



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 3, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 3, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Saint John.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year the Ontario Agricultural College in my riding of Guelph—Wellington is celebrating its 125th anniversary. Much has changed since the OAC opened its doors in 1874, but the one thing that remains the same is the OAC's well deserved reputation as a world leader in agriculture.

Many distinguished Canadians have graduated from OAC, including astronaut Roberta Bondar and our very own Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The OAC has also produced a very well respected university. The University of Guelph grew out of this agricultural college to become one of the best universities in Canada.

I would like to congratulate all of the faculty and staff of the Ontario Agricultural College, both past and present. They have built a tradition of excellence of which not only Guelph—Wellington but all of Canada is proud.

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CANADIAN FARMERS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, January 29 I hosted a public forum to discuss the Estey report on grain transportation. Over 250 grain producers attended the meeting from across Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Farmers not only had an opportunity to listen to a panel of speakers discuss the merits of the report, but they also had a chance to get up and voice their opinion.

While producers are not unanimous in their support of this report, there was a message that was very evident during the meeting. Farmers are frustrated with the current system. Producers are losing millions of dollars each year due to government regulation and inefficiencies in the grain handling system.

CPAC, the parliamentary television channel, taped the meeting and it will be replayed on February 6 and 7. The Minister of Transport and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food should take time to watch the tape of this meeting.

I urge all MPs and Canadians everywhere to hear directly from food producers. Farmers put high quality food on our tables and are the economic base in many communities. We need to listen to them.

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[Translation]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in connection with the Bloc Quebecois' position, which is surprising to say the least, concerning child pornography and the role of Parliament in the judiciary process. The position of the Bloc Quebecois on this matter is incongruous and hard to explain.

How can this party and its members support such a motion, given their past positions on various justice issues? I personally see this as an attempt to hijack this debate in order to justify recourse to the notwithstanding clause of the charter.

Let them try to defend future recourse to that clause, fine, but I believe that the public will be able to figure out for itself that Bloc members are using the debate on child pornography and the judiciary process for purely political purposes.

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[English]

TEAM CANADA

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Team Canada has scored another major international

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hockey victory. Our national team came home on New Year's Day 1999 after winning the Spengler Cup in Switzerland for the fourth consecutive year.

It was the first time any country has won four times in a row during the cup's 77 year history. The latest championship by Team Canada was made possible through the defensive efforts of not one, but two outstanding players in the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke: Shawn Heins of Eganville and Allan Letang of Renfrew. Not only my constituents are proud of their efforts, but all Canadians are proud of all Team Canada players.

I might add that Team Liberal will be put to the test when Canada's political champions travel up the valley into my riding's hockey hot bed to compete next Wednesday night at the Pembroke winter carnival. We will be facing a much tougher opposition of sharpshooters compared to the puny, punchless, prolix pogguns who pass themselves off as the opposition in this House.

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THE AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend I was very pleased to attend the Aga Khan Foundation's annual Partnership Walk Volunteer Workshop in Vancouver. The event launched International Development Week, which is January 31 to February 6.

The Aga Khan Foundation's volunteer workshop brought together volunteer leaders from 11 cities across Canada. The guest of honour was the Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie.

Congratulations to the foundation for its excellent work in supporting over 30 under-developed countries.

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APEC INQUIRY

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, APEC is an issue that is not going to go away for this Prime Minister or for this government.

Just as Watergate was not about a break-in, the APEC inquiry is not about pepper spray. It is about freedom of expression. It is about political interference from the Prime Minister giving direction to Canada's national police force to suppress protesters' freedom of expression.

● (1405)

The Prime Minister is muddifying his involvement by using the public complaints commission process.

Canadians will spend millions and millions of dollars, still ending up at a blind wall. With over \$1.4 million already blown away and hundreds of witnesses to hear, they have only heard four.

The bill is already so high because the solicitor general and justice minister have agreed to protect the Prime Minister at a rate of \$2,000 an hour for lawyers' fees. Commissioner Ted Hughes is trying to sort out the lawyer funding mess.

As the APEC public complaints commission process lurches forward, even under the astute guidance of Ted Hughes, I say again that we have the right driver in the wrong vehicle.

When is this Prime Minister finally going to come clean?

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AHEPA COMEDY NIGHT

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the pleasure to attend the fifth annual Comedy Night at the Hellenic Community Centre organized by the Ottawa chapter of AHEPA.

This year the event raised over \$8,000 which will go to the local Alzheimer's Society. In the past this event has raised and donated over \$50,000 to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Ottawa, the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Youth Centre, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Kidney Foundation of Ottawa.

I want to congratulate the main organizers, Angelo Tsarouchas, Tom Varvaresos and Bill Rothery on their great success. The comedians were first rate and provided many laughs during the evening.

I highly recommend this event to my colleagues here in Ottawa and to all who are interested in having a great time while contributing to a worthwhile cause.

Congratulations to AHEPA and to all those involved with the AHEPA Comedy Night at the Hellenic Community Centre.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to greet the people of Rosemont and Petite Patrie who have come to Ottawa today to deliver a clear message.

Under the pretext of returning the responsibility for social housing to the provinces, the federal government has dissociated itself completely from this program, by cutting its funding. The federal government has made an offer to the Government of Quebec to hand the existing housing stock over to it, an offer that is totally unacceptable.

The federal government has no trouble finding the millions necessary for promoting the maple leaf, and the struggle with the deficit has not prevented it from spending over \$40 million in all manner of propaganda.

The federal government needs to come back to the bargaining table with a better offer, because in our affluent society it is unacceptable that the number of families having to spend over half their income just to put a roof over their heads is constantly on the rise.

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[English]

DRUG ABUSE

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is poised to win the ongoing war against illicit drugs arriving in our country. Drug abuse has damaging repercussions not only on the user but on Canadian society as a whole. It is the leading cause of poverty, criminality, urban decay and related social problems.

Recently our Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the Jamaican Prime Minister and his senior officials to begin a hemisphere-wide dialogue and partnership against this rampant problem.

Forty per cent of illicit drugs come from the Caribbean and Latin America. This initiative is part of Canada's human security agenda which we hope to promote during our two year term as a member of the UN Security Council.

We will endeavour to stem the flow of drugs into Canada while improving conditions in drug-producing countries. I commend the minister for this meaningful intervention.

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CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here are the top 10 reasons given by Liberal backbenchers as to why they flip-flopped on the child pornography vote last night.

No. 10: Vote against my conscience. What conscience?

No. 9: I like to sign on to things I have no intention of backing up. It makes me feel like a cabinet minister.

No. 8: If I toe the line often enough maybe I will get a canoe museum in my riding.

No. 7: Let the commission do its work.

No. 6: No comment. The minister has not told me what to say yet.

No. 5: This from the member from Coquitlam. I am no yes man and, besides, that is not my signature.

No. 4: The Prime Minister told me I could vote any way I wanted to, as long as I voted no.

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No. 3: You get used to it. Remember the hep C vote?

No. 2: That depends on what your definition of the word "is" is.

And the No. 1 reason given by Liberal flip-floppers is: Now I want you to listen to me. My pen did not have relations with that letter, that Liberal petition, and I have never gone back on my word, not once, not ever.

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[Translation]

FISHERIES

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the end of the last session, the Liberal government announced that crabbers in the estuary and shrimpers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence had co-management agreements with Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

For the crabbers, this five-year agreement, is based on resource conservation and the financial viability of fishers, among other things.

● (1410)

In the case of the shrimpers, the agreement is in effect until 2002 and applies to all fishers in eastern Canada. It is based on the same principles of resource conservation and management.

The Government of Canada has taken a major step. It worked actively with fishers to resolve the complex and essential issue of the renewal of fish stocks, and especially of preserving and improving the quality of life of those whose work is linked to fishing.

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[English]

THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as with free trade and the GST, once again the Liberals are breaking one of their campaign promises.

This time they are breaking the 1993 election promise to eliminate regional rates of pay, a policy that pays 11,000 federal government workers a different salary depending on where they work in the country.

This is not a cost of living issue as the government maintains, it is a discrimination issue. The policy only applies to 5% of the civil service, the government's lowest paid workers. It does not apply to 95% of the civil service, such as judges, civil service managers, the military, the RCMP or members of parliament.

These 11,000 workers are staging rotating strikes across the country over this issue and they are asking the government to come back to the table for meaningful negotiations.

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I call upon the Liberals to stop their hypocrisy and end this unfair and inequitable treatment. Federal workers doing the same job should be paid the same salary no matter where they live.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to use a word other than “hypocrisy” the next time.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the UN has designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons in order to draw attention to their achievements and their contribution to communities in all countries.

The United Nations believes the proportion of persons aged 60 years and over in the population will change from a ratio of 1/14 to 1/4 in the coming years. Seniors, now representing 12% of Canada's total population, will represent 23% of it by 2041. This major demographic change will alter the economic, social and cultural structures of Quebec and Canada.

Canada's theme for the International Year of Older Persons, “Canada, a society for all ages”, was developed by representatives of the federal, provincial and territorial governments in consultation with seniors. It underscores the importance of the role—

The Speaker: The member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle.

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JACQUES PARIZEAU

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sovereignists want to give the separation option a new look. Big surprise, after the poor showing in the last election.

At least they got a well-known consultant, former premier Jacques Parizeau, the same Parizeau that lost the referendum.

But how else can they put it? There are only so many ways the sovereignists can say they want Quebec to separate from the rest of Canada.

I think what they want is a new bag of tricks. That is a favourite Parizeau strategy. But Quebecers will not fall for Mr. Parizeau's all-too-familiar sleight-of-hand. They know him well. They know the option he favours, his objectives and his views on Quebec.

This is old hat. The separatists are coming up short in the imagination department these days.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Mr. Mark Muisse (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned. I am concerned that the Minister of National Defence knew about corruption at the IOC but kept it quiet for 10 years.

I am concerned that the President of the Treasury Board was quoted in the media saying he supported the city of Quebec if it sought compensation, but when asked in the House he maintains he said nothing.

[Translation]

If the President of the Treasury Board was misquoted, he has only to say so. If the reporting was inaccurate, he must explain why he does not want to recover the money squeezed out of Canadian taxpayers.

The Quebec City Olympic Games organizing committee wants to know why it was not informed of corruption at the IOC.

[English]

Taxpayers want to know why this government spent money on an Olympic bid when it knew that the bidding process was rigged. This is no time for our ministers to hide behind the narrowness of their portfolios. It is time for them to stand up and renew our confidence in the Olympic Games.

Amateur sport, not corruption, is part of our heritage. The Minister of National Defence and the President of Treasury Board should never forget that.

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CRISPIN BOTTOMLEY

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Crispin Bottomley, a young constituent of Niagara Falls, was one of the students of my riding who attended the Forum for Young Canadians last June.

Later he was honoured by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce as Young Citizen for the Year 1998.

• (1415)

Crispin has now been chosen as one of the Canadian representatives at the Presidential Classroom: World Future Leaders Summit to be held in Washington in March. The summit brings outstanding leaders from around the world to Washington to study international relations and to debate important issues facing our planet. This gives brilliant young people like Crispin the opportunity to expand their Forum for Young Canadians experience on an international level.

Crispin feels very honoured to be representing Canada and the Niagara area. Today I would like to salute him and recognize his achievements and wish him Godspeed.

Young people like Crispin Bottomley are the hope and future for Canada.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: Today is a special anniversary for us in the House of Commons.

[Translation]

It has been 83 years since the fire here in the House of Commons in the Centre Block.

[English]

I would like to draw to your attention that on the Table before us the symbol of our authority to make laws and to speak for Canadian people is the Mace. Today we have the wooden Mace which was used immediately after the fire of 1916. I thought you should know the reason why it is there today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last month a 93-year old grandmother in Montreal took sick. She went to the hospital, was put on a stretcher, left in a hallway and she died two days later. In her obituary her family said "Don't send flowers, send a letter to the health minister asking him why someone who paid taxes for 93 years had to die in a hospital hallway".

Will the Prime Minister whose government has cut \$16 billion out of health and social programs explain why someone who paid taxes for those years had to die in a hospital hallway?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finances of all the provincial governments and the federal government were in terrible shape and every sector had to take some cuts. This is always ongoing in governments. At that time a letter was sent to Mr. Rochon, the minister of health in Quebec, concerning this case.

Incidents like that happen from time to time. We do not manage the daily operations of the hospitals. It is the provincial governments that do that.

We are in discussions at this time with the provinces and we are looking at the problem of health. We said it was to be our priority.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that is comforting to the family.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister's government knocked \$16 billion out of health care funding and has failed to make other essential health care reforms. One of the consequences of that has been hospital closures and waiting lines now up to 200,000 people.

Canadians want to know, after the so-called health care budget how much shorter are these waiting lines going to be?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is wrong. The cuts were \$6 billion for health, education and social programs but at the same time we left the tax points. The tax points have given back \$3.2 billion. We have the child tax credit that represents \$1.7 billion which is helping the provinces in the area of welfare.

There will be some money for health care in the budget and we hope that we will soon be back to where we were.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the social union talks are supposed to provide a solution to the deterioration of health care and other social programs under this administration.

The premiers have put forward some positive suggestions for change but the federal government's reaction has been primarily negative and reactionary.

When the premiers come to town tomorrow with some positive suggestions, is the Prime Minister going to react positively and enthusiastically to them or is he going to be a grumpy old man saying no, no, no?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am meeting the first ministers tomorrow and I hope it will be a positive meeting. We have always been positive.

The discussions on the social union and medicare were initiated jointly at the same time by the provinces and by us. We have been involved all along. Everybody knows that I am always a positive person. I know that the Reform Party plans—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Macleod.

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HEPATITIS C

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, hepatitis C continues to plague this Prime Minister and other countries let us know why.

In Italy the health ministry has just been found guilty of distributing contaminated blood. They have to compensate every individual, not just a few between 1986 and 1990.

What is this Prime Minister waiting for, a subpoena before he will look after everybody who was infected?

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken this issue very serious-

Oral Questions

ly. Negotiations are under way and \$1.1 billion is on the table to satisfy the lawsuits that are before the government. We are assured that those negotiations are under way at the present time. We hope to see a satisfactory conclusion in the very near future.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. In Switzerland the blood services director has just received a 12-month jail sentence for doing exactly what happened in Canada.

I will ask my question again. What is this Prime Minister waiting for, court action to force him into doing what he should have done all along?

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows and everyone in this House knows, we have taken our obligations very seriously. We have implemented all 17 recommendations that Justice Krever directed toward the federal government. Further, we have added an additional \$125 million to ensure that the blood supply in Canada is safe for all Canadians.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL UNION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the negotiations on social union, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs told the *Toronto Star* yesterday “We will give up nothing”.

The same minister told *La Presse* that the federal government’s innovative approach would please Quebecers and might even please the Government of Quebec.

I would like to know whether the Prime Minister agrees with his minister, who says one thing in Quebec and another in the rest of Canada.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, never before has this minister been criticized for not speaking his mind.

As far as our negotiations with the provinces are concerned, here in Canada we have a system in place to ensure that the federal government’s responsibilities and obligations are maintained while at the same time accommodating the provinces.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I heard the Prime Minister correctly, he is telling us that his minister did not speak his mind.

That is one way of looking at it, but the minister added insult to injury by saying that the consent of all the provinces was not required in order to have an agreement. One thing is for sure: Quebec considers the right to opt out with full compensation as essential.

Here is my question to the Prime Minister: If unanimity is not required and the agreement does not have to be signed by all the provinces, does this mean that the government might come up with other initiatives, like the millennium scholarships, in other areas?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the right to opt out and to spending powers, Quebec’s traditional position was made clear at the time of the Charlottetown and Meech Lake agreements. This right to opt out could only be exercised under certain circumstances.

That is why the leader of the Parti Québécois and premier of Quebec left the Progressive Conservative Party. He wanted the partial right to opt out provided for in the Meech Lake agreement.

• (1425)

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that an agreement on social union between the federal government and the provinces does not require the support of the 10 provinces in order to be approved.

Are we to understand from the minister’s comments that Quebec’s approval is simply not necessary to reach an agreement?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ever since I have been in politics, and before, I have always said the same thing in French and in English. Therefore, let me repeat that we would not give anything that would adversely affect the quality of the Canadian social union, which is one of the best in the world.

The social union agreement which, we hope, will be signed by all the provinces, will improve things for the federal government, for the provincial governments, but more importantly for all Canadians.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister’s statement to the effect that unanimity is not a requirement seems to indicate that Quebec’s traditional demands will once again be ignored.

Does this mean that, should some provinces refuse to sign that agreement, it would still be imposed on them by the federal government?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not worried about the hon. member and his party. Regardless of what happens, they will come up with a new traditional demand for Quebec.

Quebec’s quiet revolution was not achieved through traditional demands: it was achieved by Quebecers—with many of them coming from the federal government—who wanted to modernize and secularize their society, and they were quite successful in their efforts.

Oral Questions

Therefore, the Canadian social union will not be modernized through traditional demands.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 800,000 unemployed Canadians are now denied benefits because of this government's assault on unemployment insurance. What is the government doing to correct the situation? Well, it is working hard to deny even more benefits.

Will the human resources minister admit that Canadians are being cut off UI benefits not because their claims lack merit, but solely because of arbitrary quotas imposed by Ottawa? Will he admit that, yes or no?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. There are no such quotas. Our department obviously wants to protect the integrity of the system and works at finding out frauds wherever they are. But there are no such quotas.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that bluster does not explain the internal departmental document that shows denying benefits to the unemployed is a priority for the government. In fact the government has specific quotas, actual quotas to cut off as many people as needed to net government coffers \$612 million this year alone. To enforce the quotas the government has given employees a choice: either cut off enough people to meet your quotas or lose your jobs.

How does the minister justify this brutal attack on unemployed Canadians?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we like to manage. We manage things properly. We have some expectations. There are indeed, as we exercise our responsibilities in protecting the Canadian public, certain indicators. We know how much we can expect to recuperate in certain regions and we have certain numbers against which we compare how much we get. But there are no such threats of firing people or any element as the NDP is saying right now in the House.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the proud tradition of the RCMP, an internationally respected institution, is being destroyed by the Liberal government.

Spending this year for our national police force has been cut by \$89 million. As a result the RCMP training academy in Regina has closed and detachments all over the country are running by skeleton crews.

The government has consistently pursued wasteful spending policies to the detriment of all Canadians.

Will the solicitor general sit idly by and watch our national police force deteriorate beyond repair? What is he going to do?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is like every government agency and department. It had to look at how it spent its dollars. We have done some things also to fight organized crime in this country such as the proceeds from organized crime legislation. What this does is take the profit out of organized crime. It gives the RCMP a weapon to take the proceeds out.

• (1430)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government's solution to the problems in our national police force has been to commission a \$1 million study to review the RCMP's mandate.

The problem is not the mandate but the lack of funding provided by the government to the RCMP for national policing. While the U.S. state department has deemed Canada a haven for organized crime, the government has slashed the RCMP budget by \$174 million since 1994.

When will the solicitor general use his power at the cabinet table and immediately restore funding to the RCMP to ensure adequate protection for Canadians?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly will not deal with the figures my hon. colleague has presented.

All departments had a review of how they spent their money, the RCMP included. I can assure the House the RCMP is a well respected organization in this country and around the world and we will give it the tools to fight crime in this country.

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YVON DUHAIME

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, things are pretty shady in Shawinigan. Yvon Duhaime bought the Grand-Mère Inn from the Prime Minister in 1993. He did not reveal his criminal convictions of drunk driving and assault when he received over \$850,000 of taxpayer money in 1997 to expand his inn.

We now learn that a huge amount of this taxpayer money went directly into Duhaime's bank account when by law it is required to go to a notary.

Oral Questions

I am sure there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for this. What is it?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out once again that the loans received by this business were given on the basis of a commercial arrangement. The interest rates are somewhat higher than commercial rates through the BDBC.

Private sector lenders were engaged in the same financing package, including the caisse populaire and an agent of the Quebec labour union.

What we have is a broad package. The funds were transferred in the normal course. A cheque was made payable to the notary as well as to the recipient and the supplier. These are ordinary business transactions.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the Business Development Bank gives grants, what if any other bank were just to give grants? Any one of us would love to be on that list. The government keeps saying that this is arm's length. He received transitional job fund money and received seed grants as well. A lot of those funds were public funds that came from human resources. These are public funds that went into a private bank account. Any Canadian would love that kind of deal.

Who will investigate this? Obviously it needs to be checked. The ethics commissioner will not investigate it, so who will?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many bank transactions in Canada the hon. member would like to investigate. In this case these loans from the Business Development Bank of Canada were not grants.

I do not know how much clearer I can put that. Perhaps the member does not like the answer. But it is repayable on the basis of an interest rate that is commercially based and there is no reason for any further investigation.

The debts are there. They are repayable to the Business Development Bank of Canada.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, and again today, the Minister of Human Resources denied that quotas for employment insurance cuts had been imposed on employees in the employment centres.

Our information, however, indicates that there are indeed recovery targets for each employment centre.

Can the minister tell us whether there are quotas in his department, yes or no? If so, who sets them, and according to what criteria?

• (1435)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, we are being accused of being too aggressive in our employment insurance investigations; on the other, we are being accused of being too lax in the way we administer public funds. We have struck a balance.

There are no quotas. We are responsible for public funds. We know that we can recover certain amounts in certain areas, and these are the amounts we are expecting to recover.

I can assure you that our investigators are working diligently to respect the integrity of the public funds with which we are entrusted.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have before me a Human Resources Development document which sets for each Human Resources Development Canada centre in Quebec a target of \$100 million, indicates that the \$145 million level has been attained, and shows the percentage of success.

If these are not quotas, then what are they?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are guidelines.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: They contain indicators, according to which we can know the exact percentage of improper transactions.

This is the usual practice in any system wishing to respect the integrity of a process, in order to ensure that the system treats Canadian citizens in a fair and equitable manner.

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[English]

PLUTONIUM

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, at the 1996 Moscow summit the Prime Minister made an impromptu offer to accept weapons grade plutonium for destruction in Canada. The United States says it is ready to start exporting this weapons grade plutonium to Canada as early as next month. When was the Prime Minister planning to tell Canadians this plutonium is on its way?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to put this in context. There is a strong Canadian interest in the reduction of nuclear weapons in this world.

Oral Questions

If we are to reduce the number of nuclear weapons we have to burn the fuel that is part of those weapons. We said that we would consider looking at tests to determine whether using the Candu reactor is a proper way to burn this fuel, but no tests have been done. We said anything that would be done would be subject to the full safety, regulatory and public consultation requirements under the atomic energy act. We hold to that. At this point and in light of the committee report we will examine those recommendations.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the United States has already completed full environmental impact studies and full public consultation. Where are our environmental impact studies? Where are the details of the agreement? Where are our public consultations?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no MOx fuel in Canada at this point in time. Nobody has sent us anything. We are still talking about the possibility of doing the tests. If those tests are considered, as I have already stated in the House, we will follow fully the full regulatory environmental requirements. That is a commitment to count on.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two reports from the Department of National Defence are recommending a substantial increase in the number of officers in the university training program and focusing on education to improve the image of the Canadian army.

Does the Minister of National Defence plan to act on one of the major recommendations in these studies and set aside the money necessary for university training, money that could certainly be used by the former royal military college in Saint-Jean?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to upgrade the education and training systems of the Canadian forces.

● (1440)

A year ago I announced that a university education, a degree, would be required for those entering into the officer ranks.

As the hon. member knows, there is use of the former CMR facility in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and there will continue to be use of that facility in helping to prepare our officers for their educational program.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the studies also recommended upgrading the Saint-Jean preparatory year.

Accordingly, will the minister increase personnel, recruitment and the budget of the former royal military college in Saint-Jean, that was cavalierly closed, I might add, by the Liberal Party?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the school was closed because we simply did not need three educational institutions across the country given the size of our force and given the budget cuts in order to bring about elimination of the deficit.

We have continued to use that property. There is a renewal coming up of the contract with respect to the use of it and we are presently looking over what our future use would be. We expect and intend to continue to use that facility.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the justice minister supported her position on child pornography by saying the law in question is still in full force and effect in nine of the provinces.

In other words, the people of British Columbia were told sorry, while the appeal process goes on the children who have to live in that province will not be protected against child pornography. Yesterday we could have offered that protection but the Liberals voted no way.

How long is the minister willing to wait before child pornography is once again made a crime in British Columbia?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member did not understand what I said.

I said the law is in full force and effect in nine provinces and two territories. The law is indeed in force and effect in the province of British Columbia. The decision of Mr. Justice Shaw merely binds provincial court judges in that province and no other judge.

Let me reassure the member that the attorney general of British Columbia, Ujjal Dosanjh, yesterday indicated that the law continues to be investigated by the police. Charges continue to be laid and charges will be prosecuted.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is understandable why the justice minister did not want to answer the timeline question. This is the situation.

Oral Questions

It could take weeks for the appeal to be heard. It could take months for the decision to be rendered. If it has to go to the supreme court, this could take years. In the meantime while the lawyers have their fun, what is the protection offered to the people and to children especially in British Columbia?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote the attorney general of British Columbia who has charge of the administration of the Criminal Code: "We need to let the process work itself out while assuring Canadians across the country that issues around investigations and the crown laying charges will continue as they usually do".

The attorney general of British Columbia has made it absolutely plain that the police will continue to investigate. Charges will continue to be laid and prosecutions will be pursued.

I would ask that the Reform Party stop spreading fear in the province of British Columbia.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's proposal to transfer the social housing stock to the Government of Quebec is totally unacceptable.

Indeed, Ottawa is offering \$289 million in compensation, or 19% of federal funding for housing. That is clearly not enough in light of the legitimate needs of Quebecers.

Will the minister responsible for housing commit to making a better offer, so that the compensation reflects Quebec's financial reality?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to tell the hon. members of this House and all Canadians that the Government of Canada invests nearly \$2 billion every year in subsidizing more than 645,000 public housing units.

On the Quebec issue, I have already sent a letter to my new counterpart in Quebec, Ms. Louise Harel, asking that we meet as soon as possible. I hope that we will be able to finally put this issue to rest so that, like all those Canadians whose provincial government already signed the agreement, the people of Quebec can benefit from this agreement.

• (1445)

[English]

BOATING

Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Many of my constituents have expressed concern with the new boating safety regulations. I personally believe that these changes are long overdue.

Could the minister explain why he believes these measures will be effective in reducing the number of tragedies each summer on our waterways?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are some 200 Canadians killed in some 6,000 boating accidents annually. The hon. member is quite correct that this carnage should stop.

We have introduced new measures that follow the consistent coroners' reports in every province and territory following individual incidents which call for more training and for more and better safety equipment onboard boats.

These measures will not be intrusive. They will be easily complied with and will cut deaths on the water, which are quite unacceptable to the government.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is misleading Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Just be cautious in your words.

Ms. Val Meredith: Here are the facts. The RCMP can still investigate. Prosecutors can still lay charges, but criminals can elect in which court to be heard in this particular instance and criminals can elect to be heard in the provincial court, not the supreme court.

What is happening is that these charges will be dismissed. That is fact. What will the minister do to ensure that does not happen?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member does not understand that in fact it would be possible for the Attorney General of British Columbia to proceed by indictment, which takes the matter directly into the trial court in the province of British Columbia.

Oral Questions

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals will be spending a lot of money this spring to find out why they are so unpopular in western Canada. Let me save them some money. It is because the Liberals continually treat western Canadians as second class citizens.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member may pose her question.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, 15% of Canada's children live in British Columbia. Why is the justice minister denying them the same protection as every other child in Canada?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have outlined, the children of British Columbia have the same protection as all children in the country as it relates to being free from child pornography.

Let us seriously talk about how the Reform Party cares about children in the country. They were the only people in the country to speak out opposed to the national child benefit. Every government, provincial and territorial, agreed, and they were opposed. It was the only party in the House to oppose the community action program for children so that children could get a hot lunch.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a leaked document an HRDC official is bragging that the disqualification rates increased from 14% in 1997 to what he called a reasonable 33%. He bragged about millions being cut from the Canadian economy. Acadie—Bathurst has lost \$69 million a year. Marystown, Newfoundland, has lost \$81 million a year.

• (1450)

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources. This is an insurance program. Why are you trying to cut more people off EI benefits—

The Speaker: Always direct your question through the Chair.

Mr. Yvon Godin: This is an insurance program. Why is the government trying to cut more people off EI benefits and treat them like criminals?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is high time the member realizes that EI is not an employer. He treats EI as if it were an industry creating employment in the regions. That is the wrong way; that is the way of the seventies.

We now have the Canada jobs fund to help business create real long term sustainable jobs in Atlantic Canada. We have a youth employment strategy to help the young integrate into the labour

market. Employment insurance is not the answer to all these problems and it is not an employer or an industry. It is a support—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Surely you want to hear the answers, my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a mother with cancer was asked to repay \$3,000 in EI benefits. Ever since she passed away, Revenue Canada has been harassing her young children, demanding that they pay up. By going after children who have lost their mother, this government shows it will stop at nothing to take money away from the unemployed. The unemployed are not the ones who depend on EI, the government is.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development stop targeting workers and chasing after money?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our employment insurance reform we have included a family income supplement specifically designed to help those families that qualify for the guaranteed income supplement under the EI program. This measure is aimed at financially struggling mothers in particular.

The EI program helps get people back to work by investing a lot more money in active measures. The members opposite focus only on passive measures, part I of the act. They keep forgetting to mention part II of the act, which helps people get back to work so they can feed their children properly.

* * *

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is destroying one of the most effective police forces in the world. The Liberal government has destroyed the effectiveness and the morale of the RCMP.

Recently Canada's RCMP training academy in Regina had to be closed until spring or perhaps longer. No longer are RCMP officers being trained.

When will the solicitor general reopen the RCMP officer training school in Regina?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that we have trained our Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the country will continue to train the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, the answers that come from the solicitor general are becoming more frustrating all along.

Oral Questions

Police detachments have been forced to amalgamate at a time when more police are required on the streets. Rural areas across the country and in my riding which depend on the RCMP have been forced to cut back in detachments and manpower.

Is the solicitor general's intention to continue to cut back on RCMP presence in Canadian communities?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated previously, we have given the RCMP the tools to do the job with the anti-gang legislation and the proceeds of crime units which have operated very well and have recovered \$30 million.

We will provide the funding to make sure as we always have that we have a very effective Royal Canadian Mounted Police presence in the country.

* * *

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Last night a TV program highlighted bunk beds, the safety of their use and potential dangers inherent in their manufacture. I was surprised to learn that there does not appear to be any regulations governing their design and construction.

Is the department preparing measures to correct the problems so that parents can be assured of the safety of the use of this product for their children?

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the TV program to which the member refers. In fact Health Canada takes its responsibility for the health and safety of children very seriously.

A process has been initiated to bring in regulations for bunk beds. We are in the process now of consulting with the Canadian Standards Association and hope that those regulations will be in place perhaps as soon as the spring.

* * *

● (1455)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, veterinarians say they will not even give expired anthrax vaccines to animals. Yesterday the minister admitted he knew that expired vaccines were given to Canada's soldiers.

Why did the Minister of National Defence knowingly order Canada's soldiers to take expired vaccines that veterinarians will not even give to animals?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all vaccines that are given to Canadian forces

personnel are tested regardless of whatever date may be on the container.

They are all thoroughly tested to make sure they are effective and to make sure they are safe. That has been the case in all the vaccines we have used and we will continue to use.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a memo dated July 31, 1998 and addressed to the PEI regional director for employment insurance, departmental officials were congratulated for exceeding the target of \$53 million, since this will result in the saving of 150 jobs that the government had planned on eliminating.

My question for the minister is this: How do we call a government that threatens to eliminate 150 jobs if its public servants do not make sufficient cuts to the employment insurance benefits for the unemployed?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Roberval is defending fraud and abuse relating to the program.

Let me make it clear that, whether we are dealing with a specific region or the country as a whole, we are responsible for the public funds entrusted to us by Canadians and we will continue to make sure that we recover the funds that were either overpaid or should not have been paid.

* * *

[English]

DEVCO

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no wonder the government's compensation package for Devco miners is so meagre. Devco recently bought new mining equipment, including \$11 million worth of jacks, for a mine about to be sold.

As we all know, when there is a suspicious death we hold an autopsy. Cape Bretoners are suspicious as to what has happened. Will the Liberal government agree today to a forensic audit of Devco to confirm Devco's financial status?

Mr. Gerry Byrne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the measures that the hon. member from Bras d'Or is speaking about are not meagre at all; \$111 million for workforce adjustment is quite substantial.

It is no secret to the hon. member, nor is it any secret to members of the House, that Devco has been under certain strains of late. The management has been dealing with them as effectively as it can. We have now arrived at a solution.

We are in a situation where we are trying to put forward solutions. I would ask the hon. member from Bras d'Or to participate, for the sake of her constituents, in solutions and not just problems.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, it has come to our attention that our troops that were dispatched to the gulf over a year ago were inoculated with an outdated anthrax vaccine. According to experts, this outdated vaccine was not even fit for animals. It had been expired for a number of years.

Canadians want to know how this happened, who gave the order, what the Minister of National Defence is prepared to do for these troops, and who will look after their health in the future.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in answer to the other question from the other side, we will only give vaccinations when they are safe and effective. They are all fully tested. It is our medical people, the doctors, who determine that it is safe to give them when they are given.

* * *

• (1500)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-309

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the end of the day, during Private Members' Business, my private member's bill was debated and our internal rules prevented me from seeking unanimous consent to make this bill votable.

I therefore hasten to seek this unanimous consent now.

The Speaker: Is leave granted for the hon. member to make such a request?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Canada-China Legislative Association.

I would like to thank all members of the association. It is the very first time Canada has had a formal legislative association with China. I thank the Chinese ambassador, Mei Ping, and our ambassador, Mr. Howard Ballach, in Beijing. I particular want to thank the Prime Minister and the minister of trade for allowing me the honour of doing this job.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 53rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the associate membership of some standing committees.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 53rd report later this day.

* * *

• (1505)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-467, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Young Offenders Act and the Transfer of Offenders Act (death penalty).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this enactment is to impose the death sentence in all cases of aggravated first degree murder committed by a person 18 years of age or over at the time of the commission of the murder. Aggravated first degree murder is first degree murder committed in a heinous manner that defies human dignity.

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

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent I would move that the 53rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of several of my constituents, including the mayor of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield and municipal councillors, and in the presence of two petitioners, Gordon Davis and Gilles Bourbonnais, I have the pleasure to present a petition asking Parliament to lift the suspensions preventing Via Rail trains Nos. 32 and 33 from stopping at the Les Côteaux station. These suspensions deprive the public of an important rail service and discriminate against them in relation to residents of Ontario cities served by the same trains.

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing order 36, I have the honour to present the following petitions signed by 50 concerned seniors. The petitioners note that currently there is no street letter box to cover almost 80 seniors living in two seniors buildings in my riding. Therefore the petitioners pray and request that parliament request Canada Post to consider installing a street letter box in front of the seniors residences at 7340 and 7350 Goreway Drive.

INDONESIA

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition gathered by a group called Canadians Concerned About Ethnic Violence in Indonesia. They note that human rights abuses are rampant in Indonesia, that last May in three days of looting and riots more than 1,300 people were killed and hundreds of ethnic Chinese women were raped along with various other atrocities. They note that although most of the ethnic Chinese have been living in Indonesia for several generations they have faced constant discrimination in all aspects of their lives. They note that Canada is a leader in human rights implementation and that it should show leadership on this issue.

Therefore they call on parliament to appeal to President Habibie of Indonesia to protect the human rights of ethnic Chinese and to bring to justice those who masterminded and participated in these very serious racial riots.

AUTOMOTIVE TECHNICIANS

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to table a petition signed by the constituents of Simcoe—Grey and concerned Canadians from across this great country. These individuals are all automotive technicians employed by car dealerships. As a condition of their employment they are required to purchase and maintain several thousand dollars worth of automotive tools.

● (1510)

At the present time their professional tool investments and expenditures are non-tax deductible. Unlike other professions which require similar expenditures, they do not generate any tax credits.

Therefore the petitioners request that parliament redress this taxation policy, amending the applicable legislation to allow current and future technicians to deduct their investment in their automotive tools.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a number of petitions to the House today.

Nearly 200 petitioners appeal to this House to protect the institution of marriage by enacting legislation defining marriage as the voluntary union of a single male and a single female.

BILL C-68

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I also present petitions from 150 concerned citizens who request that parliament repeal Bill C-68 and redirect funds allotted for the gun registry toward more cost effective crime fighting initiatives such as increased police presence, crime prevention programs and more suicide prevention and women's crisis centres.

TAXATION

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in addition I present today the concerns of a number of my Crowfoot constituents who petition parliament to reduce all taxation by at least 20% and abolish the GST.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise to present a petition signed by over 250 people in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

The petitioners ask parliament to respect and adhere to their views that only the union of a single male and a single female constitutes marriage.

To this end the petitioners request that parliament enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage and Prohibitive Degrees Act and the Interpretation Act.

VETERANS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish today to present to the House two petitions signed by many Canadians.

The petitions call for our government to give fair and equitable recognition to Canada's merchant navy veterans of World War II. The concerns of these veterans can be summarized as four points. They are seeking war veteran status, prisoner of war benefits, recompense for years of inequality and ceremonial day recognition. I ask for everyone to listen to their call.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of Canadians, including from my riding of Mississauga South.

The matter has to do with human rights. The petitioners would like to point out human rights violations continue to occur in countries around the world, particularly in areas such as Indonesia. The petitioners also point out that Canada continues to be recognized as a champion of the universal declaration of human rights.

The petitioners call on parliament to continue to condemn human rights violations around the world and to bring to justice those responsible for such violations.

SENATE OF CANADA

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce three petitions.

The first is on the abolition of the Senate. The many petitioners from all over Manitoba feel strongly that they are not after a triple-E Senate, they are after a triple-A Senate, to abolish the Senate.

PAY EQUITY

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to pay equity.

They ask that there be no more delay, just pay. They want the federal government to make good on its pay equity obligations.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from Winnipeggers regarding the abolition of nuclear weapons and a non-proliferation treaty. They feel strongly that there is no place for nuclear weapons in today's world.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of a number of constituents from the town of Carstairs, Alberta.

Routine Proceedings

They request that parliament impose a moratorium on Canadian participation in the MAI negotiations until a full public debate on the proposed treaty has taken place across the country so that all Canadians may have an opportunity to express their opinions and decide on the advisability of proceeding with the MAI.

MARRIAGE

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present petitions on behalf of constituents of the riding of Windsor West.

The petitioners ask that parliament define in statute that marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

• (1515)

FRESHWATER EXPORTS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36.

Residents throughout British Columbia heard rumours that the government plans to renege on its commitment to introduce legislation to ban bulk water exports from Canada.

They also point out their concern about the ability of the various trade agreements to facilitate the export of freshwater and are calling upon parliament not to proceed with any trade agreement that would facilitate this and to take action on legislation immediately.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another petition from citizens of the Peterborough area who are concerned about the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

They point out that whereas Canada, although with the capacity to build nuclear weapons, has rejected that option and in so doing has recognized the military futility of nuclear weapons; and whereas respected international generals and admirals have declared that the dangers of proliferation, terrorism and a new arms race render the abolition of nuclear weapons necessary, they pray and request that parliament support the goal of abolition of nuclear weapons on our earth by Canada advocating the immediate de-alerting of all nuclear devices and that Canada join the nations of the New Agenda Coalition.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 163 and 184.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 163—Mr. Eric Lowther:

In all agencies and departments of the federal government in the last three fiscal years, (a) how many grants, contributions and/or contracts have been given or committed to the Canadian Coalition for the rights of Children and/or its provincial subsidiaries; (b) what are the amounts given, by department, in order that a non-governmental organization (NGO) report on Canada's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as part of Canada's five-year report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child might be produced; (c) what is the amount and purpose of any other grants, contributions or contracts given to the coalition by department(s) which contributed funding, and by type of grant; (d) when were the above grants, contributions or contracts given; (e) what other organizations were considered to receive funding to produce an NGO report on Canada's compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as part of Canada's five-year report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; (f) which other organizations actually received funding; (g) when was such funding given; (h) what were the amounts of the funding given, by department; (i) what were the criteria used to distribute funding to different interested organizations; and (j) what documents have been produced by the coalition and these other organizations that may have received funding?

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. It should be noted that 191 state parties have ratified the convention. Article 43 of the convention provides for the establishment of a UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to review reports of states parties which have ratified the convention. As a party to the convention and pursuant to article 44 of the convention, Canada is required to submit a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the measures it has adopted which give effect to the rights recognized in the convention and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights. Canada presented its first report in 1994. The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, the coalition, also made a presentation at that time. One of the recommendations of the UN committee was that a permanent monitoring mechanism be established to assess Canada's compliance with the convention. In its concluding observation on Canada's first report, the UN committee stated that it is "concerned that sufficient attention has not been paid to the establishment of a permanent monitoring mechanism that will enable a system of implementation of the convention in all parts of the country".

The coalition approached several departments to secure funding for a separate, independent and impartial report which would represent non-governmental organizations' view point with respect to Canada's compliance with the convention. Both Canada's report and the coalition's report will be submitted to the UN committee in 1999.

The Coalition for the Rights of Children ensures the collective voice of over 50 non-governmental organizations in Canada concerned with the rights of children, such as the Adoption Council of Canada, UNICEF Canada, Save a Family Plan, Street Kids International, CARE Canada, Child Find Canada and Child Welfare

League of Canada, is heard. The mandate of this national organization is to monitor the implementation of the convention. In order to accomplish this task, it has developed a framework to measure the status of children's rights in Canada.

This framework will enable the federal and provincial governments to assess which programs and policies are effective and identify the work that needs to be done to promote the development and well-being of Canadian children. The coalition has been working on this project since 1995. Several departments have made a contribution to the coalition. The Department of Justice has been co-ordinating the funding since 1997.

(a), (b), (c), and (d): The Coalition for the Rights of Children received funding in fiscal year 1995-96 and 1996-97 to develop a framework to monitor Canada's implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The funders for this initiative were: Canadian Heritage, Human Rights, \$24,750 and Health Canada, Childhood and Youth, \$24,750.

The purpose of the project was to devise a monitoring process by establishing research indicators and identifying sources of information. The coalition reached out to the broader community to complete this initiative. The final product was only due during the course of fiscal year 1996-97 upon receipt of additional funding to write and produce a publication.

The coalition received funding in fiscal year 1996-97 to write and produce the monitoring project report and to disseminate the findings. The funding partners were: Justice Canada, Public Law, \$25,950; Canadian Heritage, Human Rights, \$45,950; and Health Canada, Childhood and Youth, \$8,500.

The project resulted in the publication of a 45 page document entitled: "Canada and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Developing a Monitoring Framework".

The coalition received funding in fiscal year 1997-98 to develop Canada-wide information network, including key provincial-territorial correspondents, through conference participation and meetings. This will ensure that the monitoring of the convention is truly effective and accurate. The coalition is also in the process of conducting a review of convention articles in order to identify the issues and to determine methodology for data collection in order to commence the drafting of the report. The funding partners included: Justice Canada, Grants and Contributions Fund, \$30,000; Canadian Heritage, Human Rights, \$35,000; Status of Women, \$30,000; Health Canada, Childhood and Youth, \$40,000; Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, \$8,000; Human Resources Development Canada, Office for Disabilities Issues, \$20,000; and Human Resources Development Canada, Social Development Partnerships Program, \$5,000.

For fiscal year 1998-99, the coalition is expected to receive the following amounts to collect and analyse data for the application of

the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children developed framework to convention articles and to evaluate overall findings: Justice Canada, Grants and Contributions Fund, \$62,000; Health Canada, Childhood and Youth, \$45,000; Canadian Heritage, Human Rights, \$40,000; Human Resources Development Canada, Office for Disabilities Issues, \$25,000; and Human Resources Development Canada, Social Development Partnerships Program, \$25,000.

The report is due in 1999.

(e), (f), (g), (h), (i), and (j): The Department of Canadian Heritage has funded the following projects related to the UN Convention.

In fiscal year 1994-95, the Society for Children and Youth of B.C. undertook a project entitled "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—Promotion and Implementation". Canadian Heritage provided a grant in the amount of \$18,850. The purpose of the project was to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to act as a provincial clearinghouse linking individuals and organizations interested in the convention and to explore ways of monitoring compliance to the convention to be carried out in fiscal year 1995-96. An interim report on the project has been filed.

In fiscal year 1995-96, Canadian Heritage provided a grant of \$10,000 to the Society for Children and Youth of B.C. for the second part of the project. It was entitled "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—Rights Awareness Project-Year 2". In addition to the purpose outlined in the project for fiscal year 1994-95, the year 2 project also focuses on identifying mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the articles of the convention. A final report has been received.

In fiscal year 1997-98, the Society for Children and Youth of B.C. received a grant from Canadian Heritage in the amount of \$20,000 for a project entitled "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Measuring Compliance of Policy and Practice". The purpose of the project was to undertake research to develop a monitoring framework to measure the compliance of policies and practices with respect to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in British Columbia.

It should be noted that the society's model enables the development of an analytical framework and a four star rating system for assessing the compliance of legislation with the convention. These were applied to all British Columbia statutes.

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children's monitoring framework can be compared to a wide angle lens for assessing implementation of the convention in Canada, taking into account all aspects of the convention from legal to a public opinion perspective. The Society for Children and Youth of B.C.'s statutory compliance model and the proposed policy and practice models can perhaps be described as telephoto lenses, which presents the detailed picture in the areas of legislations and

regulations, policy and practice. Integrating these two vistas would provide the basis for a comprehensive picture of the level of implementation of the convention in Canada.

A search of the files of the Department of Justice for the last three fiscal years reveals that in fiscal year 1997-98 the Department of Justice provided a grant of \$10,000 to the University of Montreal, Faculty of Law, to write and publish a book on the rights of the child in Quebec, viewed through the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. This book will also contain an in-depth analysis of existing legislation, doctrine and case law and proposals for reform in light of the convention. The book will fill a void in the French academic tools presently available. The book is due out in 1999.

Question No. 184—**Mr. Jason Kenney:**

How many federal income tax returns have been transferred between Revenue Canada offices for the years 1990, 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1997 from: (a) Jonquière to Shawinigan; (b) Shawinigan to Jonquière; (c) Sudbury to Shawinigan; and (d) Shawinigan to Sudbury?

Hon. Harbance Dhaliwal (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): There were no income tax returns transferred between Department of National Revenue tax centres during the years noted above. The realignment of transfer of processing workloads from one Revenue Canada tax centre to another only started in 1998. In early 1998 data processing workloads of some corporate income tax returns were transferred from one centre to another. Starting in early 1999 data processing workloads of individual income tax returns will be transferred from one centre to another, including the centres listed above.

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: The questions enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered. Is it agreed that the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers No. P-34 in the name of the hon. member for Wetaskiwin and No. P-65 in the name of the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

Motion P-34

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of the three testimonial letters required for the nomination of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney as a Companion of the Order of Canada.

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The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-34 be deemed to have been adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Motion P-65

That a humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House a copy of all correspondence or documents exchanged between the federal government and the province of New Brunswick on the appointment of a second judge to the Court of Queen's Bench in the Restigouche region of New Brunswick.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-48 in the name of the hon. member for Lakeland is acceptable to the government, except for those documents which cannot be released pursuant to the Access to Information Act, and the papers are tabled immediately.

Motion P-48

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos and correspondence regarding all aspects of the government's ban of the 2% and 5% solutions of strychnine.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Notice of Motion No. P-48 in the name of the hon. member for Lakeland be deemed to have been adopted subject to the qualifications expressed by the parliamentary secretary?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that all remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if I could ask for unanimous consent to revert to motions so that we could consider a report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs which, as I explained, involves only a few changes in the associate membership of committees.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to motions for the purpose requested?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

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• (1520)

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.) moved that Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to address the new bill on citizenship.

This legislation is not only a framework that defines the criteria for obtaining Canadian citizenship. It is also, and above all, a reflection of the value that we want to give to one of the world's most respected citizenships.

Since the Citizenship Act was last reviewed, back in 1977, our world has undergone major changes. Now that we are in the era of globalization, we are seeing record numbers of people move from one country or continent to another.

Borders between European countries are gradually disappearing, and a number of nations are merging some of their most important institutions. We are witnessing tremendous progress in the transport and telecommunications sectors. These changes allow us to establish and maintain contact with people all over the world.

In this rapidly evolving world, it is appropriate to stop and reflect on what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

Our citizenship is the very foundation of the Canadian identity. It is the common denominator that unites us from coast to coast. It is also one of our most valuable assets. Our citizenship gives us invaluable rights and freedoms and it is recognized world-wide.

Citizenship is something we do not give much thought to in our everyday lives. As a minister of this government, I have had the privilege of presiding over many citizenship ceremonies and I have met hundreds of new Canadians for whom this ceremony was a highlight of their lives.

For many of our new fellow citizens, the certificate of citizenship represents independence, democracy, freedom from fear and oppression, a chance to give their children a promising future.

In my work, I have experienced some highly emotional moments, watching parents accept the certificate of citizenship for a

child adopted abroad. For these parents, it meant more than just sharing the same citizenship, it meant sharing part of their identity and their roots.

Canadian citizenship is not only a prerequisite for being issued a passport and for voting. It is first and foremost a milestone in becoming a full-fledged member of our society with its great humanitarian tradition of fairness and equity, and it is in keeping with this tradition that we drafted the new Citizenship Act.

To this end, we conducted consultations with Canadians that have enabled us to put forward today a piece of legislation that addresses their concerns.

I would like to thank all those who were involved in this process. As many of you may have noticed in December, when I first introduced the bill, it contains major improvements and necessary updates.

Since many of my colleagues have already perused the new Citizenship Act, there is no need to get into an exhaustive presentation. I will nonetheless take a moment to outline its key elements.

[*English*]

This innovative act includes some important changes for the attribution of citizenship at birth. There are three ways of obtaining citizenship by birth.

• (1525)

Citizenship is automatically granted to all children born in Canada, to children born abroad of a Canadian parent and to children adopted abroad by a Canadian.

Granting Canadian citizenship to all children born in our country is what we call the *jus soli* principle. This principle, honoured by many countries, aims to prevent statelessness. It also reaffirms our adhesion to the Canadian humanitarian tradition to which I referred earlier.

Children born abroad to Canadian parents will automatically be Canadian citizens. However, the second generation of children born in a foreign country will have to reside in Canada for three years before age 28 in order to retain their Canadian citizenship. Then again, it is important for our government to make sure that our citizenship is based on the attachment we have to our country and the knowledge we have of its values.

In keeping with our tradition of justice and fairness, we propose changes to ensure greater equity between natural born and adopted children. Currently, a foreign child adopted by a Canadian citizen is treated as an immigrant and must be first admitted as a permanent resident. With the new act, a foreign child adopted by a Canadian will be granted citizenship without having to go through the entire immigration process.

As a signatory to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children, Canada is committed to ensuring that inter-country

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adoption respects the best interests and rights of the child. The new act represents a strong statement in support of this commitment.

Of course, the adoption must conform to the laws of the nation where the adoption takes place and to those of the province of residency of the adoptive parents since adoption falls under provincial jurisdiction.

As I said earlier, one can also choose to become Canadian. It was important that we also modernize the attribution of citizenship by naturalization.

One of the main features of the new act is the clear and precise definition of criteria for attaining citizenship by naturalization.

Our primary goal is to ensure that people who obtain Canadian citizenship have a deep commitment to the adopted country. We believe that commitment is possible only if the person is physically in the country.

Physical presence makes it possible to develop a sense of belonging and a better understanding of Canadian society, values and culture. With this in mind, we have redefined the residency criteria.

As many have noticed, the current legislation does not include the word “physical”, thus leaving too much room for interpretation of the meaning of “residence”. The new act phrases the residency conditions in more precise terms, requiring such presence in the country. Accordingly, a permanent resident must reside in Canada for a cumulative three years during the five years that precedes his or her application for citizenship.

Many people who come to Canada are involved in business and maintain links with their country of origin. Actually, over half of business immigrants create their own jobs. They bring in new capital and contribute to the development of Canada’s international trade. This represents a notable contribution to our country. Other newcomers seek to maintain close social and family ties to their countries of origin.

Whatever the reason, it is vital that we provide these permanent residents with the flexibility to travel outside Canada. Therefore, we have extended the period during which they need to meet the physical residency requirement from four years to five. This offers a sufficiently flexible framework that takes into account the reality of those who need to travel for business or personal reasons.

• (1530)

We are also adding a new requirement that calls for adequate knowledge of our country and of one of our official languages. We want applicants to be familiar with the values of our society and to be able to demonstrate it without the help of an interpreter.

Some members might wonder why we have put so much emphasis on physical presence and knowledge of the country. To answer this question we have to ask ourselves the meaning we give to our citizenship. The answer lies in our principles and in the tradition of democracy, justice and fairness that we all share in

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Canada. It is of utmost importance that people who adopt Canada as their new home be prepared to accept the responsibilities that accompany the privileges of holding Canadian citizenship.

These criteria provide the necessary balance between two key principles: protecting the value of Canadian citizenship while providing flexibility for prospective new Canadians.

The new process will also address concerns expressed by Canadians across the country. It will protect the value of Canadian citizenship and promote administrative efficiencies.

[Translation]

With this new legislation on citizenship, we are doing what is needed to change a complex process to make it more precise, more effective and better suited to today's reality.

In establishing clear and precise criteria for citizenship, we are helping to ensure its value. It allows us as well to simplify a process that is currently long and time consuming. Most applications for citizenship pose no problems. They can now be processed by citizenship officers.

Thus, the citizenship judges, as they are currently known, will have more time to work on other duties given them. To mark the change in their role, we will now be calling them citizenship commissioners.

The new citizenship legislation defines some of the selection criteria of these commissioners. They will be Canadians who have distinguished themselves through their significant contribution to their community and Canadian society. They will be people who have shown, through their commitment to the community, their ability to fill the role with enthusiasm and dignity.

In addition to asking them to preside over citizenship ceremonies, we will ask them to spend a significant portion of their time promoting related civic values.

[English]

During the public consultations on legislative review I met with people from every part of the country. Although the main focus was on immigration, citizenship was also included in the dialogue I had with Canadians. It became clear to me that one of the best ways to enhance the meaning of our citizenship was to promote it widely. As our society changes it seems very relevant to promote values such as civic responsibility, respect for the law and understanding among peoples. Indeed these lie at the core of our Canadian identity.

The best persons to assume this responsibility are our citizenship commissioners. The improvements to the decision making process will allow them to use their time, talents and expertise to actively

promote community involvement and Canadian citizenship. Being a Canadian citizen brings rights and privileges and the exercise of these rights entails responsibility. Our citizenship commissioners will now take upon themselves the mandate of making Canadian citizens well aware of this.

Before concluding I will take a few moments to discuss the oath proposed under the new Citizenship of Canada Act. I am proud to propose to my fellow Canadians a pledge of allegiance adapted to today's values. The previous oath had remained unchanged for over half a century. It was high time to review it.

The proposed oath includes a clear commitment to Canada, to the Queen, to Canadian values and to respect for our rights and freedoms.

• (1535)

When new Canadians pledge their allegiance to Canada they will also commit themselves to observing our laws and to fulfilling their duties and obligations as active members of Canadian society.

[Translation]

Every year in Canada, some 160,000 people become Canadian citizens. Their commitment to their country of adoption is expressed in the oath of allegiance. With the new oath we are proposing, that commitment will no longer be to symbols but rather to the concrete definition of Canadian citizenship: our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a model throughout the world, defence of the democratic values that unite us, respect for our laws and for our duties and obligations as Canadians.

In closing, I would like to remind you that the primary mission of my department is to contribute to building a stronger Canada. The new Citizenship Act fits into that mission by reinforcing the value of our most precious asset as Canadians: our citizenship.

Building a stronger Canada means modernizing our institutions so that they may reflect contemporary issues and realities while respecting our traditions of justice, equity and compassion. Finally, building a stronger Canada means lending an ear to the concerns of the people of Canada, and responding to those concerns.

[English]

This new act is the result of considerable consultation and in depth reflection on what we want our country to be in the next century. It is part of the government's efforts to modernize Canadian institutions, to keep them in tune with today's realities and to foster public confidence in them, and to preserve and promote our identity, our values and our traditions. We need to make sure our legislative framework is updated to reflect our sense of who we are.

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This is what I propose today with this forward looking, uniquely Canadian legislation. Therefore I ask all members of the House to support the new Citizenship of Canada Act.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask for unanimous consent of the House to have the minister respond to questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Is their unanimous consent to permit a question and comment period consequent on the minister's speech as suggested?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate the minister was not willing to entertain questions at this time. I certainly have a lot of questions for her.

This piece of legislation, an act to replace the current Citizenship Act, is dealing with the very important subject matter of citizenship. It is a very personal issue and an issue that most of us feel very strongly about.

It is especially important for new immigrants so that they sense the pride in accepting Canadian citizenship, the feeling of new opportunity that comes with being a Canadian citizen, and the commitment that taking citizenship means and demonstrates to our country, Canada. For new Canadians particularly citizenship is something that is very personal and very important. For that reason the subject matter of this piece of legislation is also very important.

In the time I have been immigration critic for the official opposition I have heard touching personal stories from new Canadians about what it means to be a Canadian citizen. All of us who are not new citizens of the country could be reminded what it really means by listening to our newest citizens. I know many of us feel strongly about being a Canadian citizen, but a reminder from time to time would do none of us any harm.

• (1540)

I will begin by giving a little background material to the bill. The government's stated purpose has been presented by the minister. Bill C-63 was tabled by the minister on December 7, 1998. It is intended to replace the current Citizenship Act. Bill C-63 will be the new Citizenship Act when it passes, hopefully with many amendments about which I will talk in the future.

Bill C-63 has been touted by the minister as the first major reform of citizenship in 20 years. It is an attempt to modernize the act, as we have just heard the minister express. While some parts appear to more clearly define parts of the act than they are defined in the other act, Bill C-63 certainly does not constitute a major modern reform. Critical areas have been neglected while others have been changed in a negative way. I will refer to a few of those in my presentation today.

I congratulate the minister on two points. First, I congratulate her for finally after three years as minister presenting some legislation in her area. Clearly the first piece of legislation should have been major changes to the Immigration Act because the Citizenship Act refers to the Immigration Act in several cases. Because the Immigration Act is clearly in a state of collapse we need new legislation in that area immediately. That should have been the first area dealt with, but I sincerely congratulate the minister for finally bringing forth a piece of legislation.

Second, I congratulate the minister and her department for making the bill an easy bill to read. I am very sincere about this point. Some pieces of legislation are very difficult to work one's way through. This one is not. It is presented in a very clear way. That allows anyone reading the legislation to very quickly recognize that there are many things missing from the legislation. I will talk about some of those.

In way of a general response to the bill, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration tabled its report in 1994, four and half years ago. It was the only committee report that has dealt in a substantial way with citizenship. Many others have dealt with various components of the Immigration Act, but it was the only one that has dealt with citizenship.

Four and a half years later we finally have legislation dealing with the act, but unfortunately it does not deal with many key issues proposed by a committee which is a Liberal dominated committee. With a majority of Liberal members we would think the minister would listen and pay some attention to what the committee put forth.

This unwillingness to change integral parts of the act will result in several things, and there are some very negative things. The court system will ultimately make law in several areas which should be made by the House of Commons and by parliament.

What is left out of the act will in effect neutralize some of the good proposals that are put forth in a very general way by the legislation. In other words, it has been put forth in such a general way and so much has been left to regulation that it is virtually meaningless in many cases. The regulations that will be put forth by departmental officials will determine the impact of the act.

An increase in power is given to the minister in many areas of the legislation. To be fair, I recognize that authority is necessary in some places. I will talk a bit later about one of those areas. Too much power is being given to the minister without the checks and balances required to make sure that no individual will be discriminated against in an unfair way. I am very concerned about that.

Along the same line and by way of general comment, the legislation contains clauses which were incorporated not as the result of an initiative on the part of the minister but due to court cases.

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• (1545)

The old legislation was so loose, the court in effect made law, and the minister decided she should at this time incorporate the court decisions in law which she is required to do. An example of a case which is worth talking about shows the extreme unfairness of parts of the old act which led to one of the changes in this bill.

Until recently there remained within the Citizenship Act a discrimination between men and women. Before 1977 certain children would not have qualified for citizenship and under the current act, such children are required by the act to make an application for citizenship and undergo a criminal security check. Children born abroad before 1977 to a Canadian mother would not automatically obtain citizenship but children born abroad before 1977 to a Canadian father need only register their births.

Clearly this was an unbelievable discriminatory aspect of the old bill. Unfortunately, rather than government changing that before 1977 it was changed by the courts and incorporated here by the minister.

For these general reasons and some very specific reasons, the official opposition must oppose this bill unless there is substantial willingness on the part of this minister and this government to accept some substantial and broad amendments. I would hope that kind of co-operation is there between the official opposition and the government and that the government will look at some very substantial amendments that we will be proposing in committee and at report stage.

If those amendments are accepted, then we would only be too happy to support this legislation. However, at this time we clearly cannot accept this legislation in the way it has been presented to us.

I would like to get into the specifics of the act. One of the very serious flaws of Bill C-63 deals with citizenship at birth. Bill C-63 states that all children born in Canada, except those born to diplomats, are automatically citizens at birth regardless of whether either of their parents has citizenship status as a landed immigrant or as a permanent resident.

Recommendation No. 12 of the 1994 committee report states "Children born in Canada should be Canadian citizens only if one or both parents is a permanent resident of Canada". This statement was made in a House of Commons committee report, a committee dominated by Liberal members of this House, yet the minister refused to accept that recommendation.

It was not only the House of Commons committee that recommended change in this area. In 1997 the LRAAG report, the legislated review advisory committee report, outlined the government's awareness of the problems that this clause was causing. It said "In our consultations across the country we heard concerns about the abuse of the provision of the Citizenship Act granting

automatic citizenship to children born on Canadian soil". It was recognized by that committee as well.

Finally, this is the position of the official opposition, and I am going to quote directly from Reform policy. "Reform supports an immigration and citizenship policy that requires children born in Canada to take the citizenship of their parents. Children born in Canada to landed immigrants would assume Canadian citizenship".

Clearly, there is support from several groups and from many Canadians to not automatically grant citizenship to children born in this country.

During her press conference tabling this bill in December, the minister stated that she made no changes to this clause because there was no research done on how big a problem citizenship at birth really is. She stated that because hospital records do not request the nationality of parents and that changing this would require provincial co-operation, her hands were basically tied in terms of collecting data.

This minister has been the minister for immigration for three years now. Why has the necessary background work not been done so that the minister could have presented in this bill those changes that Canadians are asking for. Her story is that she cannot do anything about it because the research has not been done. It has been four and a half years since the committee reported. Why on earth has the research not been done? I hope the minister will answer that somewhere along the way.

• (1550)

On several occasions the minister has made it clear that she really does understand the abuses that result because of this automatic granting of citizenship. She knows of the case of Mavis Baker which is before the supreme court now. In this case Mavis Baker who came to this country legally and has three children was ordered to be deported by the minister's department.

Because the legislation is so loose and based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child among other things, her lawyer stepped in and said that Mrs. Baker could not be deported. Her deportation order by the department is being overturned by the court. We have not heard the results of this case yet.

I would not be the least bit surprised that because this law has been left as it is, the minister's neglect in this case, that the courts could well determine based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that these children be automatically granted Canadian citizenship due to the law the minister chose to leave the way it is. Because the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child does not allow separation of a mother from her children, the court could determine that this woman cannot be deported.

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That kind of law in effect being made by a court is completely unacceptable. Let us have laws in this country made in the Parliament of Canada. It is only loose legislation, improper legislation that allows the courts to make laws the way they have been doing for so long.

The second issue that has been dealt with in this bill and which I want to talk about concerns the requirements for granting citizenship. There are some recommendations in this bill that look good on the surface.

Clause 6(1)(b) of Bill C-63 defines the terms of permanent residence more concisely than does the current act. This was incorporated in response to recommendation 6 of the committee report. The existing legislation may be loosely interpreted. Some individuals have been found to be residing in Canada due to a court case. The courts determined that they were residing in Canada because they had a bank account in this country or because they own property here. Either one of these things would indicate that they were residing in Canada.

The minister said the right words in the bill. She said that we were going to plug that hole. What will be required is 1,095 days or three years of physical presence in this country within a five year period to meet the conditions for applying for citizenship. That change was made. Sadly this change is rendered virtually useless because the minister did not implement recommendation 7 of the House of Commons report.

Recommendation 7 said that measures should be introduced to enable accurate monitoring of periods of time that permanent residents are absent from Canada. There is nothing that provides any mechanism or any rules that would allow for the tabulation that would be necessary under this law.

In effect this piece of legislation is rendered completely useless because the follow-up step has not been done. What will follow will be done behind closed doors by the minister's officials. The minister will approve as she sees fit without any requirement that it be passed by this House. In effect, even a change that sounds good and looks good is rendered virtually useless because it is so loose it is meaningless.

I also want to talk about the blatant patronage. It goes another step that we have not seen for some time. Let us look at the blatant patronage which has been promoted in regard to citizenship judges. Probably one of the most contentious issues of this bill is the continued trend of patronage which has now been put at a new level.

• (1555)

Under clauses 31 and 32 the duties of the current citizenship judges will be handed over to departmental officials at Citizenship

and Immigration Canada. We have called for that for some time. That is a good move.

The citizenship judges who are patronage appointees will no longer determine citizenship. That will be done within the department. We have supported that because it should reduce costs, allow some streamlining and lead to some consistency in the rulings among the people who are determining citizenship. That is good.

Instead of just ending the patronage appointments entirely, the minister has created the new position of commissioner. What is the role of these commissioners? They will continue to get paid at the same rate until their terms are up and then they will be reappointed at the minister's will, or some new friends will be appointed. What is their role? Listen carefully because it is unbelievable that this kind of patronage appointment would be put in place. Their role is to promote active citizenship in the community.

Talk to the member from Hamilton, to the Canadian heritage minister about that because that is one of the stated purposes of her department. They had better get it straightened out between the immigration minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and decide which department will do this.

Most Canadians would say it is not necessary for any department to do this. It is a complete waste of taxpayers' money. Let us stop wasting money in the citizenship and immigration department. Let us stop wasting money in the Canadian heritage department and let the local residents and local community groups promote good citizenship. I know of so many groups that do such a good job of that.

Let us cut this spending entirely. I can sure see the Speaker is agreeing with this completely. That encourages me.

I was going to make several more points about citizenship judges but I think I have made the point. I will go on to the next section which is the granting of citizenship, clause 6(1)(b)(i).

The current legislation allows individuals whose application for permanent residence is approved to count each full day of residency in Canada from the date of application as a half day toward the total needed for citizenship application. That is the way the current act reads.

Bill C-63 removes that provision. As a result applicants will be penalized for bureaucratic delays in the department. Even if these delays are caused through no fault of their own, because of the removal of the provision they will be given no credit whatsoever toward their three year requirement for residency in the country before they are eligible to apply for citizenship.

It is disgusting. Few things disgust me more than when a department acting inefficiently can put that kind of burden on someone who wants to apply for citizenship in this country.

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Clearly people who want to become Canadian citizens should not be denied the opportunity to do so in a timely fashion just because of bureaucratic holdups. It is a very sad commentary on this part of the bill.

There were some changes made regarding adoption outside Canada. Some of these changes seem to be a move in the right direction but they are so loosely defined and the regulation will really determine whether they are effective or not.

Bill C-63 will reduce the distinction between a foreign child adopted by a Canadian citizen and a child born in Canada. Currently a foreign child adopted by a Canadian citizen must first be admitted to Canada as a permanent resident before citizenship can be granted. That is the way it is under the current act. It is currently ensured that the child is sponsored and undergoes medical, criminal and security checks. That is the way the act is now.

This bill will remove those requirements as long as the adoption occurs outside Canada. That causes me great concern. I just cannot wait to get the minister's explanation as to why that has been put in the bill.

• (1600)

The new legislation will make it easier for adopting parents to gain Canadian citizenship for the child, which is good, but Bill C-63 stipulates that in order to allow citizenship to be granted to the minor, the adoption must create a genuine parent-child relationship. This is in response to some abuse we have seen across the country. It is not general abuse but specific people abusing the system by claiming they are adopting while they have other reasons for wanting the young person to come into the country.

Section 43 puts the regulation in place. The concern is that section 43(f) leaves defining the terms of this relationship to the minister's discretion. This legislation fails to provide more specific guidelines and terms with regard to exactly how this will be determined. The legislation is so loose that regulation could make some changes that appear to be positive have no positive impact whatsoever.

There is another area of great concern in this bill. Should this bill pass as is, authority will be given to the immigration minister to redefine the Canadian family if she so chooses. I am referring to clause 43 which grants the minister quite far reaching powers including the right to "specify who may make application under this act on behalf of a minor". This is not defined in the legislation. It is left to the bureaucrats and the minister.

Clause 43(c) refers to fixed fees. The level of the fees could have a great impact on how this act works. Clause 43(i) defines a spouse for the purposes of this act. It is left to the minister's to define what

a spouse is. Should this legislation pass the minister could choose to define a spouse in any way she wants. If the minister feels a change should be made, that change must be made by parliament. It should be made neither by the minister nor by the courts. This legislation opens it up so the minister can freely define what a spouse is.

It is of concern to me that the minister is free to define what constitutes the relationship between a parent and child for the purposes of determining entitlement to citizenship under the provisions of this act. Allowing these issues to be determined by the minister behind closed doors without the oversight of parliament is clearly a very arrogant and insulting thing to do to the Canadian population. I call for the minister to quickly reject this part of the act. I hope it is something she missed as she was reviewing the legislation put together by her department. If changes are needed in these areas and the minister wishes to make them, those changes should be done in parliament and not behind closed doors.

Reform Party policy supports restricting sponsorship privileges to the immediate family members, including spouses, minor dependent children and aged dependent parents. All others should apply for entry through the normal selective process. That is what we and I think many Canadians are calling for.

I will read both citizenship oaths. This is the oath under the current act:

I swear [or affirm] that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen.

This is the proposed oath contained in this legislation:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to defend our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

• (1605)

Am I objecting to the new oath? No. I do not think the new oath is probably all that bad. What I am objecting to is the way this oath was arrived at. This minister is so arrogant that she puts forth her oath and thinks her oath is what the Canadian population should accept. That is arrogance that Canadians will not accept. I believe the minister will be chastised by the Canadian public for doing that.

Clearly the minister has missed an opportunity here. She has missed a tremendous opportunity to have a patriotic debate across this country such as presents itself rarely. She could have called for a debate across the country in this House where Canadians would have the input on the oath and the oath then would truly be the oath of Canadian citizens. It would be an oath supported by citizens across the country.

But no, the minister in her infinite wisdom has determined that she can change that oath unilaterally and to heck with what Canadians want. I am concerned about that.

There will be now a debate on the process of entering this oath and on the oath itself, but it will not be as a result of what the minister has done.

On the language requirement in clause 6(1)(c), the minister stated in her presentation that she has put in place language requirements for those who wish to become Canadian citizens. The clause in question states: "The minister shall on application grant citizenship to a person who has an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages of Canada". Further clause 31(7)(3) states that the new commissioners "will be responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the minister on appropriate methods to evaluate citizenship applicants about their knowledge of an official language of Canada and of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship".

At least the minister will let these citizenship judges who will no longer be judges have their say on what they think the language requirement should be, but clearly the legislation should contain a definition of what the minister believes are reasonable language requirements. The minister has once again ignored her responsibility to make a decision on this issue. She is going to have that made behind closed doors by her departmental officials. Parliament will have absolutely no say in what adequate language requirements are.

While the move sounds like it may be a good move, I have heard from some new Canadians that they do not support the new language requirements or any new language requirements. But probably a majority do.

While this change could have been so positive because nothing has been defined, because everything is left up to regulation, we have not a clue what the minister really means about that. I think that is too bad.

This is the second reading of this bill and we are looking at very general comments. I have kept my comments quite general. There are several other issues I will talk about as we get to report stage. Other members of the official opposition will talk at third reading and in committee as well.

I sincerely hope this minister will pay attention to what she hears at committee, to what she hears from Canadians from across this country. Because the minister did not listen before she presented the legislation, she should now listen to what Canadians really want in this area of citizenship. It is an area that is extremely important to Canadians, a very personal issue and an issue which should be dealt with by Canadians and not by the minister behind closed doors.

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I look forward to future debate on this issue from all political parties and hopefully we can make the changes necessary to make something out of this bill, something that Canadians will be able to identify with.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to divide my time with the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, with each of us taking 20 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent from the House for the hon. member to share his time as requested?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Réal Ménard: First of all, I would like to say that we generally understand citizenship to be part and parcel of national sovereignty. It is the government's prerogative to introduce a bill such as this. We will support it, bearing in mind of course that the day is not far off when a sovereign Quebec will introduce its own such bill.

That having been said, with the contagious laughter of an enthusiastic minister in the background, I wish to draw to the House's attention six questions we have about the bill.

I would like to begin by congratulating the minister on one aspect of the bill, a courageous aspect that makes me think I was not mistaken in describing the minister as a dove, while other aspects of the bill are indicative of a few hawks in this cabinet. There have even been some uncharitable remarks about night-hawks, but that is another story.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the minister for having included recognition of same-sex couples in her bill. This is ground-breaking, for such recognition is long in coming. I am pleased that the minister has shown leadership and I hope that she is seated right beside the Minister of Justice in cabinet, if that is not privy information.

We therefore congratulate the minister on this aspect of the bill.

My first question has to do with the decision to introduce a citizenship bill first when all signs were that an immigration bill was coming down the pipe. The minister wanted to take us a bit off guard and introduced a citizenship bill first.

This is the government's prerogative, but I know that deep inside she will agree, in the light of the Trempe report, tabled by the task force brilliantly led by the former deputy minister to the current minister responsible for income security. This task force made 172 recommendations, some being admittedly more valuable than others, but I think that overall it did a good job. I would have liked

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to see the minister heed the wishes of the auditor general, who had asked that she review the legislation.

The inefficiency of the Immigration Act and the highest administrative tribunal, namely the IRB, currently costs the provinces of Ontario and Quebec \$100 million a year. This is something that could have been addressed if the minister had been willing to, but we were all left unsatisfied.

The auditor general also arrived at a fascinating diagnostic. He told the IRB that there were two hierarchies pitted against one another: officials and commissioners. Such confrontation obviously makes it very difficult to exercise any real administrative control. The hon. minister knows that what I am saying can easily be found in the documents from the auditor general, and I ask her in all friendship to table a bill in the next few weeks. She can count on the kind and gentle co-operation of the opposition in ensuring vigilance.

I would now like to share a few good memories with the minister about the 1995 referendum campaign. I think this was a high point in her public life, she had incredible visibility and the full confidence of the Prime Minister. We will recall that the agreement signed in June by the three party leaders—the current Quebec premier, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Parizeau and Mr. Dumont—contained a proposal, which will be back on the table in a foreseeable future, and I am sure the minister remembers it, for dual citizenship.

• (1615)

This is reassuring. Behind every minister, there is probably a closet sovereignist. The minister is surely very pleased to tell us that, since the provisions remain the same, the status quo is maintained as regards dual citizenship.

Once Quebecers decide to become a sovereign people, we will certainly be able to agree, as two sovereign states should do, on the issue of dual citizenship.

This is a very positive aspect of the bill. Again, we hope the minister's influence will be felt among Privy Council members, but that is far from certain.

The other issue is that of linguistic ability. That issue was also raised in the Trempe report. I agree that it is not easy to draw the line. However, I hope the parliamentary committee—before which, I am sure, the minister will as usual be pleased to appear—will obtain guarantees that, with regard to the linguistic skills that will be required and evaluated by using standardized tests, particular attention will be given to the knowledge of French which, as you know, is Quebec's official language.

I know that the Quebec government has made representations to the minister. We will reiterate them and I hope the minister will be in a position to provide the guarantees that are necessary, given the precarious situation of the French language in Quebec.

You, Mr. Speaker, are a bilingual citizen and this is to your credit. Quebec's precarious situation is easily understood when we read the Beaudoin report. The authors of that document, which was released two years ago and which is named after the minister responsible for the charter of the French language, estimated that 40 rulings—imagine the context in which we find ourselves—were made under the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and invalidated entire sections of Bill 101.

I am sure the minister is aware of this. It is important to be vigilant and to make sure that those who choose to settle in Quebec will comply with an inescapable requirement, which is to have a knowledge of the French language.

Again, I am counting on you, Mr. Speaker, to remind the minister that we must have very solid guarantees. It will of course be our duty to raise these issues in committee.

There is also the oath of citizenship. The minister is a woman of honour. She knows the importance of an oath in everyday life. An oath is a binding commitment with a strong symbolic value.

But there is a small paradox. There is something of an inconsistency. First, we should question why we are maintaining this allegiance to the Queen of England. Some may argue that Canada has been a sovereign country since the Statute of Westminster. We know that. We wonder why a minister, who seems to represent the progressive wing of the cabinet, stubbornly and, I must say, somewhat awkwardly maintains an allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who has had her share of problems, as we know.

I do not want to speak against the royal family—it would be against our rules—but let me say that there have been many more divorces in that family than in mine.

Why should we keep in an oath of allegiance such an explicit reference to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who fulfils a symbolic role?

• (1620)

Would it not have been wiser to take advantage of the opportunity to eliminate this reference to Her Majesty Elizabeth II in “modernizing the oath” as they are calling it? The minister has said in a press conference that these are two separate debates. I imagine this government will have the opportunity to discuss the matter as things develop.

There is something I do not understand, and I am sure the following question will be of interest: How can it be that the opportunity is not being taken, in revising this element, to respect what this government has adopted, namely a motion recognizing Quebec's distinct society, its distinct character?

Ought there not to be some consistency here? If we want to speak of the reality of Canada, and if we believe that we must do so truthfully and accurately, ought the minister not to agree with me that it would have been the most basic of courtesies to refer to the existence of two nations in this country or at least to Quebec's distinct society?

Quebec's characteristics are well known. The minister, who has a strong background in social sciences, is aware of this. I am not asking the minister to become a member of the Bloc Québécois or the Parti Québécois but, as a Quebec MP just like me who shares my passion for Montreal, when talking about Quebec, she should speak with a bit more finesse, a bit more accuracy, a bit more refinement, all qualities which she certainly does not lack.

Mention should have been made that Canada comprises two nations. Any treatise of constitutional law, which the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry has taught over many years, would have helped the minister understand that a nation is made up by people with a sense of community. This is the definition given in the 19th century. A nation is made up of people that control a territory. The minister cannot deny that Quebec controls a territory, that its population has a real sense of community, that it has a vernacular language, French.

The fourth element that defines a nation is, of course, its history. This is important, because this is to be found in every constitutional law treatise.

The minister's oath is incomplete, her work is incomplete. I think we should expect amendments.

I could make the same remarks with respect to native Canadians. Why did the minister not refer to them? At the 1982 constitutional conference, the minister was already very interested in things federal. She knows very well that this conference was the native peoples' conference. It even appears in the Constitution Act, 1982. There are very specific rights.

When we speak of Canada, we really must do so in the knowledge that it will soon be facing major change, based on two states that will form an association respecting their mutual sovereignty. In the meantime, it would have been simple courtesy for the minister to mention Canada's binational reality and the existence of the first nations, in her reference to Canada. This must not be forgotten, when an oath is taken on this reality. This did not happen, and should be rectified.

I want to raise another point that will require the minister to provide explanations to the committee. This is the notion of redefining the role of the citizenship judges in depth. They will be called citizenship commissioners. However, the description of the responsibilities of these commissioners remains rather vague. It would not take much for this appear as a desire for rather lyrical propaganda.

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The bill mentions promoting civic values. That is certainly interesting, because there is no social unity without civic values.

• (1625)

But would this not be a slippery road to propaganda? I do hope the minister will make it extremely clear what role these commissioners will be expected to play.

The strongest criticism I have to make to her—and I urge her to listen, as her undivided attention is required on this very serious concern of ours—has to do with the process for appointing the commissioners. Why not go through the Public Service Employment Act and have a competition? How will they be appointed?

At the press conference, I was left with the impression that we are dealing with partisan appointments, something I have always stayed away from, as the whole sovereigntist movement has done. So, does the minister not feel that the appointment process could be used to benefit friends of the government? I am concerned about that.

If I were sure that those selected were all as qualified as the hon. member for Laval-Ouest, I would not be concerned, because I know that immigration is an area she knows very well, having herself been involved in those circles. But we have been given no such assurances.

I think that the minister will have to be extremely careful and that these appointments should be free from partisanship. I want to really stress this point. I do not want to turn into a Reformer, but still the minister should beware and she will have account for her actions to the parliamentary committee.

Another important point is the whole issue of international adoption. I myself had occasion, in a slightly more informal context, to make representations to the minister. She knows how important this issue is for the Government of Quebec.

In fact, I wonder whether I would have unanimous consent to table a letter addressed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, in which Quebec's minister Jean Rochon, an honourable man if ever there was one, and André Boisclair, express certain concerns.

I cannot resist sharing this letter with its rather—

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: The reply as well.

Mr. Réal Ménard: The reply as well, if a page brings it, because I do not have it with me.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Table them both at the same time.

Mr. Réal Ménard: I will read the letter, then:

During a meeting with the minister of relations with citizens and immigration, on October 26, you confirmed—

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The reference here is to the minister.

—your intention to table, in mid-December—

Everyone will recall that that was around the last day of the session. I wish to mention in passing that the opposition parties were put in a rather difficult situation from a parliamentary point of view, because I learned on the train one Friday that I had to be back Monday to reply to the Minister. It would have been nicer to have a few extra days to prepare, but I know that the minister has her plate full and that this will not happen again in future.

The letter said:

During a meeting with the minister of relations with citizens and immigration, on October 26, you confirmed your intention to table, in mid-December, a bill to amend the Citizenship Act. This bill proposes, among other things, to grant citizenship without delay, in cases of recognized international adoption, to the child adopted by a Canadian citizen, before that child arrives in Canada.

This bill raises various issues in Quebec. One of them has to do with how we can reconcile the legislation and our civil code.

I will stop here, but let me tell the House this: under Quebec law—and the minister, who at one time sat in the National Assembly, knows Quebec law—the adoption process must be confirmed and finalized by an order from a Quebec court.

There is an incompatibility and this is why the Quebec government made representations regarding the fact that the status of adopted child would be granted when the child is still abroad, before the process is finalized in Quebec.

On the other hand, I fully realize that parents who go through the international adoption process expect things to be done diligently. We hope it will be the case. However, I am asking the minister to respect the provisions of the Quebec civil code, and in particular the prerogatives of the National Assembly.

• (1630)

In conclusion, we will support this bill, since citizenship is an attribute of national sovereignty. In the not too distant future, when we have achieved sovereignty, we Quebecers will have an opportunity to introduce a similar bill. I know that we can count on the minister to promote good relations and to ensure successful negotiations on dual citizenship.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): I am always very pleased to see the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve display his sense of humour and irony to the House, involving our colleagues on the other side of the floor and reminding us that they sometimes do listen to the opposition and its proposals.

I will be pleased to associate with my colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, as I have in other circumstances, moreover, in offering some views, some enlightenment arising out of my training as a professor of international and constitutional law, as

someone who has spent a number of years in a university teaching about legislation such as this Citizenship Act. Someone who wants to take a constructive look at improving this legislation, clarifying some of its provisions, making that contribution for the most part within a parliamentary committee, which will examine it clause by clause.

It might be worthwhile raising a few questions here in the House, in order to provide the minister and her staff with the opportunity to reflect upon some of the clauses which strike me as needing more reflection and perhaps upon the changes which we can examine together within the parliamentary committee.

It seems to be that the general nature of the act has not been changed, overall. Of course it has retained the two major concepts for assigning nationality, the concepts of the law of the blood and the law of the soil, *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*, adding to them naturalization and attribution of citizenship under a certain number of other criteria, such as the exceptional criteria by which the minister may, on occasion, on recommendation of the governor in council, award citizenship. These items are in many ways a repeat of the old act.

There is no doubt one thing the minister should look at, and that is the notion in part I of the right to citizenship. It seems to me that clauses 3 to 12 of the bill do not really concern the right to citizenship, a right that could have been acknowledged and guaranteed in the Canadian charter of rights and which was not. We could have, had we wanted, for example, incorporated in Canadian law the prescriptions of international instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I submit the following thought to the minister for her consideration: does part I not indeed concern the granting of citizenship and should we not use that expression rather than the right to citizenship. Although the quality of citizen is involved, clauses 3 and following are not drafted in a way as to concern a right really, but the government's ability to grant citizenship, especially when it is granted through the process of naturalization.

Compared with the part following, which concerns the loss of citizenship, part I should be entitled: "Granting citizenship", with the corollary of the various reasons and grounds for granting citizenship provided in the various provisions in this part.

I would point out to the minister that in this part there is some doubt about the relevance of clause 11(e), which could pose a problem in the case of dual citizenship, as the government does not seem to want to grant or agree to grant Canadian citizenship when an individual is a citizen of another country or is entitled to citizenship in another country.

• (1635)

There seems to be a restriction to dual citizenship in paragraph 11(e). I therefore submit to the minister that this may be an exception to the rule, which calls for further investigation.

There is also a need to ensure—this has not been done and, in any case, it deserves careful consideration—that the legislation will not allow the two conventions signed by Canada, that is the Convention on the nationality of married women and the Convention on the reduction of statelessness, to be violated. By signing the latter, Canada and the other signatories agreed to pass legislation that does not cause statelessness.

I look forward to finding out at committee whether the act has been examined in terms of compliance with this international convention of which Canada is a signatory. This is one of the issues I think a parliamentary committee should look into.

There is another thing in this act that struck me; it is in part 4 on prohibitions. The concept of public interest may be too vague. In the context of paragraph 21(1), this concept is the basis for making an order prohibiting the granting of citizenship. This may be too vague a concept and the vagueness of the criteria set out in paragraph 21(1) of this citizenship bill could cause problems in terms of constitutional validity.

I also submit to the minister that it might be a good idea to consider adding, at section 23, which deals with national security, a provision to ensure that, in paragraph 2, reference is made not only to crimes provided for in federal legislation, but also international crimes now codified in several international conventions as well as in the statute of Rome establishing the international criminal tribunal.

It might be appropriate to add a reference to the criminal acts under international law referred to in section 11(g) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This might be one way of ensuring that international criminal acts, being increasingly codified, could be used to justify refusal of citizenship, since it would represent a threat to national security to award it to people who have committed criminal acts not only under federal law but under international law as well.

I have always found this act to contain a curious concept—and I found it so in my university teaching days as well—that of Commonwealth citizenship. In this act, as in the one it is intended to replace, there is the concept of Commonwealth citizenship, that any Canadian citizen or any citizen of another Commonwealth country holds the status of citizen of the Commonwealth in Canada.

This is therefore a nationality or citizenship which is superimposed on nationalities attributed by other countries, but it is one about which we know nothing. What point is there to Commonwealth citizenship? Does it confer any real rights, or is a highly

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symbolic assignment to citizens of other Commonwealth countries of a status in Canada?

I would like to be properly enlightened on the real significance of this concept of Commonwealth citizenship and its corollaries in Canadian law.

• (1640)

Perhaps there is one point here which ought to be of concern to the minister, which is that other concepts of citizenship or nationality appear to be being created here in Canada itself. It might be worthwhile checking whether the Nisga'a treaty, just signed between the authorities of British Columbia and the Nisga'a band, contains a concept of citizenship which is compatible with Canadian citizenship, or is complementary to it.

Then there would have to be an examination of, not only the concept of Commonwealth citizenship, but also other domestic citizenships which seem to have been created, or will be created in future, by treaties with aboriginal nations. So I suggest the minister examine this new idea of a domestic citizen and look at how it would work with the notion of Canadian citizenship.

Finally, on a more technical level, on the content of the bill, I sometimes have a hard time understanding why, in a bill on citizenship, there are provisions that have nothing to do with citizenship. All of part VI concerns what non-Canadians cannot or can do. There are provisions on their right to acquire property, for example, in this bill, and a number of provisions on the power of the lieutenant governor in council, by regulation, to alter bans on property ownership by non-Canadians. This whole part should not be included in a bill on citizenship.

The general organization of this bill, therefore, does not lend itself to the idea of including provisions that do not concern Canadian citizens and the rights they enjoy.

Therefore, in my opinion, we could readily contemplate the inclusion of clauses 49 and 54 in legislation other than on citizenship, because it seems to me they have no place in this legislation, except a place history has reserved for them, but that history does not justify now as it used to, especially since the existence of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other instruments enshrining property rights.

So, these in my opinion are the things that warrant debate and verification in certain cases. I was also interested in the matter of citizenship from the standpoint, as my colleague mentioned, of what would happen in the case of a sovereign Quebec, in the matter of dual citizenship, the opportunity for dual citizenship. I am one of those who consider the minister very wise to—

Mr. Réal Ménard: Visionary.

Mr. Daniel Turp: —visionary, even—my colleague, the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve has such a way with words—

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that I think that, internationally, the trend now is no longer just to tolerate, but to accept and even encourage multiple nationalities and not just dual citizenship. The trend is to even add the category of supranationals as Europe has done, with the Maastricht treaty that was recently passed to recognize citizenship in the European Union, which is entirely consistent with French or British nationality.

This is something sovereignists will continue to ponder. Would it be a good idea for a sovereign Quebec to share supranational citizenship with a sovereign Canada, in other words citizenship in one Canadian union for two sovereign states? These are debates we will also be having.

In the present legislative setting, amendments are certainly important. My colleague, the member for Hochelaga—Maison-neuve, and I will be making constructive suggestions during the committee debate.

I conclude by recalling the fundamental distinction established by the French when they passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789.

• (1645)

The French understood “man” in the generic sense, including “woman” of course, as a universal being with a certain number of fundamental rights to which he was entitled as a member of a universe where borders were of no importance. But citizens are no longer universal beings. Citizens inhabit territories and, when it comes to the status of Canadian citizens within such territories, they must be provided with citizenship legislation that provides them with the best guarantees.

It is in this perspective that the Bloc Québécois intends to make a positive contribution to the study of this bill. I hope that I will be able to make a contribution that will be helpful to the minister and her officials.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, employment insurance; the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, Canada Post; the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, employment insurance; the hon. member for Mercier, Pratt & Whitney.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to represent our caucus in the debate at second reading of Bill C-63. I will be splitting my time with the member from Kamloops. I am relatively new to the critic area of citizenship and immigration, but I am getting well versed.

The issue is certainly not new to me given the area of Winnipeg in which I live. Citizenship is probably one of the key issues and concerns that we have in the community.

I am pleased to see that the minister has chosen to remain in the House to listen to the input of the opposition. I have not seen that in the past from any minister during second reading. Ministers usually read their piece and then carry on out the door. It is a very nice gesture and I am glad the minister is interested in what we have to say.

In my riding of Winnipeg Centre citizenship is a critical issue. We recently took a survey to get an idea of how many new Canadians are living within our borders. I knew there were high numbers of certain groups, but I was very surprised that there were 7,800 people of Filipino background just within Winnipeg Centre, and certainly my riding does not represent the majority of Filipinos in Manitoba or Winnipeg.

The only group that came close in numbers in terms of minority groups was the aboriginal population, with 6,500. There are over 2,000 Portuguese, over 1,800 Vietnamese, over 2,000 Chinese, Laotian, Cambodian, Eritrean, Chilean and Guatemalan people. I was overwhelmed by all the various subgroups. It was a real eye opener to see the number of new Canadians that have settled in the riding of Winnipeg Centre.

I would like to add that we would like to see many more. We would hope that any amendments to the Citizenship Act or Immigration Act would send a very welcoming message to the world that we recognize immigration as an engine of economic growth. In our riding it is critical in revitalizing an inner city that has more than its share of problems as a core area of a major Canadian city.

As a case in point, during the election campaign, going door to door in the worst part of my riding, it was revealing to see the housing stock. We would go past shack after shack with boarded windows or a house used by gangs, and then there would be a lovely little cottage, just recently renovated, with a painted fence, a new roof, curtains in the window and flowers planted along the sidewalk. Without even knocking on the door I knew that was the home of a new Canadian. I knew that would be a Filipino family or a Vietnamese family so proud of their home. The selling price of these houses is \$15,000 to \$17,000. A person can buy a good home in the inner city of Winnipeg for under \$20,000. By anybody else's standards this would not be the kind of property that we would go to a great length to beautify, but the new Canadians who come to Winnipeg do just that. It is a real pleasure to see.

• (1650)

It is also a pleasure that the area is being repopulated. There has been a mass exodus out of the inner city. As people manage to get some means together they seem to move out to the suburbs, leaving

this donut-shaped city and vacant houses. There have been 65 arsons since October in a 12 block area. It is almost like the Watts riots in the southern states at the height of the civil rights movement. It is burn baby burn. They are trying to level the inner city in many ways just out of sheer frustration at all things that poverty brings.

However, new Canadians are turning that around by buying these houses. They are also keeping the schools viable because there are more children in the neighbourhood.

Having said that, I am disappointed because I do not believe that this piece of legislation is going to move us any closer to the goal of welcoming new Canadians to the country or sending the message internationally that the door is open to Canada.

Without getting too technical I would like to go through some of the points that we have reservations about and what leads us to say that at this point, without amendment, our caucus will not be voting for Bill C-63.

First I would like to speak about the physical presence requirement in clauses 6(1)(b) and 2(2)(c). While I understand the concern over what many people feel was a loophole in the law, I feel that the proposed requirement for a full three years of physical presence in Canada is extreme. I also object to the loss of the current provision whereby one-half of the time spent in Canada prior to becoming a landed immigrant would be counted toward residency for citizenship.

The issue that we find the most fault with would be the language requirement, that the test has to be done in one of the two official languages. The minister in her introduction said that Bill C-63 was the result of extensive consultation around the country. I agree. I went to the consultations in Winnipeg. However, overwhelming I believe what the minister heard during those consultations was that Canadians did not want this rigidity. The language issue was a real sore point, a real hot button for a lot of the groups who made representations. Even the Filipino Association of Manitoba, the largest ethnic group in my riding, made a very spirited representation to that committee. It was very capably argued by the son of the chair of the committee on citizenship and immigration, who is a very bright and well respected lawyer in the city of Winnipeg. He spoke passionately against this particular clause. I am sure it was not the only group. I heard many groups making that representation.

I will quote the organization that deals with English as a second language in downtown Toronto, COSTI. Mr. Mario Calla felt very strongly about it. He said "A lot of people will forfeit the opportunity to gain Canadian citizenship as a result of this change and that is very unfortunate".

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There is great nervousness and unrest in the advocacy groups and in the social agencies that deal with English as a second language.

When we break it down to its barest core, how can we judge the value or the merits of an individual by virtue of what language they speak? Why must they be proficient enough to take a test in one of those two languages? I do not see how that has anything to do with whether they will be useful to us as productive Canadian citizens.

● (1655)

Many people who live here for three to five years, as Mr. Calla pointed out, are too busy to get good enough in one of the official languages to take a written test. When a person comes here and works at a minimum wage job, or maybe two or three minimum wage jobs, and maybe juggling child care, they might learn enough English or French to get by, like many people do.

We do not want more barriers. This really does send the message that Canada is not welcoming people with open arms because we are going to put all these roadblocks in the way.

There are many other obvious roadblocks. The hated head tax, of course, we are not going to talk about under the citizenship rules. I hope we get a chance to debate the head tax again under immigration.

Things like landing fees really set the tone to people in other countries who might be looking to Canada. They feel that it is not an open door; it is a door that has a series of hurdles in front of it meant to trip people up and keep them out.

My first wish would be for 5,000 new Canadians in downtown Winnipeg tomorrow. However, I do not see anything in these rules that will help us achieve that goal or even help with the message that Canada welcomes new Canadians to help rebuild this country.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate having an opportunity today to make a few comments on Bill C-63, an act respecting Canadian citizenship.

For those of us who have been fortunate enough to be elected to represent our constituents here in parliament, one of the most pleasurable expectations of our time is to participate in citizenship ceremonies in our constituencies. I am sure I speak for everyone here in saying that it is one of the highlights to see the joy in the faces and to see the tears in the eyes of people becoming Canadian citizens by choice.

Most of us became Canadian citizens because we happened to be born here, but these people are different. As I say, it is a highlight in my life. When I am not able to be there my staff enjoy it equally. Everyone wants to take our picture, we are invited to teas and there are all sorts of dinner invitations. It is a great moment.

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I appreciated the minister saying that it is a moving ceremony. One cannot help but be made proud again to be a citizen of Canada.

One of the things during the ceremony that I always feel a bit uneasy about is when I have to affirm my citizenship. We stand to talk about the Queen, her heirs and so on. I cannot help but think that this does not fit that well in modern day Canada. I do not want to get into a debate on the Queen and the monarchy and who we should be swearing allegiance to, but I do find it somewhat uncomfortable.

When I talk to new citizens they are curious about this Queen, where she lives and who she is. When I tell them she does not even live here, that she lives in another country, they think it is odd, but when one becomes a citizen of a new country a lot of things are strange. But having a Queen who does not even live here seems to be peculiar in modern day society. Our friends in Australia are looking at this. I look forward to the debate that we will have in our country one day, hopefully sooner rather than later, on the question of the validity of having a foreign queen as our own queen.

My colleague from Winnipeg noted that section 6(1)(c) of the legislation requires that an applicant for citizenship must have an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages of Canada. At first blush this seems like a reasonable requirement. If a person wants to become a citizen, to have knowledge of English or French is not an unusual expectation.

However, I think back to my own parents. They came from Norway and like most new Canadians sought out people of similar backgrounds and culture for the first year or two to become used to the new country. Obviously they spoke Norwegian. I do not think my father or mother spoke a single word in English. They arrived in this new country and some years later became proficient in English. My Dad in his late nineties still speaks with a real heavy Norwegian accent, so I suspect it was probably some time before he became proficient in English.

• (1700)

When the legislation gets to committee I want to encourage the minister to be open to this section to ensure that when we say that it has adequate knowledge that adequate does not mean we are going to prohibit people from becoming citizens who are having difficulty with the language and have lived presumably in their cultural community for the first two or three years and are simply in a very early learning stage. We will examine this in committee and I ask the minister to be sensitive to this section and open to some very clear clarification.

Perhaps I would ask her at this early stage that when she appears before the committee to define what we mean by adequate knowl-

edge in a very explicit way. I know she will be concerned that we do it in such a way that this will not prohibit the kind of citizens we would welcome into Canada simply because they are a little weak in learning languages. I know the feeling when it comes to being a little weak in learning foreign languages. I am one of those people.

The section that requires residency in Canada for three of five years is again something else we want to look at because as Canada is one of the world's great trading nations which attracts people from other countries to take up residency and become contributing citizens, it is really one of the key aspects we have as a country in terms of facilitating new overseas trade arrangements.

When a person comes from Vietnam and takes up citizenship in Canada it is only natural for them to think if they are going to be doing foreign trade either importing material or exporting Canadian goods to Vietnam that their friends there would be an obvious contact. So as we develop more trade and more overseas connection in terms of the whole globalization forces that are in place we should be sensitive to whether this three year permanent residency make sense recognizing modern commerce, trade and communications. I am not saying it does not but I simply want to say that we have some concerns about this and it should be considered carefully in committee.

I turn to section 28 which identifies a number of prohibitions:

Despite anything in this act, other than section 8, no person shall be granted citizenship or take the oath of citizenship, if the person

(a) is, under any enactment in force in Canada, subject to a probation order, on parole, or confined in any penitentiary, jail, reformatory or prison;

(b) is charge with, on trial for, subject to or a party to an appeal of a review relating to an offence under this act or an indictable offence under any other act of parliament.

One of the concerns I hear regularly, and I am not certain how accurate it is, is people often have a perception that a lot of people who have come to Canada and are not yet citizens and get in trouble with the law remain here. Consequently we pick up the costs and we welcome a criminal element into our country. I know that is not the intent of any legislation and not the intent of any government policy. It would seem that when we consider section 28 this might be an opportunity to consider that section and ensure that Canadians know clearly that if a person wishes to become a citizen of Canada and he or she gets into serious trouble with the law, that person is not welcome any longer in Canada. We do not want a person who participates in illegal acts to become a Canadian citizen. Again I ask the minister if she would clarify that section when we get to committee.

I applaud most of the initiatives the minister referred to in her opening comments in terms of the need to promote citizenship, the need to promote an understanding of what being a citizen of Canada entails, the responsibilities that go with that citizenship.

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• (1705)

I feel that at a time when we have all these forces tugging at us as a result of globalization and we as Canadians are part of such a multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial country we have to emphasize what it means to be Canadian. It is not clear and I suspect we are one of the few countries in the world where people actually ask what it means to be a Canadian.

I cannot imagine someone in Greece asking what it means to be a Greek or somebody from Italy asking what it means to be Italian. They know these things but it is not as clear here because of the kind of country we are. We are an amalgamation of folks from every country of the world.

I ask the minister to give some thought to the consul we have in Chandigarh, Punjab. It was set up as a consul office. We understood the office would facilitate issuing visas and so forth but in my judgment there have been some problems with that consulate office.

In talking with people they seem frustrated because a goodly portion who come to Canada from the subcontinent of India are from the Punjab state. We should have that office operating in a more efficient and perhaps more elaborate fashion than it is at present.

I ask the minister to give that some thought, to expand the ability to facilitate those visas and other immigration and consular work from that office in the future.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's presentation with interest but I have some questions as a result of his presentation.

He expressed a concern that he cannot really tell what the minister means in the legislation about the language requirement. He is concerned that the requirement might be a little too difficult and may set up a requirement that is unreasonable for some people who are new immigrants wishing to become citizens.

I have heard from people of new immigrant communities who have made that point to me. They are concerned from that point of view. I have also heard from others who say they think it is only a reasonable commitment on the part of somebody who wants to become a Canadian citizen to speak with a fair degree of capability in one of the official languages.

Does it not concern the member that when he reads the legislation he really cannot tell what the minister has in mind? The legislation is so vague that it is impossible to tell what the minister has in mind. If I were a new immigrant concerned that the requirements might be set at too high a level I would be concerned that it is not in legislation. The member said he would ask the minister at committee and find out what she has in mind. That is not good enough for me. That is not good enough for new

Canadians who want to know what the requirement will be. It should be in the legislation.

I see that problem with almost every proposal made in the legislation. There is not enough information to determine what the minister has in mind. Is the member not concerned about that issue? Is it good enough for him just to hear the minister's answer and then assume that is what will happen?

The second issue concerns the need to promote citizenship. He is supporting that concept, that there is a need for government to promote citizenship. The heritage department already does what it claims is promoting good citizenship with several different programs. I wonder why that is going on. The member had expressed his support for that concept.

Does he believe that local community groups somehow are not capable of promoting good citizenship, that service and cultural groups in the community somehow are not capable of promoting good citizenship? Does he feel there actually has to be a government bureaucracy whose job it is to promote citizenship? Does he have that little faith in the local community to do that?

• (1710)

Mr. Nelson Riis: Madam Speaker, I am puzzled by what I sense as an attitude on behalf of my friend. When I say I welcome the opportunity for these officers to go into the community and promote citizenship, I do not imply that is the only thing that takes place when they promote citizenship.

I know the citizenship judges who operate in my constituency. They are excellent individuals who are recognized in their communities as outstanding Canadians. They make it a habit of promoting citizenship. They go into schools, college classes, immigrant centres and so on to talk about the responsibility of Canadian citizenship. My friend might think this is a bad idea but I do not. That is not saying that other people are not doing it in all sorts of other ways. Of course they all do.

I am very happy to say that many immigrant societies in my constituency promote Canadian citizenship. They promote the concept and educate new citizens about what Canadian citizenship means. What it means to be a citizen in some countries is quite different from what it means to be a citizen in Canada. Examples are the attitude toward police forces and authority in general and the attitude toward members of parliament. The fact that you can actually walk into an MP's office is rather unique in the world, unheard of.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am afraid the time has run out.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Madam Speaker, could I seek unanimous consent for another 90 seconds?

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Madam Speaker, thank you. This is after all legislation and from this legislation will flow regulations. Regulations will be the place to be specific in terms of what is meant by a term as vague as adequate knowledge. My friend is absolutely right when he asks what this means.

I hope the minister will explain what it means and that we will see in regulations specifically what that means. Does it mean a test, as my friend from Winnipeg indicated? Is it a competency level? Is it an ability to communicate in some simple way through a written letter or through oral communication? What does it mean? My friend is right that we have to be specific about this. It has instilled virtual fear in the hearts of many in the immigrant community because they see it as a potential barrier. I do not believe it is an intentional barrier. As long as the definition is adequate his concern and the other concerns can be adequately met.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here this evening and to speak on the proposed changes to the Immigration Act. Before I venture too far into the matter I would like to revisit a bit of the history of Canadian immigration.

On January 1, 1947 the first Canadian citizenship act took effect. It was from this point on in our history that we were considered Canadian citizens. This led to an unprecedented population increase of over 40,000 as people from around the world wanted to become Canadian. The concept of citizenship evolved as Canada advanced over the years. In 1977 parliament initiated a new citizenship act. Today, some 22 years later, we have proposals before us to change the act once again.

I heard the hon. member from the NDP say how sorry he was that we were referring to the monarchy. I am so pleased and proud that the monarchy is still part of our citizenship oath. I represent Canada's first city to be incorporated by royal charter. We and our people played a major role in building all of this country. We date back to 1783. There are those who say they want to eliminate our ties to the monarchy. I cannot believe that the people who say that sit in the House of Commons.

I recall when the rumour was flying around here. I asked the Prime Minister in the House if we were going to break our ties with the monarchy. After he talked to the minister of heritage he stood and said "I am not going to break the ties with the monarchy. If the hon. member for Saint John would like to represent us in London, England we will fly her out tomorrow".

• (1715)

Well, I did not take that job but let me say that I have had an opportunity to be with Her Majesty. I have had the opportunity to be with Prince Charles, Prince Andrew and also with Princess Diana before her life was taken away. I want to say to everyone here and back home that if they want to divide this country like never before, that would happen if the monarchy was removed from the oath.

I say to everyone how important this truly is. I was very pleased when I saw the new oath and when the hon. minister read it because the oath still refers to the monarchy.

The minister knows that my office has worked very closely with her office on a number of immigration cases. We put in over 250 hours in regard to one case. There was a problem concerning a family with one child who had been born in the United States and another child who had been born in Canada. My staff and her staff worked together. There were rules and regulations that had to be met.

After many months we were able to bring that family back to Canada. They arrived just a few days before Christmas. The whole community came together. The little children got off the plane. People had come from all over to give them gifts. Both the wife and husband work. They have contributed to society. They donate their time to those who are living in poverty. The husband is a baker. He goes to Romero House which is a little drop-in centre. People who have no money go there to get their meals. He bakes for them at night. He makes sure that they get the best of food. This has been a very beautiful success story but it took a long time.

I remember when the auditor general came to the public accounts committee. He talked about the immigration program and the process. He also talked about the fact that some 20,000 people are still here in Canada illegally because our process is so slow in the manner in which it is presently laid out. He recommended major changes to streamline it. I understand the minister has stated that with the new changes they are hoping to have all those cases completed within the year. I must say that is a very strong statement because of the numbers that we have.

When it comes to the system, as the auditor general stated, it must be changed with the commissioners. I have heard here tonight about taking patronage out of it. All I can say is that whoever is there, let them be competent, let them know the process, let them apply the process. Let them do whatever they have to do but do it in a manner in which politics does not play a role in it.

I know this is difficult. We hear about the little families in church basements. Usually when they go into a church basement it is because if they go back to the country from which they left, their lives are at stake. Usually they would not be in the church basement if the minister or priest did not believe in helping the little families.

I have seen it, I have worked with it and I know what it is all about. I hope we are able to work out a far better system than it has been in the past.

● (1720)

They talk about the two official languages, whether they should be able to speak English and French. I come from Canada's only official bilingual province, New Brunswick. Our door is open for immigrants. In fact, a motion was passed recently by the mayor and council in Saint John, New Brunswick asking for more immigrants, to work to bring more into Saint John, New Brunswick.

If they are not absolutely fluent, there are all kinds of opportunities with our Samuel D. Champlain Centre. If they are not fluent in French, we will teach them. It will not cost them anything. If they are not absolutely fluent in English, we can do the same.

Our doors are open in Saint John, New Brunswick and our people want more. They do not all have to be in Vancouver or Toronto. They can be in the maritime provinces as well. I hope in the future people will look at that in Ottawa. They have a role to play. They have a lot to share with us.

It talks about having to be a skilled worker. I mentioned the man who is a baker. Bakers are considered to be in short supply in Canada. However a refugee who can bake but who has no formal degree may fall short of receiving adequate points at the interview.

We have to find a way to keep an open-minded approach to judging those who apply. At the same time I agree that people must have the skills that show they can perform the task they say they are able to perform. The test should be flexible, changing in its application but not in its content.

Other proposals contained in the most recent report are things that will have to be debated.

There is reference to same sex families. There are those who will believe that that constitutes a family. I am one who believes in the traditional family. I am one who will always speak for the traditional family. I think the traditional family has been forgotten and it is time for many of us to speak out for them. I really do. I have some concerns about that section which is being recommended.

Other proposals contained in the most recent report are things that need to be debated.

On the issue of maintaining Canadian safety, I agree that we need to go as far as possible. The safety that Canadians now enjoy should never be compromised for any reason. We have one of the highest standards of living in the world. Although everything is not perfect, we are fortunate to live in this nation.

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Some of the more serious concerns I have with the proposals lie in the fact that there are no concrete measures proposed. There are no details for us to study and comment on.

What some of these proposals mean to one person may not mean the same to some of my colleagues. This puts a great deal of work in front of the committee members as they will ultimately be the people who decide what is brought forth for concrete measures.

The PC Party has long valued the contributions of newcomers to Canada. For the most part the immigrants we have received into Canada have been very resourceful, vibrant people. Our party believes that we must have a balanced approach to immigration, one that would not punish legitimate applicants but one which would prevent abuse of our social programs.

If we had a system that would see the end of patronage appointments, and I do not care who is in government, just make sure that we have responsible people there, then we would have a much better system.

Another suggestion would be to streamline the procedure to help expedite the process for legitimate applicants. As I have stated, it takes a long time. This could also serve to quickly turn around those applications that will not be accepted.

In closing, this process will be long. It will need to be thoroughly developed to best serve the needs of those wishing to come to Canada. I hope all opinions will be listened to and respected.

I want to thank the hon. minister and her department for the help and co-operation she has given to me and my office on refugee cases in the past year. I want that on the record.

● (1725)

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Madam Speaker, listening to the speech by the hon. member brought to mind the fact that I am an immigrant and had to go through the immigration process in 1979 to get into Canada. It took about two years. We first applied and we were automatically turned down. We asked why we were turned down. We applied a second time. It took three applications to come here.

My wife and I had money to buy a home. We had jobs guaranteed. We felt we had earned the right to come here. We had earned it. We truly felt like Canadians and that is the way we have behaved since, as Canadians.

I personally see nothing wrong with having a high standard. That is the same message I get in my riding from all of the immigrants who have come in through the legitimate process.

I have two questions for the member. She does not object to requiring reasonably high standards. The second point has to do with criminal refugees.

Private Members' Business

The real problem in the major centres has nothing to do with immigration as such. But it is the problem which the minister is not addressing which is the one of criminal refugees.

In a TV interview last week with BCTV, a reporter basically demolished the minister over the issue of not deporting criminal refugees and allowing them to enter our borders holus-bolus. She has done absolutely nothing.

In the last three to four months in Vancouver there have been multiple arrests of up to 80 criminal Honduran drug dealers who are all illegal entries. Up to half of the arrests every night in Vancouver are criminal non-residents, aliens who have crossed the border as criminal refugees.

Has the member thought about that problem in the big cities? Like most of the people of Vancouver, does she agree that there should be a better way of getting rid of those bad people quickly instead of having them hang around for 10 or 12 years?

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, what one has to ask is were they like that before they came in or did they become criminals after they came to Canada, to Vancouver?

When it comes to the drug situation the member knows it is not just the immigrants. That drug situation is across the nation. When it comes to a criminal coming to Canada and becoming a Canadian citizen, then there is something wrong with the system. There are not enough strict rules to protect and to have the checks and balances.

A little man who had come from Guatemala to Saint John was shot in the stomach. He was lying in the street dying. A fireman found him, picked him up, took him to his home and saved his life. That little man lives in Saint John right now. He contributes to our society. He was not a criminal. He spoke out against a communist way of life. That is the only thing he did.

When it comes to drugs we have to take stronger stands. We have to do more to clean up the drug situation across the nation. If there are immigrants who are into that and have come in with a criminal record then they should be deported. We have to strengthen the system. We have to have a stronger system. There is no question about that.

Mr. Ted White: Madam Speaker, to make sure that my question is clear, I hope the hon. member has seen the news reports in the Vancouver area where up to 80 Honduran drug traffickers are being arrested at one time. Eighty of them. They are taken to the court in Vancouver, charged and then they are immediately released. They all live on welfare. They all have free medical care. They acknowledge that they are illegal refugees.

I am not talking about the genuine refugees who come from genuine refugee screening camps around the world. People as young as 12 years old are using the system to come here to abuse our laws and deal in drugs. They know they can be here for 10 to 12 years before they are deported and it is all because of the minister over there who will do nothing about the problem.

• (1730)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, if they are here illegally, if they are breaking the law, then they should be deported immediately. That is what the auditor general would say. I think we all agree to that.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to get clarification regarding a comment the member made. She said she and her party certainly would not support redefining a spouse as a same sex spouse. The member was referring to the leeway the minister has for her to change that definition on her own if this legislation passes.

On CBC radio this morning a report was that all parties except Reform supported the changing of the definition. That comment was with regard to the bill of last night of the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, I am so pleased the member brought that up so we can clarify it. No, it was not the party. The hon. member from my party who attended and spoke was speaking on behalf of herself and her feelings and not on behalf of the PC party. I am speaking on my behalf. I am not for same sex benefits. I am not for redefining the family. I am for the traditional family and everybody knows that across Canada.

[Translation]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

TAX ON FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

The House resumed from October 28, 1998, consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am certainly pleased to speak today with regard to Motion No. 239. I infrequently speak in this place primarily because most of the time when I do want to speak it is not always possible and also because I speak only when I have something to say.

I know my hon. colleague has the best interests of our country in mind when he indicates that financial speculators apparently do have some play in some of the problems that occur in a lot of countries where there is not a lot of good control over finances.

I ask this question with regard to the financial transaction tax, the Tobin tax. Economists will tell us anything we want to hear or there are ways to build models to indicate what is good and what is bad.

As I understand it, the best way of avoiding a financial disaster is to have good management, good fiscal policy, good regimes and legislation to make sure that financial institutions and people who deal in financial transactions are managed properly.

The second thing which apparently is a myth is that foreigners are responsible for creating speculation in countries. There are a lot of greedy people in the world. Machiavelli said the strong will do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. There are people like that in this world. It does not matter what kind of situation they are in. If we were to give everybody in our country, all 30 million people, \$1 million each some would have goodwill. They would want to help their neighbours and do not really care about money. After 10 or 15 years a lot of them would end up with zero cash and some would end up very rich, saying "We are all right, thank you very much. We do not care about all of these other people. Let them suffer because they did not do X and they did not do Y".

• (1735)

That kind of world is not a good world to live in. It is a world where the law of the jungle prevails. Sometimes people say to me Liberals are soft. I can be as strong and as vicious as any of my colleagues around the table.

But if one really gets out in the jungle, as I did one time, and looks at the real wild animals they are not well dressed, they do not have three piece suits. They are ugly. They roll around in a lot of stuff, they smell like the jungle and they are vicious.

Some of the people who wear tuxedos, drive the big limos, live in places that are fenced in with servants and slaves and what have you think this is great. It is not a good environment to live in. In that kind of environment even the people who are working for them do not like them.

I will get back to the second point I want to make. Speculation starts in their own country for some people. They understand the rules. They understand the regulations. It is the stock brokers or the local banker who gives these tip-offs. They trigger these things. It is kind of like a BRE-X. The next thing we know all kinds of things happen. Then in come the speculators. The speculators become involved. If we could only get a buck every time somebody makes a transaction it would be good for the common good of all Canadians and this would not happen.

Private Members' Business

The third point which is probably the most important reason why this Tobin tax would be problematic is in this world there are many countries where trading occurs. The capital will flee to the country that does not have a regime in place where moneys are taken during transactions.

Although I know what we do in this House is very important, our discussions about how we regulate things and we are here as legislators, I am not here just to make laws. An old farmer told me when I was first elected "Go to Ottawa but don't make a lot of rules and regulations that you are going to place in a stand somewhere. Remember some times things like the ten commandments. That can get you very far".

Sometimes notwithstanding that our colleagues come up with good legislation and there are a lot of good private members' bills that have been passed in the House, the best thing about private members' bills is that we discuss them. We look at all the angles and we pry and we probe. Sometimes the good ideas are stolen by ministers or by colleagues or by some group and used. We have to be mindful that we are just not here to make rules and regulations, put them in some kind of document, place them on a shelf somewhere or try them and they do not work or they make the system worse.

I understand the finance minister has looked at it and the department has looked at it. We hear the concern of the hon. member, but Canada is already exercising international leadership. We have a broad strategy to attack the underlying causes of financial market volatility. Big financial markets are not perfect institutions.

As well, I am told, the challenge we face is to find the best way of dealing with these problems, which economists call market imperfection. In other words, no market is perfect.

Proponents of the Tobin tax then argue that such a law would put sand in the wheels of international financial markets by imposing a very small percentage tax on a foreign exchange trader. And so the argument goes. This would discourage speculation. It would stabilize the financial markets without interfering unduly with longer term trade or investment.

• (1740)

Others are attracted by the tax revenue. There are a lot of people looking for these big slush funds, tax moneys. Politicians would love it so we could spend it and so that we could raise some funds which they believe would finance and enhance worthwhile programs.

We do have regimes for raising taxes. Those regimes are well thought out. This discussion is very good but as far as I am concerned this is not the way the government should go because of those reasons I mentioned.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I was delighted to hear my colleague from Bruce—Grey. I have not heard him speak often, as he mentioned, but I wish he would do so more often. He certainly provides an excellent view on this subject. I also enjoyed his member's statement yesterday. He was on all the national networks mourning the loss of the rodent in his riding.

I am here this evening to talk about the motion of my hon. colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle on the financial transactions tax, that in the opinion of this House the government should show leadership and enact a tax on financial transactions in concert with all OECD countries.

Like many ideas that come from my colleagues in the aging New Democratic Party this is a noble one I think with a good purpose and a thoughtful objective in mind, to find some way of governments imposing some discipline on the increasingly unwieldy currency and financial exchange markets which really seem to many of us to be out of control at times. I think we, like all Canadians, share at times a feeling of helplessness as we are adrift on the sea of trillions of dollars being exchanged daily across the world electronically, affecting our standard of living, affecting the value of our currency, affecting our international purchasing power and yet to a very large extent beyond the control of us as individuals or as communities or as government. So I recognize the frustration which gives way to the kind of impetus we see behind this motion.

It would be wonderful if we could find a fiscal policy lever, a tax if you will, to slow down the sometimes destructive and irrational nature of these speculative currency markets. That I admit. It would also be marvellous if we could live in a world where everybody had a marvellous standard of living where there was no poverty, no unemployment and no economic inequities. But unfortunately that is not a world we live in and it never will be. That is a Utopian world. There are some things which government simply cannot do. One of the iron laws of economics is that people will generally act in their own self-interest and maximize their own returns. This is an irrefutable fact of economic history.

Essentially what I am saying is that the imposition of a financial transaction tax proposed by this motion would be unworkable, impractical and would create unintended consequences that would be far more devastating on developed countries like Canada than are the current vagaries of the currency exchange markets.

One example springs to mind about the kind of perverse unintended consequences that result from governments when they choose to establish certain outcomes through tax policy. In the 16th century in England the crown was looking for an efficient way to tax people based on their wealth.

• (1745)

The tax collectors then noticed that wealthier people tended to have homes with a relatively new luxury of windows. Lovely Tudor

homes with windows were being built throughout the land. The tax collectors decided to advise the crown that they should impose a window tax. It was a brilliant idea to soak the rich. The 16th century version of the NDP said "Let's soak the rich and redistribute that income. Let's have some Robin Hood economics here in jolly old England".

They imposed this punitive tax on windows. The tax collectors went around from town to town and county to county and counted how many windows people had in their homes and assessed a levy based on how many windows they had. Inevitably we can imagine the consequences which tax collectors could not possibly imagine in their linear minds. What happened was that everybody throughout the land boarded up their windows and darkened their homes to avoid the taxes they would otherwise have to pay.

This marvellous new innovation of Renaissance architecture, the window, became blackened and covered up because of a punitive tax which was designed to achieve some kind of equity. To this day in some small villages in England we can see what were once framed as windows covered up by plaster. To this day we still see the unintended consequences. That is the kind of natural, inevitable, historical, human reaction to the effort by the state to impose taxes on people to penalize them for certain activities.

We have seen this in more recent history where other developed economies have tried to impose financial transaction taxes such as the one contemplated in this motion. We have seen that jurisdictions such as Brazil, Sweden, Japan, Germany and Switzerland, all in the past five years or so, have removed or eliminated financial transaction taxes which they had at one point levied principally on the trading of equities and other financial instruments. The United Kingdom, while not yet having eliminated the FTT which it imposed on the registration of securities, cut it in half back in 1986.

Why did all these countries that were theoretically generating revenue from this painless small levy on financial transactions end up eliminating it? What they found was much like the window tax, that these financial transaction taxes were counterproductive.

By imposing a levy on securities and equities and the trading of those instruments there was less activity in their equities market, less securities were being registered. Why? It was because investors acting rationally in their own self-interest moved their financial investments, their equity tradings and so forth into other jurisdictions.

The tax base which these governments had sought to derive revenue from began to diminish. By imposing a tax not only did the revenues from that source decline year after year as investors moved more capital trading out of the country, but it became completely counterproductive because all the FTTs in various jurisdictions had a dampening effect on economic growth.

There is absolutely no doubt that we would see a similar unintended consequence were Canada and other OECD countries to impose an international tax along the lines proposed by economist James Tobin in his now notorious Tobin tax. There is no doubt that it would be impossible to compel every national jurisdiction in the world to comply with such a tax. It would also be impossible to impose sanctions on those sovereign jurisdictions that refuse to do so.

Even if we could persuade all 26 OECD countries and all G-7 countries to impose a 1% or .5% levy on financial transactions, of which I am highly skeptical, we would still have some 130 international sovereign jurisdictions to persuade to participate in this kind of tax.

• (1750)

Inevitably some would do what banking havens like the Grand Caymans, Bermuda, Switzerland and the Channel Islands do today, that is act as havens for investment. We would find that capital would flow to the point of least resistance. We would end up with an enormous distortion in international financial markets which would be devastating to equity markets and the prosperity and economic prospects of countries like Canada.

With respect to my colleague from Regina, it is a nice idea but it is impractical. It would not work. It could not work. Let us not hamper Canada's economy by imposing such an unworkable international tax regime.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate, which I feel is an important one, in light of my personal values.

First, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for tabling Motion M-239, which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should show leadership and enact a tax on financial transactions in concert with the international community.

An amendment to this motion has already been proposed by the hon. member for Repentigny and reads as follows:

That the motion be amended by removing the words "enact a tax on financial transactions" and replacing them with the following:

"promote the implementation of a tax aimed at discouraging speculation on fluctuations in the exchange rate."

I hope the majority of our colleagues in this House will support the amendment as well as the main motion. The hon. member for

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Regina—Qu'Appelle is to be commended for putting forward this motion, which parallels the current debate surrounding the issue of globalization. This is a good example of globalization and how the world has shrunk, given that, with the extremely sophisticated technology available today, financial transactions can be performed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and have a major impact on economies worldwide.

This has been done extensively, and it makes this motion today, the Tobin tax, all the more interesting in light of recent developments.

In a word, as we know, the purpose of this tax would be to levy a very small amount—one tenth of one percent—on international currency transactions around the world. It is estimated that such transactions total, and that is where it becomes interesting, between \$1,500 and \$2,000 billion a day. It is hard to imagine what \$1,000 billion a day represents. That is order of magnitude we are talking about here. At the end of a year, given a rate of one tenth of one percent, \$150 or \$175 billion would have been raised and managed, as a world fund, by the UN or another organization designated by the international community for this purpose. As a result, and this is very important, wealth would be better distributed.

It would act as a mechanism to curb rash exchange speculation on the currencies of countries, sometimes the most vulnerable countries. We would kill two birds with one stone with this world fund, which could be used effectively to fight poverty worldwide.

And better distribution of wealth would be achieved. This would have the effect of counteracting the negative effects of globalization and slowing down the progress of the unbridled neo-liberalism which has reigned for far too many years already.

We have seen the way these faceless speculators, with no sense of social responsibility, no accounting to anyone, whose job it is to type away on computer keyboards everywhere on this planet, checking out interests rates that are too low, fostering their own clients' interests, thumb their noses at community or national interests.

• (1755)

When we refer to national interests, we are not referring to some vague concept. We are referring to what has happened in recent years, first of all in Asia, in Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Indonesia. All of Russia has been through it since the wall came down, and now has become a haven for all manner of crooks and criminals. Things seem to be out of control. A few years ago Mexico too was experiencing some very hard times, as Brazil recently did.

A full-scale attack is launched on certain economies—often developed ones such as Japan but sometimes still fragile, such as Indonesia perhaps—so that these economies must suddenly face some devastating times. This may be seen in the document I am

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going to read. This has devastating effects on economies and on the individuals in them.

Fortunately, an awareness is developing internationally. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Charles F. Johnston of 5th Avenue North in Saskatoon for alerting me to the debate and inviting me to take part. He summarizes very well the problem with the Tobin tax: "A tax like this not only would impose a number of constraints on short term speculation, but it would generate a fund destined to support economic growth and restore social programs throughout the world".

Mr. Johnston is one example of the awareness that is developing, especially in France. That is not new. We all know about the acuity of the French on social issues. They have always been in the forefront. They are there thanks to a publication you are no doubt familiar with, Madam Speaker, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, which, in January of this year, published a ground-breaking article on the question, entitled "For the reconstruction of the international financial system: at the root of the evil". The root of the evil for *Le Monde Diplomatique* is the processing of financial transactions, including those involving currency and rates of exchange.

I will quickly read several quotes: "So, since the crash in the winter of 1994-95, half of the population of Mexico has fallen below the poverty line. Malnutrition and famine are again raging in Indonesia. In Russia, ten years of economic liberalism have done more to tarnish the reputation of capitalism than 70 years of propaganda on the "real" socialism. Average life expectancy for men has dropped by seven years, unprecedented in the 20th century. In Korea and Thailand, IMF suicides continue. Workers who have been laid off and are without resources kill their wives and children because they are unable to provide for them."

I will read another excerpt from this excellent article: "The top 20% of humanity consumes 86% of the wealth, while the bottom 20% is left with 1.3%. The fact is, and we hear it often enough, that the gap is widening yearly at the same time as official development assistance is declining. It is the debt that is the worst threat to the future of the south, particularly the future of less developed countries that are in the process of almost disappearing off the face of the earth because of debt that they are unable to repay now and will never be able to repay in the future.

The less developed countries are spending an average of over 20% of their export revenues on servicing this debt. If this were lowered to 1% or 2%, as it was for Germany after the war, these countries could invest the money saved in health, education, and the environment, thus generating a virtuous circle. The more a country could invest in human capital and sustainable development, the more it could reduce its debt, to the point of eliminating it entirely."

This is what would be done with the international fund resulting from the Tobin tax on international currency transactions.

• (1800)

Still in France, I would like to mention the Association pour la taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens.

The purpose of this association is to denounce financial globalization, which adds to economic insecurity and social inequality by circumventing and limiting the choices open to nations, democratic institutions and sovereign states responsible for the general good. The association wishes to show that it is necessary and possible, contrary to popular opinion, for people to put the public interest ahead of the interests of financial markets and transnational corporations. This Paris-based association also has a Web site. I urge everyone to contact it.

[English]

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the motion of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on whether we should enact a new tax on financial transactions.

During the Christmas break I had the opportunity to travel throughout my riding and talk to many of my constituents, as I like to do whenever the House is not sitting. I also held a number of town hall meetings and many private meetings where my constituents voiced their concerns on a number of issues. They told me that they need more money for better health care. They said they need more jobs and better opportunities in rural Canada. Many people also told me that politicians need to get to work to solve our national unity problem.

In all of my travels in the last six weeks and in all of my discussions with constituents not one single person said that what this country needs is a new tax. Since I was elected in June 1997 I cannot think of one single time when any voter asked me to raise their taxes.

I read several newspapers every day. I also look through many press clippings. This may be hard to believe, but I cannot recall ever seeing an article or an editorial calling on the government to raise taxes or to bring in another tax. Yet we are discussing how we can take even more money out of the pockets of hard working Canadians.

I have heard other members talk ad nauseam about James Tobin, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian financial crisis. I will talk about why introducing a new tax is a bad idea.

It is important for members on all sides of the House to remember that when taxes go up there are very real consequences on the lives of every Canadian. Whenever I hear a politician suggest that we should increase taxes I think of a gentleman from my riding by the name of John Minard. John Minard did not come

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from a wealthy family. He did not always have an easy life, but he made the most of his life and shared his successes with others.

John built a successful building supply business that employs his family and many members of his community. He and his family worked very hard at making this business successful and at making sure that the family's needs were always looked after.

John was usually the first one at work in the morning and the last one out at night. He worked six days every week to make sure that his family and his employees had a job to go to and that their bills were paid. However, John Minard did not stop at providing for his very large family. John always felt that he should give something back to his community. Mr. Minard gave time and money to minor hockey, to baseball and softball for children. He was involved in the local Rotary Club and he always had money for the Christmas Miracle for Kids.

Unfortunately, John Minard is no longer with us. He passed away just over a year ago. I bring up his name not just to pay tribute to this good man, but to make a point to my hon. friend from the NDP. There are many John Minards in every community around this country. All across Canada there are people who work days, nights and weekends to make sure their families have enough to eat. These same people are the ones who always have a few dollars for the scouts, for the hospital drive or for many other worthy causes in their communities.

• (1805)

What I want us to consider before we forge ahead and raise taxes is this. Whatever project we would spend this new money on, we are taking money away from the John Minards of this country. Is this project important enough that people like John Minard should have less money to feed their families? Is getting money for whatever whim happens to strike members of parliament this week so important that we should deny that money for all the kids in John Minard's community who benefited from his generosity? I do not think so.

Yes, I understand that the hon. member thinks it would be a neat idea if we could get all of the countries and all of the principalities of the world to agree to do something about the nasty currency trader, but that tax fails the John Minard test.

Lots of Canadians buy Canada Savings Bonds and lots of Canadians save for their retirement. Those are the people who would have to pay this new tax. Is it more important to bring in this trendy new tax just so we can say "We showed those money traders in Singapore who is boss"? Or is it more important that the kids who play minor hockey in Woodstock, New Brunswick still have people like John Minard and those who have come after him who they can count on to help support their communities? In my

opinion, I say let us support the hard working generous people like John Minard in our communities and take a pass on this tax.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to say at the outset what a joy it is to be participating in the debate today which has been made possible by my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle. I had the pleasure to second this bill. In a sense, I am a co-sponsor with my colleague.

It is interesting to listen to the debate and the commonality. Every speaker on this topic speaks against the currency speculators. Everybody is against those who make their living by speculating on currency. I have not heard anybody yet say that they are in love with the currency speculators, that currency speculators are somehow helpful, that currency speculators have done anything good for the economy, or that they are doing anything good for society generally.

We are in complete agreement that currency speculators who sit up 24 hours a day in some parts of the world are causing problems, causing havoc to the attempts of sovereign nations to develop their economies.

While listening to the previous speaker, I could not help but think of our debate around gun control. Some people say that gun control will not stop all murder. Therefore, why do we have gun control?

No one said that it would stop all murder and that it was either one or the other. We have gun control in our country to attempt to reduce the rate of murder. I think we have been successful.

On balance, we can argue about whether this gun control initiative is appropriate or another control is appropriate, but the fact that we are not all packing sidearms like they are in Texas makes this place a better place to live, a safer place to live. The fact that everyone packs sidearms in Texas makes it a terrible place to live.

When we talk about currency speculators, let us agree that it is worth the effort to try to control these characters. No one can make a convincing case that this is good for anybody other than currency speculators and some of their bosses.

When we look at the media and listen to some of our colleagues we hear a financial elite who just do not want any kind of meddling in their marketplace. They want to have carte blanche freedom to do whatever they want. If that results in countries being devastated, like we have seen as a result of currency speculators, so be it. We even came close in our own country just a few months ago when we watched our dollar collapse day after day. In August last year our currency collapsed day after day, hour after hour, simply because speculators were speculating on our currency. It had nothing to do with the state of our economy. But it caused problems. It caused

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uncertainty in the marketplace. A lot of investors and consumers were concerned about making important investments or consuming the items or services they wished.

• (1810)

A long comes an idea. Is it a perfect idea? My friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should show leadership and enact a tax on financial transactions in concert with the international community. . .

In other words, if the international community is in support of this, then this will proceed. We cannot do it unilaterally. We do not want to do it unilaterally. We want to show leadership. The world is calling out for leadership.

I am pleased to say that our Minister of Finance a few months ago was completely against this idea. Now the Minister of Finance says that he is open to these ideas. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance says that he thinks there is merit in this. That is why I am puzzled by some of my friends in the Liberal Party who are against this initiative. If the Minister of Finance thinks it is a good idea and if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance thinks it is a good idea, why are those Liberals across the way bad-mouthing this concept?

That is what they are doing. But it is a free country and I appreciate that they have a right to say unusual and perhaps uninformed things.

Let us look at what we are talking about. We are talking about a form of the Tobin tax. In 1972 James Tobin, Nobel Prize economist, first proposed the idea of a tax on foreign exchange transactions. This has now been updated. The most recent suggestion is that this would be a tax as low as .1% of transactions in order not to swamp the normal commission charges and so on. It is fair to say that the first \$10,000 would be exempt.

We are not talking about the person buying a Canada Savings Bond. We are not talking about a person buying a car. We are talking about people who are currency speculators.

There would be another charge, but the reality is that it would only be with the support of the international community.

If the international community was in support of some form of a Tobin tax, why would Canada not be in support of it? I listened to the leader of Germany the other day. He is in favour of some form of a Tobin tax.

I returned not long ago from the Asia-Pacific parliamentary forum. Twenty-two nations from around the Pacific came together. This was a major item. Unanimously they agreed that some form of a Tobin tax was appropriate for their countries. Yet some of my friends in the Liberal Party bad-mouth this concept. They are

bad-mouthing the leadership of Asia-Pacific. What are these people thinking?

I know that some of my friends are here as voices of the financial elite of the country. I can understand why they would not support this legislation. However, most people representing constituents in the House of Commons would say "Show me a constituent in this country who would vote against the idea of a Tobin tax". If I went to Calgary today and said "Do you folks in Calgary like the idea of some form of control on international currency speculators?", I bet there would not be a single Calgarian who would stand and say they would not want this kind of tax.

An hon. member: Oh, yes there would be.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Oh, no there would not be. The financial elite spokespersons would say that. However, I know the average Calgarian well. My previous home was on the outskirts of Calgary. A Calgarian will not say "Give free rein to the international currency speculators. Let them destroy economies around the world. Let them smash the Canadian dollar".

We are a major trading nation. The value of our currency is crucial in our ability to work in the international marketplace. The stability of our currency is crucial. That is why I cannot understand my friends in the Reform Party who do not want to bring some meaningful rationale to this process. As I say, it is a free country. If they want to be on the side of the international currency speculators, who I am to say they ought not to be there.

• (1815)

We are quite enthusiastic about this initiative for two major reasons. First, it would have the ability to control international currency speculation. There is no question about that. Some have said we have to talk every country in the world into this. My goodness. Eighty per cent of global foreign exchange trade takes place in only seven cities in the world, Tokyo, New York, London, Singapore, Hong Kong, Frankfurt and Bern. It would not be bad if we could control 80% of foreign currency speculators.

There is another way. If the international community buys into this why could it not be a provision of membership, as my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle suggested, in the IMF? If you are going to participate then you buy into this concept. The leading nations of the world have bought into it. Why would you not if you were a small country that wanted to join this organization?

Another very significant benefit of the Tobin tax is the money it would raise for international development. The suggestion is it is probably in the range of \$150 billion that it would raise to solve the problems of poverty and environmental degradation around the world. That is why I asked my Liberal friends across the way why they would be against such a massive initiative which could really

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solve the significant global problems we have today. My friend should be ashamed of himself.

For extremely good reasons we support this concept of the Tobin tax. We support enthusiastically the suggestion by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle that in the opinion of this House the government should show leadership and enact a tax on financial transactions in concert with the international community.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today on the motion put forward by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, a very thoughtful and considered individual. I had the opportunity to participate in a debate with him not too long ago on our caucus task force report on financial institutions. We dealt with the bank merger. It was supposed to be a debate but it turned out to be more like a love-in. I was a little concerned given our different political stripe but most political parties were in favour of the recommendations we made, although we never did hear much from the Reform Party on bank mergers. I guess it was in a difficult spot on that issue.

The motion by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle calls on our government to show leadership and enact a tax on financial transactions in concert with the OECD countries. The Bloc Quebecois has proposed an amendment that enlarges it to the international community in lieu of the OECD. This is one of those rare occasions where I find myself in agreement with the Bloc Quebecois. I would support enlarging it to the international financial community if we are to consider it as a motion.

In principle I support the motion in general terms but we need to clarify a number of issues. Given the events over the past year or so, I do not think many Canadians would argue with the fact that global financial markets are interconnected. There does not seem to be any doubt about that. The financial meltdown in Asia started in Thailand over a year ago. It was followed by the financial crisis in Russia and more recently the events in Brazil. They have had an enormous ripple effect throughout all the economies and financial markets of world.

Although our Canadian dollar has shown some improvement recently, it has been taking a beating. This is for reasons I believe are largely unrelated to the underlying factors of the Canadian economy. While some might argue that the markets are always right, in some circumstances they are somewhat irrational. In this case they seem to be acting irrationally. One has to wonder what is going on behind this apparent irrationality.

• (1820)

Our finance minister is pushing for an international agency that would monitor financial institutions worldwide. I gather its purpose would be to identify emerging problems and develop more

time sensitive and co-ordinated solutions. The proposal is a good one and one that I support.

Other solutions have been proposed to address the destabilizing effect of currency traders and speculators like the Tobin tax which has been much mentioned here today. The Tobin tax would be a tax on individual financial transactions. However, unless all countries agree to such a tax it would not be workable.

Imagine 27, 28 or 40 countries around the world enacting a Tobin tax and a number of countries not. It would not be a surprise if suddenly the financial transactions migrated to those jurisdictions where they did not incur the Tobin tax or financial transactions tax. Unless all countries are in harmony with such a tax it is just not workable.

The member opposite talked about the finance minister saying he thought it was a good idea. The finance minister realizes that there are a lot of good ideas out there. The question is which ones are feasible and which ones would he implement. I think his approach in pushing for an international agency to monitor financial institutions worldwide is a more workable solution.

It is important to acknowledge that the issue of global financial market speculation and its impacts on global and domestic economies is one that deserves the attention of world leaders and deserves the attention of the House.

Our government is showing leadership on this issue in the G-7 and other international fora. There are solutions to the downward pressure on the Canadian dollar that can be found right here at home. Statistics Canada recently reported that Canadians are investing abroad in stocks, bonds and bank accounts at record levels. This is a result in part of changes the previous Conservative government made in 1990 to the foreign content rule of RRSPs. The limit at that time was increased from 10% to 20%. Perhaps that should be revisited given the effect it is having on the Canadian dollar.

I am sure there are people in this Chamber who would disagree and perhaps argue that the limit should go the other way. However, I am of the view that we should be very cautious in that area and perhaps consider moving it back. If Canadians want to have foreign investments in their RRSPs no one would debate or argue that but why should the Canadian taxpayer support that, particularly when it could be having a detrimental effect on the Canadian dollar?

I am offended as I am sure all Canadians are when the international financial markets are disturbed profoundly by speculators.

Let us examine a tax on financial transactions. Presumably such a tax would be targeted on foreign currency transactions. The targets hopefully would be short term capital movements because investors should really not be penalized or inhibited from moving

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capital from one currency to another based on long term decision making or structural decision making.

I throw out a word of caution. We often hear Thailand cited where huge capital outflows caused a crisis. Was the movement of capital a symptom of some deeper underlying problems? In other words, where was the chicken and where was the egg? The answer to that in the case of Thailand is a categorical yes, there were some underlying fundamental problems.

Some good Canadian friends of mine who have lived in Thailand for many years described to me recently the financial devastation in that country. Did the migration of capital from Thailand precipitate the financial crisis there or vice versa? This is an important question.

I am told by my colleagues in Thailand that the banking system collapsed as a result of three major issues. There were some very bad investments by the banks, a lot of cronyism in the banking system and a lot of corruption in the banking system. So foreign investors in Thailand perhaps could see this coming and decided to relocate their capital. I think the causal chain of events is important here and we should not be just looking at speculative movements. There are often some underlying reasons for the movement of capital.

• (1825)

I do applaud the Minister of Finance in pursuing the establishment of an international agency, perhaps created from within the resources of the existing international agencies, that would track the fundamental financial stability issues in countries around the world and proactively develop strategies and actions required to prevent problems, not respond to events after the fact.

Coming back to Canada and the downward pressure on the Canadian dollar vis-a-vis the U.S. dollar that we have experienced over the last year, we are told we experienced a flight of capital to so-called safe havens. I find this curious when the economic fundamentals in Canada are so strong, if not the best among the developed countries.

In Canada we still suffer with the prospect of another referendum in Quebec. This creates uncertainty in financial markets. I am sure this had some bearing on the fate of our Canadian dollar. Our colleagues opposite in the Bloc Quebecois and the Parti Quebecois in Quebec should be held accountable for this.

I applaud the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his interest in this important topic. I think it is very worthy of debate and discussion in the House and indeed around the world in the various international fora. I think it is a very important issue. I support the motion in principle and the concept, but we do need more

discussion and debate. The main thrust of the motion is that our government should show leadership. We are showing leadership.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate.

The motion is that the government should show leadership and enact a tax on financial transaction in concert with the international community. I certainly applaud the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on that motion and I very strongly support it.

Of course we need an international agreement and we know that will certainly not happen unless somebody takes leadership. It only makes sense to me in the kind of government we have. We show leadership in a lot of areas. We certainly could show leadership in the international community in this area.

I am told that Canada has explored the idea during the Halifax summit, at which time it became apparent that a number of G-7 countries were very strongly opposed to the idea. I recognize their positions have not changed. But they will never change unless we provide the evidence to them on why it should change. We have to enter into that debate at a global level and go out there and make the arguments for putting in place a Tobin tax.

I realize that even if we had all the industrial on side it would not be sufficient for the proposal to work. But we have to start somewhere. I suggest we can start here, that we need strong political will on the part of the Government of Canada and on the few allies that we can achieve in the beginning and exercise that political will so that we can institute a Tobin tax some time down the road.

We are not talking about a big percentage tax here. It would be a very small percentage tax. But imagine on the amount of speculation of money in this world what that small percentage tax would do in terms of benefiting and improving the lives of people around the world, in Canada, in Nicaragua, in Honduras, in Central America. All around the world it would improve the lives of people and those are the kinds of things that we should be doing.

• (1830)

I heard the member from the Conservative Party speak earlier. He used the example of someone in the community who did a lot of volunteer work. I respect what that individual did. I applaud what that individual did. But the member tried to leave the impression that this was a tax that would hurt that individual. It would not. I doubt that individual was a money speculator. He was not a financial money speculator. Who are these people?

I am a primary producer and I know about speculation in terms of the hog market, the grain industry and the beef industry. I know very well that those people that play those markets make huge profits many times by shuffling a little paper around and playing

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with the futures market and so on. The primary producer who does all the work, who takes all the risks, who creates the investment and puts his family to work and works himself, ends up many times losing money. The speculators make money.

It is even worse when we get to the financial speculators, the money speculators. They play games, not only with countries, and with the new technology that is available today millions even billions of dollars can be moved in the flash of a second.

There was a rumour in New York where someone said that Canada was a basket case. Of course when we became the government we changed that and the government is no longer a basket case. Remember what happened? One trade, a supposedly respected trader, said internationally that Canada was a basket case. Suddenly our dollar started to go down. That was the financial money speculators playing games and they are not playing games only with countries, they are playing games with people's lives.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

[*English*]

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

I can assure the hon. parliamentary secretary that he will have five minutes remaining in his remarks the next time this item is called for debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

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

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 29, 1998, I asked a question in the House on employment insurance.

I asked the Prime Minister the following question:

—when he was Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister wrote—

The date was February 17, 1993.

—and I quote: "By lowering premiums and increasing the penalties for those who voluntarily leave their job, it is obvious that the government is not very concerned about the victims of the economic crisis. Instead of getting at the root of the problem, it targets the unemployed".

This is from a letter written by the then leader of the opposition and now Prime Minister.

Today in the House we talked about a letter that was sent to the Department of Human Resources Development. Let me now quote this letter from the government of this former leader of the opposition who is now the head of this government, whose praises the Liberal member from P.E.I. was singing. This letter is addressed to the director of an HRDC employment centre in P.E.I. and reads as follows:

[*English*]

"The P.E.I. region has shown some improvement in performance this year but it still appears likely that the regional savings objective will not be met. In order for the target to be met, considerable improvement will have to be made in clerical and ICO performance as they are both significantly below national averages".

[*Translation*]

The federal government imposes quotas on HRDC offices and forces people to do an inhuman job.

• (1835)

The employees themselves phone to tell me that the job they have to do is awful. Even the UN has condemned Canada because of its changes to the employment insurance program. It went to the trouble of condemning our wonderful country, while the government brags about doing a good job from a human point of view, at a time when 800,000 Canadian workers cannot qualify for EI benefits because of the cuts. In the riding of the Minister of Human Resources Development, lost benefits amount to \$38 million per year. I wonder what his constituents think of him.

In my own riding, these lost benefits total \$69 million. It is ordinary people who have been deprived of that money, people who have lost their jobs.

What about the number of children who leave for school in the morning without having had breakfast, this because of the government? These same Liberals were opposed to the changes made to the EI program by the Conservatives in 1993, on the grounds that those changes were inhuman.

I personally toured the country and I heard horror stories. Some people, including women, related how they were treated by the Department of Human Resources Development, and how their families are suffering as a result.

I hope the federal government will soon make changes to employment insurance, so as to help Canadian families.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker is always talking about fewer people being on unemploy-

Adjournment Debate

ment insurance. He always interprets this as being bad news because in his riding there seems to be fewer people on it and therefore fewer benefits. He interprets that to mean there are fewer dollars being spent in the economy of his constituency.

Take a piece of news and the NDP will make it bad news. As a Liberal, I prefer to make it good news.

There are fewer people on employment insurance, that is true. However, does anyone think that maybe that has something to do with the fact that there is a lower unemployment rate in the country and more people are working? I think that is good news. It is good news that more people are working and have actual salaries and wages to spend in the constituencies and they are not dependent on employment insurance.

The member speaks as if employment insurance is the only industry in his riding and that the benefits are the salaries his people are making. Nothing could be further from the truth.

He also accuses the government and the administration of this department as having quotas to try to catch people. Nothing could be further from the truth in that case as well.

It is obvious he does not know a great deal about the skills of management. Every manager has to make a prediction about the coming year. He has to predict how many workers he is going to need, what kind of production they are going to have, et cetera. That is good management. This government is trying to follow that model.

The officials within the HRDC department who are charged with the very serious responsibility of identifying fraud are also asked to predict. That does not mean they are trying to reach that number. It simply means that they are managing and taking care of the assets of Canadians as best they can and catching people who are fraudulently using the system.

CANADA POST

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must say what an honour it is to be in your humble presence again.

The rural route mail contractors are not considered to be employees according to the provisions of the Canada Labour Code because they are specifically prohibited those rights under the Canada Post Corporation Act, section 13.5. This means that RRMCs do not enjoy the rights and protections that the vast majority of workers take for granted. This includes things like minimum wages, health and safety protections, workers compensation, employee insurance benefits, vacation leave, maternity leave, severance pay and so on. RRMCs are also denied the right to negotiate improvements to their wages and working conditions.

• (1840)

Why does the government continue to allow these conditions to exist? The RRMCs have now formed an association called the Organization of Rural Route Mail Couriers in a serious attempt to get the government to change their working conditions. There are now over 3,400 signed members who are dedicated to improving their lifestyles. These members deliver mail to several million householders across rural Canada. They virtually do the same work as their urban counterparts. How can this government deny these dedicated workers the opportunity to receive the same wages and benefit as their urban counterparts?

This is very similar to what the regional rates of pay do to the lowest paid workers in the public service. They get a different salary depending on what part of the country they live in and that is straight discrimination.

The solution to both these is to remove section 13.5 from the Canada Post Act, which this government could do, and replace it with section 1 of the Canada Labour Code, a very simple and easy thing that can be done to improve the lives of thousands of people in this country.

It is important to point out that people who do similar work have these rights, private sector workers who deliver mail in rural areas, public service workers who deliver mail for Canada Post in urban areas, rural route mail carriers who work for the United States postal office. Even rural postal workers in Mexico have a collective agreement.

The RRMCs strongly believe that it is wrong to deny them rights accorded to so many workers. They are determined to change their conditions but they need the government's help. Will the government remove section 13.5 of the Canada Post Act and replace it with section 1 of the Canada Labour Code now?

In the 1998 budget the federal government promised people that it would look at new ways to deliver information and programs so that rural Canadians are full participants in Canada's future prosperity. Was the government's promise to look at new ways of delivering information programs just another way of saying it will find cheaper ways of exploiting rural Canadians who deliver information and programs? Rural Canadians would like assurances that this is definitely not the case. Recently it introduced restructuring the stamp sales which will definitely hurt thousands of rural route post offices.

Speaking on behalf of the riding of Sackville—Eastern Shore I find this government's approach to rural route mail carriers absolutely despicable, as with the way it treats the bottom lower salaried people who work for the public service in terms of 11,000 workers across this country, different regional rates of pay which this government has said it would eliminate in its 1993 promises in the red book.

Adjournment Debate

Ms. Carolyn Parrish (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this will indeed be an interesting experience for both the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore and me because the question I was given is entirely different from the question he just asked.

As far as labour negotiations, Canada Post is an arm's length corporation functioning quite separately from the government and has very little government regulation at this time. It operates within our framework.

I must apologize to the member and agree to meet with him again and respond more fully to his question.

As far as the small franchisees he alluded to, the difficulty we had over the last couple of months in negotiating with many of these small postal service outlets is Canada Post is charged with providing Canadians access to postal service. The changes have been fought through committee. Multiple changes have been put in place. The small postal outlets are being given a fee to operate with much assistance. The rural postal services or franchisees have had absolutely no changes to their revenue. That has been guaranteed at the 1997-98 levels. As far as the large services are concerned they are being given a flat rate of \$25,000 a year to operate.

What we have tried to do is get rid of the gentlemen who go around with large suitcases full of stamps and sell in the small areas. I think we have done that well with this change to the postal services.

Again I come back to my abject apology of not having a prepared answer for the first part which is the most extensive part of the hon. member's question. We will meet again here sometime as dictated by the hon. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Speaker would not presume to dictate.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the adjournment proceedings on a question I asked on September 30, 1998, stressing that the government has two things to do with respect to the employment insurance: significantly lower premiums and improve the program.

In December, after the EI surplus scandal was exposed and the Minister of Finance was forced to backtrack on his plans for a bill to make the misappropriation of funds legal, EI premiums were cut by 15 cents for every \$100 of income. While we were asking for a more substantial reduction, it nevertheless represents a major

victory. Even more ground was won on the other, more important priority, that is reasonable eligibility requirements for the unemployed.

Today, another scandal was unveiled. The human resources development minister was caught red handed. He claimed that no quotas were imposed on his officials to achieve reduction targets in his department. Well, we in the Bloc tabled a document showing that there are indeed quotas at employment centres, which have a disastrous impact.

The New Democratic Party tabled a document providing further evidence of the fact that there are indeed individuals at Human Resources Development Canada who are put in front of a harsh reality: they must fill the required quotas or there will be no jobs left. There were 150 jobs at stake.

I hope that the unveiling of this scandal will help produce the kind of results achieved with respect to the lowering of EI premiums, that similar results can be achieved in this case and that the government will finally see the light, eliminate the intensity rule and change eligibility requirements to make them acceptable again to women and young people entering the labour force.

It is terribly discriminatory to expect a woman or young person re-entering the labour market to have worked 910 hours to qualify, when the rules are much less stringent for someone who goes on EI only occasionally. There is no reason for this sort of discrimination.

Seasonal workers are the worst off. Every time they use up 20 weeks of EI, their benefits go down 1%. Instead of getting 55% of their average earnings, they get 54% after 20 weeks of benefits, 53% after 40 weeks, and so on up to 50%. The result will be that, in two years' time, all regions with seasonal industries will have people who get 50% of their average earnings rather than 55%. This is treating people like economic guinea pigs.

It is clear that everyone wants to work. When a company advertises a job, several people apply.

Faced with all these facts, will the Minister of Human Resources Development, or the Minister of Finance, who is really in charge, do what is necessary in the coming weeks to put the EI scheme back on its rightful track, with sensible premiums and benefits that go on for a reasonable period, rather than building up surpluses to bring down the deficit at the expense of individuals and regions who have paid too high a price?

The federal government's policy, at a time when the impact of globalization is being felt, has weakened rather than stabilized regional economies.

I await an answer from the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in essence the hon. member was

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talking about the employment insurance fund. He often makes reference to the fact that the moneys in the employment insurance fund are being used for other purposes and how the government must take measures to stop that.

Again I remind the member that the auditor general in 1986 advised the government that any revenue which comes in from employment insurance premiums must flow into the consolidated revenue fund because the government stands behind the program.

In 10 of the last 17 years where the fund was in deficit it was the taxes of taxpayers who may not have paid any employment insurance premiums that went to prop up that account so that those individuals who were on benefits could receive those benefits. It is not just about the fact that those individuals who pay receive benefits. It is also about the fact that those premiums flow into consolidated revenues. In fact it is government that stands behind the program.

• (1850)

While the hon. member talks about the employment insurance program and how it is very necessary, we as a government believe that employment insurance provides a very effective and useful role for Canadians who find themselves temporarily out of work.

The actions taken by the government are directed toward ensuring that our economy performs in a way that small business and large business are able to create employment opportunities for Canadians.

Let us look at the record. Since October 1993 private sector jobs are up almost 1.6 million. Full time jobs are up over 1.2 million. During 1998 alone roughly 450,000 jobs were created and almost all of those were in the private sector.

Along with the employment insurance program, there are other measures that the government has taken to ensure the economy performs to its fullest. We will continue to do that so that Canadians who want to work have the opportunity to be employed.

[*Translation*]

PRAIT & WHITNEY

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to remind the House that, on October 1, 1998, I asked a question of the Minister of Industry concerning the dramatic layoff of 900 workers at Pratt & Whitney, 500 of them engineers in its R&D units. The other employees involved were also high-ranking employees.

Why was this? Because of federal government underfunding of its Technology Partnerships Canada program. I asked the minister whether he understood that this situation affects not only high-ranking employees, but also the lead role of Quebec and Canada in the aerospace industry.

Speaking after colleagues who showed just how drastic the unemployment situation is, I know that when I say that the government must fund the Technology Partnerships Canada program—as I said in another question—at least to the \$100 million level, this is because high-level jobs are a guarantee for the future, for the economy. These are jobs which will get the economy moving.

The government is getting criticism from both sides. Its strategy is the opposite of what it should be. It makes no sense to penalize the unemployed and make workers earning up to \$39,000 and especially the SMBs employing them pay, as it does, through excessive contributions. The big companies pay less.

On the other hand, however, it makes no sense not to give big business, including the aerospace industry, the instruments they need to be competitive, if there are to be high level jobs.

Technology Partnerships Canada is not a funding program. It funds itself from the return. When research and development has become a cost effective product, it funds itself out of royalties. That is why we support it. It is not a funding program.

This program provides for the financing of research and development in strategic areas like aerospace, where Quebec has a small lead, followed by Ontario. This is an area that creates many jobs, one which is growing three times faster than this country's GDP, and where the industry, Pratt & Whitney in particular, goes significantly further than many businesses, not only in this area but also in others, investing 20% of its turnover. This cannot last.

But the competition is heavily subsidized, directly or indirectly, through DND contracts among other things. The same is true of the United States, which has resulted in engineering positions moving south of the border. This is to say that we are very concerned with the drop in the share of added income in sales.

Canada is facing a productivity crisis. This is not the way to go about resolving it. Let us not forget the unemployed in all this.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say that the government has made a substantial commitment to aerospace and other high tech, high growth sectors especially in the Montreal area and across the country. An example of this commitment is Technology Partners of Canada whose budget was increased from \$150 million two years ago to \$250 million this year.

The Montreal area, where much of Canada's aerospace industry is located, and all of Canada stand to benefit greatly from TPC. There have already been investments in several world class

aerospace projects. There have been other investments in the biotechnology, environmental technology and telecommunications sector.

The success of the federal government strategy for promoting partnership for innovation, economic growth and job creation is evident across Canada.

With respect to Pratt & Whitney Canada our commitment has been substantial. Today TPC has invested in two Pratt & Whitney Canada projects totalling \$147 million. We are continuing to work closely with Pratt & Whitney Canada to explore all reasonable options that can be pursued to support the company's future development.

The minister recently met with Pratt & Whitney Canada executives to this end. We believe Pratt & Whitney Canada is committed to its Montreal operation and elsewhere in Canada. The Government of Canada is committed to continuing partnership with Pratt & Whitney.

Adjournment Debate

With respect to employment, the impacts are not as immediate or as dramatic as one might be led to believe. Not until the end of 1999 would there be a significant reduction of jobs. This is a normal phenomenon for a cyclical industry like aerospace and largely the result of the completion of earlier research and development projects. As well the company has indicated this will mostly be implemented through early retirement and normal attrition.

Let me say that the aerospace industry is growing at a very favourable 14% rate annually. Although some jobs will be lost at Pratt & Whitney, other local aerospace firms such as Bombardier and Bell Helicopter are still expanding.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.57 p.m.)

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