workers and that it is the responsibility of this parliament to ensure that they have an adequate income, in recognition of the contribution they have made to the economic development of their region.

I want these workers to know that we will not forget them and I say shame on this government, which once again has failed to support those who need the help of this parliament.

Mr. Pierre de Savoy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I may be wrong, but we do not appear to have a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Portneuf is right. We do not have a quorum. Call in the members.

[*English*]

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we just had a quorum call to make sure there were sufficient members of parliament in their seats to allow the debate to continue. Let us face it, this is a very dark day for Cape Bretoners, a very dark day for democracy and a very dark day for parliament.

Once again, in spite of the fact that this legislation will profoundly impact on the lives of hundreds and hundreds of families in Cape Breton and will mean a difference in the futures of hundreds and hundreds of families in this hard-pressed part of Canada, the government has decided that it does not want to hear any more debate, that it has heard enough. The government has, some 60 times in this session, again muzzled the duly elected representatives of the people of Canada from 301 constituencies who will have no further chance to participate in this debate. The government is saying that it has the understanding, the knowledge and the comprehension to say that enough is enough and that it has heard enough.

The reality is that there are many people here who want to speak to this legislation. The fact that the government has said that it is not interested in allowing debate any longer is a dark day for this

institution. I know you, Mr. Speaker, must also be very sad. I know Canadians are sad. I know parliamentarians are sad, at least on this side of the House. At least in our party we are making an effort to keep the debate going. I know others are very sad. I can see their heads shaking. This is a bleak, black, dark, gloomy day for democracy and for the parliamentary system in our country.

It is also a dark and mysterious day for Cape Bretoners. This has to be one of the most mysterious debates when people are raising questions that logically do not make any sense. For example, the government has decided that selling Cape Breton coal for Nova Scotia to generate power does not make any sense. It has decided that it makes more sense to import coal from Columbia, from Venezuela, from foreign countries.

• (1715)

Imagine how the people of Cape Breton are going to feel when those ships roll up to those docks in Cape Breton to unload coal from Colombia. It has to be embarrassing. We are going to bring coal from Colombia to Cape Breton.

Guess whose ships are going to be hauling that coal. This has to be a sad day for political leadership in the country when we find that the shipping company of the Minister of Finance is going to be used to ship coal from Colombia to Cape Breton. As a matter of fact, it has been shipping coal for a long time. There are 33 ships shipping coal from Venezuela, the United States, Colombia and other foreign countries to provide fuel for the power plants for the people of Nova Scotia.

If that is not enough, in today's newspaper we find that the Minister of Finance is a little short of ships and has to build some new ones. Does he select Canada's shipyards to build ships? No. He goes to the low wage shipyards in China. That is where he is building his ships. The Minister of Finance is building his ships in low wage China, using Philippine labour, and the ships are flagged in Liberia or some place in the Caribbean. The Minister of Finance is supposed to be setting a model for economic behaviour. There is a lot of puzzling around this which we have to get to the bottom of in committee.

Who is going to buy this? I know that the workers who are going to lose their jobs wanted to make a deal so that they could essentially run the new company. They wanted to find ways of raising finances. The Government of Canada said "Hold it, that is not good enough. We want a foreign buyer". It is part of the theme of Canada being up for sale.

This morning Statistics Canada revealed that takeovers by foreign companies have now reached breakneck pace. We are in passing gear. Our low currency and the big for sale signs all over the world mean that foreigners are coming here to buy and control our economy like they never have before.

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What does the Minister of Industry say about it? He is happy. He is one happy camper. He says that he loves that foreigners are buying up our economy and he loves that foreigners are controlling our future. I can say that we in the New Democratic Party do not like the idea of foreigners controlling the destiny of this country's next generation.

It is time to take Canada back. The problem is we had a made in Canada solution and the government said that it was not interested. It would much rather have a mysterious foreign buyer come in to take over the operation. This does not make sense.

Those people who over the years fought for this country in wars, who fought and died for democracy, and those leaders of our country from coast to coast to coast who struggled to build up economic sovereignty must be turning in their graves right now. They cannot believe this is happening in our country. It is a sad commentary.

I have heard some of my Liberal colleagues, who have given rather embarrassing presentations today, say that the people of Cape Breton should be thankful for this handout. You have been to Cape Breton, Mr. Speaker, probably many times. Most of us have been there many times. As a matter of fact I was there recently. We will never meet a prouder group of Canadians who are prepared to work hard for their incomes. They are working hard.

Today we are talking about hundreds of people who go down into those pits underground. They go down into those dark, wet, dangerous pits day after day and make modest amounts of money to provide income for their families. They have been tossed on the coal heap. Some 1,500 families have been told "Sorry folks, we do not need you any longer". We are not talking about 1,500 jobs. That is the obvious number of jobs. We are also talking about spin-off jobs, because for every miner who loses a job, a dentist, a teacher, a shoemaker and somebody else are losing their jobs. We are probably talking about 5,000 jobs.

Then the Prime Minister roared into Cape Breton and said "Listen, I know 5,000 of you have just lost your jobs or are in the process of losing your jobs. We have got a great idea. We are going to open up a call centre so that at least 400 of you can be telephone operators". The government expects people to cheer for this. To be fair, it is nice to have some kind of an infill.

• (1720)

We are talking about men and women who work hard. For generations people have been going down in those coal mines working hard to provide for their families. The idea of sitting in a call centre with a phone headset on for minimum wage is not that attractive but that is the best we have. We have to deal with this in committee.

We heard others say that today. For goodness sake, we are the most connected country in the world. Our banks are overflowing with money. We have talented and trained individuals. This country has the best minds. If we cannot find a better way to provide for the people of Cape Breton than what is in this piece of legislation and what the government has announced, something is very wrong.

If we put the proper economic strategy in place, if we included the proper industrial strategy along with an economic strategy, if we established a business plan for Cape Breton, we could turn Cape Breton into the showcase of economic development in this country if it will be there.

They are talented, hardworking, well trained and educated people who are prepared to work hard. They are prepared to create something of hope for their children, but they need a government on their side, not a government that is prepared to toss them out the window. That is another reason we have to get this bill to committee and deal with it properly.

I was in Cape Breton with some of my colleagues from the New Democratic Party. We met with individuals, mining specialists and people who know the Devco operation inside out. They all said the same thing. The theme which was emerging from all of our deliberations in all of our meetings was the systematic program to demonstrate that Devco was uneconomical.

Today many people have shared with us their personal experiences, the way they were approaching the coal faces, the way they set up those strategies and so on. In other words there was a scenario to enable Devco to be financially inept and therefore something the government had to sell off. That is definitely not the case. We have to expose that.

What do we say to a group of people who say they know they are going to get some measly severance arrangement? As a matter of fact I heard a government member say that those people are going to get \$8,000 a piece to retrain themselves. Where do people retrain for \$8,000? Maybe for a call centre job to learn how to put on a headset properly.

Eight thousand dollars is a bit of an embarrassment. As my fiends from Bras d'Or—Cape Breton and Sydney—Victoria pointed out, all sorts of other government settlements have been much fairer in how the men and women involved were treated. Cape Bretoners get shortchanged. Cape Bretoners do not get a fair deal. The government says to Cape Bretoners that it is not interested in giving them the same kind of deal it gives everybody else. Why is this? Why does the government treat the people of Cape Breton in such a cavalier fashion?

There are lots of questions. We are up against closure today and not many more of us will have a chance to speak. Let us just hope and pray that when the bill gets to committee and witnesses come before the committee to explain some of these questions and

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provide new information that the government does not use its muscle in committee and close that debate off as well. That would be the darkest day.

Although the threat of closure is about to strangle us here in a few more minutes, we hope that when the bill goes to committee we will have a chance to debate it properly.

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing the constituency of Okanagan—Shuswap. Mr. Speaker, imagine sitting around in Cape Breton or anywhere in Canada 30 years ago with your coffee buddies, your friends and you were talking about what would be happening in Canada 30 years later. If somebody said that all the coal mines in Cape Breton would be shut down, somebody would have called for an ambulance and a white jacket.

• (1725)

What are we doing today? We are talking about exactly that. We have to stop and wonder how this all took place and what exactly happened.

I have had the opportunity to go to Cape Breton. I have also had the opportunity to go down into the mines with the workers, and hardworking and dedicated people they are. Not one of them I talked to was asking for a handout. When I talked to them they were asking for the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Order, please. It might have been that my subconscious knew that the member for Okanagan—Shuswap had already been on his feet speaking to this.

Mr. Darrel Stinson: Mr. Speaker, but not on the subamendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): But not on the sub-amendment. According to the infallible records of the clerk it was. We could ask for unanimous consent for the member to speak for another eight minutes and that would solve the problem.

Mr. Darrel Stinson: I was just going to talk about the mismanagement with regard to Devco.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Unfortunately our records indicate that the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap has already been on his feet. I am sorry it took that long to figure it out.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to speak to Bill C-11 with some sadness.

The last time I spoke on the bill was in November. I raised questions about the basic misunderstanding of the problems in Cape Breton by the government. I spoke about the fact that many Cape Bretoners who still consider themselves Cape Bretoners no longer are able to live there. They now reside in my community of

Dartmouth or in Montreal, Calgary or Toronto, or they have been forced to leave the country. They go to Boston or elsewhere in the United States because of the government's approach to the problems of Cape Breton.

The approach has been that it is time to move on; it is time to leave the island that they love; it is time to lower expectations, to know that what the coal miners have wrested from the rock with their sweat and with the lives of their fathers and grandfathers is not worth the government's attention any longer. What it is really time for is the government to stop being so arrogant and to stop being so patronizing.

Since I last spoke on this bill a number of things have happened. The people of Cape Breton finally got the government's attention by taking direct action. They took control of the mine. These men had finally had enough and the spouses and the families of the men had had enough. Together they took control of the mine. I do not blame them. They were not prepared to let the legacy of sweat their forefathers had left go without a fight.

I want to salute the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton for her levelheaded and hands on approach to the workers who took that dramatic action. I think the situation may have descended to violence had she not been there to keep communications between the parties going during that very tense situation. That took a lot of guts on her part and it took a lot of guts on the workers' part to take the action that they did. They brought the attention of the entire country to their plight.

I also wish to thank the member for Sydney—Victoria for the brilliant defence of his constituents and his articulate, eloquent and passionate representations made to government members, sadly to no avail. The Liberals seem hell-bent on destroying Cape Breton island. They told the workers down the mine that they would send their reasonable grievances to an independent decision maker to get them to end the strike and allow the coal to flow once again.

It was strange that when the coal stopped flowing the power supply to my constituency became uncertain. Still the Liberals say that shutting off the tap of Cape Breton coal is a good thing. Maybe I should be a little more charitable.

• (1730)

It is willing to let Devco go simply so an American company can have the privilege of buying the supply contract which will keep my constituents' lights on. However, from what I am hearing here and back in Nova Scotia, the government has never fulfilled this promise to the brave workers who went down that mine. I am not surprised, only saddened.

The only thing the government has done is assured workers in Cape Breton that they will be provided jobs in call centres. The Prime Minister himself flew to Cape Breton on the eve of a

provincial election to tell people in Cape Breton that he would get rid of good paying jobs without providing decent severance and let them work for crap wages in call centres. The Prime Minister called this the best kind of patronage. I call it arrogant and patronizing.

While being a playwright, I had the great pleasure to write a play about characters living in Glace Bay, called *The Glace Bay Miners' Museum*. It was based on a very important story of the same name by Sheldon Currie. This bill presents to me a whole new scenario, a comedy of course, a farce I guess.

An hon. member: Black.

Ms. Wendy Lill: A black comedy, absolutely.

I have visions dancing in my head of a whole new industry being put together in Cape Breton by the Government of Canada because it believes in patronage first. First it announces call centres. Hundreds and hundreds of jobs all over Cape Breton for former coal miners to sit behind desks and explain to callers from Alabama how to fix their washing machines or how the good people of Mississauga can order their lingerie in the right size or colour.

Then a problem surfaces. The call centre company's quality control police at head office in Dallas or Singapore notice that these call centre workers have Cape Breton accents, probably in both languages. This greatly offends their sense of global commercial homogeneity and the companies are not happy. The government believes, above all else, that companies be kept happy.

I see a group of concerned ministers and a legion of advisors huddled around the Prime Minister discussing accent problems. What is the result? We have a whole new private sector industry being subsidized by HRDC to train Cape Bretoners not to have accents. The Prime Minister himself will give the final exam because he believes in hands on patronage for Cape Breton, and according to many comics I know, he is an expert on accents.

I see the Prime Minister personally flying into Sydney and Glace Bay on each and every graduation day to congratulate the new accentless Cape Bretoners.

I also see problems with some of the companies accounting for all the money they were given, but that would be another story, a different story.

Eventually, the government, for the benefit of Cape Bretoners, will encourage them to leave the island, after all they no longer had accents and the call centre business was now moving farther offshore due to newly signed trade agreements negotiated by the Government of Canada.

I admit that some of this has been in jest, but less than one would think. The underlying theme, that this government is destroying Cape Breton, its culture, its lifestyle and its soul with this bill, is

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not a joke. It is forcing people in industrial Cape Breton to make a choice: accept less and maybe not be forced to leave or leave and maybe not be forced to accept less. This is no real choice at all. It is torture. It is cruel, cynical and unjustifiable.

Even at this late stage of debate, even during the tyranny of closure, I call on the Liberals to think about what they are doing and pull this bill.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this amendment on Bill C-11.

First, I want to tell the House, on behalf of the Canadian Alliance, how absolutely aghast we are at the government for once again moving closure. The government has now hit the record for the number of times closure has been moved. It has tied the record of the Mulroney regime that preceded it, and in a much shorter time.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: That's nothing to be proud of.

Mr. Monte Solberg: That is nothing to be proud of. What does closure mean? It means that the government is cutting off debate.

This is an important issue. There will be almost 1,600 families affected by this legislation. We have talked for a little over five hours on this issue in the House. There is no reason in the world why we should not have the ability to talk about something that so fundamentally affects the people of Cape Breton as does Bill C-11.

• (1735)

I also remind the House that there have been many other times when the government has prematurely moved closure. Let us consider Bill C-20, the clarity legislation. We talked about it for 18 minutes before the government moved closure.

It is outrageous that the Liberals continues to do this and is not embarrassed about it. They seem to think it is fine if it is them pushing the legislation through. They should be absolutely ashamed. This is anti-democratic behaviour. On an issue that is as important as this one, it is absolutely ridiculous. The people of Cape Breton should be outraged by what we have seen from the government.

I will now move on to more specifics in Bill C-11. I have been to Cape Breton but I do not pretend to know it as well as some colleagues in this place. Cape Bretoners are wonderful and warm people. They live in a beautiful part of the world. Given an even chance, they would have an outstanding economy. As far as I can tell, Bill C-11 seems to be the final chapter in a legacy of broken promises by successive governments.

What started out many years ago as a plan to help out Cape Breton, instead seemed to be a situation where the government kept

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hanging the carrot in front of their nose causing them to move forward but ultimately to never realize their goal.

What was the goal of Devco and all the money that was put into Cape Breton? It was to build a sustainable industry in Cape Breton. Obviously, that has not happen. A lot of money has been poured into this and people have spent years in those mines building what they thought was a career. Now it has all come tumbling down around their ears. They have families and they expected to have a future in that place. It is now gone. The government should be absolutely ashamed for allowing this to happen over this long period of time.

We could recount reasons for for this, but it boils down to a lack of transparency and honesty from this government and previous governments about what would happen and what the chances would be of having a sustainable industry. Even today my colleagues have pointed out that there is no reason to believe that those mines could not be profitable. Because of government policies, that has not happened. Who pays the price for that? It is the workers at Devco and the people of Cape Breton.

I suppose there are many ways we could try to fix this. I do not pretend to be enough of an expert to talk about those in great detail. However, I do believe there is hope for the people of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and Atlantic in general. It does not lie with governments that do not give people the straight goods. It does not lie with governments that build peoples' hopes up only to dash them later. It lies in the private sector. It is time we gave the people of Cape Breton the same tools that many of the more developed areas of the country already have.

What are those things? The people of Cape Breton need to enjoy some lower taxes. Cape Breton is a beautiful and gorgeous part of the world. With a trained workforce and with people who know how to work hard, it has the ability to become a prosperous part of the economy that some parts of Canada now enjoy. How do we do that? We do that in a number of ways. First, let us clean up the mess at Devco. Let us get it behind us and ensure that people get a proper severance package, one that will not leave them high and dry if they are near retirement but do not have the number of years that would allow them to have that package. Let us treat them decently and put this issue behind us.

Second, let us go about allowing the economy to produce jobs that these people can rely on. How do we do that? We begin by lowering taxes for one thing. I am not saying that is the only thing. We must give people a decent severance package so they can pay for retraining.

• (1740)

The government must be allowed to remove the barriers that prevent so many companies from investing in places like Cape Breton.

Why is it that some parts of the country do extraordinarily well while others languish? One of the reasons is that the governments looking after those areas have all kinds of impediments in place that do not allow those areas to prosper. Cape Breton, I would argue, is a victim of those sorts of policies. Sadly, that has happened at the provincial level. I will not reflect on whether it is happening now. It has certainly happened at the federal level over a long period of time when areas like Cape Breton were operated like a fiefdom by certain Liberal members of parliament and senators. That is crazy and it has to end.

We are not in the 20th century any more. We have to step into the 21st century and give these people the tools they need to do the job: lower taxes, fewer regulations and a commitment to training the people of Cape Breton and Nova Scotia, which should primarily come through provincial levels of government. This is probably an area where I disagree with my friends on other sides of the House, but I think it needs to come through the provinces.

These people need to be well trained. If this begins to happen, we will perhaps see the sorts of things that have happened in other parts of the country begin to happen in Cape Breton. People will come to a beautiful place like Cape Breton because the impediments are now gone. They will want to enjoy the quality of life that a place like Cape Breton can offer.

This is an island that people from across Canada and from around North America flock to because it is so beautiful and a wonderful part of the world. The people are great and have a unique culture. Cape Breton has every potential to become a powerful economic area. However, it will not happen if we continue to go down the same tried and failed road we have gone down so many times before.

Help is not going to ultimately come from governments. If there is any lesson to be learned from the last 30 years in Cape Breton, it is that the government cannot be relied on. What happens time after time is that nobody wants to do what is right, they only want to do what is easy. They want to do what they think will get them re-elected, only to find out years later that they made promises they could not keep. For crying out loud, let us not go down that road again.

Instead, let us give these people the tools. Let us lower their taxes, leave more money in their pockets and let the entrepreneurial spirit shine in Cape Breton. I believe it can. We have seen it happen in many other places.

I will conclude by simply saying, especially to my friend across the way who has been responsible for moving closure so many times, that it is time to allow a little democracy to flourish in Canada. This is the House of Commons, the Parliament of Canada. If democracy should be evident anywhere, it should be evident here.

Sadly, freedom of speech is apparently something that is anathema to the government. It does not want to hear about people getting

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up and speaking out on issues that are important to the people so it moves closure and shuts down debate. It has now moved closure as many times as the Mulroney regime, and it should be ashamed.

Cape Breton has the tools to do the job. Unfortunately, it has been pounded by government after government suggesting that help will come from Ottawa. It has not. Promises have been dashed by this government and other governments.

The people of Cape Breton need a new vision, a vision that embraces the private sector, one that has provided so much prosperity for the rest of Canada. Let us hope that the government will see the error of its ways and allow the people of Cape Breton to really flourish in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to impose time allocation again, for the 65th time, I think. I am a young parliamentarian, but I always thought parliament was the place to debate, to discuss issues.

However, I can understand why the government wants to gag the opposition. It is because it closed Cape Breton's Devco mine.

• (1745)

The Liberals have nothing to say, since hardly any of them have addressed the issue this afternoon. Only opposition members are talking about it. If the Liberals are proud of the job that they are doing, if they are proud of having found the solution for Cape Breton people, they should at least rise and defend their position. They are closing that mine, but they have no good reason to do so, they have no reason at all.

They have no reason to do that to people who have worked in the mine for over 30 years, people whose lives totally depend on that mine. This closure will affect over 1,500 families, not to mention the spinoff it will have on all the other jobs related to that mine.

As Newfoundland's Premier Brian Tobin said "It is not the people of Atlantic Canada who let the Liberals down, it is the Liberals who let Atlantic Canada down". That is the problem for the Atlantic provinces. The Liberals let them down.

It is not just Devco. We have a similar situation with the Sydney steel plant. The Liberals are letting the people of Atlantic Canada down.

The government offered \$8,000 for training. What difference is that \$8,000 going to make to train people who are 45 of 50, to help them rejoin the labour force, considering that it is hard to find work in the Atlantic provinces? Jobs do not grow on trees.

The people of Cape Breton deserve more respect. The miners of Cape Breton deserve more respect. As a former miner myself, it is something I have to say today in the House of Commons. I said it last time and I say it again today, I have a lot of respect for these miners.

Government members say they supported Cape Breton all those years. The people of Cape Breton got up every morning to go to work. They have put their health and their life on the line. They have sacrificed their health for this country. Today, people like the finance minister are benefiting from what is happening in Cape Breton, as his ships are bringing in coal from abroad. What is going on in this country is absolutely shameful.

People went on a hunger strike to get the attention of the Liberal government. We will recall minister Dingwall, who was turfed out by my colleague from Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. The same government that is currently in power has hurt seasonal workers in Atlantic Canada and across the country by cutting EI benefits.

While in opposition, Liberal members used to say that, should they ever form the government, they would never do as the Tories did. They used to say economic problems ought to be attacked, not people. This is what the Prime Minister used to say when he was in opposition. But once in office, the Liberals gutted employment insurance. They squeezed out seasonal workers who are faced with the black hole, the so-called gappers.

This is what the Liberals have done. They followed in Brian Mulroney's footsteps. There is a good reason why we can hear a Liberal member singing. He is unable to rise and make a decent speech in support of the closure imposed by his party. The Liberals have invoked closure in the House of Commons 65 times. Shame on them. This is an all time record.

[*English*]

It is a real shame that the government put closure on this legislation so we cannot debate this issue.

An hon. member: What is the difference?

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is no difference. The parliamentary leaders in the House of Commons know better than that. It is a real shame how the people of Cape Breton are being treated today. The Premier of Newfoundland, a good Liberal and a good friend of the Prime Minister, said that the people of the Atlantic provinces did not drop the Liberals, the Liberals dropped them. We could see that is what happened with employment insurance

• (1750)

The Liberals were in opposition in the spring of 1993. The present Prime Minister said at that time to some people in Quebec that the Conservative Party attacked the wrong people by cutting

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the employment insurance. They should attack the economy is what he said.

In March 2000 we heard the Prime Minister at the Liberal convention saying “We lost the Atlantic provinces because we cut the employment insurance. We have to give it back if we want some votes”. He did not say he wanted to give it back because he heard the people, the seasonal workers. That is not what he said. We might have said that was a good thought on his part and that the Liberals will make some changes because they now realize they have hurt families in this country from coast to coast to coast. That is not what they said. Now they are saying that the Atlantic is for sale. I have a surprise for them. The Atlantic is not for sale and our people in the Atlantic will not be bought out by the Liberals, I can tell hon. members that much.

I remember not too long ago the Liberal caucus in the Atlantic provinces said “Let us catch the wave, and to catch the wave we have to change the employment insurance because when we changed the employment insurance we lost the Atlantic. Let us catch the wave”.

I hope the Liberals catch the wave and that they start to understand that in the Atlantic provinces we are still part of this country. We are human beings in the Atlantic provinces and we have kids who have to go to school. The kids will go hungry because of the decisions of this government. The government dropped them, that is what it did.

It is a shame what the Liberals have done to Cape Bretoners. It is a shame what they did in my riding where people are caught in the gap and then left on the street. Shame on the Liberals for what they have done to the people in the Atlantic provinces and across the country who are not fortunate enough to have a full time job. Shame on the Liberals for what they have done.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals should really be ashamed of the way they treated the people who are not lucky enough to have a full time job. I offer as an example all those who have seasonal jobs in the area of tourism. The New Brunswick provincial government is now telling loggers “In the short term, the only solution is to go on welfare”. I am sure the same thing is going on in Cape Breton.

The attitude of today’s governments has to change. I know that people alone will be able to bring about this change by putting the Liberals out of office once and for all and by showing them the real road so they will understand what it means to be a family in misery, instead of all of them coming from Ontario, where things are prosperous and where they are lucky enough to have people who work all year long.

If they go to northern Ontario, perhaps they will understand too. Even Liberal colleagues say that people have been mistreated by the Liberals.

I hope that this amendment will be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development so that we can look at the human side of this situation and the way people will be affected by what the government has in mind.

[*English*]

I hope the government will agree to this amendment and send it to the committee on human resources because we have to look at it as a human problem for the people of Cape Breton.

• (1755)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have had a chance to speak after my good friend from Acadie—Bathurst. I appreciate the emotion and the colour he is able to put into his speeches.

I would like to add a few remarks as we come to the conclusion of speeches on second reading of Bill C-11.

On November 15, 1999, the Minister of Natural Resources indicated to the House that fundamental change is required in the coal industry in Cape Breton and that Bill C-11 is an important component in the reshaping of that industry.

The bill provides the legal authority for the Cape Breton Development Corporation, or Devco as it is commonly known, to sell all or substantially all of its assets. The bill is consistent with the recommendation from Devco’s board that a private sector buyer should be sought to purchase Devco’s assets, as agreed to and announced by the government in January 1999.

Finding a strong private sector owner who can maintain a commercially viable operation over the long term is viewed as the best and most realistic way to sustain as many coal mining jobs as possible in Cape Breton.

In the debate of this bill, considerable support has been expressed by members on both sides of the House for a private sector commercial operation. I am pleased to tell the House that the firm of Nesbitt Burns Inc., which is managing the sales process for Devco, has been successful in identifying private sector interest in Devco’s assets. In fact, prospective purchasers have toured Devco’s facilities as part of their due diligence process and definitive proposals have been received for Devco’s assets.

Devco is at the stage of evaluating and clarifying one of the proposals with a view to finalizing the broad terms and conditions

Government Orders

of a sale in June. Negotiations concerning the final detailed agreement of purchase and sale would then follow.

The prospects for transferring Devco's assets to the private sector and for maintaining coal mining jobs in a private sector commercial operation are real.

It is now more important than ever with purchasers on Devco's doorstep that we move forward with this bill. Timely passage of Bill C-11 will allow Devco the legal authority to finalize a sales transaction with the purchaser. Most important, a sale will confirm the maintenance of good, solid private sector coal mining jobs.

During the debate there has been some concern expressed about the fairness of the \$111 million human resources compensation package for those Devco employees, estimated at approximately 1,000, who will lose their jobs because of the need to close the Phalen mine.

In January of this year, in response to requests from its unions, Devco's management agreed to establish a joint planning committee which is following the process as outlined in the Canada Labour Code to resolve issues related to the existing human resources package.

This process has led to the appointment of an independent third party arbitrator whose decision will be binding on both parties. That decision is expected around the end of May.

Beyond providing the legally required sale authority, the bill creates no new ministerial powers and no delegated authorities. It maintains what is called the general advantage of Canada clause which will ensure that the Canada Labour Code will continue to apply, a point which is important to Devco's unions and employees.

The sale proceeds, as with any other funds provided to Devco, will be expended under business plans which will be approved by the Government of Canada. The Financial Administration Act requires that Devco operate within an approved business plan, summaries of which are tabled in the House. The bill will not change that requirement.

Concern has also been raised by some hon. members about Bill C-11's elimination of section 17(4) of the Devco act. Let me remind my colleagues of two points.

First, the Canada Labour Code, as well as collective agreements between Devco and its unions, contain provisions dealing with workforce reductions.

Second, the economic development responsibilities of Devco's former industrial development division were transferred to Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation in 1988. Although Devco has continued to make a significant contribution to the Cape Breton economy, it has not been an instrument of economic development

for over 10 years. However, economic development on Cape Breton is continuing to be addressed by the government.

• (1800)

In fact, to support economic development in Cape Breton and in response to the requirement to close Devco's Phalen mine, the Government of Canada has already committed \$68 million. The Government of Nova Scotia also contributed \$12 million for this purpose.

The new federal funding is in addition to any job creation or economic development activities that would normally be undertaken by either the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation or the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, or any other federal agency or department.

Already the existence of this fund has made it possible to attract jobs to Cape Breton. On March 21 the Prime Minister announced the DES Sydney centre, a contact centre that will create up to 900 full time jobs over the next four years. As requested by Cape Bretoners, local consultations have been undertaken to obtain the very best possible local advice about how to use that new funding.

The panel that was assigned to conduct these consultations with Cape Bretoners has submitted its final report to ministers. Federal and provincial officials will use that information as the basis upon which to design an economic investment strategy for Cape Breton. The initial elements of that strategy should be operational this summer.

Just as an aside I would point out, and I would like to make comments contrary to those of the member for Dartmouth who exhibited very little confidence, I believe in the workers of Cape Breton.

Sheelagh Whittaker, who is president and CEO of DES Canada, when it was announced that this new major project would be undertaken in Cape Breton, said this: "DES customers, major global corporations and telecommunications manufacturing and financial services will come to rely on this centre for rapid and responsive support. The customer service professionals here", and she meant there in Cape Breton, "will be trained and equipped with cutting edge web and wireless technologies and the DES centre itself will be nothing short of a showcase featuring the latest thinking in both technology and customer service processes".

I believe she was clear in saying she was making a bit of a joke I guess of the situation unfortunately, but I would ask her to revisit her words and instead say that the people of Cape Breton and the workers in the coal industry are capable people, capable of adjusting to a new world and in fact as we begin this new millennium proceed with a confidence that I believe and we all believe is there.

Government Orders

Everyone knows the enormity of the challenges now facing the people of Cape Breton. The Government of Canada is committed to assisting in every reasonable way to help building a more secure and durable future. Legislation now before us is the key to moving that process forward. The future hinges in large part upon that process being successful in finding a buyer who will make a tangible and long term commitment to Cape Breton and to Cape Bretoners and to its workers.

Bill C-11 is relatively simple and straightforward. By allowing a private sector operator to purchase Devco's mining assets we are taking a tangible step to try to maintain the maximum possible number of coal mining jobs in Cape Breton in a commercially viable context for the long term. Now is the time to get on with the important business of examining the bill in more detail in committee. Now is the time for us to show confidence in Cape Breton and its people.

In responding to the amendment with reference to the HRDC committee, I believe its proper place is with the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations which is fully capable of examining this bill. While I remind the House the bill is a simple bill, a straightforward bill, it does not create any new authorities for the minister. It does not delegate any authorities. It is a bill which will allow for the evolution as it must of the coal mining industry in Cape Breton.

With that I see that my time is up, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members to support the bill, including my colleagues across the House.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the hon. member for Halifax.

• (1805)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all the mindless moralizing, tongue clucking and finger wagging that we are hearing from this side of the House is the same attitude that came with the announcement that 1,100 coal miners in Cape Breton were out of work.

The so-called analysis of the event wafting out of all the ivory towers west of our island could barely contain a content for coal miners, the whole tribe of poor cousins east of the Gaspé. Our sin, to hear the chattering elite tell it, was twofold: first, we were poor; second, and even worse, we were undeserving poor, the kind that is

able enough but unwilling to do much for themselves, always expecting others to take care of them.

Where do such ideas come from? I have never met a coal miner who believed the world owed him a living—not my Dad, not my Uncle Ronnie at the bottom of Number 26 colliery, not any of my relatives who went down in the mine, not any of the miners on the street where I grew up, not any of the miners I know anywhere in Cape Breton. But what do I know? I am not a newspaper editorial writer or a television news anchor. I do not get paid to pontificate. I am a coal miner's daughter who grew up in Glace Bay.

I do not have the sensibilities of people who dig abstractions for a living. I know about the men who dig coal for a living in Cape Breton and what I know is that the last thing any of them ever got was a free ride. What I know is that they had worked like hell for every single thing they got and still do.

I know they did the best job in the world, year in and year out, until their bodies were broken by the work. The men took it and came back for more. They battled the bosses when they had to, but always did the work. Whatever it took to dig the coal, they did it. Through the long days of summer they did it. Through the short days of winter when they got up in the pitch black of the dying night to descend into the pitch black of the mines, finish their shift and come up as pitch black as the coal itself to the home in the pitch black of the new night, they did it.

They did it for their wives and the kids and for the almighty company overlords of the British Empire Steel and Coal Company and the Dominion Steel and Coal Company and the Cape Breton Development Corporation and for Canada. They did it to get a paycheque and earn their way. They went into deep, dark holes in the ground where the earth creaks and the pit props groan. They endured dust and heat and wet and cold and noise and vermin in a hell that no devil ever dreamed of. They gasped for air and staggered to the surface after bumps that squashed their friends to pulp or blew them to smithereens, turned around, worked in a rescue, cleaned it all up and then went back underground again. They did it to pay their way and because we counted on them to do it.

When the wars came, we implored them to do it. Coal was life and death. Coal was the margin of victory. Our world ran on coal. Every comfort, every convenience, every essential service was tied to coal and Cape Breton miners provided whole mountain ranges of it. They served us all well. They never, ever got something for nothing.

Clifford Frame, who built the Westray Mine that vaporised 26 miners in the early morning of May 9, 1992, got to walk away to live in the sunshine without a scratch. Miners were not that lucky.

Government Orders

They say Devco is unprofitable, whatever they mean considering the source and however significant such an assessment can be considering our island's political history. To date we have been left with only the word of the federal government. But if it truly is unprofitable, it is not because of the miners. God knows enough of them died trying to make it otherwise.

Taking away our living is an injury all Cape Bretoners will have to bear. Blaming us for the loss is an insult that sears our souls. It is cruel and callous to expect us to submit to the snide chiding of self-appointed pundits who see us as latter day cargo cult civilization, always watching the skies for gifts from the gods of government. Give us the respect we deserve. Do not add the indignity of insult to injury.

We earned everything we ever got. We earned it with our sweat, our blood and our tears—oceans of sweat, lakes of blood and rivers of tears. There was a time when it was enough to earn us a living. It should forever be enough to earn us respect.

• (1810)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to share the time with my colleague from Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. I do not have the direct ties to coal mining in my immediate family as does the hon. member who just preceded me and that is why she speaks about the issue so eloquently and so passionately.

Let me say very briefly why I was prompted, and I guess I would say provoked, to enter the debate that is before the House at this time. There are really three things that provoked me to do that. One was recognizing and watching the government invoke closure yet again, I think for the 65th time in this session if I am not mistaken, outdoing the Mulroney government's record for heavy handedness and disregard for the importance of dealing with an issue like this in a thorough and comprehensive way. What a legacy for the current federal Liberal government.

Second, I have been listening and watching members across the way, most recently the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, talk about the lives and livelihoods of Cape Bretoners, in particular the miners and their families, as if they are a commodity, a commodity to be disposed of, to be traded away. The focus of attention has been so much on the notion of transferring assets, completing sales, finishing deals and finding buyers. If there were ever an eloquent reason for referring this legislation as the subamendment before us proposes to the human resources committee, it is that. We are talking about the future of a generation of people and the next generation coming from behind them.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development said "Well, I believe that Cape Bretoners are capable of adjusting to change". You are darn right they are

capable of adjusting to change, but we are talking about human lives being lived in a community and what the economy of that community is going to look like. This government does not even have the sensitivity or the decency to understand why issues as complex and as sensitive as this should be brought before the human resources committee.

This brings me to the third reason why I was provoked to enter this debate at this time. On Friday I was in Windsor, Ontario. I was participating in a forum, a teach-in really, around the upcoming meetings of the OAS that are going to take place in Windsor. One of the speakers at that forum was the president of the mine workers from Columbia. That trade unionist who risks his life to come and talk with us in Canada about what is happening to coal mining, not just in his own back yard, not just in his country, but around the world, used the issue of Devco and the government's handling of Devco as one of the most dramatic examples of what is wrong with the corporatization of our economy both locally and internationally.

What he described is absolutely true. While this government presides over the elimination of large numbers of jobs in the coal industry and puts at further risk the opportunity for future work in the coal mines by saying "Well, the private sector will do it just as Westray, the families of the survivors of Westray, did about the privatization of coal mines.

What this trade union leader from Columbia talked about is while the federal Liberal government knowingly puts the jobs and the futures of those coal miners of Cape Breton at risk, what it does is drive the race to the bottom and turn around and import the coal from Columbia, one of the worst countries in the world with regard to labour standards, working conditions and human rights.

I want to end by pleading with the federal Liberal government to understand the simple concept of treating the lives of Cape Bretoners and the future of those miners and their families, and others who are dependent upon the mining industry as a human issue to be considered by the human resources committee, not as a commodity, not just something to be traded away.

• (1815)

Our human resources are going to be the future of Cape Breton. It is high time the government understood that treating people with dignity recognizing that they are indeed a human resource is going to be the key to a prosperous and stable economy in Canada based on human rights and decent labour standards.

Let us refer this issue to the human resources committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It being 6.15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

Government Orders

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those in favour of the amendment to the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Call in the members.

• (1845)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 1281)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy
Bailey
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Crête
de Savoye
Dockrill
Elley
Gagnon
Gilmour
Gouk
Gruending
Hanger
Harris
Hill (MacLeod)
Johnston
Lowther
Marchand
McDonough
Mills (Red Deer)
Picard (Drummond)
Reynolds
Robinson
Scott (Skeena)
Stinson
White (Langley—Abbotsford)—53

Alarie
Bellehumeur
Bigras
Cadman
Chatters
Cummins
Debien
Duncan
Epp
Gauthier
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guimond
Hardy
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lill
Mancini
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Penson
Proctor
Riis
Schmidt
Solberg
Strahl

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)

Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Baker

Bakopanos
Bélaïr
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Clouthier
Comuzzi
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Finlay
Fontana
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lee
Limoges
MacAulay
Maloney
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
O'Reilly
Paradis
Peric
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proud
Redman
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
St. Denis
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Torsney
Vautour
Whelan

Barnes
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Bonin
Borotsik
Brison
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Cauchon
Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Collenette
Coppes
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Folco
Fry
Godfrey
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvard
Ifody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keys
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Leung
Lincoln
Malhi
Manley
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Milliken
Minna
Muisse
Myers
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Reed
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeri
Wappel
Wilfert—134

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre
Normand

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

The next question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

• (1855)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 1282)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy
Bailey
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Crête
de Savoye
Dockrill
Elley
Gagnon
Gilmour
Gouk
Gruending
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Macleod)
Johnston
Lowther
Marchand
McDonough
Mills (Red Deer)
Picard (Drummond)
Reynolds
Robinson
Scott (Skeena)
Stinson
White (Langley—Abbotsford)—53

Alarie
Bellehumeur
Bigras
Cadman
Chatters
Cummins
Debien
Duncan
Epp
Gauthier
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guimond
Hardy
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lill
Mancini
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Penson
Proctor
Riis
Schmidt
Solberg
Strahl

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Bélair
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Caplan

Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Baker
Barnes
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Bonin
Borotsik
Brisson
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll

Casey
Cauchon
Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Collenette
Coppes
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Folco
Fry
Godfrey
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvard
Iftody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Leung
Lincoln
Malhi
Manley
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Milliken
Minna
Muisse
Myers
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Reed
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeri
Wappel
Wilfert—133

Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Clouthier
Comuzzi
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Finlay
Fontana
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutsen
Lee
Limoges
MacAulay
Maloney
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
O'Reilly
Paradis
Peric
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proud
Redman
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
St. Denis
Steele
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Torsney
Vautour
Whelan

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre
Normand

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Government Orders

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

• (1900)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 1283)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Axworthy
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Bélaïr	Bélangier
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Collenette
Comuzzi	Copps
Cullen	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dion
Discepola	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Galloway	Godfrey
Goodale	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keys
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lee	Leung
Limoges	Lincoln
MacAulay	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
McCormick	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McTeague	McWhinney
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Muise
Murray	Myers
Nault	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Peric	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Reed
Robillard	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora	Sgro
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	St-Julien
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault
Torsney	Valeri
Wappel	Whelan
Wilfert—129	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Alarie
Bailey	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bigras
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Cadman
Casson	Chatters
Crête	Cummins
de Savoye	Debien
Dockrill	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Gagnon	Gauthier
Gilmour	Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Gouk	Grey (Edmonton North)
Gruending	Guimond
Hanger	Hardy
Harris	Hart
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Johnston	Lill
Lowther	Mancini
Marchand	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough	Ménard
Mills (Red Deer)	Penson
Picard (Drummond)	Proctor
Reynolds	Riis
Robinson	Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)	Solberg
Stinson	Strahl
White (Langley—Abbotsford)—53	

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Normand	Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Government Operations.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY ACT

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, an act respecting genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and to implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-19.

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the House would agree, I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House with Liberal members voting yea.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members present this evening will be voting no on this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois vote in favour of this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members of the New Democratic Party present vote in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting yes on this motion.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I had to step outside the Chamber for a minute. I was not recorded for the last vote but perhaps you could record my vote as being with the government on this subsequent vote.

The Speaker: On this vote you will be recorded.

• (1905)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 1284*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alarie
Alcock	Anderson
Assad	Assadourian
Axworthy	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Béclair
Bélangier	Bellehumeur
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clothier	Collenette
Comuzzi	Copps
Crête	Cullen
de Savoye	Debien
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Dockrill	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagnon	Galloway
Gauthier	Godfrey
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Gruending	Guarnieri

Guimond	Harb
Hardy	Harvard
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lee	Leung
Lill	Limoges
Lincoln	MacAulay
Malhi	Maloney
Mancini	Manley
Marchand	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McTeague
McWhinney	Ménard
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Muise
Murray	Myers
Nault	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Peric	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Reed
Riis	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora	Sgro
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	St-Julien
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault
Torsney	Valeri
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NAYS

Members

Bailey
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Cummins
Elley
Gilmour
Grey (Edmonton North)
Harris
Hill (MacLeod)
Johnston
Mills (Red Deer)
Reynolds
Scott (Skeena)
Stinson
White (Langley—Abbotsford)—30

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre	Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Normand	Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

*Government Orders***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2000**

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in parliament on February 28, 2000, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-32.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent for the members who voted on the previous motion to be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberals voting yea.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members present this evening will be voting against this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois oppose the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP are voting no on this motion.

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting no on this motion.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 1285*)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Assadourian
Baker
Barnes
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Bonin
Boudria
Bryden
Byrne
Calder

Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Bakopoulos
Bélair
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis

Caplan
Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Clouthier
Comuzzi
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Drouin
Folco
Fry
Godfrey
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Harvard
Iftody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keys
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Leung
Lincoln
Malhi
Manley
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Milliken
Minna
Murray
Nault
O'Reilly
Paradis
Peric
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proud
Redman
Robillard
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
St. Denis
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
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Carroll
Cauchon
Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Collenette
Coppes
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Finlay
Fontana
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lee
Limoges
MacAulay
Maloney
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Reed
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeri
Whelan

NAYS

Members

Alarie
Bailey
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Crête
de Savoye
Dockrill
Duncan
Epp
Gauthier
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guimond
Hardy
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lill
Mancini
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Muise
Picard (Drummond)
Reynolds
Robinson

*Government Orders**(Division No. 1286)*Schmidt
Solberg
StrahlScott (Skeena)
Stinson
White (Langley—Abbotsford) —56

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre
NormandMartin (LaSalle—Émard)
Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-27, an act respecting the national parks of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-27, an act respecting the national parks of Canada. The question is on the motion.

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the House would agree, I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yea.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members present this evening will be voting against this motion unless instructed by their constituents to do otherwise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting in favour of this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP are voting in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Norman Doyle: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will be voting yes on this motion.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alarie
Alcock	Anderson
Assad	Assadourian
Axworthy	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellehumeur
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Collenette
Comuzzi	Copps
Crête	Cullen
de Savoye	Debien
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Dockrill	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagnon	Gallaway
Gauthier	Godfrey
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Gruending	Guarnieri
Guimond	Harb
Hardy	Harvard
Hubbard	Ifody
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lee	Leung
Lill	Limoges
Lincoln	MacAulay
Malhi	Maloney
Mancini	Manley
Marchand	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McTeague
McWhinney	Ménard
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Muise
Murray	Myers
Nault	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Peric	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Reed
Riis	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora	Sgro
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	St-Julien
Steckle	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibeault
Torsney	Valeri
Wappel	Whelan
Wilfert—153	

Adjournment Debate

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Benoit
Cadman
Chatters
Duncan
Epp
Gouk
Hanger
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lowther
Penson
Schmidt
Solberg
Strahl

Bailey
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Cummins
Elley
Gilmour
Grey (Edmonton North)
Harris
Hill (MacLeod)
Johnston
Mills (Red Deer)
Reynolds
Scott (Skeena)
Stinson
White (Langley—Abbotsford)—30

PAIRED MEMBERS

Lefebvre
Normand

Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Nunziata

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1910)

[*English*]

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

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this spring the Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development released a study that exposed the government's failing record on climate change. The institute reported that Canada's worst polluters are spewing out more greenhouse gases than ever.

Nine companies, most of them petrochemicals, joined a voluntary program to stabilize emissions at 1990 levels. They did so following Canada's promise to do just that at the Rio de Janeiro conference in 1990, but seven years later these companies were belching out substantially more pollutants than they had earlier.

It is not just the companies that are dragging their feet. The same report shows that of 88 measures passed by federal and provincial governments to combat global warming, only one-third of them have ever been implemented. Many of these programs are for

public awareness or consultations and have fallen short of expectations.

This year our Canadian emissions of carbon dioxide and similar gases are expected to reach 694 million tonnes. That is 15% above the level Canada agreed to stabilize at 10 years ago.

It was in 1997 with great fanfare that Canada signed the Kyoto protocol. That committed us to a substantial reduction in our emissions of greenhouse gases. As of today, Canada has still failed to ratify that pact. In fact, it appears that we are backing away from our original commitments because of our failure to get there to date.

Amazingly the government continues to rely on the voluntary efforts of individuals and corporations. It refuses to promote alternative technologies which, according to the Suzuki Foundation, could reduce our country's greenhouse gas emissions by as much as half.

The government refuses to talk about the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions and instead puts its trust in companies like Petro-Canada. Members may be aware that this company's new president and CEO said last week that his investors have put money into a company for its shareholder value and not "for us to solve a global problem". It is going to take more than volunteerism here. It is going to take government action.

Climate change is no longer something for Canadians to worry about tomorrow. The changes are already with us today. The polar ice caps are thinning. Nearly 300 square kilometres of a large ice shelf in Antarctica have disintegrated since October 1999 because of steadily increasing temperatures. In our own polar region, Inuit hunters and elders report that hunting is becoming risky because of thinning ice and melting permafrost.

Weather patterns are also changing and the economic effects can be devastating. Earlier this spring NASA reported a shocking decline in the ozone layer over northern Canada. Despite a worldwide ban on ozone depleting chemicals, it is expected that ozone layers over Canada will take decades longer than we had expected to return to normal. Again this is because of greenhouse gases.

This is not good news for our children who already face high cancer risks. Climate change is upon us, yet the government refuses to take action. There have been consultations and talks and talks and consultations, but there is no national plan to reduce greenhouse gases.

• (1915)

Canadians are waiting for options to help reduce these greenhouse gas emissions. I urge the government to move beyond consultations, to ratify the Kyoto protocol and to set some targets to meet our promises.

Adjournment Debate

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this point.

I commend the member for taking the issue of climate change and the emission of greenhouse gasses as serious. It behoves all of us as members of parliament and as responsible citizens of this country, indeed responsible citizens of the world, to convey the message to our colleagues and fellow citizens that this is a serious issue. It does demand a serious response not just from us in Canada but from the global community. It is a global issue and an issue that cannot be fully resolved without concerted global action.

Canada generates only about 2% of the world's global emissions, but on a per capita basis we rank much higher on the list in terms of global emitters, so we must do our part to deal with the issue.

Beginning with the Kyoto protocol, we have put together a process that has engaged 450 Canadians in more than 16 issue

tables to examine every dimension of the greenhouse gas issue vertically by sector and horizontally by the cross-cutting theme to make sure that we had before us at various levels of government a complete menu of well thought out, well researched, factually based policy options from which to choose.

That work is now virtually complete. The ministers of energy and the environment federally, provincially and territorially are meeting throughout this year to select from that menu the policy options that we will pursue in the future. Canadians can be very assured that the Government of Canada is very serious about the issue. We intend to perform to international standards.

The Speaker: 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 7.17 p.m.)

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