



House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 133

NUMBER 109

1st SESSION

35th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 19, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 19, 1994

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

TELEVISION VIOLENCE

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, following the tragic events in Norway, where a five-year-old girl was killed by two six-year-olds, the public is entitled to wonder if television violence does not lead to violent behaviour in young people.

Many are convinced that it does: 1.5 million people have signed Virginie Larivière's petition calling for an end to violence on television.

There is increasing agreement among medical experts as to the harmful influence of television violence on the behaviour of children.

In the face of the CRTC's inertia on this issue, what is the federal government waiting for to propose concrete and effective measures that address this serious problem, which is detrimental to the development of our children?

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[*English*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a Torontonian applied to bring his bride from Guyana to Canada. His file was taken in Etobicoke; another was taken in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The files then went to Toronto. Then they went to Brampton. Then they went to Mississauga and back to Toronto.

There his file sat for over six months with no action. Now it has to go back to Trinidad with no action taken, but the medicals have expired and have to be done over. Then the file will have to come back for approval to Mississauga and then go back to Port of Spain.

With luck the case will be finalized in a few months. That is two years of passing the buck for a standard application. That is two years of heartbreak and loneliness and that is not unusual. I

have spousal sponsorships on my desk that have taken four years.

The system is overwhelmed. This government says that family reunification is a priority but to make it work we must cut the numbers of extended family sponsorships, cut the backlog and make room for those who deserve priority.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House a glaring difference between reality and practice in the immigration sponsorship program.

Ideally under the terms of the program, someone who agrees to sponsor a family member also agrees to provide assistance, if necessary, for a 10-year period following their arrival. In reality, this agreement is of little worth as 62 per cent of all sponsored immigrants apply for social assistance within two years of their arrival in Canada. While undoubtedly some defaults are justifiable, in most cases sponsors simply do not live up to their agreements because they are not enforceable.

The credibility of the immigration sponsorship program must be restored. The creation of a mechanism which would be enforceable would give sponsored immigrants the security they need while at the same time protecting the Canadian taxpayer.

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CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET AND PRODUCTIVITY CENTRE

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre on its 10th anniversary today. Former Minister of Finance Hon. Marc Lalonde was instrumental in establishing this unique forum for dialogue and consensus building among Canada's business and labour communities.

Admittedly, business and labour have distinct and divergent agendas on many fronts. However, over these past 10 years the CLMPC has brought together leading labour and business organizations, such as the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, and the Canadian Federation of Labour. Together they have produced many significant consensus reports on important economic challenges facing Canada.

S. O. 31

All of us wish to extend our thanks to the hundreds of business and labour leaders who have contributed so much to this worthwhile endeavour. We congratulate the CLMPC today.

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SOCIAL PROGRAM REVIEW

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his document released last week the Minister of Human Resources Development announced the objectives of the reform which included helping Canadians get and keep work by ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to compete with the best labour forces in the world.

[*Translation*]

The Parti Québécois government shares this objective and sets it out clearly in its chapter on full employment: "If every member of society, on the basis of his abilities and determination, is able to find employment that meets his expectations, society as a whole stands to gain. In order for Quebecers and their economy to attain their full potential, there must exist a framework of policies that encourage people to lead a productive life".

It is perhaps surprising that the Quebec government shares our objective. I would therefore invite it, without delay, to take part in the consultations on the reform of social programs. This is part and parcel of the responsibilities of the good government it has promised us.

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[*English*]

BREAST CANCER MONTH

Ms. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to remind members of the House of Commons and all Canadians that October is Breast Cancer Month.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Canadian women. Approximately 17,000 new breast cancer cases will be diagnosed this year and 5,400 women will die of the disease.

Health Canada, together with the Canadian Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute of Canada, and provinces and territories is implementing a major initiative on breast cancer totalling \$25 million over five years. Activities include support to provincial breast cancer screening activities, research, five breast cancer exchange projects and fostering high standards of care for breast cancer.

I would like to applaud the efforts of families, professionals, voluntary and self-help groups and others toward reducing the burden of this disease on Canadian women and their families.

This month proclaimed as Breast Cancer Month provides us all with opportunities to support breast cancer initiatives—

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[*Translation*]

TERRORISM

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, approximately 20 people were killed and 40 wounded in a bombing this morning in Tel Aviv. The horror we have witnessed was appalling, and we wish to extend our deepest sympathies to the victims' families.

(1405)

Just days after it was announced that the Nobel Peace Prize had been awarded to Israeli leaders and the leader of the PLO and two days after Israel and Jordan announced they had reached a comprehensive agreement, there is cause for considerable concern about the effect of this deadly attack on the ongoing peace negotiations.

We strongly condemn this attack. The enemies of peace must not win. According to the PLO leader, the best way to respond to the acts of such radicals is through the pursuit and intensification of the peace process. Let us hope that the peace process will continue.

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[*English*]

TERRORISM

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Reform Party I offer my deepest condolences to the victims and their families of today's tragic bombing in Tel Aviv, Israel. While no words can do justice to the suffering of the families, we must speak out.

Terrorists who seek to destroy peace must not be allowed to win. Those who target innocent people to generate fear and hatred must be fought with every ounce of our energy and condemned by all civilized societies. In the end it is the voices of those who have struggled long and hard for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East who must triumph. Their victory will honour the lives of the victims and send a message to the world that violence need not be an endless cycle.

We are sickened by this criminal act and will not forget the victims of terrorism. I hope members of this House will pledge to fight on for their memory and the memory of those who have gone before them. The world community must never surrender to terrorists and we must never abandon our quest for peace.

GOVERNOR GENERAL AWARDS

Mrs. Jane Stewart (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year the Governor General awards in commemoration of the Persons case are given to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution toward promoting the equality of women in Canada.

This year we honour five women who have gained distinction for their lifelong vision and dedication. They are: Shirley Carr of Niagara Falls, Ontario, who championed legislation that addressed women's rights in the workplace; Dr. Rose Charlie from Agassiz, British Columbia, who struggled for social justice for the women of Canada's First Nations; Alice Girard of Montreal, Quebec, who made a remarkable contribution to the public awareness of the nursing profession's role in health care; Morag O'Brien of Saint John's, Newfoundland, who was the backbone of her area's health care system for over 40 years; and finally, Dodi Robb of Toronto, Ontario, who dedicated her career to ensuring the inclusion of women's perspective in television programming.

I call upon this House to join me in saluting the courage of these five remarkable Canadian women.

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THERESA STEVENSON

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House a constituent of Souris—Moose Mountain of whom we are justly proud.

Theresa Stevenson is a member of the Cowesses Indian band. She will receive the Order of Canada today for her personal conviction to improve the condition of life of all people in her community by helping them to receive the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing and education, the necessities many of us take for granted.

Theresa is a woman of action. She is involved in providing hot meals to needy children, working as a literacy volunteer, assisting patrons to provide low cost housing, and much more.

Theresa lives by the credence: If you are honest, fair and work from the heart, you can do almost anything. Her humanitarian efforts are not reserved for her own people. She says: "God has made me colour blind. A person is a person and I will never close my door or my heart to a person in need".

We congratulate her.

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[Translation]

ELECTION ACT

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, the government of Quebec has announced its intention to amend the Quebec Election Act to save time and money by eliminating steps that are not necessary and cost the taxpayers a great deal of money.

(1410)

Ottawa could bring the federal deficit down and save tens of millions of dollars if it applied measures along the lines of those announced by the Quebec government. The federal government should consider seriously a real election law reform.

The government must eliminate influence peddling as well as financial backer pressure in the case of traditional federal parties. As my hon. colleague from Richelieu said, the government of Canada should revise all outdated electoral practices and review party financing so as to allow only individuals to contribute to the coffers of federal political parties.

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[English]

PATRICK AND ELIZABETH

Mrs. Jean Payne (St. John's West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tragedy has once again stricken the residents of St. John's West.

It is with great sorrow that I rise in this House to inform members of a tragic loss of life. On Thursday, October 13 the vessel *Patrick and Elizabeth* was lost off the coast of Newfoundland with all five crew aboard. A massive search failed to turn up any signs of survival.

I express our deep sympathy to those families mourning the loss of Captain Patrick Coady of St. John's, crew members Edward Barry, Gerald Goldsworthy, and Mark Traverse of the Placentia area, and Wayne Giles of Southern Harbour.

My deepest sympathy.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we also extend our sympathies and appreciate the member's statement.

When interest rates shot up after the release of the Liberal government's first budget, the red ink book, Reformers were the first to call for immediate action to keep the budget on its deficit reduction path. Yet the government refused to acknowledge that a problem even existed. The Prime Minister repeatedly stated that no additional cuts would be necessary for the government to reach its deficit reduction targets.

Oral Questions

Over the last few weeks the C.D. Howe Institute, the Business Council on National Issues, and the Governor of the Bank of Canada have all said what we have been saying from day one: that the Liberal deficit reduction targets are billions of dollars off track. Yesterday's presentation of the finance minister only confirmed this scenario.

This government's unwillingness to reduce expenditures is threatening economic growth, hindering job creation and jeopardizing the nation's health care and social programs. The government cannot put off making hard decisions. The ticking of the debt clock is growing louder every day and now stands at \$534,864—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, N.D.P.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Public Service Alliance of Canada pointed out the skyrocketing cost of contracting out. Far from being a way to save money, contracting out is actually way more expensive. A Manitoba example helps to illustrate the point.

As Local 704 of the Union of National Defence Employees argues, figuring the total cost of the base support budget and other costs into the allegedly hourly cost of doing a job currently done by DND employees at Camp Shiloh not only grossly misrepresents the cost but creates an artificially high ceiling that is easy for private contractors to come in under.

Contracting out is a scam designed for patronage. A government serious about saving money should cut back on contracting out. It should not cut back on employees who will do the job for a lot less than what the private sector now charges the government, thanks to the government's own misleading way of calculating the cost of doing it in house.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is a critical issue to the future of Canada.

The riding of Waterloo includes two of Canada's leading universities, the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, as well as a campus of Conestoga College. The concentration of post-secondary students in Waterloo riding is the highest in the country. These institutions have played a crucial role in my community and in Canada's economy.

The residents of Waterloo riding are proud of Canada's record of excellence in post-secondary education. However we also know that our education system must continue to develop in order to meet the challenges of the next century.

I am pleased the government is now reviewing its role in post-secondary education in an effort to improve the system. We need to ensure that our post-secondary institutions are affordable and accessible to our youth who must compete in the international marketplace. Only through a comprehensive discussion with students, professors, administrators and the general public can we properly strengthen our universities and colleges to effectively serve Canadians in the years ahead.

* * *

(1415)

REFORM PARTY

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party came to Ottawa on a power trip last weekend for its first national convention east of the prairies.

Using a decoder, here is a translation of its policies. If you want to speak French, go to Gaspé. If you fear a break-in, get yourself a bazooka. If you catch a kid at the cookie jar, cane him. If you are a woman wanting equal pay, get lost. If you are an immigrant, pay the doctor cash in advance if you please.

God save us from such caring, national unity builders.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election campaign, a few days before the vote, the Prime Minister made a formal commitment not to increase taxes. He reiterated this same commitment in this House on September 20, when he said: "We do not plan to have any tax increases".

How can the Prime Minister reconcile his election commitment not to increase taxes with the statements made yesterday by his Minister of Finance, who said: "We made no promise with regard to taxes"?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not plan any tax increases. The Minister of Finance will table a budget and we think that there will be cuts. However, if people do not want us to make cuts, the alternative is to raise taxes.

We do not know exactly how much the economy will grow. We hope that it will give us the revenue we need, and I am pleased to report to the House that the Conference Board said today that confidence in Canada last month was the highest since 1979.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): As a historical aside, I was Minister of Finance at that time.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister tell us that he is counting on economic growth to make up the deficit, when his Minister of Finance said exactly the opposite yesterday, and I quote him from memory: "We can no longer count on economic growth alone to make up the deficit. Other measures will have to be taken"? How does he reconcile these two statements?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the hon. member has a memory problem. We cut government spending in the last budget; it will be necessary to make further cuts in the next budget. That is what we are saying.

The Reform Party tells us that we are not cutting enough. Yesterday, you criticized us for not cutting enough, so we will perhaps listen to the opposition and make more cuts. Then they will stop complaining.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, you will agree that the majority of Canadians find it rather distressing for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to merrily contradict each other on such an important issue.

If the Prime Minister is serious in the answer he just gave, could he, despite what his Minister of Finance said yesterday, make a formal commitment not to increase taxes for Canada's middle class?

(1420)

[*English*]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are consulting the Canadian public at this time. Everybody knows that when we became the government we had \$500 billion of debt that we have to carry. We have prepared a very serious plan. We said that we will reduce the deficit every year by so much and will be at \$25 billion at the end of the third year of our mandate.

We said very clearly that we will achieve our goal and we will do it. This year growth is at 4 per cent which is helping a lot. We will probably have to make cuts too. Probably we will have to plug some holes that exist in the tax system. We always have some problems like that which can bring in more revenue to the government.

I have absolute confidence we can reach our goal. There is always abuse of the tax system. I have been around long enough to know that. It is the job of a good minister to plug these holes and I have complete confidence in my good Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Instead of getting spending under control, the Minister of Finance has clearly announced that he is not giving up the idea of raising taxes. His document proposes a review of tax expenditures that affect mainly middle-income people, such as education tax credits, RRSPs, credits for charitable donations, credits for seniors, credits for married people, compensation for work accident victims—it is all fair game.

After hitting the unemployed and the very poor hard, how can the Minister of Finance now consider taxing the middle class more when he makes no reference in his paper to the scandal of family trusts and of tax shelters which benefit rich Canadians?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the hon. member just did, really, as I did yesterday, was to read the public accounts. Now we know that he can read. We now ask him to take a closer look, to make choices and to tell us what he thinks should be done. We also asked the member many times to give us his suggestions about family trusts. We asked him to participate fully in the debate, but all we hear are political speeches, not constructive suggestions!

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we made some very specific suggestions to the Minister of Finance. And I even challenged him to apply them and to attack the problems that are out there: operating expenses and tax breaks for wealthy Canadians. That is where he must cut.

Under these circumstances, how can the Minister of Finance consider going after RRSPs when he refuses to touch family trusts and tax shelters? That is the question and it is outrageous that he is not doing it!

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, we closed the \$100,000 capital gains loophole. That was the biggest tax break. We closed a great many corporate tax loopholes. We will certainly follow through in the next budget. Until then, the hon. member and his colleagues can make suggestions. Instead of making partisan speeches and praying to heaven, why do they not act as responsible members of Parliament and join the committee to really improve the lot of Canadians?

[*English*]

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister admitted that the spending cuts contained in his last budget were not sufficient to even meet his own modest deficit cutting target. He admitted that unless another \$3 billion to \$5 billion in savings is achieved in 1995-96 and another \$6 billion to \$9 billion in 1996-97 he will not meet his target.

Oral Questions

My question is simple and direct and I hope to receive a simple and direct answer. Where does the minister expect to get that order of savings?

(1425)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I set out yesterday, among the various scenarios, was a scenario based on a prudent assessment of what interest rates are going to be and of the necessity to arrive at savings of \$9 billion cumulatively over a two-year period.

As to where that is going to come from, I set out very clearly a list of all government expenditures, a list of all spending and tax expenditures. We have set in place a process of consultation which is unique in Canadian economic history. It is very important that the process work.

I ask the leader of the Reform Party and his colleagues who sit on that committee to give us their suggestions, to join in drawing Canadians out as we have to, to make the trade-offs.

It is crucial, in the period into which we are going and the budget into which we are going, that we build bridges to Canadians so there is a national consensus of the need to face up to the problems at which we are looking.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister was told in the budget debate six months ago that his spending cuts were inadequate. He insisted that they were good enough. When interest rates went up, the minister was told by analysts, by officials in his department, by the money markets, that his deficit cutting was off track. He insisted he was on track.

The minister has repeatedly been advised over the last six months that his deficit control program is off track and how to fix it, but he has ignored that advice.

Why should Canadians believe that their advice would be listened to now?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Reform Party is engaging in a certain amount of revisionist history.

What took place in the House was members of the Reform Party consistently crying wolf and saying, within about two weeks after the budget, that we were going to miss our targets this year, that we should have a mini-budget in March, that we should have a mini-budget in April, May, June, July.

I do not know if they have ever run anything, but that is not the way a big institution works, certainly not the Government of Canada.

As we indicated yesterday, we are going to hit our deficit target this year for the first time in Canadian history.

If someone would like to talk about the last budget and how I feel, I am a little upset that the Prime Minister announced that business confidence was up. I was going to announce that. I am even more upset that the Prime Minister said that business confidence was higher when he was the finance minister than now—

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Same level.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): On the same level. I would like to tell the Prime Minister that not only is business confidence up but that real exports are up to record levels, 17.7 per cent higher than at this time last year.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Silye: Keep laughing while you go further in debt. Enjoy yourself now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I love these Wednesdays.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Liberal cabinet has not the foggiest notion of how to balance budgets and Canadians are paying the price for it.

Reformers in the House know that the Minister of Health cannot read a financial statement, that the Prime Minister does not know that jobs are created by deficit cutting and not public spending, and that the Minister of Human Resources Development has never balanced a budget in his entire political life.

How much more are Canadian taxpayers going to have to pay while high spending Liberals learn the elementary lessons of fiscal responsibility?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just a slight correction. I believe the Minister of Health is an accountant. I have never said very much about accountants, but I think they can read balance sheets. In fact she is a very good accountant.

We have offered members of the Reform Party the opportunity time and time again to set out before us what they would do. We gave it to them in the prebudget debate and they did not take advantage of it. We gave it to them this summer and they did not take advantage of it. We have given it to them over the last two days. What we are saying is this: You now have a unique opportunity to lay in front of us what the Reform Party would do, and we are looking forward to the details. I was going to say one other thing before I was so rudely interrupted. Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you that manufacturing shipments are also up. We have just had the strongest six months growth since the start of the recession.

Oral Questions

(1430)

[English]

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In his grey paper, the minister admits for the first time that he intends to make major additional cuts in the social program reform, on top of the \$7.4 billion cuts announced in last spring's budget and which have largely been approved already.

Now that the Minister of Finance has confirmed that he will cut billions more at the expense of the poor and the middle class, the question is: How many billions?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made it very clear in the budget that, in 1996–97, transfers to provinces would be frozen to the 1993–94 level. This was also confirmed by the Minister of Human Resources Development in his document.

We said that a review of the UI program was in order and that it would be the second stage of the reforms undertaken. Again, this was confirmed by the Minister of Human Resources Development. Make no mistake about it: We will definitely have to cut in all government spending.

The Minister of Human Resources Development is holding consultations right across the country and the finance committee will conduct the same exercise. I do hope that members opposite will make suggestions. Indeed, instead of just yelling they should make useful suggestions.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister announce additional cuts of billions of dollars in social programs without being more specific, when the consultation process on the social policy reform is barely getting underway?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggested that the hon. member read not only the grey paper, but also the first document, which is mauve as you can see. She will see that the policy statement is very clear: we have to improve government finances in order to protect our social programs.

Obviously, we cannot let international markets tell us how to build our country. Again, it is to protect our social programs that we are undertaking a true structural reform and I hope that the hon. member will come before the committee to make suggestions. I will welcome them.

THE DEFICIT

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on February 23 of this year I asked the Minister of Finance to admit that if he provided realistic economic projections in his budget, as a result of that budget the deficit would not go below \$30 billion in the third year and would remain close to 4 per cent of GDP. The minister replied: "The answer is quite the opposite. Absolutely we will attain the 3 per cent of GDP".

Yesterday the minister admitted that my original assumption was correct. Will he tell the House why he did not know what he was talking about when he presented his budget projections in February?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there obviously is a little confusion here. The member says that I did not know what I was talking about in the House yesterday. I was not in the House yesterday.

Perhaps these might help. The fact is—

(1435)

The Speaker: Order. We would prefer that there not be any props.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): I wish they were props, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that we have been unequivocal. The Prime Minister has stated it unequivocally. All the members of cabinet and all the members on this side and on that side of the House have stated it unequivocally. We are going to hit our target. If there should have been any doubt about it, there could not have been any doubt after yesterday with what this country is going through.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister missed the English translation. What I said was that the minister made precisely that statement about his February budget and he was wrong just as every finance minister with weak intermediate targets—Marc Lalonde, Michael Wilson, Don Mazankowski—have been wrong in the last 10 years on this very subject.

When will the Minister of Finance admit that a two stage approach to this problem will not work? Will he admit that it is not possible to jump over a wide chasm in two short leaps?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously do not have the same familiarity with the Mazankowski and Wilson budgets that the member does because I did not work for them as he did.

Oral Questions

I understand the member's analogy to jumping chasms. Let me simply say that may be the Reform Party's way, but in terms of chasms, we in the Liberal Party far prefer to build bridges.

* * *

[Translation]

HIBERNIA PROJECT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

He acknowledged yesterday in the House that he has no idea whether or not the Hibernia megaproject will be profitable one day. He said, and I quote: "We must complete this project because[. . .] we will be able to recover if not all at least a large part of the money invested so far". The Prime Minister does not even dare talk about profits.

Considering that this statement is in direct conflict with the smug optimism of the Minister of Natural Resources, how can the Prime Minister say that he is managing public money soundly, when he is not even sure that we will be able to recoup the billions of dollars we are sinking into that project?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Let me assure the hon. member that this government believes that the Hibernia project is viable and that we anticipate a reasonable and fair rate of return on our investment as do all consortium members.

Let me suggest that the hon. member should appreciate that we in the Government of Canada define value in a number of different ways, only one of which is rate of return. I should remind the hon. member that many jobs have been created and many contracts have been let, many of those in the province of Quebec. Over half a billion dollars worth of benefits have gone to the province of Quebec.

We are building infrastructure. We are building a new source of energy security in this country. Therefore, I suggest that Hibernia on all counts is a valuable project for the long term prosperity of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, the minister must be one of the very few who imagine we can make money on a barrel of oil. We are going to see the end of the oil before we see any profit. If you want to talk about Quebec, Madam Minister, let us talk about it!

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member that he should address his comments to the Chair.

Mr. Duceppe: If the Minister wishes to talk about Quebec, maybe she could explain to us why a shipyard was built from

scratch in Newfoundland, where there was no expertise—as we can see today with the transfer of work to New Brunswick—while the shipyard in Lévis—Lauzon could have done the work instead of being threatened with closure.

The minister is telling us that she is having her arm twisted. As we know, the government withdrew from two other megaprojects, one in Regina and one in Lloydminster, in Saskatchewan.

Why continue to sink billions of dollars in Hibernia, when she actually acknowledges that it will never be profitable?

(1440)

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me try and answer at least some of the hon. member's allegations.

There are many indicators at this point that we will receive a reasonable rate of return on our investment. I suggest the member look at a recent Wood Gundy report which indicates that we will enjoy a reasonable rate of return on our investment as will all consortium members.

Let me suggest to the hon. member that when he talks about shipyards that he is referring to a recent contractual issue involving Vinland shipyards and Saint John shipyards.

I think many in this country, including my colleagues from New Brunswick, would be somewhat surprised to hear that the hon. member does not believe that the Saint John shipyard, one of the finest shipyards in the world in terms of instrumentation and electrical abilities, is qualified to participate in this contract.

The Speaker: My colleagues, I appeal to you. If we could keep the questions short and the answers, it would be better for all of us.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, under the red ink book infrastructure plan, governments of Canada have borrowed over \$4.7 billion in this \$6 billion boondoggle and have created only 7,000 long term jobs.

Given the statement of the finance minister yesterday about everything being on the table when considering cuts to the deficit, will the Minister of Finance commit in this House today to axing the pork barrel program and saving taxpayers the last billion dollars?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I again want to remind the member about the projects that are going on in his riding which he did not object to.

Oral Questions

Nevertheless, this program is creating not 7,000 but some 100,000 jobs. That is only the beginning because it is attracting additional private sector investment into many communities and that will create at least twice as many jobs at the end of the day.

The money that is used for the federal portion as has been said time and time again because it is in the red book—have a look, it is on reallocation—is a matter of setting priorities and spending smarter. That is what we doing with the money we are putting into it.

The Speaker: I want to thank you for keeping the questions short and the answers.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister had taken the time to find out, he would have found out that I opposed the projects in my riding.

We hear about the red ink book, the lilac book and the green book. The only thing in common is that they are comic books.

The infrastructure program is up for review at the end of its second year. Given that the finance minister has admitted that the deficit kills jobs, will he kill the infrastructure program and create jobs?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear what the member thinks about some of the projects in his own riding that are putting people to work. He has never told me that. He certainly never told my office that.

This program is implementing what this government said it was going to do in providing a program that brings three orders of government together to get the economy moving. Provinces of all political stripes and municipalities of all political stripes applaud this program and are in fact joining together in a partnership that is helping to get Canadians back to work.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL FORUM ON HEALTH

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Clearly, without the participation of the provinces, the National Forum on Health will be just a lot of useless talk about health issues, and the Prime Minister admitted as much when he said, and I quote:

The forum is not a decision-making body. Its purpose is to look at the issue and make recommendations. This exercise is not binding on the federal government nor on the provinces. . . I invited these people to discuss the issue.

(1445)

Since the fact that the provinces will not attend makes the National Forum on Health an exercise in futility, will the Prime Minister cancel the forum and save \$12 million in taxpayers'

money, to show he is really serious about dealing with waste in government spending?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all participants, who represent the health care community in Canada, including all national associations, have applauded the government's initiative. The time has come to review a system that has served Canadians well so far. We must realize, however, that the system costs the Canadian economy more than 9 per cent of our gross domestic income. This is better than the United States, but not as efficient as systems in other countries.

We must find ways to work as cheaply and efficiently as we can to serve all Canadians, and we must have a dialogue with experts from all regions of the country. I think it will be a very useful exercise that will help us ensure that we can maintain adequate levels of health care for all Canadians across Canada, because health is everybody's business.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister refer, as he did yesterday, to establishing national standards, when health care is the exclusive purview of the provinces and at a time when his government, the federal government, is contributing less and less to health care financing?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was an ordinary member of Parliament and we adopted medicare for all Canadians, the federal government's contribution in the health sector was practically nil at the time. We set up a national system of which Canadians can be proud. If the federal government at the time had not taken this initiative, we would not have a national health care plan that applies to all Canadians.

That is why we have a Canadian Parliament that sets standards for the benefit of all Canadians. Our system is the envy of other countries, because we treat our citizens well, whether we are talking about health care or other areas.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Bruce—Grey is very near to Lake Huron and we are susceptible to airborne particulates and pollutants from the state of Michigan.

Recently the state of Michigan applied to the EPA to lower the standards of emissions. Is the Minister of the Environment aware of the situation, and what she is doing to protest this step by the Michigan authorities?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this happens to be an issue that affects the health of literally hundreds of thousands of people in southwestern Ontario.

Oral Questions

As a result of the initiatives of not only the member for Bruce—Grey but also the southwestern caucus and the minister from Windsor, we have been in touch with the EPA directly. The Department of Foreign Affairs has spoken directly to the State Department of the United States.

We are not satisfied with the EPA's proposal to move forward with the lowering of the standards that could potentially negatively affect the health of Canada. This is why I am very pleased to tell the House that on July 26, along with my counterpart in the United States, Carol Browner, I entered a dialogue to start looking at the issue of joint airsheds from a shared point of view.

Airborne problems do not carry passports. We are going to tackle the problem together and we are going to find a solution that respects the health of Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance says that Canadians can expect the deepest spending cuts in history, cuts that could total at least \$6.3 billion in the next two years.

Is the minister willing to play a leadership role and make spending cuts in his own backyard, namely cuts to the federal office of regional development in Quebec, a program for which he is directly responsible?

(1450)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of FORD-Q and very proud of the role FORD-Q plays within the province of Quebec.

FORD-Q, along with the other regional agencies and indeed with all of government, has already been subject to very severe fiscal discipline. No part of government is going to be exempt from a detailed examination of what it is doing.

The kind of thing we are doing on this side and on that side of the House is making government better. We are not only looking, as did other governments, at the 10 or 15 per cent of cutting that must be spent but we are making the 85 or 90 per cent that remains work well. That is certainly the case with FORD-Q.

Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister says everything is on the table, which includes taxing RRSPs.

Will the minister commit to Canadians that he will make spending cuts including his own regional development program and not go after Canadian RRSPs?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member was not there yesterday. We made it very clear that our preference in this whole action is clearly on cutting spending. We said that very clearly.

We also said, in relation to the tag end of the question which is an original one, I must say, that I am not going to comment on individual suggestions because what I really want is for Canadians to focus on the tradeoffs. I hope the member and his party would rise to that challenge.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. In approximately three weeks, the Security Intelligence Review Committee will report to the Solicitor General on its inquiry into the Bristow and McInnis affairs as well as allegations of illegal activities. Surprisingly, after one month of inquiry, the review committee has not yet gone back to the main actor, Mr. Doug Lewis, who was then Solicitor General.

Does the Solicitor General find it normal that on the eve of the publication of a report which is supposed to reassure the people, the review committee has not yet questioned the former Solicitor General even though he is the main clue to this puzzle?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Security Intelligence Review Committee has been created by Parliament in legislation passed by it to be independent of CSIS, of the government and of the Solicitor General.

Therefore I do not think it is for me to comment on how the committee does its work. The committee can take note of the hon. member's question and I look forward to receiving its report at the earliest possible date.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, how can the Solicitor General expect the review committee to shed some light on the activities of CSIS when its five members are only working part-time and fail to meet with major witnesses?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the Security Intelligence Review Committee has a full time staff and is capable of hiring additional staff to work full time on inquiries like this one.

I understand this is what has happened. People have been hired to work along with the full time staff. I suggest to the hon. member that he await the completion of its work before passing judgment. That is the fair thing to do.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, after yesterday's appearance of the former Solicitor General before the subcommittee on national security, it has become apparent that both the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and the Liberal Party of Canada have had access to CSIS information that mentions the Reform Party of Canada.

It appears that the party denied access to the information is the Reform Party whose rights have been abused. What steps is the Solicitor General prepared to take to stop this abuse of the democratic process?

(1455)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware political parties do not have access to information gathered by CSIS and the CSIS act is very clear on what that body can and cannot do.

I think the hon. member knows as well as I do that this information is not available to political parties, even though the allegations and questions relate to a period of time before this party formed the government.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is very apparent to me that solicitor generals do represent political parties. There is only one way—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to put her question, please.

Ms. Meredith: There is only one way to alleviate the concerns of Canadians about the information that CSIS holds on our party.

Is the Solicitor General prepared to provide the leader of the Reform Party with access to all information that CSIS may hold on our party?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not concede that CSIS holds information on the Reform Party, but I would be prepared to provide any and all information as I am entitled to do under the law passed by Parliament.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ron Fewchuk (Selkirk—Red River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

At the last meeting of the G-7, Canada was asked to take a leadership role in the international effort to restore the Ukrainian economy. After decades of economic and environmental mismanagement under the former Soviet regime, could the minister explain how Canada is investing in the future and fostering better ties with Ukraine?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his question.

I remind the House that last July in Naples the G-7 endorsed the proposal of the Prime Minister to host a conference on economic reform in Ukraine. The conference will take place in Winnipeg at the end of this month. It will be part of the state visit of the Ukrainian president who will be in Canada for a few days' visit.

It is good to remember that Canada is totally committed to assisting Ukraine in its development. We have already committed over \$41 million to over 70 projects. We are very confident that Ukraine will be able, with the assistance of the G-7, to turn around and establish a market economy in that country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister of Canada. On more than one occasion, Mr. Protti, the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, and his predecessor, Mr. Elcock, told members of this House that there is no special division within the Canadian Security Intelligence Service spying on the Quebec government and its democratic move toward sovereignty.

With everything that is being written in the newspapers these days, and in view of the imminence of a referendum in Quebec, can the Prime Minister rise in this House and solemnly affirm that there is no organization of the "French-problem" type keeping an eye on the sovereignist movement in Quebec or on any other democratically elected party in this House or in Quebec?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in politics for a while now and I have never been advised of any spying activities. I am the leader of this government and the Reform Party is making accusations. Well,

Routine Proceedings

we do not need spies to know what that party is saying. We need not know more to eliminate it. As for the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois, who are unable to admit that they are separatists and call themselves sovereignists to try and confuse people, we do not need spies to know more about them.

* * *

[English]

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on October 7, I sent to the Minister of Transport my solution for the Pearson airport contract problem. He has now had almost two weeks to consider the merits of my proposal.

Will the minister agree that the Pearson problem will not go away and that the proposal I sent him is the only fair and logical way to bring the matter to a just conclusion?

(1500)

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you will understand my concern when you hear from whom the proposal came. The hon. member who asked the question has been quoted as saying that as far as he is concerned there is nothing wrong with the Pearson deal. Therefore anything he has to say about it certainly will be suspect in my mind.

What is very interesting with respect to the position of the Reform Party on this matter is that when we talk about the court system, I hear its members every day questioning the judicial system of the country. Yet when they want to protect their friends with a deal at Pearson they want us to go to court. Make up your mind.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, N.D.P.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, before the finance committee, he indicated that in his first round of prebudget consultations Canadians "told us they wanted clear targets to which they could hold the government accountable and we provided those targets. We provided those milestones." I applaud him for his leadership.

However, we have heard an awful lot about the target of deficits. Why did the minister not also include targets for employment? He is concerned about employment. We have been hearing only targets for deficit reduction. Why not targets for employment as well?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Develop-

ment—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all that I welcome the question from the hon. member. It is really unfortunate that it only appears to be from this side of the House that one ever hears the voice of compassion or understanding and I am delighted to hear it coming from that side of the House and from that member.

The member is quite right to point out the great distinction between yesterday's document and the document that we issued on Monday: the one that dealt with creating an economic framework, the one that dealt with jobs, the one that dealt with giving Canadians skills, that said basically that the best social policy is a good job, the one that dealt with building this country.

The member is very wise to point out that we embarked on a two track project in the red book and in the election campaign. We were going to build this country and we were going to clean up the nation's finances. We remain faithful to both tracks.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: My colleagues, I would like to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of Mr. George Heller, president of the Victoria Commonwealth Games Society.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the government's response to the first report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

[Translation]

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, our response to the first report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (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 a petition.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in only a few short days we will celebrate the first anniversary of the Liberal government.

(1505)

Over the course of that year the red book has become a guiding light of government policy. Today I am proud to announce that once again we are delivering on another red book promise.

I am proud to announce that we are going to follow up on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. We are following up on our promise not only to appoint an environmental auditor general, but to go even further.

[Translation]

Today, our government has decided to make profound changes in the way we operate in order to ensure that Canada's environmental agenda is integrated with Canada's economic agenda.

[English]

We have heard the members on the opposite side of the House say spend money. What the members of the third party do not understand is that a government that incorporates the principles of sustainable development into all of its actions will be a government that will save taxpayers money.

We promised in the red book that we would appoint an environmental auditor general. Many people thought the government would never follow through on that promise because it opens the government up to the potential for criticism. It could subject us to the same kind of hard nosed analysis and criticism that we are currently open to as a result of the Auditor General's current level of activity on our financial behaviour.

I wish to tell members of Parliament that not only are we fulfilling our red book promise today, we want to go further. We think it makes good environmental sense and it delivers better government. We are serious about promoting sustainable development and we are delivering today. We are serious about the greening of government.

This place alone saved over \$750,000 when the former Speaker decided to make the practices of the House of Commons sustainable. It does not cost more money because we are spending money smarter. We are serious about getting the federal government's act together on environmental issues and we are serious about being held accountable for our environmental actions and our environmental planning.

The cabinet has reviewed the extremely thoughtful work of the parliamentary committee chaired by the hon. member for Davenport.

[Translation]

The committee felt that while it is vitally important to audit past actions of the government, it is even more important to ensure that environmental considerations be a fundamental component of planning in all government departments.

We have decided upon a package of initiatives which meet all the objectives of the committee's report and does so in a manner consistent with the fiscal framework of the government. Members of Parliament from all parties and a wide range of individual witnesses indicated the importance of moving from the concept of sustainable development to the practice of sustainable development.

[English]

I want to repeat that in English because I think it is an important underlying principle. We have to stop talking about sustainable development and start delivering. We have to move from the theory to the practice, and that starts right here in this place with the actions of the single biggest employer in the land, the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

The Committee called for enhanced environmental auditing of the government's policies, programs and laws.

[English]

The committee believed that individual government departments must improve their practices to achieve consistency with sustainable development and the greening of government. The committee called for the review of existing policies and independent and internal evaluation of all new policies and laws.

The committee also felt that the government must be held accountable to Parliament and to the public for demonstrating real progress in meeting these objectives.

[Translation]

The committee advocated that the government go beyond the idea of just an Environmental Auditor and, instead, establish a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

(1510)

The government will amend the Auditor General Act to establish a Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

To guarantee the absolute impartiality of this person, she or he will be appointed by the Auditor General of Canada and report through the Auditor General to Parliament. The government will include a definition of sustainable development in the Auditor General Act and ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in all Auditor General reports to the House of Commons.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

All cabinet ministers will be required to table sustainable development strategies in Parliament. The act will make the commissioner responsible for monitoring and reporting, not to cabinet, not behind closed doors, but to Parliament to monitor and report on the performance of government departments in meeting our sustainable development goals and objectives.

The Auditor General Act will also be amended to allow the commissioner to receive from the public and to forward to appropriate ministers petitions on environmental concerns. The commissioner will have the authority to monitor and report on government responses to petitions from the public.

I want to be crystal clear. The commissioner, through the Auditor General, will issue a separate report annually to Parliament on the extent to which departments are or are not meeting the goals and objectives of their stated sustainable development strategies.

In addition to this separate report, the Auditor General's report will include considerations of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and environment.

These changes go well beyond the red book commitment and we intend to do even more. The parliamentary committee indicated the importance of an open, inclusive process to really get people involved.

[Translation]

We must get people involved in the greening and sustainable development process.

[English]

Government departments will be required to prepare their sustainable development strategies in an open and transparent manner which includes review by public stakeholders in receiving the advice of independent, objective experts, including the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

[Translation]

We want to guarantee that members of Parliament have a key stake in ensuring that we meet our objectives. All ministers, therefore, will be required to report on their progress toward sustainable development in preparing and presenting their annual estimates for consideration by Parliament.

[English]

The environment is not just a job for the Minister of the Environment. The environment is a job for every minister, every member and every department of government. The government, through the red book, devoted a chapter to the importance of sustainable development in building a strong economy by

linking a healthy economy and a healthy environment. We are committed to this integrated approach.

Economic, social and environmental policy must go hand in hand. We are committed to ensuring the promotion of thinking green and delivering on our actions. It must be a central component of decision making, not just from the Ministry of the Environment but in the decision making of all departments of government and at all levels of society. That is the role Harlem Brundtland was talking about when she said that you think globally and you act locally. What you flush down your toilet is part of what affects the environment. What we flush down the sewers, sometimes unaccounted for, affects the drinking water and the ecosystems and the gifts that we can give to our children.

In the Government of Canada, decisions of government departments must reflect a sustainable approach to building on our economic strength by recognizing that the world is going green.

We have announced already our intention to proclaim and strengthen the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. I was pleased that we received the support of the opposition in this particular initiative.

(1515)

We have already announced a comprehensive proposal for the management of toxins which put the onus not on people to prove that chemicals kill, but on companies to prove that they are safe. Reverse onus is a very important principle.

We have followed up on our promise to establish an environmental industry strategy at a time when everyone knows that government dollars are tight. We are spending new dollars from a reoriented budget to ensure that we have our fair share of an emerging world market that has the potential to create thousands of Canadian jobs over the next decade.

In less than one year we have also delivered on our promise to put in place an independent task force. The Minister of Finance and I spent a number of months working on the membership of that task force. That task force is going to report in one month on where the government is developing tax policies that help the environment and where perhaps some of our policies might be disincentives to sound environmental practices. The information from that report will help the Minister of Finance as he has to make the tough decisions that come up in the next budget. That work will also lay the groundwork for a comprehensive review of federal policies and programs again as promised in the red book.

We are determined to see the greening of the federal government. Looking around, this is a green chamber, but we want to make sure it is more than in name only. We are prepared to put our government on the line, to hold ourselves accountable for meeting our objectives and obligations.

Routine Proceedings

Today's announcement means the beginning, just the beginning, but it is the beginning of a fundamental change in the operation and practices of government. Environmental and economic thinking must converge. They are not disparate; they are not fighting against each other. They are coming together because environmental health is essential for long term economic and human health.

Who would have thought 10 years ago that a whole industry would be wiped out because we did not develop sustainable practices? Just look at the fisheries, the cod stocks in Atlantic Canada to see a living example of the lack of a sustainable development policy.

Today's initiatives will be funded within existing resources. I believe in the long run today's announcement will pay off major dividends, environmental and economic, to the taxpayers of Canada, because thinking green does not cost money, it saves.

The government is getting its act together on sustainable development. We are beginning to make the links between the environment and the economy. We are turning the sentiments of Canadians into concrete action. We are delivering on the spirit of the red book. We are taking measures to seek out independent advice because we are not afraid to have our mettle tested. We are not afraid to put our feet in the fire and say we will be accountable not only to cabinet, not only to the government but to the people of Canada through the Parliament of Canada.

That is what is happening with the creation of the commissioner who reports to Parliament. The government wants to hold Parliament accountable and the people want to hold the government accountable.

[Translation]

With this announcement, the government is fulfilling, in less than a year, yet another primary election commitment of the Prime Minister. One chapter was devoted to sustainable development in the red book. This is much more than words. It is a set of specific initiatives to ensure all government departments develop, announce and publicize our sustainable development programs.

I want to thank, first of all, the members of the standing committee and the witnesses who appeared before the committee for their invaluable advice and insight. Today's initiatives are much stronger because all members of the committee undertook their responsibilities with the utmost seriousness and dedication.

(1520)

[English]

I want to acknowledge the work of all the committee members, some of whom actually along with the chair are currently on the road on another task of reviewing the five year plan of CEPA. One former member is in the House today. I know he and his colleagues contributed very constructively to the outcome of today's announcement. As I said, it is only the beginning. We want to look to him and his party and to all parliamentarians for that kind of constructive co-operation in the future.

I can say from a personal point of view that I have spent a lot of time in opposition and not much time in government. Sometimes it is hard for governments to open themselves up to public scrutiny. It was not easy to move this through all the levels behind closed doors. However I can say that the commitment of the cabinet to open this to transparency and in particular the commitment of the Prime Minister to live up to the promise of the red book is what has made today's announcement a reality.

We came into government and some of the people in the bureaucracy said that the red book was politics. Now it is government and now they are starting to understand that the politics and the policies of the election form the basis of what it is we want to achieve.

We were successful in actually moving forward on the creation of a commissioner for sustainable development who will report directly to Parliament through an agency outside of cabinet and outside of government departments. I had the full support of all my colleagues because they understand that to really make government work we have to incorporate the principles of sustainable development not only in the Ministry of the Environment, not only in the agencies involved in environmental protection, but most particularly in how we do business in the future.

May I conclude by saying that I believe today's announcement is the beginning of a future when the commissioner for sustainable development will provide the kind of ammunition opposition parties need to get up and hold the government to account.

I am confident the mandate we have accorded to the new commissioner for sustainable development with the political teeth of the Office of the Auditor General and with the personal commitment of the current Auditor General will make this process work. Just as today when the Auditor General comes down on government departments, we may not always like it but we change, we move and we respond to the analyses of the Auditor General. In the same way future Parliaments will be waving around reports of the commissioner for sustainable development to make government accountable, to work for the people, of the people and in particular to be accountable to the Parliament of Canada.

Routine Proceedings

I am thrilled. This is a small step in the right direction, but it is a step that could yield fantastic dividends for the greening of Canada in the next decade.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, today I have been given the great honour of hearing the Minister of the Environment respond to the report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development about the position of environmental commissioner.

Throughout last winter, the members of this committee heard many witnesses who, one after the other, told us how they felt about the idea of creating such a position in order to assess federal programs, activities and legislation, thereby translating sustainable development into something concrete, measurable and quantifiable.

The work done by all committee members was unquestionably very serious and constructive, while the discussions held during our meetings were always frank and honest.

(1525)

I must pay tribute to all members of the Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, and particularly to its chairman, the hon. member for Davenport, who always showed throughout our discussions a respect—I would go so far as to say an innate respect—for the environment and sustainable development.

The Bloc Québécois members on the committee, that is, my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Terrebonne, and myself, expressed a dissident opinion on the main directions set by the majority. We did so with the necessary rigour, without partisanship and in the hope of optimizing the resources and expertise already available in the Canadian Parliament.

So I take a certain pride in the fact that the minister accepted the alternative proposal we submitted to her at that time. The minister and the Cabinet agreed to amend the Auditor General Act to outline a function to be assigned to the commissioner. The government decided to make departments more accountable for sustainable development, so that efforts made in this area can be assessed.

Making departments accountable for the environment is the way of the future for sustainable development. The Auditor General, need I remind you, has learned a great deal about environmental assessments. He has developed an expertise in this area over the years and he now performs several environmental assessment functions. The Auditor General has a thorough knowledge of where environmental jurisdiction is shared and where the provinces have exclusive authority.

In a word, the Auditor General has the necessary integrity to carry out these tasks, to give the person appointed all the requisite technical support to meet the objectives and fulfil the ensuing action plans, in order to make sustainable development a reality. Of course, to do this, he will need the financial resources required to implement these objectives, which the minister has surely provided for and will assuredly inform us of in the near future.

We members of the Bloc Québécois thought it was most important to amend the Auditor General Act to allow the Auditor General to present more than one report a year to Parliament and the people.

A few moments ago, the Minister of the Environment, in full oratorical flight, said that the auditor or the commissioner might tell the government things it did not want to hear. Of course, it hurts to hear that one has done something badly, but to be told it only once a year by someone who has a four-year contract with the Canadian people is not so bad. We suggested that the Minister of the Environment allow the commissioner to make two reports a year, or better yet, to present them as required in case of disaster and not to wait 18 months to bring this disaster to the public's attention. But no, they are still sticking with an annual report.

(1530)

We members of the Bloc Québécois thought that it was very important to amend the Auditor General Act so that the Auditor General can report to Parliament as required. If there is an emergency, another report will be presented; if there is another emergency, one or two more reports could be presented.

It seems that the minister did not want to amend the law that way. If our understanding of this is correct, two separate annual reports will be published, dealing with two different aspects of sustainable development: one for the departments and the other for current activities affecting the environment.

Hopefully, the bill to establish a commissioner responsible for the environment will be more specific and will provide a clear idea of what is involved.

The environment minister acknowledged the contribution and concerns of Bloc members regarding the position of commissioner. We will continue our critical but constructive work in committee during the review of this legislation.

Sustainable development and the environment must become priorities for the federal government, the provinces, the territories and the municipalities.

Our concern for the environment is real and permanent. Recent measures taken by the minister, including the proclamation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the proposal regarding an integrated management policy on toxic substances, seemed to be motivated by a stand-offish attitude.

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However, establishing a dialogue and harmonizing policies with the provinces are essential to promote sustainable development.

Our environment is too important and too fragile to start arguing over issues of jurisdiction. True sustainable development can only occur by co-operating with the provinces, not by antagonizing them or acting alone.

We feel the minister is making a mistake and will not help the environment at all if she does not enlist the participation of the provinces in various federal initiatives. The minister must make sure that the efforts to provide a healthy environment for future generations are not wasted.

I am sure the minister will agree that our environment is too important to avoid a dialogue with her provincial counterparts.

In conclusion, I once again say to the Minister of the Environment that she can count on the support of the Bloc Quebecois regarding any policy, provided that she respects provincial jurisdiction and that she avoids overlapping.

(1535)

Her colleague, the Minister of Finance, used a very vivid metaphor, when he said that jumping over a bar three feet high does not look like much, but if you happen to be standing six feet down in the hole, it is quite a challenge. It means you actually have to jump nine feet!

Well, the minister can always count on our support, but Madam Minister, you will have to recognize provincial jurisdictions, and especially Quebec's, and you will have to avoid overlap, something Bloc Quebecois members on the Environment Committee have said repeatedly. Of course we did not always get our way on the Environment Committee, but considering the announcement made by the Minister of the Environment today, we were probably the only two members—after three or four months of debate, who were right, because from the very beginning our position was that the environment commissioner should work with the Auditor General.

Perhaps the Minister of the Environment will appreciate the following story. When I was a little boy, in a certain country they had a red book that was read by everyone. Children grew up reciting passages from the red book. Of course, Mr. Speaker, they later went to the other extreme—

An hon. member: Like a catechism.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Yes, like a catechism. They collected all the red books to make huge bonfires. The hon. member for Shefford mentioned this awhile ago, and I suddenly remembered. So the red book became toxic waste, as it were, and they tried to erase its harmful effects from the minds of the people, and they will succeed. Mr. Speaker, you have probably guessed the name of the country and the author.

Speaking of red books, I had one during the election campaign almost a year ago, and then my organizers made the mistake of throwing it out when they were housecleaning. I asked some Liberal colleagues for one, and of course they were quite willing to give me photocopies of part of the red book but never the real red book. Madam Minister, could I make a formal and official request for a red book?

Ms. Copps: Please drop by my office.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): I will be there in less than an hour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge at the commencement of my remarks that when I first started into this process I rose in the House and I said: "If the minister is serious and if we have the opportunity to go through the whole process, I am looking forward to her and her department coming forward and saying yes, this is the collective wisdom of the committee and we are prepared to act on it". I said that if she did that I would congratulate her, so today I congratulate her.

I realize as a Reformer that I have to be careful, but I would like to make special note of the chair of the committee, the hon. member for Davenport. I believe he and I share a mutual respect for each other, for the fact that we have hard opinions, strong opinions and different opinions. In spite of that he did a masterful job of bringing together all of the opinions that were available through this arduous process. He is absolutely to be commended for his work.

In addition, taking some of the responsibility for this, the member for Comox—Alberni and myself absolutely held out, dug in our heels and would not be moved. I am now very pleased to see that the minister has announced that we will fund these initiatives within existing resources. I take some small amount of credit for that on behalf of the Reform Party. There were people on the committee who had a differing point of view to that.

(1540)

I would like to read from the minister's prepared comments: "The government will include a definition of sustainable development in the Auditor General Act and ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in all Auditor General reports to Parliament". She will know that extreme environmentalists would see the term sustainable development as being an oxymoron, in other words the two things do not necessarily fit together. The responsible industrialist, the entrepreneur, does not see it that way. I must tell this House that neither does the Reform Party.

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The Reform Party sees sustainable development as being an absolutely achievable goal. However, one of the difficulties is what does sustainable development mean. That is a very difficult question. I have some small bit of concern because the minister in her comments today in the unprepared part of her speech said that there will be an onus on the companies to prove their process is safe.

One of the concerns that I have is that I do not know what that means either. In other words, are we going to kill the goose that lays the golden egg by becoming so wrapped up in saying we cannot do anything that we will not be able to have any responsible development of the resources that we have in Canada? It is a concern.

I would like to read into my speech from the Reform Party blue sheet. We have gone from mauve to purple to red to green to grey. The Reform Party has always stayed with blue.

The Reform Party supports ensuring that all Canadians and their descendants dwell in a clean and healthy environment. The party supports sustainable development because—

This is the most important part.

—without economic development and the income generated therefrom, the environment will not be protected or enjoyed.

That is where the hon. member for Davenport and myself differ. From his perspective I believe I would be fair in characterising his point of view to say that we must protect the environment before we get into economic development. I suggest if we take a look at what is happening in the third world where the countries do not have proper economic activity, where they do not have the resources to protect the environment, we end up with absolutely atrocious situations in the third world in terms of pollution. They do not have the resources to protect the environment.

I say again that the Reform Party states that without economic development and the income generated therefrom, the environment will not be protected or enjoyed.

This has been a consistent position of the Reform Party contrary to what has been said. I am sure that the minister would never have said anything disparaging about the Reform Party, but maybe there are some people in the Liberal Party who have said some things that perhaps have not been totally accurate in characterising where the Reform Party is coming from. I would like to read in exactly where we are coming from on the issue of sustainable development. This by the way has been in our blue book since 1991.

The Reform Party supports the view that environmental considerations must carry equal weight with economic, social and technical considerations in the development of a project.

The Reform Party supports the integration of environmental and economic objectives in management philosophy, structure, procedures, planning and all decision-making matters involving economic and environmental issues in which the federal government has constitutional jurisdiction.

The Reform Party supports the initiation of a public education program of environmentally conscious purchasing. The federal government and private sector should cause their purchasing departments to be environmentally conscious in all their purchasing.

The Reform Party supports the federal government in taking leadership in developing a new discipline integrating economics and the environment.

This has been the position of the Reform Party. I cannot possibly imagine that the responsible members of the Reform Party would ever move from those very sustainable and responsible positions.

However, there is a battle for the hearts and minds of people over the issue of responsible resource management and development and probably no place more strongly than in the province of British Columbia.

(1545)

This battle for the hearts and minds of citizens is waged by people who seem to get on to the extreme. We have to realize that, just as in society, people, human beings, have a finite life. For example, in British Columbia the flashpoint is trees. Trees have a finite life.

What has to be decided is what we are going to do with the fibre. Are we going to let it fall to the ground in decay? Are we going to harvest it? Are we going to be handling it responsibly? There is this battle for the hearts and minds of people.

I will tell a quick story. I was at a meeting attended by people from all over Canada in my constituency a few weeks ago. A prairie farmer came up to me. He was very proud of the fact that he was going out of his way to save all the forests in British Columbia. He was one of the largest contributors to one of the more extreme environmental groups that have single-handedly shut down logging operations, put loggers out of work, and created all sorts of havoc in situations where the companies within the last five years have turned around and managed their affairs and the affairs of the forests very responsibly. I suggested to him that maybe I should start to contribute to a fund that would advocate returning all the prairies to grasslands. How would he feel about that? Of course he became very incensed about it.

One issue in the entire area of the environment is to get good, quality information out. I congratulate the minister and the committee chairman for their effort to this point. I look forward to the Reform Party supporting the initiative.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees.

If the House gives its consent I intend to move concurrence in this report later today.

* * *

CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, N.D.P) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-284, an act to amend the Canada Health Act (conditions for contributions).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the act to amend the Canada Health Act, conditions for contributions, is intended to ensure that the health care insurance plan of a province provides for the obligation for hospitals to disclose to emergency response employees, who provide emergency medical or rescue services to a patient, the name and nature of an infectious or contagious disease that the patient might have transmitted to them.

This is something that the International Association of Firefighters has been requesting for a long time. It is similar to a bill which was first introduced in the last Parliament by Joy Langdon, the former NDP labour critic. However the bill includes a clause dealing with confidentiality which is an improvement over the previous bill.

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

* * *

NUCLEAR REACTOR FINANCE LIMITATION ACT

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, N.D.P) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-285, an act to eliminate financial support for nuclear reactor design and construction in Canada or abroad and to amend the Atomic Energy Control Act in consequence thereof.

(1550)

He said: Mr. Speaker, actually the tabling of the bill is quite timely when we consider that the subsidies to Atomic Energy of Canada amount to almost \$200 million a year at a time when we are very concerned about deficit reduction.

Essentially the bill prevents the federal government from giving any financial assistance or technical support to nuclear reactor projects except those for making isotopes for medical

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use, acknowledging that there is an appropriate use in terms of a nuclear industry particularly when it comes to treating the illnesses of people.

It is essentially a moratorium on any further construction of these types of projects.

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

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think there would be unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the 40th report, interesting as it may be.

I move that the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

VIOLENCE

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, the House will know that violence in our society is a great concern among Canadians. Violence in the media is of particular concern perhaps principally to parents who are raising children.

The petitioners ask government to ensure that the CRTC monitor very closely violence in the media. They feel there is a relationship between that which they see and hear and that which happens in society. They believe that violence is not necessary in order to entertain. They also underline that violence and violent acts are counterproductive to that which they try to do in raising their families.

They point out, however, that there have been some changes and that they are appreciative of the initiatives the CRTC has taken.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from residents of my riding asking the government to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code which would sentence people convicted of murder to life imprisonment with chance of parole after 25 years but review after 15 years. They are objecting to it and think that section of the Criminal Code should be repealed so that it would not be allowed.

It is always kind of sad when somebody in the community starts a petition, collects hundreds of names, and then when the petition arrives it does not meet the requirements; it is lacking in form. I am always sad when that happens.

Government Orders

I have two such petitions here which I know I cannot present in the usual way at the table or get any record for them. However they are both objecting to suggested gun control that is being discussed in Canada. They think we should have criminal control.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the House that asks Parliament to act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code to extend the same protection enjoyed by born human beings to unborn human beings.

I submit that with my full concurrence.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, N.D.P.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from constituents who call on Parliament not to amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality. The petition includes amending the human rights code to include in the prohibited grounds of discrimination the undefined phrase sexual orientation. That is the way the petition reads.

(1555)

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the solemn responsibility to present a petition to the House.

Last May 6, I stood in the House to table a petition in memory of Carrie Lynn Pinard signed by over 54,000 Canadians. Today I add 972 names.

The petitioners pray for more severe penalties for those convicted of violent offences; the release of names of those young offenders convicted of murder, sex crimes and other violent assaults; and the automatic transfer to adult court for those young offenders charged with sex crimes and murder.

I am pleased that since May 6 the government proposed amendments to the Young Offenders Act and that the Pinard and Racine families have been heard.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of petitions. The first has 247 signatures.

The petitioners pray that Parliament ensures that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously, and that Parliament make no changes in the law that would sanction or allow the aiding or abetting of suicide or active or passive euthanasia.

The signatories are mostly from the city of Nepean but also from the city of Kanata.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has 90 signatures, again of residents of Nepean.

They ask that Parliament review and revise our laws concerning young offenders by empowering the courts to prosecute and punish the young law breakers who are terrorizing our society, by releasing their names and lowering the age limit to allow prosecution to meet the severity of the crime.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 42 minutes, pursuant to Standing Order 33(2).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ACT

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food) moved that Bill C-49, an act to amend the Department of Agriculture Act and to amend or repeal certain other acts, be read the third time.

He said: I am glad to address the House as Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food, Fisheries and Oceans and to move the third reading of Bill C-49 entitled: An Act to amend the Department of Agriculture Act and to amend or repeal certain other Acts.

Three weeks ago, at the start of this debate, the minister was telling the House that this bill was a reflection of the kinds of changes the Canadian agriculture and agri-food industry has undergone in recent years and can anticipate in future years. The proposed changes are not spectacular, but they are important for the two following reasons. First, they take into account the fact

that agriculture as a commercial activity is evolving and is now much more than mere growing of plants. Second they represent sound public management.

(1600)

The agri-food element now added to the mandate of the department is important, because it reflects the interactions we must have with all our clients, from producing farmers to urban consumers. To prosper, the processing sector must rely on flourishing farms and, conversely, farmers need a healthy processing sector for their goods. We are mutually dependent for our daily bread.

[*English*]

Allow me to illustrate with a few examples. In 1993, \$10.5 billion worth of farm inputs such as seeds, machinery and fertilizers were transformed into farm production valued at \$21.5 billion. In turn that farm production was further transformed into processed foods and beverage products worth \$46 billion.

In 1993 Canada exported \$13.3 billion in agri-food products. That contributed to a surplus of some \$3 billion to Canada's balance of trade.

The recognition of these connections will be important as we plan for the future.

[*Translation*]

These amendments will contribute to better public management for the following reasons. The bill defines more clearly the department's responsibilities in research. The present legislation indirectly refers to research by mentioning experimental farm stations. The bill broadens this definition to include research in agriculture and its products specifically with respect to experimental farm stations. This is a wise clarification at a time when Canadian industry must compete on international markets dealing with food and non-food products, that is to say products resulting from research.

More amendments. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will have the authority to designate inspectors for the purpose of the Food and Drugs Act, a responsibility which is presently his under several other acts. Contrary to what the opposition has been implying, this amendment does not add to the inspection functions of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Rather, it is an amendment necessary to allow the minister to carry out responsibilities under the Food and Drugs Act he inherited from the former Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Government Orders

These amendments represent a sound management practice since they repeal three pieces of legislation which had become useless.

Finally, under this new bill, the department will publish only one yearly summary of its expenses and programs in a single document, namely Part III of the Main Estimates, instead of doing it in several annual reports. This will save a lot of time and money.

[*English*]

With the world trading environment opening up with new ways of doing business emerging, it is an opportune time to review the mandate of one of the country's oldest departments.

(1605)

Over the next few months the minister will be working with producers and industry to hammer out a shared, comprehensive vision about where we want agriculture and agri-food to be in the year 2000, 2005 and 2010 and how we plan to get there.

The government is preparing to make some fundamental decisions about many longstanding and difficult issues in agriculture and agri-food. These decisions for the future will be part of a comprehensive plan for a modern, progressive industry.

The minister has spent a good deal of his time during the past month or so talking about the need for a long term vision. The minister's view is clear. Industry should be growing. Industry should be competitive. Industry should be market oriented and, of course, it should be profitable.

It should respond to the changing food and non-food needs of domestic and international customers. It should be less dependent on government support. It should contribute to the well-being of all Canadians and it should contribute to the quality of life in rural communities. Overall it should achieve farm financial security, environmental sustainability and a safe, high quality food supply.

As a New Brunswicker I am of course very interested in the vibrant farming community and agri-food industry. My province may be small, but it has developed a very competitive food sector. McCain Foods Ltd., Cavendish Farms, Ganong, Moosehead, Baxter Foods and Dairytown Products are all New Brunswick firms that have found success beyond provincial borders. In my own riding of Beauséjour, although concentrated in the fishery, food processing is a major activity and farming is as well.

I see in agriculture an agri-food industry that is leading the way in achieving growth, jobs and security, the three overriding themes of this government in the Atlantic region and across Canada. To achieve this, it is vitally important that everyone involved in this industry, from suppliers to producers to handlers and processors to consumers and governments, recognize that most of our issues cannot be dealt with in isolation.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

This bill, which groups agriculture and agri-food together under one roof, highlights how important it is nowadays for sectors, provinces and even continents to consult one another.

We are all interconnected and interdependent. We must be aware of the possible impact of our aspirations and actions on the other links in the complex chain of stakeholders in the agricultural and agri-food sector. We need one another and we must adopt a concrete and firm team-work approach to solve our internal problems and compete against the rest of the world.

The GATT and NAFTA agreements have resulted in freer trade and easier access to world markets. Every government on the planet is helping its exporters to make inroads abroad. We too must follow suit. During our first year in power, we have taken steps towards this end.

Soon we will create a Canadian agri-food products marketing board which will be made up of people from the industry representing every sector of the agri-food business. This board will act as a forum to improve co-operation among industry players and to help them to be more competitive.

(1610)

The Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, in co-operation with the departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, will create an international agri-food marketing branch. Through this single window, the industry will have access to federal foreign market development programs. We have already put in place a network of agri-food trade specialists in key locations like Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Mexico and Dusseldorf, and this network is growing.

We are getting ready to take advantage of increasingly sophisticated national and international information highways. Our offices world-wide will be linked to the Info-Agro-Export network. This is an interactive, automated system providing personalized information on world markets. Canadian food industries invest a relatively small percentage of their sales in research and development, as compared to their US counterparts. They could do better in this area.

A few months ago, the research branch undertook a pilot-project called Agri-Food Research and Development Cofinancing Project. In this project, the department and the industry will work together to carry out research and development, each contributing half the funds. Since the industry will be setting its own priorities, the relevancy of the research and development activities will be guaranteed. In addition, technology transfer will be facilitated because, with the industry sharing in the financing of the research activities, its support will be guaranteed in advance. We hope that this project, to which a budget of \$2 million was allocated this year, will be a first step towards a substantial increase in agri-food research in Canada.

[English]

This is only the beginning. The challenges we face are formidable. As I said earlier, in 1993 Canadian agri-food exports of \$13.3 billion contributed a surplus of almost \$3 billion to Canada's balance of trade, almost a full one-third of Canada's total merchandise trade balance.

However, it is worth noting that while there is a positive balance for primary products, there is a negative balance for processed products.

Strong export growth has been registered in early 1994 with projections for the year moving beyond the \$14 billion mark. Canada's overall share of the world agri-food market has declined since the early sixties. Our growth in agri-food exports is lagging behind the rest of the world. It will be a major push to meet the \$20 billion export target by the year 2000 set last year by federal and provincial agriculture ministers.

We are on track toward that target in 1994 with exports projected to reach \$14 billion. What can we do in co-operation with industry to keep on track?

These are some of the issues we need to address: From 1992 to 1993 our agri-food export surplus declined. In fact, countries which used to buy Canadian commodities and products are now net exporters. We have higher processing costs and less private sector research than some of our competitors. Government income support payments exceed net farm income and are much higher than our investments in marketing or market development.

(1615)

There is little growth in our exports of these higher value products to countries other than the U.S, in particular, to Asian markets where demand is growing rapidly. We must therefore continue to address international access issues without forgetting there are unnecessary trade barriers here at home.

Of course food safety has been and must continue to be a priority in and for Canada. Our reputation for safety and quality is vital to our domestic consumers and it is a critical advantage in the international marketplace. At the same time we need to ensure that it is an efficient system.

[Translation]

The minister fully intends to continue playing an active role in promoting Canadian agri-food products abroad. Next month, the Prime Minister will head a trade mission to Asia, a region that the Governor General and the minister visited last spring. Next week, he will go to the international food fair in Paris, where he will participate in the presentation of international prizes to five Canadian companies that showed excellence in creating or marketing innovative food products. The Paris fair is the largest trade fair for food products in the world.

Government Orders

The Canadian agri-food sector already enjoys some significant advantages such as internationally famous product competitiveness, high health and safety standards, and environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

If we focus our activities on the markets, if we use our limited financial resources wisely, and if we keep in mind that the various elements of the agricultural and agri-food sector are interrelated, we will be able to preserve and even increase the level of success enjoyed by the whole sector.

By proposing these amendments today, we recognize that, even in a changing world, the Canadian agricultural and agri-food sector can continue to play an important role at the international level.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-49 which we are debating on third reading this afternoon would amend the Department of Agriculture Act.

Mainly, this bill adds the term "agri-food" to the department's name. Like the minister, his secretary of state said in his speech on second reading of this bill that it is important to change the title of the act.

This emphasizes that Agriculture Canada's field of activity is not limited to helping farmers. Indeed, their economic future is closely tied to processing, distribution, marketing and of course research and development at all levels of these various products. It is essential to deal with the whole cycle of farm products.

As agriculture critic for the Official Opposition, I can tell you that we in the Bloc Québécois will not oppose this bill.

(1620)

Nevertheless, as my colleague from Jonquière said on second reading of this bill, changing the department's name will in no way solve other thorny problems, including overlap with the provinces. What farmers, like pork producers in Quebec, want is not a change in the name of the Department of Agriculture. They do not want a change of deputy minister. What our pork producers in Quebec want is a government that works for them.

For example, regarding pork exports in particular, what has the minister done to clear up the mystery surrounding the reproductive and respiratory syndrome in pigs? Nothing. What did the federal agriculture minister do to reassure the nine countries importing pork, namely Russia, Argentina, Venezuela, Australia, Uruguay, Panama, Korea, Denmark and South Africa? Nothing. What did he do to reassure Quebec's maple syrup producers? Nothing.

Quebec's maple syrup producers do not care whether the department is called the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. What they want is that department to help them sell their product at a fair, reasonable and, above all, stable price. Last Sunday, I met a producer who told me that he had sold maple syrup, in bulk, for \$1.62 a pound. Some people and friends told him that this price was too low and that he should wait until the end of the fall to sell the syrup produced in the spring.

So, that person waited until last month and instead of getting \$1.62 he only got \$1.47, which is 15 cents less. That price does not even cover production costs. These costs keep increasing year after year, while the selling price of maple syrup is almost constantly getting lower. In fact, one can now buy maple syrup for much less than in 1980. This gives you an idea why Quebec producers do not care about the name of the agriculture department. What they want is results.

What did the federal Department of Agriculture do to stabilize prices? Nothing. What budget did it allocate for research and development in the maple syrup industry? None. The result is accumulated surpluses in Quebec, where 90 per cent of all the maple syrup in the world is produced. I come from the region of Plessisville, the national capital of maple syrup; I know what I am talking about and I can tell you that we produce the best maple syrup in the world.

(1625)

We have surpluses and if the government would only take the trouble to release funds for research, we could surely find some new attractive outlets. Just the other day, the former Liberal Minister of Agriculture, Eugene Whelan—I can give you his name since he is not here—said: "In the agriculture industry, \$1 invested in research later yields \$7." I told Mr. Whelan: "I am no businessman but I can count. If you can guarantee me a seven-fold return over seven, eight or ten years, I am willing to sell everything I own and to invest the money in your research and development company. I am ready to do it if I am to get a seven-fold return."

What has the Canadian Department of Agriculture done to ensure income security for Quebec farmers in supply-driven sectors such as milk, eggs and chicken? Not much. What has this famous department done to find more new outlets for dairy products, eggs and chicken? Not much. Surely, changing the name of the department will not make it any more efficient. We need to change our ways. We have to be willing to change our ways. The department is not doing anything. And the Bloc Québécois will keep nagging at it until it decides to act, because the farming community is fed up with this stagnation.

Government Orders

What has Agriculture Canada done or what will it do in the short or medium term to support young farmers, to ease the transfer of family farms from one generation to the next? Nothing.

My neighbour bought a hog farm not far from us. He went to the Farm Credit Corporation, the federal agency, to negotiate his loan the day after New Year's Day and was able to sign the contract the day after Canada Day. It took exactly six months for him to get the necessary financing. I should tell you that he nearly lost the opportunity to buy this farm. And, in buying it, he created a job for himself, for his brother and for another person.

For Quebec's farmers, the Department of Agriculture seems rather sluggish and unwilling to help. So much so that last week, during our recess, whether my government colleagues like it or not, I toured my riding where nearly 20 per cent of my constituents depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihood and I submitted them to a test. I just love tests. I asked them: "Do you know who Quebec's new Minister of Agriculture is?" Eight out of ten said that it was Marcel Landry, a member from the Gaspé Peninsula, and some of them were even able to name his riding, Bonaventure. Then I asked them: "Could you tell me who the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa is?" I could not find anyone, Mr. Speaker, who was able to tell me the name of the Minister of Agriculture sitting right in front of me. Nobody could. Perhaps it is because he went too often to Quebec or spoke to Quebec producers in their own language, listened to their concerns, their needs, the solutions they had to propose, I do not know, but the fact is that they do not even know his name. Let us hope that he is better known in his own riding than he is in Quebec within the farming community of my riding.

(1630)

What did the government do to promote global marketplace access for our producers? I listened carefully a few moments ago to the Secretary of State who said he was going to favour this, to develop that, to open our borders. Our farmers are fed up with talk. They want action.

This afternoon, someone pointed out that next week would mark the first anniversary of the Liberals' coming to office, on October 25. Let me tell you that the Liberals are slapping themselves on the back for winning such a clear majority, 98 seats out of 99 in Ontario, almost a perfect record. One hundred per cent in the Maritimes. There is one lady there who was elected—

An hon. member: Fifty per cent of the Tory caucus!

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Indeed, 50 per cent of the Tory caucus. But even there, one out of approximately twenty, and 98 out of 99 in Ontario. Fine. But in Quebec, the results were not so fantastic. Except for the English-speaking ridings and the Outaouais, they were elected in two predominantly French-

speaking ridings, apart from the riding of Saint-Maurice which elected the Prime Minister, have elected Liberals. Of course, no expense was spared in Saint-Maurice. And let us not forget that in Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, they won by a very narrow margin. These things must be pointed out.

Nevertheless, I would like to put another question to the Liberal government: What has the Department of Agriculture done to reduce acid rain? As you know, acid rain affects the soil. Year after year, we check the pH balance and we find that the acidity level is too high. When flowers and strawberries grow in crop fields, that is bad news. Children like that, they can pick them. But farmers know very well it means that the pH level is too high and must be lowered, and that costs a lot of money. Lime is getting more and more expensive. The riding of Frontenac is getting acid rain and as we know, this riding and the Eastern Townships are where acid rain conditions are the worst in eastern Canada. This is not because there are industries in Frontenac because we have almost none, except for asbestos mines and a few small and medium-sized firms. The acid rain is not caused by industries in Montreal. A good part of it comes from Ontario but for the most part it comes from the American Midwest.

What have my Liberal friends done to compensate farmers and help them eliminate the acid rain that seeps through the soil? Every year farmers must buy lime to lower the pH level in order to have decent crops. Year after year, farmers see their production costs rise and their gross income decrease.

(1635)

What has the Minister of Agriculture done and what does he intend to do for farmers with respect to the global warming problems? It is all very well to say that, over the last 50 years, the temperature has risen by 3.2 degrees centigrade. Some people are smiling at the thought of lower heating costs. But the problem is not so simple. Far from it.

The Department of the Environment is not alone in having a role to play. The Department of Agriculture is also in for trouble. What has it done? Nothing. What has the Minister of Agriculture done to reach a reasonable and acceptable agreement between his department and the Department of the Environment? Nothing.

To illustrate, one of my constituents called me last week. He was desperate. Let me tell you briefly what happened to him. Three or four years ago, a fire destroyed his farm, leaving only the foundations. People in my region are very supportive, you know, so we pulled together, we all contributed money according to our means and we organized a bee, as we often do in the Beauce area, and we rebuilt the barn following all the standards set by the Department of the Environment. We had obtained permits to build on the same spot.

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A river runs very close to the barn, perhaps 700 or 800 meters away, 1,000 meters at the most. In May, the farmer applied for a permit to the Department of the Environment to build a liquid manure tank. Believe it or not, last week, he was still waiting for his permit to dig a manure pit. Why? "You are too close to the river". After being granted a permit to build a \$450,000 barn four years ago, why is he being told today that a permit cannot be delivered because he is too close to the river and why do they make him wait for a permit to dig a manure pit?

You see, too often, it seems as though, in some departments, the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. Merely changing a name will not help to improve foolish situations like this one.

What has the Department of Agriculture done to improve rural services? I was about to say: "Nothing." But another department has chosen to close down some post offices, arguing: "They are not profitable".

An hon. member: Not any more.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Not any more, you say? But they did. Stop kidding me, they did. They closed down some post offices.

How about the road conditions. You could tell me: "The province of Quebec has jurisdiction over this issue". It is true, but what did you do four years ago? You cut transfers to the provinces. What did Mr. Ryan, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, do? He transferred \$500 million of expenses to the municipalities. Municipal governments do not have the money, the technology nor the know-how to maintain the smaller municipal roads.

(1640)

Can you imagine the 1,500 municipalities of Quebec each buying a grader, a salt-spreader, a small bulldozer and a backhoe. It does not make any sense!

I know where the Minister of Finance is heading! Of course, it is not the Minister of Agriculture, but his good old buddy. The Minister of Finance will cut transfer payments to the provinces. He is paving the way for this announcement. He has promised not to increase taxes, but last night, on the news, he did say that they never promised such a thing. In the red book, there was a promise—but now they have discovered a gaping hole. They will not be able to fulfil their commitments; they will need more time.

I can see where he is heading! He is going to transfer part of the federal deficit to provincial and municipal governments, again at the expense of rural Canada.

I visited a small town whose 500 residents are concerned with gas supply. Standards for gas tanks are very strict and since it is too expensive and not cost-efficient to dig out old tanks and replace them by new ones, gas is not sold there any more. These people must drive 15 kilometres to buy gas. That is what it means to live in rural communities.

As for government services, since regional offices are not cost-efficient, they are closed down. People will just have to go to the city. As it happens, MAPAQ services were closed in Disraeli. Granted, Ottawa had nothing to do with this but these services were closed and people must now go to Thetford. If you need to have an autopsy carried out on a dead animal, you can no longer go to Sherbrooke. You have to go instead to Saint-Georges de Beauce.

These are small irritants people have to live with in rural areas. People are telling us it is not fun any more to live in the country, and that they want to move to the city to earn a living. Young farmers are fewer and fewer.

What has the Liberal government done this past year? After all, it will be a year next week since it took power. What has it done to help young farmers? Nothing.

One thing we must recognize is that this bill to change the name of the department includes amendments to update the real mission of Agriculture Canada. Therefore, this measure is part of a vast process of reorientation and redefinition which the government is going through with respect to this department's future.

It is in that context that during the next year, the Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food will try to redefine the future of agriculture in Canada. Let me tell you that this is a big challenge because considering the current economic and political conditions, one thing is sure, and that is that it is absolutely necessary to find a direction for the future of agriculture.

I submit that our discussions on Canadian agriculture must be based on the following three factors: First, the willingness to respect the provinces' priorities. I tell you, Mr. secretary of state, that if the priorities of the provinces are not respected, you are sure to fail. Second, the recent trade deals signed by Canada, in particular GATT and NAFTA. And third, the ability to balance the interests of the various regions fairly. It is not without reason that Quebec's farmers have great difficulty naming the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. There are hidden reasons and I know them.

(1645)

There is nothing wrong with amending the act governing the Department of Agriculture with a view to planning the direction that Canadian agriculture will take in the future. However, before redefining anything, it is important to ensure that the provinces' work plans are fully respected.

In Quebec, this consultation and orientation process concerning the future of agriculture has already begun. Following Quebec's development model, the various players in the agricultural community have undertaken an extensive reflection effort. Let us just mention the *États généraux du monde rural* and the Trois-Rivières Summit which resulted in a series of real commitments. Quebec took the lead in laying down the principles on which that province's agricultural future will be built. It would be inconceivable that the federal government, the Liberal government, would establish national standards that are inconsistent with its own priorities and development goals.

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Therefore, it is essential that any initiatives undertaken reflect the priorities set by the provinces.

Another problem that should be examined is the provisions in the free trade agreements affecting Canada. With market globalization, we recognize that all trade areas will have to redefine their orientations. The main goal is to allow farmers from Canada and Quebec to be able to compete internationally. Agriculture is an important and well established industry in Quebec as well as in Canada. It is essential that it remain so and that we take greater advantage of its export potential.

It is all very nice to export, but it is even better to export processed products, commonly referred to as value-added products. We have just been told that value-added exports are stagnating whereas we are exporting wheat that we import later under a processed form, for instance as flour. Japan is doing that to us. The Japanese buy our wheat, refine it and then re-export it as flour. If Japanese are bright enough to mill our wheat and resell it to other countries as flour, I wonder why we could not do the same here at home. This would provide jobs to our people, and in so doing we would be promoting job creation and economic recovery. We need more than mere words, we need action. We have to get going.

GATT and NAFTA herald deep changes in the workings of international trade. That is why Quebec and Canada must have a clear and specific agenda.

(1650)

It is important at this point to mention negotiations on durum wheat. My colleagues in the Reform Party dealt extensively with that in the agriculture and agri-food committee. Those negotiations should teach us a lesson. If our arguments are flawed, and if our action plan is defective and outdated, we will knuckle under to major league players like the United States.

The government and the agriculture department had an ideal case with durum wheat. They had all they needed to play a good hand of poker, but they ended up sharing the pot. This does not bode well for the future. It is therefore becoming urgent that we plan our strategies and solve the difficult problem of Canadian trade deals. I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Which comes first, GATT or NAFTA? Let me say this once more. Which takes precedence?

I do not want to hear anything like sometimes it is the GATT and sometimes it is the NAFTA and in some cases neither one because they are equal. Which one takes precedence? As long as this question remains unanswered, any assumptions on the markets for agricultural products will only be a smoke screen.

When we talk about negotiations, the issue of regional disparities always comes up. Agriculture is one of the best examples of this dead end debate. The heart of the problem is that in a negotiation process, you must compromise in order to make gains you consider crucial. You cannot win it all, but you cannot lose it all either. How can we speak for the key sectors of all provinces with one single voice?

Canada is a vast country and, as my colleague the hon. member for Richelieu said so very well, it is quite a job to govern a country. How could we speak for the key sectors of ten provinces and two territories with one single voice? The GATT negotiations are a striking example of the fact that one voice cannot speak for all regions of Canada. In Western Canada, the priority is grain exports; in the East, it is quota controlled productions.

There is no denying that Canada's failure with regard to Article XI.2(c) of GATT is a good example of these opposite interests. In December, a few months after being elected member of the federal riding of Frontenac, I went incognito to a meeting organized by UPA in Saint-Georges-de-Beauce—I remind you that I am also a farmer. At that time, the GATT negotiations were going full steam. I wanted to find out the farmers' opinion on the matter. I walked in and, although I was recognized by a few people, I could sit in a corner with a few friends and listen to the chief economist of UPA. This man is a professor at Laval University and also the owner of a dairy farm in the Drummondville area. He explained very simply what the negotiations involved.

(1655)

I must say that the 500 producers present at the meeting were very concerned. The older farmers especially were worrying about their retirement, because their milk quotas represented their retirement savings. Clearly they worried about their future: "I invested in milk quotas. I was counting on the sale of this quota to retire". They were unable to give him a satisfactory answer.

Most farmers do have RRSPs. Today, during question period, the finance minister was asked once again if, in the next budget, he was going to tax RRSPs. His answer was neither yes nor no.

If the Liberal government decides to tax RRSPs, I hope that the agriculture minister, totally unknown by Quebec farmers, will stand up and speak with one voice for all the farmers in Quebec and Canada. This is their pension fund. The government changes the rules at the very last minute. This is totally unacceptable.

In Quebec, we believe that the future of agriculture lies in shifting power to the regional decision-making units which are more sensitive to local realities. Unfortunately, shared jurisdiction in agriculture and the very diverse interests of the main agricultural areas in Canada leave very little room for initiative on the part of Quebec farmers.

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The Bloc Québécois believes that sovereignty is the indispensable tool which will allow Quebec agriculture to fare better. I want to stress that bills like the one before us this afternoon are surely very important, but we should keep in mind that there are other urgent issues to deal with.

Bill C-49 reflects the government's desire to make changes within the Department of Agriculture. I sincerely hope that it will meet the provinces' concerns and that the government will not take advantage of this to confuse further the issue of provincial jurisdiction.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and his secretary of state that it is not by changing a name that they will solve the agricultural problems in Quebec. It will take the will to change, and things have to change.

(1700)

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, 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 Mississauga West—Pearson International Airport; the hon. member for Calgary West—The Constitution.

[*English*]

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit when I first laid eyes on Bill C-49 I had no idea it would be so convoluted and complicated. Today we have heard two speeches that went into great detail and involvement in the department of agriculture. Certainly I had no reason to expect what we saw yesterday with the amendments in Bill C-49. There were voice votes and all matters of things I had not anticipated we would see in a bill that I originally thought was a very lackluster one containing absolutely nothing.

The federal department of agriculture certainly needs more than just a name change. As laudable as Bill C-49 is, to reflect the reorganization of the department made in June 1993 we need to do much more to restore hope for the future in the agriculture industry. Today I would like to place before this House a proposal for reforming the entire jurisdictional areas of the agriculture industry.

My proposal builds on statements and ideas put forward in this House by my colleagues on this side beginning last May. It also reflects the ideas that are being generated and talked about by many farmers, academics, and farm leaders right across this country. There is a real momentum building to radically alter and redesign how governments and industry function together in

agriculture, in other natural resource sectors and the other many sectors of our society.

This is an issue where people are way ahead of governments in their thinking, their ideas, and their proposals. It is time to lay those ideas and those proposals out on the table to look at them honestly and openly, to have the debate and discussion needed to move forward. I am not suggesting in any way that what I will share today will be the final word in the way things should ultimately be but, it is a starting point for discussion and dialogue.

Our proposal builds on Reform's vision for reconfederating agriculture on the basis of a clearer division of responsibilities for both levels of government and for the industry. It also lays the foundation for a new visionary, comprehensive and cohesive Canadian agri-food policy.

The new governance system proposed here calls for decisions to be made at the lowest most local level at which decisions can reasonably be made. The task of the larger unit is to assist or support the individual industry or more local government bodies in carrying out these tasks. This new governance entails a devolution of senior government responsibilities to the provincial and local levels and to the industry and the citizens themselves.

Consequently we should have a leaner and more strategic senior level of government to deal with norms, standards, general directions and values over and beyond the managerial tasks that can be handled effectively at that level. The system would be more community owned with the federal government in a more catalytic role. It would call for local and provincial governments to minister to the public and to deliver the service best adapted to the diverse needs of different communities.

Such devolution might entail a Canadian governance system of the year 2020 in which a small percentage of the agri-food civil service will be federal. It would be organized into small units concerned with longer term national policy in the areas of trade arrangements, financial support, and safety and health standards. Again, although there is an attempt in this proposal to more clearly delineate jurisdictional responsibilities in the agri-food sector, this does not mean an absolutely watertight allocation of tasks among players.

This new system of governance tries to reconcile contradictory tendencies, for example the need to be global in outlook but local in application, to be small and big, to be centralized and decentralized, to be capable of generating both freedom and justice for all the players. This therefore must and will be an ongoing process of learning.

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(1705)

This proposal complements the current study being undertaken by the Liberal government in its effort to downsize government programs and departments. The Liberal study is based on six questions that each department asks itself.

The questions are: Does the program or activity continue to serve the public interest? Is there a legitimate and necessary role for government in this program or activity? Is the current role of the federal government appropriate, or is the program a candidate for realignment with the provinces? What activities or programs could or should be transferred in whole or in part to the private or volunteer sector? If the program or activity continues, how can its efficiency be improved? Lastly, is the result and package of programs and activities affordable within the fiscal constraint and if not, what programs or activities would be abandoned?

By thinking hard about these matters now we can help lead the way to a sound future for the agri-food industry. This proposal forms a theoretical basis for examining how agri-food programs currently in existence at both levels of government and in the industry could be reformed, removed or reassigned. As such, it is a prerequisite step for proposals we would make about federal budget cuts, savings and expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I will not be able to continue my speech as I cannot get a word out of my voice. I would just like to ask the Chair if I can take my leave right now.

The Deputy Speaker: Certainly. Would somebody wish to carry on and give the speech for the hon. member?

Mr. Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, if it is all right, I would just defer at this point in time.

The Deputy Speaker: Does that mean nobody wishes to speak on behalf of the Reform Party at this point in the debate?

Mr. Kerpan: Mr. Speaker, maybe we could move on to the next speaker and that will be fine.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to participate in the debate on third reading of Bill C-49, an act to establish the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Our farm community has many concerns today. I used to farm. I was not a full time farmer. I was a part time farmer but I certainly realized very shortly that farming is a lot of hard work and not a lot of money.

I would like to deal with two concerns that our farm community has today and possibly address how our government is dealing with them. They deal with general financing and also with intergenerational transfers and farm properties.

In my riding agriculture is a very significant enterprise where gross agricultural production is second only to General Motors. From Bowmanville to Orono to Port Perry and Uxbridge farm-

ing is a major way of life. It is a community that has developed over 100 years of agricultural background. One thing I have noticed is that our farm community is aging. The average age of the Canadian farmer is about 54 years.

I have spoken in this House and in committees about the need for small business to seek access to new forms of capital. Indeed, the industry committee which I sat on has just put out a report on access for growing small business. All too often we forget that farms are small businesses as well and they have significant problems in dealing with their banks. When I was farming every spare dollar I had went back into the farm, into equipment and new buildings. As a consequence, farmers have very little cash flow.

(1710)

Over this last break I had the opportunity to talk with some of the local bank managers. Many of my constituents who are farmers have expressed the major concern that they are having a hard time dealing with their banking enterprises. These are not people who started farming overnight; they have had long term credit ratings with their banks, possibly 15 or 20 years. I talked to some of the managers. One of them commented that the banks no longer want to make evergreen loans. I had never heard that expression before so I asked him to explain. He told me that an evergreen loan is one the banks consider never gets repaid. I suppose the analogy is that evergreen trees never shed their needles; similarly the banks do not want to make loans they think will not be repaid.

Quite frankly, I thought that to be rather preposterous. I can remember not too many years ago that the last thing a bank wanted to do was have its loans repaid, because obviously once forming a good credit relationship with a farming enterprise it went on for decades and decades. A relationship was formed with these people.

Farmers need to finance numerous things on the farm. The two basic ones however are the financing of livestock inventory and the financing of next year's crops. Like any other small and medium sized business, as it grows it continually needs that degree of financing. By definition, it is not money that is paid off every year. In fact in a sense it becomes a fixed asset or liability of the farm. It becomes what we used to call a hard core loan, something that is there all the time; the farmer pays his interest on it and the banks make their profits on it and everybody is happy.

We have discovered that the banks have changed their attitude to all kinds of sectors of small and medium sized businesses. Farmers are feeling this very hard pinch as well. The banks are saying they want their loans paid off. They have also become a little different; they are now brokers of money as opposed to bankers. That means every time someone wants to borrow money the banks will charge a fee. They charge all kinds of setup fees.

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Worse than that, I have clients in the farming business who have been with a bank for 15 or 20 years and they are now being asked to do all kinds of financial reporting. These are things the banks used to do internally and now they are telling the farmers to hire professionals to get all this work done. Of course the farmer is in a very precarious situation. He owes the bank \$100,000. He may have a half million dollars worth of assets but he cannot pay the \$100,000 back tomorrow without selling his cattle or getting rid of all his crops, or not planting next year's crops. In a sense the farmer is in a bad position so he has to comply.

I am a chartered accountant and my own profession would love to deal with the extra business from that source. But the reality is and the question is, is it necessary? Is this a necessary expense to farmers? I suggest that along with some of the studies that have been done in the industry committee that we also focus on small business loans to farmers.

I look at the banks and their pampered position in this country. There are special tax laws for banks. There are even laws that allow them to create money. What better operation can you have than that, when you can lend money that you do not even have? These are the rights of the banking sector. We have to look at those rights and privileges and reflect on what they are doing to our farm community.

One of the recommendations made by the industry committee was the possibility of regional banking. People can think back to the early 1900s when there were such things as farmers banks. The local people could form their own banking enterprises so that the smart alec MBAs from Bay Street are not telling them whether or not they can buy that new combine or manure spreader, even though they may have more of an affinity for the latter than the former. These are some of the aspects of capitalizing small business. I think our government is very interested and very concerned about moving in the area of improving access to capital for farmers.

(1715)

I would like to deal with the aspect of retiring farmers. As I mentioned in my opening remarks the average Canadian farmer is 54 years old. One of the exemptions that they have under the Income Tax Act today is a \$500,000 lifetime exemption for capital gains. I would like to discuss capital gains in relation to farming.

The reality is that the capital gains tax, in spite of what the people in finance might tell us from time to time, generally speaking does not exist on the farm. In fact what it represents is inflation. In other words, what was the value of the farm in the 1950s and what is the value of the farm today. If we go back and extrapolate the real value of money we discover the farmer in fact has not gained anything.

He has however taken every spare cent he has and buried it in that farm property. That is his retirement income. He does not

have a retirement savings plan. Maybe some do, but very few just by the nature of the business itself.

Finance from time to time talks about \$2.2 million lost revenue from this deduction for farmers. The reality is that it is not lost money at all. It is money that does not exist. It is a tax on inflation.

I draw that to the attention of the House. Presumably the finance minister will also feel similarly impressed that this is something we have to maintain in order to assist our farmers to make orderly transfers of their farm property to another generation or even to retire completely from farming.

My second point is where Agriculture Canada and more specifically the Farm Credit Corporation have been active in assisting our farm community. Only recently Farm Credit Corporation introduced a new mortgage plan for farmers. Some of that will relate to farmers who are retiring and turning it over to their sons or daughters and some of it will involve farmers who are retiring from farming completely. Generally speaking this program will assist retiring farmers to transfer their properties to another generation.

All too often farmers stay with the farm away beyond the time they should turn it over to another generation. Usually the problems are financial. Farming is hard physical work. Obviously at 54 we should have thought about retiring or becoming a manager long before this.

Farm Credit Corporation has devised a mortgage instrument. It is a little complex but I will explain it briefly. If the farmer wants to sell his farm for say \$100,000, his son will have to come up with 10 per cent of the proceeds, \$10,000. Farm Credit Corporation will then advance \$40,000, up to 40 per cent of the sale price to the retiring farmer. He will have \$50,000 or half of the proceeds of the sale on the day of sale. The balance of the money is paid to the retiring farmer over a maximum five year period. It could be a shorter period than that.

The other side of that is the retiring farmer only receives the interest on the \$40,000. The new farmer, his son or daughter, will pay full mortgage payments. More and more money is being applied against the principal and only a small portion is paid toward the interest on the \$40,000.

This is another good idea that Farm Credit Corporation has which is going to assist the new farmer to build up equity in the farm and assists the retiring farmer to get his money out of the farm.

(1720)

What is the catch? Generally speaking the retiring farmer is not going to receive interest on as much as \$50,000 over that short period of fiscal time. However, most farmers I know realize and in fact I have heard it mentioned many, many times in the farm community that if we charge over 10 per cent interest we are going to get the farm back.

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Most farmers are knowledgeable about the concept. They would be happy to reduce the amount of their real interest with the concept that they are going to get their cash flow out of the farm.

This is one area where the Government of Canada through Agriculture Canada and the Farm Credit Corporation has added a very specific and useful instrument to assist the farm community to make intergenerational transfers.

I conclude with the remark that these are some of the things we will have to take into account when dealing with our agricultural sectors, the problems they have with their banks, the fact that they must retain their \$500,000 lifetime exemption. The Government of Canada has heard their concerns about intergenerational transfers and it is trying to do something very positive in assisting them.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the hon. member for Durham had to say when he talked about financing for intergenerational transfers. I will comment very briefly and would appreciate the hon. member's comments as well.

I know quite a few farmers who need a very substantial line of credit. The problem is, however, that the bank or credit union charges very high interest rates on this line of credit, because it does not pay for the farmer to mortgage his farm, his house or part of his property to get the loan.

I am reminded of one of my friends who bought a quota in the spring, a very substantial quota worth \$35 per kilo of butter fat, not produced, and then ran into some bad luck. He had to replace, and he had not budgeted for this, his baler, bale-cata-pult and four-wheel drive which all broke down at some point, and at the end of the haying season, he had to replace his mower-conditioner as well.

This was money he had to spend right away. He could not afford to waste three weeks looking around for financing. He needed the money yesterday. He could not afford to wait, because every minute counts when the haying season is under way. So he increased his line of credit and had to pay much higher interest.

Perhaps the hon. member for Durham could suggest that his government set up some form of assistance, so that farmers could have a line of credit based on their income as reported on the previous year's tax return. The interest would be paid largely by the Farm Credit Corporation or else the FCC, which he mentioned earlier, could provide financing in a few cases when farmers are hard pressed. As I said before, a farmer cannot afford to wait six months. The money would have to be available within a week.

I would appreciate the comments of the hon. member for the Liberal Party.

[English]

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

First, the Farm Credit Corporation does have a program of what is called variable rate mortgages. The reality is that Farm Credit usually takes its credit by way of a mortgage on fixed property so it is usually the mortgage on the farm.

(1725)

I think what the hon. member is really addressing is more of a demand for what we would call working capital. The reality is that there is a great void between our banking sector and how it operates and how farms operate. As the hon. member has mentioned, it is because there is always a degree of uncertainty on the farm. There is always the possibility that hailstones will wipe out your crop. There are countless problems.

In my brief encounter with farming it seemed that the equipment would always break down on a Sunday when nothing was open. It goes on and on and on. These are the problems of farming.

To address the specific intent of the question, I think it goes back to some of the things that I was saying. Our financial sector genuinely is not set up to really deal with farmers. The banking sector, which has always been a short term lender, is becoming more and more of a short term lender and wants its money back every year. It wants to be able to be flexible. It wants to be fluid. Farms are just the reverse of that. Farms are long term commitments to capital. In other words, there is a breakdown in the financial structure of that system.

We have realized through the Industrial Development Bank that in the business sector there is this problem of obtaining long term capital. I think it is an apropos question to ask how we can reform the credit lending system for agriculture. Maybe this goes back to my first comment. Maybe we should think about things like schedule 3 banks, regional banks, a farm bank where farmers will understand as creditors of that bank and as lenders and depositors the problems of banking. I think that is possibly one way we could address that issue.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member about the Farm Credit Corporation. The member referred to a particular program that the Farm Credit Corporation offers.

I would like to ask whether the Farm Credit Corporation is needed any more. I have heard from managers, directors and members of the credit unions that they would like to fill the lending gap or would like to be lending the money that Farm Credit is lending now. They are asking if there really is a need for the Farm Credit Corporation and that is the first question I am asking you.

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The second question is along the same line. There is considerable money which should be available to farmers in any farming community. This money comes from retired farmers and in particular from within that community. Unfortunately what is happening now is retired farmers are concerned enough about the economy and the future of agriculture that they are investing the money mostly outside of the country now. This is as a direct result of the lack of resolve on the part of finance ministers for the past 10 to 20 years to eliminate the deficit and reinstate in Canada an air of confidence in the economy.

My question to you is do you believe it might be a wiser move to get rid of Farm Credit and use that as part of the budget balancing funds and indeed make that money available through private investors by creating this more positive atmosphere?

The Deputy Speaker: I take it the member for Vegreville wants the Chair to answer the question. I am making the point. Please, members, when they say you please refer to the Chair and the third person as an hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you very much for the question. I think the thrust of that question is whether there is still a need for a Farm Credit Corporation in this country. I am going to say yes, very much, in the affirmative. On some of the things that you are talking about concerning confidence in our economy, we are doing those things in a positive way as well.

The problem with financing in agriculture is the thing that I talked about which is the necessity for long term capital. Generally speaking, our capital markets have not addressed that, even in the residential mortgage business today. I can remember when everybody had a five year mortgage. Today it is down to two years or three years and people are playing around with that. That is another problem with residential mortgages.

(1730)

The United States has 30-year mortgages. Canada cannot come up with anything better than a five-year mortgage. It seems to be a dilemma of our capital markets. They are not large enough and strong enough to be able to address that concern.

We have a parallel situation in industry with the industrial development bank. In spite of what we might say—they have had a lot of management as all other banks have had—generally speaking the industrial development bank has been successful at addressing the issue of the need for long term capital. If private industry would come along and take that over we would all be very happy about it. The reality is that they are not prepared to take the risk.

In answer to the member's specific question, we still need something like the Farm Credit Corporation. Perhaps we should open up its doors. The hon. member talked about farmers who are investing overseas. In my area we would not have such a luxury. Perhaps too many subsidies are being directed to the member's area so these people have that kind of luxury.

They might invest in something like a farm credit corporation. That is a possibility. Perhaps we can cross the line and partially privatize it. Everybody wants to address the concerns of farmers for long term capital.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Landry (Lotbinière, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, my speech will deal with Bill C-49, an Act to amend the Department of Agriculture Act.

The Department of Agriculture being renamed the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food is something that we can understand. It goes without saying that the economic future of the agricultural sector depends not only on government assistance but also on the development of processing, marketing and distribution. I have questions on the last point, distribution, and on overlap. Agri-food processors often talk about the difficulties they encounter in distributing their products.

How can we develop the agri-food sector successfully without tackling the deficiencies of the distribution sector?

Let us take the example of fine cheeses, which are difficult to distribute. This small market could be profitable but transportation and market placement costs are exorbitant. Intercompany consultation could be a solution. The current distribution monopoly hurts processors. We could look at the example of the Quebec consultation forum on exportation, where businesses worked together to transport food products to new markets. The government has a responsibility to provide more information on these markets. There is room for improvement on its part in this area.

Such co-operation must be encouraged among wholesalers, who have a hard time competing with their American counterparts enjoying special access through U.S. subsidiaries established in some Canadian markets. These subsidiaries already have their own suppliers of cheaper U.S. products. That is why it is important for our wholesalers to work together to fight these American companies with a significant advantage.

Producers do not enjoy a power relationship with the distribution sector so they must co-operate on transportation to become more competitive. Joint price setting by producers, processors and, of course, the government must not be done at the expense of producers.

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With respect to overlap, we see, once again, that the government did not take it into account in drafting a bill. The minister of agriculture did not say clearly that his bill would save Quebecers from paying twice for the same services. This happens all too often, unfortunately.

As I already pointed out in a previous debate on agriculture in this House, industry and government in Quebec have worked together for a very long time to implement market-winning strategies. Meanwhile, the federal government sets up programs that conflict or overlap with provincial programs, thus wasting public funds.

(1735)

This also increases the debt, which surely displeases the Minister of Finance. When the government imposes its policies, does it realize that these do not always, and I would even say not often, fit in with the priorities and development approaches of those who work in the sector concerned?

Let me remind you of some of the objectives which came out of the summit conference on rural Quebec in 1991: respect and promotion of regional and local values; co-operation among regional and local partners; diversification of the regional economic base; protection and regeneration of resources; a top-down shift of political power. From this conference arose the co-operative councils, which have proven their effectiveness. The federal government does not take these objectives into account at all in developing its programs.

The government should stop trying to direct farming, but should consider farmers as business people when it supports regional entrepreneurship. It must distinguish agricultural development policies from regional development policies and encourage farmers themselves to realize the importance of environmental issues as a way to promote agriculture. Those are provisions we could have found in this bill.

It is all very well to agree with the spirit of this bill, but nothing prevents us from seeing that there is still a big potential for overlap. Some activities that overlap? Here are some: The Canadian and Quebec governments both support farmers. They both promote the development of markets, research initiatives, as well as inspections of agricultural products.

The fact that the Department of Agriculture will become the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food confirms the greater responsibility of that department. It will no longer simply help producers, because the future of the agricultural sector is dependent on the processing, marketing and distribution of products. The minister made it clear in this House last month. Needless to say that the new department will have to help our producers become more competitive and self-sufficient in relation to foreign producers, and will also have to ensure the future of our agricultural sector.

The bill provides that the minister will assume his responsibility in the field of research, which is essential. Indeed, with the opening of world markets, the department should play an active role in that regard.

I will conclude by asking the minister to look at the issue of overlapping as well as the distribution problems experienced by processors, which I referred to earlier. Then, the new name of his department could be a meaningful change.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of farmers in my riding, and as you know, farming is a major industry in Eastern Quebec, in the province as a whole and, of course in Canada.

I was again very interested to hear the hon. member's comments, but I was surprised at this tendency to ignore what the Government of Canada does for a sector that is so important to Quebecers and especially to the people in the Gaspé.

I had the privilege of working with the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec in my riding, where we handed over a cheque of \$84,000 to develop a small-fruit industry, as part of a program to provide new incentives for local farmers to grow new products for local, provincial and even international markets.

I would also like to point out that the same people have already contacted me, and I am referring to representatives of the UPA and farm producers, especially in the dairy sector, to set up a program for regional processing of milk and cheese.

(1740)

These people came to see the Government of Canada. They came to see their federal member. However, they have yet to receive an answer, and people may have the impression that their member is the Minister responsible for Agriculture in the riding of Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and has not bothered to respond.

I took this project very seriously. I transmitted it to the Federal Office of Regional Development, because we want to show local people that the federal government is prepared to work with them, in partnership with farmers, the Government of Quebec and all the agencies concerned.

An hon. member: Question.

Mr. Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): So I am very surprised, and I realize we are on questions and comments, but just the same, if we are talking about agriculture and research, including research on cattle, I repeat, the federal government has made a commitment to develop new technologies, but unfortunately, once again we hear the Bloc Québécois setting themselves up as the defenders of the public service. I do not claim to defend the public service. I defend and promote the

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interests of farmers in the Gaspé. And when I hear the opposition defending the public service, I have my doubts.

Mr. Landry: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to respond to my colleague opposite. There is one thing that I would like to tell him about. Let us look, if you will, at maple syrup, where we have an over-production. Look at what is going on. I will go further than that by telling exactly to the government what happened in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Let us talk about potatoes. In New Brunswick, farmers produce potatoes; they are also produced in Quebec, and the federal government was subsidizing the New Brunswick potato growers so that they could go on the Quebec market.

Quebecers never got 5 cents to leave their area and go on the market, within their own province. So, I justify myself today; that is exactly what the federal government did, or give me some evidence to the contrary. The evidence that I have is that it has never been fair. I could also talk about many other issues.

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact, although the opposition seems to ignore it, that 48 per cent or the Canadian milk production comes from Quebec, and this is because of the quotas that were instituted by the federal government. It is thanks to the federal government which protected the Canadian market that Quebec could control 48 per cent of our milk production.

Potato farmers were mentioned once again. Let us talk about potato farmers, let us talk about maple syrup. I know what I am talking about, I used to work for a company abroad which tried to open up this market for Quebec producers. It is totally false to say that the federal government did nothing. In my riding, UPA received \$84,000, and you refuse to acknowledge that we paid more money to people who work in the field in order to diversify local production.

I am disappointed by the denials of the opposition. Once again, we only hear the separatist rhetoric, that real Quebecers do not want.

Mr. Landry: Mr. Speaker, in Quebec 24 per cent of the population works in the agricultural industry, but only 10 per cent of the agriculture budget goes to Quebec.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac, B.Q.): Only 10 per cent.

Mr. Landry: Only 10 per cent. I want equity. Once my colleague opposite gives us equal treatment, we will talk.

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that much remains to be done in agriculture. The hon. member must bear in mind however, that the federal government and several departments are working on finding ways to make programs more accessible to the Quebec producers. At any rate, I would like to point out to the hon. member that, as it happens, we are managing and considering programs in which producers are invited to get involved in biotechnology.

As it happens, there is program in my riding to encourage farm producers, these men and women who work the land, to try and find ways to perhaps introduce such products making use of new technologies, for the betterment of Canadians health and well-being.

(1745)

Of course, the opposition is none too pleased to hear such things, but as far as the entrepreneurs are concerned, when we talk about bank loans, about the implications for example of the involvement of the Federal Office of Regional Development, of the Federal Business Development Bank, it is all a matter of balance. What matters for Quebec producers, in terms of balance, is to make sure that there is a Canadian market in the first place.

I think that Quebec producers agree almost unanimously on the importance of the Canadian market and the need to maintain this market to compete with the United States.

Funds were made available to farmers, scientists, research workers, unions, labour organizations. The federal government has a role to play. Let us not forget it and let me tell you that it is often welcome, contrary to what the hon. member opposite claims.

Mr. Landry: Mr. Speaker, we were talking about fairness. That is a point I wish to raise. I would like to debate the issue of fairness.

In my riding in Quebec and elsewhere, we see young people who, after completing agricultural studies, want to start working on farms, or to buy family farms. There are many restrictions and requirements at the FCC. Young agricultural school graduates are not allowed to work in their field of study.

We in Quebec know what we need. I have nothing against them defending the federal government but I want fairness. As I said earlier using the figures I quoted, we have 24 per cent of the population but only 10 per cent of the budget. I am not asking the impossible; we should simply get our fair share per capita, that is, 24 per cent.

With respect to agriculture in Quebec, there is overlap and duplication. The party opposite has asked us to offer solutions. We do more than just criticize. The Official Opposition is not only to criticize but to propose solutions, as we saw this afternoon when we talked about tax shelters and family trusts. We indicated where cuts must be made and what is needed. We do more than just criticize. I am willing to criticize but also to offer solutions.

[*English*]

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address this bill as a politician and also as a farmer. I appreciated the comments of the last two hon. members because as a farmer I am a little hard of hearing. Finally I could understand the debate and it made my day a little

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happier. I do not want to comment on the remarks. I do not know how valuable they were but I could understand them.

When the bill was first proposed to the House we were briefed on it. I found it almost unbelievable that a new government would pick up on a suggestion that more or less was put to us by the previous government under Prime Minister Kim Campbell to reorganize this department. I felt that the bill would have at least contained some improvements to make the department more efficient or in some way give the Department of Agriculture a stronger voice in the House. I do not see anything of that. That is the point I would like to raise at this time.

If I as a farmer had not reorganized every year before I put the crop in, if I had not updated my machinery or improved my seed varieties, I do not think I could have survived. If I had gone out and purchased a different machine in a different colour and it had no more performance and did not do the job any better, although I had just spent a bunch of money, my neighbours would have thought me a little queer and I am sure I would not have survived very long.

(1750)

The government reminds me a little of the first self-propelled combine I owned. It had all the parts. It looked like a beautiful machine. I was so proud of that machine I was just dreaming of the day I could take it into the fields. By coincidence that machine was a faded red colour.

When I started up that machine there was noise. Boy, it really performed out in the yard. I said: "If this machine works like this in the fields I will get my crops off in half the time". However that is about where my joy ended.

When I put the combine in the field and pulled into the swath there were noises; loose chains, loose bearings, walkers banging. The worst part was that the cylinder was out of balance.

An hon. member: It sounds like a Liberal combine.

Mr. Hoepfner: Let me get to it. I am trying to get there. This was a tremendous experience. My hair stood on end. I was furious that I had been really duped into buying this machine. When that cylinder got some straw in it, it bounced around and almost left the ground. What were the results of this? I got very little work done all day.

It reminds me of this Liberal government. I have heard noises. I have heard: "Boy, we are going to do something for agriculture". Boy, we have accomplished very little. That cylinder I see in front, which I call the cabinet for comparison, I hear one member say "cut", the other one says "spend" and the agricul-

ture minister says: "Hold it members. Let us not do too much. We could be accused of doing something".

I was a little enthused the other night when all of a sudden I saw one of the standing committee members on that side making amendments that would make this bill of some value. He tried to balance that cylinder so it would run a little smoother. What did the majority of the members do? They shot him down, 90 per cent. The Bloc agreed and the Reform agreed. Finally we had an amendment that would have made this bill of some value.

What was the result of this? It was the same as with my combine. I got very little done. We have been two days on this bill and we still have not passed it.

It amazes me that people do not realize that when you put in a long day and only get little done the fuel tank still gets emptied. That is all we have received out of this debate so far. We have an empty fuel tank and when that happens we are going to be in big trouble.

Grain that should be in the bin is not in the bin. Grain that should be in the tank is mostly chaff and straw. It has no substance. Why do we pass bills like this when we should be talking about problems like provincial trade barriers and value added? Instead we are talking about building swimming pools and maybe adding a sports arena somewhere. We are forgetting that we may be hungry some day. Why are we even going through the motions here?

I would like to compare the tremendous amount of effort we have put into this bill to my tremendously efficient combine that went so slow that when I turned the corner I was usually lost in the dust and I could not find the next swath. People around me wondered if there was a driver in the machine. I get the same impression from this Liberal government. When we as a standing committee make suggestions to the government they just get shot down or forgotten. Ask me why.

(1755)

When we told the agriculture minister to stop the back-tracking and change the car allocation system, what did the government do? This was recommended by every member on that standing committee. The government did nothing. Is the Liberal government running this by remote control? Are the railways, or the grain companies or the unions running the government? Who is running it? Sometimes I wonder.

This bill reminds me of a lot of other bills. When we should have been addressing problems what did we do? We did the same thing as that old, faded out red combine did for me. It put the grain over the walkers back on to the ground and we are going to see it sprout and be ruined.

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That is what Parliament has done as far as agriculture is concerned. It makes me wonder when I see a bill which contains a clause like clause 6 which says that the agriculture minister can appoint any person to inspect any product, to control any act that he has anything to do with.

I will tell members why that bothers me. The government previous to this government and the agriculture minister tied the hands of the customs and revenue people and allowed unlicensed grain into the country. He set at risk the quality of our wheat. He set at risk the reputation that farmers had built up of growing a superior quality of grain. Not that he listened to farmers, he listened to a few individuals or self-interest groups.

This agriculture minister is going after illegal exports of grain, for which I must commend him, but why does he not prosecute those farmers under the wheat board act? Why does he have to enlist customs and revenue when they have nothing to do with it? Customs and revenue are there to prevent imports, not exports.

This is the type of bill I will not support. That is why I think clause 6 should not be in the bill.

I see I have taken my 10 minutes or so. I always like to end on a positive note. There is hope. One of these days we will have a green machine on that side. Then as farmers we will say when we see a green machine on the fields, it runs like a deer and we will see a government that runs slick, smooth and swift and we will get things done.

Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say to the member for Lisgar—Marquette that I thought the story of the combine was absolutely fantastic. However he missed the essential point. He should have told us why the operator, to wit himself, was punishing through with that kind of machinery. Why would he not do what we are doing with this bill? The time comes to refurbish, to trade your equipment in or at least refurbish it instead of trying to punish it out in the field with very low production. That is what this bill is all about.

The member for Lisgar—Marquette said something else and I wrote it down. I will probably get it framed. I want the House to realize, all my friends to realize—

Mr. Nunziata: Friends, which friends?

An hon. member: I'm his friend.

(1800)

Mr. Simmons: Are they ready for this now? Even the member for York South—Weston will appreciate this one, I am sure. The gentleman from Lisgar—Marquette said something just now that has to be absolutely historical. He sits with the group that said: "We are not politicians. We are going down there to get them politicians". He started his speech today beautifully. I

commend him as a politician and as a farmer. Welcome to the real world.

Mr. Hermanson: An honest politician.

Mr. Simmons: Now the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster wants to qualify it. There is only one kind of politician. Either he is a politician or not a politician. He should stop apologizing for it.

If we had the time—we certainly have the audience; there is no question about that—I would tell the House about agriculture in Newfoundland. There the combines do not break down. They are all green. Roadrunners, almost.

You will be interested to know, Mr. Speaker, in the very short time I have at my disposal that in my riding alone we have quite a diversity of farm activity.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Better green than red.

Mr. Simmons: Only yesterday I was musing with my friend here about how times have changed. This crowd came to Ottawa not to heckle. They were going to be pipsqueak quiet all the time. It is beautiful; I am feeling more at home with this crowd. I might join this crowd.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Simmons: I say to my friend from Winnipeg South that the idea of being the first Reform cabinet minister of Newfoundland and having my own clothing allowance had its appeal, but I said no. I said it was a good opener but it was not enough. I asked what else they had. It is a question of time.

Mr. Ramsay: At least we do not put our helmet on backwards, Roger.

Mr. Alcock: At least we wear one.

Mr. Simmons: That is his sin. That is the Prime Minister's sin, I say to the gentleman from Crowfoot. Is that a terrible sin? Is that a terrible gaff? Imagine, the member for Crowfoot has gone right to the nub of the issue. Some people, no matter how many helmets they put on or which way, would not protect anything important.

We can change the name of the department and the sooner we do it the better.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is the following one. Mr. Robichaud for Mr. Goodale, seconded by Mr. Chan, moved that Bill C-49, an act to establish the Department of Citizenship and Immigration—

Mr. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the din I did not hear the speaker ask for the next presenter this evening and I was prepared to give a presentation on Bill C-49.

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(1805)

The Deputy Speaker: There was a mistake in the form and I read the wrong bill. I asked if the House was ready for the question and I do not think I heard anybody say no.

Is the member indicating, and we always take a member's word on these matters, that he could not hear and generally wished to say that the House was not ready for the question?

Mr. Benoit: Yes, that is right, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair will always take a member's word on that. The hon. member for Vegreville.

Mr. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that very much.

The Deputy Speaker: It seems to me the member has already spoken in this debate. Am I not correct?

Mr. Hill (MacLeod): No.

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe you had already called the question and that you had moved on to begin reading the question. In fact there was substantial agreement among the three major parties in the House that we would allow the debate to collapse at this point and have a vote on division on this question.

Perhaps the hon. member who just rose might want to consult with his whip before he insists on making a speech at this particular time. The fact is that the question has been called and we should then go on with the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any other colleague wish to speak on this point of order, mostly including the whip or the acting whip of the Reform Party?

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, Reform had agreed that if the debate did collapse on the bill we would have the vote on division. However I was informed that the member for Vegreville intended to speak and had prepared a speech.

However in the din and the excitement between the speech of the hon. member for Lisgar—Marquette and the response of the member for Burin—St. George's I think he did not hear you, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, if the House would be agreeable, we would appreciate it if you would give him an opportunity to speak to Bill C-49.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I made some preliminary comments during my speech. I had intended to make a speech on the issue but I was informed there was an undertaking among the parties that there had been enough debate on the issue and that it was the general wish of the House to conclude the debate. I co-operated by sitting down and yielding 15 minutes of my time to allow the vote to go forward.

I think a deal is a deal. I appreciate the member for Vegreville would have liked to make some remarks on the matter. He should have told his whip or his House leader in due time so that could have been communicated as part of the deal. We had an arrangement here. We have observed the arrangement and in so doing I have forfeited my speaking time. I am sure there will be other opportunities for the member to participate in debate.

I would suggest that technically the Speaker has already put the question anyway. I believe the Speaker has effectively called for the question and I think we should get on with it.

Mr. Hermanson: The agreement was whether or not we would call a recorded division.

Mr. Simmons: I submit that the question has been put. I also submit that we had an arrangement and we should in honour stay with that particular arrangement.

Mr. Keyes: Mr. Speaker, not with the intention of leading the Chair but rather making a suggestion to the Chair, it has been precedence in the past that in some cases where this has arisen the Speaker recognized the request by the hon. member who may not have had the opportunity to rise in his place at the moment that was important. What that led to was a request for unanimous consent of the House to proceed with the member's request to make the speech. Maybe that could be the compromise the Chair might want to reach on this particular occasion.

(1810)

[Translation]

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, for our part, we would be ready to vote. However, if I understand correctly, I believe that the government is adamant on having a vote today.

On the other hand, the Reform Party wants one of its members to be allowed to speak. I think that we are running out of time. If we could have unanimous consent to prolong the debate in order to allow the Reform member to speak before proceeding with the vote, it would be satisfactory to all of us here. We all know that the vote will be taken on division. I believe that if there were unanimous consent to do so, everybody would be satisfied and this would put an end to these incessant points of order, clearing the way for a real debate on important matters.

[English]

Ms. Catterall: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member would take her seat for a moment, the time has expired for the debate unless there is unanimous consent from all the members not to see the clock for a few moments.

It was the Chair's understanding that there was an agreement by all parties to end the debate a moment before 6.12 p.m. and

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then the vote would be taken on division. On that understanding the Chair was not listening for anybody saying that he or she was not prepared to go ahead.

We are now in a very difficult position. I wonder if the deputy whip of the government party has something to propose.

Ms. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly prepared to accede to unanimous consent, provided the member for Vegreville displays the same courtesy to our agreement that the member for Burin—St. George's did and keeps his remarks equally brief. Otherwise we would have the position where one member was denied his speaking time. I hope he will respect that.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chairman: Is there unanimous consent to give the floor to the member for Végréville for a few minutes and then proceed with the vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for causing all the problem this evening. It was lack of experience on my part. Indeed I will keep my comments very brief. I will just hit on the points I was going to elaborate on in some detail.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Department of Agriculture Act to give effect to the government reorganization initiated by the previous government. For the most part it is an administrative bill. Its basic intention is to streamline and clarify the mandate of the department. Streamlining is consistent with Reform thinking but when streamlining is done there has to be a positive outcome, or at least Reformers demand a positive outcome.

In the case of the streamlining proposed in the bill there is only a very small efficiency added to the way the department operates. There is no indication at all of any cost saving, which is the other requirement of any streamlining. The bill falls far short of what any reorganizing bill should. It will not improve the efficiency of the department substantially and it will not cut the cost of operating the department.

The specific clause of the bill I would like to address again briefly is clause 7 that deals with reporting to Parliament. The bill recommends and, if it passes, will cause the reporting to Parliament to be removed. These annual reports have been around for some time.

Part III of the main estimates give more detail than the reports do in terms of how spending occurs within the department. The problem is that part III of the estimates do not give enough information to make the finances and spending of the department clear. I would propose this accounting to Parliament and

this report to Parliament should remain in the bill so that there is proper accountability.

(1815)

This is exactly what the hon. member for Malpeque was suggesting in his amendment which was shot down by his colleagues.

I am only asking for what the hon. member for Malpeque was suggesting in his amendment and nothing more. The parliamentary secretary to the minister when addressing this issue said: "Why keep the annual reports because they were always late anyway and they had very little in them?"

That does not sound like the way to handle a situation like this. If the annual reports were of very little value then the annual reports should be presented in a more timely fashion and with enough information to make them worth while.

There are two different views on how to handle a situation like this. I believe that by making these annual reports timely and meaningful that together with the main estimates this House and the people of Canada, to whom we are responsible, would be able to understand whether the spending within the department is done in an efficient and acceptable way or not.

The only other comment that I will make now in the extended time I was given is that the main estimates do not give enough information to make the spending by this department or any other department easy to understand. As evidence of this I would challenge any member opposite to a duel at high noon tomorrow.

Mr. Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): I will take you on.

Mr. Benoit: I will ask questions about the department. I will ask questions and using part III of the estimates, the hon. member will answer the questions. I hope there will be a taker for this challenge, certainly the parliamentary secretary or the minister. I will be absolutely delighted if this challenge is accepted.

I will end my remarks saying that we will not oppose this bill although there is very little in it for us to support.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.)

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's *Order Paper*.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Lib.) moved that Bill C-226, an act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity this evening to speak to Bill C-226, which I initially introduced in the last Parliament and reintroduced in this Parliament on March 17, 1994.

I would like to thank the chairman of the subcommittee on Private Members' Business, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, and other members of the committee for selecting this bill as a votable item. As you know Mr. Speaker, it means this bill at some point will be put to a vote in this House, a free vote. Every member will be called upon to exercise his or her discretion in saying either yes or no to repealing section 745 of the Criminal Code.

I am convinced, given the discussions I have had with a great number of my colleagues, that this bill will in fact become law in the not too distant future. I am convinced as well because of the overwhelming public support for the removal of this section from the Criminal Code.

Section 745 of the Criminal Code was introduced in 1976 when Parliament was debating the abolition of capital punishment. At that time there were a series of compromises and deals struck, presumably in the backrooms of the precincts of Parliament, in order for capital punishment to be abolished.

One of those deals or compromises was that in return for abolishing capital punishment there would be a law that said if you are convicted of first degree murder you have to serve a minimum of 25 years in prison before you become eligible for parole. That is not where our predecessors let it stand. A group of others decided that was cruel and unusual punishment. Before giving their support for abolishing capital punishment they argued that what became known as section 745, because they thought 25 years was too long, would give inmates faint hope that they could in effect apply for a reduction in the parole ineligibility period. They argued that it would be used very rarely, only in exceptional cases.

Most Canadians are not aware that section 745 is in the Criminal Code of Canada. It says very simply if you commit first degree murder, it is the worst possible crime in the Criminal Code. This is cold blooded, calculated, premeditated murder. These are the people who plan a murder. They buy a gun or a knife. These are not pleasant crimes, not your run-of-the-mill armed robberies. These are vicious and cruel crimes that result in the victims being mutilated and raped before or after they are murdered. We are talking about the worst crime under the Criminal Code.

Section 745 says if you are convicted of murdering somebody in those circumstances, if you kill one, two, three or more people—Clifford Olson raped and murdered 11 young children and he will be eligible under section 745—regardless of the number of people you murder or how you committed those murders, you can apply to have your parole ineligibility period reduced to 15 years.

Most Canadians believe that the penalty for murder is life in prison. We all know that is bogus. Nobody serves life for murder, or at least not that I am aware of. Most Canadians think it is 25 years, but that is not the case. Right now the going rate which I refer to as the Walmart discount in the Criminal Code is you can get 40 per cent off that 25 years by applying under section 745. These applications just started a few years ago because of the time lag from 1976 and 15 years hence. As of May 1994 there were 60 applications from convicted killers. Forty-three of those 60, or 72 per cent, were successful.

That tells you very simply that the penalty for first degree murder in Canada is fast becoming 15 years. Is that what Canadians want? Is that a fair penalty? I suggest not. In my view it demeans the value of life. It is one of the reasons why Canadians have so little respect for our criminal justice system. It is an example of how the criminal justice system in this country is totally imbalanced. The rights of convicts, the rights of criminals are considered to be first and foremost. The rights of victims and their families are shunted aside.

(1825)

This Parliament now has an opportunity to create a more equitable balance in our criminal justice system. Section 745 must be removed from the Criminal Code in order for Canadians to at least have some belief in the criminal justice system that it is serving the public and not serving convicted killers.

I spoke of Clifford Olson who becomes eligible for parole on August 12, 1996. It was not that long ago. Most members in this House recall the hideous nature of Mr. Olson's crimes. I have here some comments from Mrs. Sharon Rosenfeldt, the mother of one of the Olson victims, Daryn Rosenfeldt, who was abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered by Clifford Olson. She says and I quote: "I am so repulsed that our justice system

can circumvent a court of law decision. A court of law sentenced the killer of my child to life in prison with no eligibility for 25 years. Who then is lying to me, my family and the public?"

That is the mother of just one of the victims. I can say that in the next 12 to 15 years 600 of these applications will come forward. I have here the list of those who have committed first degree murder or those who have committed second degree murder and have been sentenced to a period of incarceration of more than 15 years. A good number of them have already been successful. Some of my colleagues might recognize some of these names.

In Ontario for example, the province I am from, there is Gerald Chase, Darryl Dollan, William Frederick, Frederick Sweet, Norman Clairmont, Rolf Droste, Allan Kinsella whose case is coming up, and Frederick Radike. These cases have all been successful. There are a good number of other cases across the country that have been successful.

It would appear that a good number of these applications, unless Parliament acts decisively to repeal section 745, will be made by Olson. Do not let anyone kid you that it is impossible for Clifford Olson, the Canadian version of Charles Manson, to be released. All you have to look to is the Karla Homolka case here in Ontario. A woman who was privy and party to the murder of two innocent young women was sentenced to 12 years in prison. We are not even talking about first degree murder. She becomes eligible for full parole after serving only four years. She becomes eligible for day parole after serving only two years. Something is drastically wrong with our criminal justice system in this country.

There is the case of a family of another victim, in this case a police officer in Saskatchewan. In 1978 a 39-year old RCMP officer by the name of Constable Thomas Brian King had completed his shift on duty and was returning home to his wife and three small children. There were two men who decided that they were going to bag and murder a cop. What they did was remove the licence plates from their vehicle. They were stopped by two police officers. They wanted to get stopped. The two police officers searched the car and levied a fine I suppose. Because there were two officers and only two of them they decided not to do anything to those two officers.

They again removed the plates from their car. This time they were stopped by Constable King. They overcame Constable King, handcuffed him with his own handcuffs and then went around to boast about how they had bagged a cop. Because they could not find some of the friends they wanted to boast to, they took Constable King out and fired two shots into his skull. As he was dying, and I am reading from a synopsis of what occurred, according to the evidence in court, "as the steaming warm blood

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was gushing on to the two soon to be convicted killers they delivered a few more final blows to the head of their victim and began dragging his body off to the river to discard it". That was in 1978, not a long time ago.

(1830)

Mrs. King, her three young children and all the other relatives thought that these two individuals would serve a minimum of 25 years in prison. Much to their horror, last year it was revealed to them that one of the killers was applying under section 745 to be released from prison or to have the parole ineligibility period reduced.

The wife of Constable King writes:

This suddenly opened a terrible new chapter in the life of the King family for which we were not prepared. If a book were to be written, it would show enough pain in this one chapter to nauseate or embarrass them into reconsidering the way in which section 745 functions and how it is so counterproductive to the very lives of those whose Canada's judicial and correctional system is intended to serve.

I relate these two cases to you, Mr. Speaker. Here is another. Let me make it three, the Kaplinski family. In January 1978 a young night desk clerk at an inn in Barrie was robbed by two men. Mr. Kaplinski was the father of a very young child. He was a law-abiding citizen, working to support himself and his young family. The inn was robbed and several months later his decomposed body was found in a snowbank north of Barrie.

They came in to rob the guy. They took the money and then drove him up north where they pumped a number of bullets into Mr. Kaplinski's skull and left him in a snowbank. This is what the sister, Joanne Kaplinski has to say about how section 745 has impacted on her family:

We the Kaplinski family received our own life sentence by being forced to look into the abyss of human cruelty and selfishness. However, last December 1993, we were once again forced to revisit that abyss by the application of one of the murderers, Allan Kinsella, for early release under section 745. We thought that after the original trial the men responsible for taking Ken's life in such a cruel and brutal fashion were being made to pay for their actions by forfeiting at least 25 years of their lives under the conditions of incarceration. We simply could not believe that release after only serving 15 years was an option.

She goes on to say:

Fifteen years is not adequate retribution or denunciation for the wanton destruction of human life and we fail to comprehend why the current legislation fails to include protection of the public as relevant criteria being only reflective of the rehabilitation principle of sentencing and ignoring—

She goes on about how this section is a miscarriage of justice.

Those are just three cases. Six hundred others are coming up. Families that were victimized 15 or more years go will be revictimized as a result of this provision in the Criminal Code of Canada.

It is an injustice. Section 745 ought to be repealed. I regret to say that it is not the official position of the Government of Canada today that it ought to be repealed. However I am pleased with the government's commitment to Private Members'

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Business and I am pleased that this bill will have a free vote in the House of Commons.

As I said earlier, I am convinced that it will pass. Not only does section 745 demean the value of life and create a terrible imbalance in our criminal justice system, but it is costing Canadian taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars for these applications to come forward, an estimated \$4 million a year over the next 15 years. I believe that is a low estimate, given the fact that those who will be applying will be using legal aid lawyers.

(1835)

This bill is supported by CAVEAT, the Victims of Violence, the Canadian Police Association and, I would submit, the overwhelming majority of Canadians. I cannot accept the views of the bleeding hearts. I suppose we will hear from some bleeding hearts here in the House who say that 25 years is cruel and unusual punishment.

Those who argue that 15 years is a sufficient period of time for first degree murder, I suggest that they are sadly mistaken or misguided. There are those who will argue as well that those convicted of first degree murder will not reoffend.

I present this statistic for consideration. Between 1975 and 1986, there were 130 murders committed by people who were released on parole. Ninety of those were murder and 40 were manslaughter. Anyone who suggests that people who are released on parole are unlikely to reoffend and commit murder refer to these statistics which were put out by the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

In closing, I urge my colleagues on all sides of the House to support the bill at second reading. In so doing, it will be referred to the justice committee which will then provide an opportunity for all Canadians, various interest groups and others to come forward and present their views.

When the bill comes back to the House I hope and I expect it will be passed, resulting in a major correction of a flaw in the criminal justice system.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, in 1976, the federal government amended the Criminal Code to make it consistent with its parole legislation and policy. It replaced the death sentence, which had just been abolished, by life sentence for murder.

The Liberal philosophy, to which the hon. member for York South—Weston would never have subscribed, was inspired at the time by the general principles of humanism. In 1976, the criminal was looked upon first and foremost as a victim of society in general, of his social group in particular and even of himself. His crime was above all a social act. Irrespective of the harm done, criminals were treated like the casualties of the

system, individuals who had to be saved even at the expense of common sense.

We must now recognize that such noble principles overlooked certain realities. The system had come to consider all criminals, that it to say individuals convicted by a court for an offence against a criminal law, as the first victims of their actions. Our parole legislation is a product of this thinking.

Once the judicial drama is over, you deal with the real stuff. As soon as the court has passed sentence, the correctional system takes charge of the individual behind closed doors, whether in an institution or in an in camera sitting of the parole board. Regardless of the work of the court, the correctional administration undertakes to assess the criminal and to establish how much of the sentence he or she will actually serve. And all of this under the cover of a big word: rehabilitation.

The entire system is predicated on this concept that the public does not look upon favourably, an argument put forward by criminologists, these crime philosophers. In a word, the concept of rehabilitation is defined as an act of pity on the part of society towards criminals perceived no longer as individuals responsible for their faults but rather as victims of an ill-accepted social environment.

Therefore, crime no longer being a real crime, the criminal is no longer a real criminal, and a quiet reintegration into society is supposed to serve the public interest.

(1840)

Even if the court feels that an individual is beyond redemption, Parole Board and correctional system officials will, in their ivory tower, decide to set that person free when he should have been kept in jail.

Even if they admit that an individual is the sole responsible for his crime, these so-called rehabilitation experts firmly believe that criminals can be rehabilitated. It is time we set the record straight.

Our criminal law is based on the responsibility of the individual. I realize that many hold less pragmatic views on the Canadian criminal law, but let me say to these philosophers that, in our judicial system, positive law still takes precedence over moods, which is certainly a good thing. Consequently, an individual who has committed a murder will be handed down the mandatory sentence provided by the law and by the law only. That is the reality.

The general public thinks that murderers are jailed for at least 25 years. This is what the law provides. However, along with our common law system, a new law full of subtleties, nuances and surprises has developed. The public does not know about it, because this new law is, more often than not, applied in an absolutely discretionary manner by crown agencies. There is now such a thing as correctional law.

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If I were cynical, I would define correctional law as the set of written or implicit rules which allow criminals to serve the shortest possible sentence in the best conditions. Behind its functional aspects, correctional law refers to the allocation, by public authorities, of maximum resources to reduce the sentences handed down by the courts.

Our so-called correctional law is based on a set of laws and regulations more elaborate than our criminal law. We have developed a very sophisticated administrative legal system for the benefit of criminals.

Criminals who go to jail enjoy the protection of a true charter of rights and freedoms for convicted offenders. In fact, the correctional system abides by the following principle: the sentence is now calculated based upon the duration of the total reduction. The prisoner knows about this.

All the efforts made by the prisoner, often with the help of correctional officers, aim at changing the length of his sentence. It is a well-known fact that prisons are full of converted and born-again Christians just waiting for parole.

A life sentence should mean imprisonment until the death of the inmate, but the average citizen has come to understand that, by some work of fiction, it now means a minimum of 25 years before parole. But this is where he is wrong. In fact, a life sentence can mean 25, 15 or 10 years depending upon the inmate's eligibility for parole. And this is when the average citizen lets you know that he has had enough.

So, I understand how frustrated the hon. member for York-South-Weston feels, but I do not think that the minor amendment he is proposing will change anything in the system. I even think that striking down section 745 of the Criminal Code would do more harm than keeping it.

What we find appalling in the parole system is the philosophy behind it, the costs and the aberrations, but mostly the discretion given to the sentencing courts, despite all the information it has about the crime and the criminal.

Actually, the sentencing court is in the best position to evaluate the individual and the crimes he has been found guilty of. The sentence is contemporaneous with the offense.

Do you really believe that, 15 years after the sentencing, a civil servant would be in a better position than the court to determine if the decision was justified? Or that because of changes in his personal outlook, the criminal no longer deserves the punishment imposed for acts for which he remains responsible, despite the passage of time? Tell that to the relatives of murder victims.

In these circumstances, whether a sentence is exemplary is very much a matter of opinion. In the end, the principle of immutability and the usefulness of sentences as a deterrent should prevail over all the nebulous theories of liberal criminology.

(1845)

Under its existing provisions, the Criminal Code provides for a judicial review mechanism, which seems appropriate.

In every case where the inmate has served 15 years of his sentence after being found guilty of murder, he will have to convince a jury that he should be released before his ineligibility period expires. If he is not successful, he will have to serve his full sentence.

Personally, I am more inclined to trust the judgment of six or a dozen ordinary citizens than that of a commissioner of the National Parole Board, whose qualifications are strictly based on his political past.

The statistics I obtained from the Department of Justice tend to confirm my opinion and put into context the relatively small number of individuals concerned by section 745.

Since the 1976 amendments and up to March 31, 1994, only 128 inmates across Canada were able to apply for a judicial review under section 745. Only 71 actually applied, and 43 requests were heard.

Before looking at the conclusions, we should remember we are discussing the cases of about fifty people. We are looking at legislation that is aimed at a very small group. I want to make it very clear that I do not understand the relevance of the bill standing in the name of the hon. member for York South-Weston.

As for the outcome of these hearings, I think we can conclude that the system works quite well. As a matter of fact, of the 43 applications heard to date, and again I repeat that this number covers the 28 years since the introduction of section 745, 11 were turned down, 13 have led to a partial reduction of the number of years of imprisonment without eligibility for parole and 19 have been successful.

Thus it seems to me that the system is working relatively well. This is why I think we should end the discussion immediately since we are discussing situations so rare that I feel I am wasting my time.

Must we remind the House that in case of murder the rule is still life imprisonment?

Finally, section 745 allows any inmate guilty of a murder of either category, first or second degree murder, to apply for a reduction in the number of years of imprisonment without eligibility for parole. The bill proposes to abolish this section.

In other words, imprisonment without any possibility of parole.

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I will conclude by saying that by abolishing section 745 we would be replacing a necessary evil by a mandatory evil. I nevertheless congratulate the hon. member for his initiative but I must tell him and the House that I will not support the bill.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for York South—Weston for this bill. I stand in support of it.

Today there is a cry across the land for the return to capital punishment. Why is this? It is clear this cry for the return of the death penalty is a recognition of the complete and utter failure of the bleeding heart approach to criminal justice. The philosophy underlying our present criminal law is not protecting members of society. Our sons and daughters are being assaulted and murdered without end.

The most horrific sign of failure of this underlying mentality of our criminal law is the murderer who kills again after being paroled. I thank my hon. colleague from York South—Weston who told us today that 130 innocent people have been murdered by people who have been released on parole.

(1850)

These politicians who have set the agenda for the administration of Canada's justice system for the past 20 years are responsible for paroling into society criminals who have raped, assaulted and killed again. The custodians of our justice system, these very same people, want to continue to release these people into society. Section 745 of the Criminal Code is the most pathetic example of this bleeding heart mentality.

In 1976 the death penalty for murderers was abolished. At that time the politicians assured us that society would be protected because murderers would be sentenced to life imprisonment and would have to serve a minimum of 25 years before release. However, the people of Canada were betrayed by these politicians.

Bill C-84 which eliminated capital punishment contained a little known clause which allowed for the creation of section 745 of the Criminal Code. Section 745 nullifies the term life imprisonment and grants murderers the right to apply for parole eligibility after serving only 15 years of their so-called life sentence.

The bleeding hearts assured us that in exchange for the abolition of the death penalty, society would be protected by a 25-year minimum sentence. Then they deliberately betrayed us. They provided the murderers with the right based in law to be released back into society after serving only 15 years.

I ask these people who support section 745 and the early release of killers into society: What is a human life worth to

them? I ask these politicians: What penalty should Larry Sheldon pay for having raped and murdered a little, innocent 9-year old girl? What penalty should Norman Clairmont serve for brutally and savagely murdering the 19-year old Potts girl? What penalty would the bleeding hearts have Charles Simard pay for murdering two innocent teenagers in the province of Quebec? I ask again: What is the value of an innocent life to these politicians?

On April 28, 1994 Judge Demetrick of the Alberta provincial court declared that portions of the definition of firearm contained in the Criminal Code of Canada were so convoluted as to be legal fiction and twice removed from reality. It seems incredible that the Government of Canada is producing legislation that is being declared by our courts to be fictitious and twice removed from reality.

The only explanation for this type of legislation is that the political thinking and reasoning that is producing this type of legislation is fictitious itself and is itself twice removed from reality. Can the families of victims murdered by criminals who have been released on parole come to any other conclusion than the politicians responsible for this are twice removed from reality and do not know what they are doing?

When we look at our national debt, our Young Offenders Act, the horrendous mess our immigration policy is in and the betrayal of section 745 of the Criminal Code, is it any wonder that our courts are pointing out that some of this stuff is twice removed from reality. And by so doing are they not clearly implying that our politicians do not know what they are doing?

The hon. member for York South—Weston has my support for this bill. I believe he has the support of the entire Reform caucus and I believe he also has the support of millions of Canadians who back in 1976 were conned into believing that the abolition of the death penalty was to be substituted for a term of life imprisonment with a minimum of 25 years.

(1855)

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I take offence to the term that Canadians were conned by a piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order as I suspect the member fully knows. The hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I believe as well the hon. member for York South—Weston may even have the support of many of his own colleagues in the Liberal caucus if they are allowed a true free vote on this private member's bill. I shall wait and see. I am sure millions of Canadians who are demanding the return of the death penalty are also waiting to see how many in this House consider the taking of the life of an innocent human being to be worth less than 25 years imprisonment.

We will see if the twice removed from reality mentality still controls the agenda in the Liberal caucus. If it does, then the only real hope for the people of Canada who want change to legislation like section 745 of the Criminal Code is to wait until the next federal election. They can then remove the Liberals from power as decisively as they removed the Tories from office in the election one year ago.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I owe it to my constituents and the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, CAVEAT, the families and friends of victims of violent crimes and tens of thousands of Canadians who signed petitions, to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-226, an act to amend the Criminal Code.

During the last Parliament and through two years of work my own private member's Bill C-330 attempted to introduce similar changes to the Criminal Code that among other things would eliminate section 745. Consequently I applaud and second the member for York South—Weston's bill to reintroduce this initiative to the House of Commons for consideration. I thank him for that honour.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Keyes: The Reform Party should wait to hear my whole story before applauding.

In our society first degree murder has always been considered to be one of the most heinous crimes punishable by law. Despite our unswerving disgust with the premeditated destruction of another life, our approach to punishing first degree murderers has changed somewhat over the years.

With regard to convicted first degree murderers, the most significant change to take place in our criminal justice system occurred in 1976 when the members of this House passed Bill C-84. In addition to creating two new categories of murder, first and second degree, this bill also brought about two significant changes to our criminal justice system. It abolished the death penalty for Criminal Code offences such as first degree murder. It went even further by creating a legal loophole, section 745, that allows convicted first degree murderers to apply for early parole consideration after serving only 15 years of a so-called life sentence without parole for 25 years.

The actions taken in this House by my predecessors 18 years ago constitute what I call a double compromise. This double compromise is unwarranted and unjust. It serves only to confuse, frustrate and even traumatise the many families and friends of murder victims throughout this country.

When the death penalty was abolished 18 years ago, it was done in recognition of several key factors: one, the fact that capital punishment was not and is not an effective deterrent for heinous crimes such as first degree murder; two, the death/

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penalty obviously eliminates the entire notion of rehabilitation of the convicted criminal; three, at the time this legislation was introduced, Canada's social conscience was more conducive to sentencing a convicted first degree murderer to life imprisonment rather than authorizing state sanctioned murder; and four, the legal and administrative costs associated with successfully carrying out a death sentence are often, I say to the Reform Party, far greater than the costs of incarceration.

Clearly the abolition of capital punishment represented the first compromise between two extremes. Those at one extreme were like our friends in the Reform Party who believe that all first degree murderers should be lined up and shot immediately. Those at the other extreme believed that we should simply rehabilitate first degree murderers for a few years instead of subjecting them to the harshness of long term imprisonment.

(1900)

As though that compromise were not enough, section 745 of the Criminal Code allowed for what I call a double compromise. Not only would first degree convicted murderers escape the death penalty, they would also have a chance to escape their so-called life sentence by applying for early parole consideration after serving only 15 years of a minimum 25-year sentence.

I personally do not agree with the death penalty but let us be reasonable here. By compromising ourselves twice in this area we went too far. Whose interest does this second compromise really serve anyway? Does section 745 serve the interests of the victims who were brutally murdered in cold blood? Of course not. Does section 745 serve the interests of a society that is led to believe that it will be safe from first degree murderers for at least 25 years without parole? Of course not. Does section 745 serve the interests of a criminal justice system that aspires to be balanced, fair and effective when dealing with first degree murderers? Certainly not.

People across the country are asking us to say what we mean and mean what we say when a person is convicted of first degree murder. If an individual is convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole for 25 years then that is what should happen. If people think that life in prison without parole for 25 years is inappropriate for the same reason then we should debate what the actual sentence should be, reach an agreement and codify it in our laws. We should stick to it until we have reason to change those laws.

Under the current provisions of section 745, the sentence of life imprisonment is nothing but legal doubletalk. According to the statistics of the National Parole Board there are over 2,000 offenders serving life sentences in the Canadian correctional system. Furthermore over the next 15 years—and this is for the Bloc's edification—655 inmates in federal prisons will be eligible for this judicial review courtesy of section 745.

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As of May this year there have been 60 judicial review applications made under section 745. A staggering 42 of them have been successful. That means 72 per cent of the convicted first degree murderers, first degree premeditated murderers who applied for early parole consideration, were successful under the current provisions of section 745 of the Criminal Code.

To anyone who is thinking that I am just a vindictive individual, I ask them to consider this: crown attorneys, our public defenders, tell me they are not prepared to handle the sheer volume of judicial review cases that are about to come crashing down upon them. Most crown attorneys have little or no experience with this type of judicial review, which makes me a little concerned with the proper administration of justice in the country.

Canadians are fed up. They feel their rights are being superseded by the rights of the criminal. They feel that the scales of justice are no longer balanced but tipped in favour of the criminal and that there is not enough justice for the victim in society in general. For the benefit of those who may have forgotten why we need to seriously punish for heinous crimes, allow me to awaken their collective consciousness.

Daniel Gingras was convicted of murder in 1978. Nine years later he was released from a maximum security prison on a day pass for his birthday. He escaped his police escort and later celebrated his birthday by brutally killing two women.

Clifford Olson was convicted of murder in 1981. He still managed to murder 11 children while out on parole, one of whom was a young boy who was repeatedly raped for several hours before he was killed. He has the right under section 745 of the Criminal Code to be eligible for parole in less than a year.

Joseph Fredericks was convicted of raping and sodomizing a little boy in 1984. While on parole this man raped and murdered an 11-year old boy.

Patrick Mailloux was convicted of a long list of violent crimes. While on parole he walked into a corner store, pulled out a gun and murdered a 17-year old girl in cold blood.

Charles Simard killed two teenagers in Quebec. He had his parole eligibility period reduced by a judicial review from 20 to 15 years. Also there were Gilles Lavigne, Larry Sheldon and Serge Roberge.

(1905)

Perhaps the most stirring case is that of Saul Betesh, Josef Woods and Ronald Kribs. In 1977 those three men lured a 12-year old boy into their apartment and raped him for 12 hours before strangling the little boy to death. Betesh and Kribs were convicted of first degree murder and Woods was sentenced to 18 years without parole, which means that he may be released as

early as next year. All three prisoners are expected to seek judicial review courtesy of section 745.

Mr. Speaker, think about what that 12-hour torture was like for that little boy. Now think about what it would be like if he were your child.

In my own riding of Hamilton West there was the case of John Rallo who brutally ended the lives of his wife, his five-year old daughter and his six-year old son, whose body has yet to be found. Indeed the list goes on and on.

What exactly are the people of Canada saying to us about this issue? I have received a great deal of feedback from my constituents over the years that illustrates the public sentiment out there. I will give one before I conclude: "Only a politician and/or a lawyer could come up with a penalty which turns out to be not life imprisonment for 25 years but 15 years, and our politicians wonder why people do not trust their words".

How much longer must Canadians live with the double compromise presented by section 745 of the Criminal Code? Let us say what we mean: truth in sentencing. Life without parole for 25 years should mean exactly that and section 745 of the Criminal Code must be eliminated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard St-Laurent (Manicouagan, B.Q.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-226 could have been called "sink the shipwrecked" or "shoot the ambulance". In actual fact, it comes to the same thing. In the society we live in, the light at the end of the tunnel is part of daily life, irrespective of the environment we are in.

For example, we are currently going through an intense recession. The Minister of Finance knows it, he does not see the light at the end of the tunnel either. We have difficulties imagining that one day this country will come out of it, financially. Yet, we do not shoot the Minister of Finance. The system is not perfect, only human, and no human is perfect.

To understand the consequences of Bill C-226, we have to put it back in its context. In 1961, murders fell into two categories: capital and non-capital. Before that, death was the only sentence available for convicted murderers, even though the governor could grant a stay of execution and intervene in favour of the sentenced.

Those convicted of non-capital murder were sentenced to life in prison, but were eligible for parole after seven years. We are talking about 1961.

After 1967, people sentenced to life in prison needed permission of the governor in council to be released. They had to serve at least ten years before becoming eligible for parole.

In 1974, changes to the Criminal Code allowed judges to raise to 20 years maximum the period during which no parole could be granted.

As we can see, sentences are becoming more and more severe. In 1961, we were talking about seven years; in 1967, ten years; and in 1974, we could go to twenty years.

On February 24, 1976, the Solicitor General introduced Bill C-84 which abolished the death penalty altogether. At the time that was a hot topic. We were wondering whether the death penalty should be kept on the books or abolished.

It is still a very contentious issue today, so imagine what it was back in 1976.

Bill C-84 offered a new variation, namely different categories of murders: first degree murder and second degree murder. People convicted of first degree murder had to serve 25 years before being eligible for parole, whereas people convicted of second degree murder had to serve between 10 and 20 years, depending on the sentencing judge's decision, before being eligible for parole.

(1910)

Therefore, in 1961, seven years, in 1977, ten years, in 1974, maybe 20 years, and in 1976, maybe 25 years. Bill C-226 is aimed at removing any hope of parole for convicts serving a life sentence. Everybody agrees that society must be protected, but to what extent? As parliamentarians, do we have the right to pass laws regarding the probable behaviour of individuals 15 years from now?

As it now stands, the law gives individuals the opportunity to be tried and sentenced to penalties proportionate to the seriousness of the crime which brought them to court. Bill C-226 claims that none of us believes that individuals who are sentenced today will be rehabilitated 15 years from now. It closes the door to hope. It shoots down rehabilitation. Do we have the right to do that?

As parliamentarians, we have rights, but we also have the fundamental duty to do our best so that, when we leave, society is a bit better off than when we arrived. It is to meet this humble objective that we must strive. Statistics show that only 6 per cent of inmates on parole re-offend within six months of their release. That is to say that the present judicial process and parole system are not working too badly.

The controversy surrounding the review process is fuelled by two often contradictory objectives. On one hand, there is the way we feel about crime and, on the other, the desire to rehabilitate offenders, which are often mutually exclusive. The initial reasons for a judicial review are always the same. At the time, in the years 1961, 1967, 1974, and 1976, reactionary views were predominant. There were debates on the death penalty and life imprisonment. Those were the buzz words, back then.

Private Members' Business

The right wing is back, and we hear the same debate all over, especially with the emergence of victims' rights groups, the word victim being used in its widest sense. The emphasis is now placed on the problems those victims experience. We should realize that arguments for repealing section 745 of the Criminal Code are based on retaliation.

Retaliation does not justify shattering one of the few hopes lifers have left. When you are in prison, the light at the end of the tunnel is essential. I do not mean to put up an all out defence for prisoners, but we must recognize that those people are not animals. They are human beings, and we have no moral right to utterly deprive them of hope.

Let us not forget that judicial review after 15 years does not mean lifers will automatically be released from prison. It is just another step a prisoner has to take before parole is granted. People who sit on parole boards are there to determine whether individuals can be safely released in our society. If not, parole boards have every right to keep them behind bars till the end of their sentence.

I am puzzled by Bill C-226. First of all because I honestly do not think victims will be better protected. Nor do I believe that sentencing will be improved by this bill. Moreover, we have to wonder if Bill C-226 really serves any purpose since there are already, within the parole system, people whose job it is to be sure that the individuals they choose to release will make a positive contribution to society. Obviously, it is important to protect society, but as members of this society we have a role to play. When we see an ambulance going down the street, we do not fire at it. We give it the right of way without even asking who is inside.

(1915)

For a person who has received a life sentence, the parole system is the light at the end of the tunnel. I do not think that the victims' relatives will suffer after 20 years. They certainly have suffered and everybody deplors that fact. However, we do not have to always give in to the people who shout the loudest.

A politician must be able to stand up and defend his views. My view is that Bill C-226 serves no useful purpose.

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the debate on these bills under review this evening gives me the opportunity to dispel certain myths concerning the Criminal Code provision which Bill C-226 would repeal and that is the section providing for a judicial review of the parole ineligibility period.

This provision was adopted in 1976. The legislation adopted at that time stated that people convicted of first degree murder or high treason were to wait for at least 25 years before being allowed to apply for parole and for those convicted of second degree murder, the jury would set a 10- to 25-year parole ineligibility period.

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But Parliament was wise enough to determine that in both cases, once the convict had served 15 years of his sentence, a jury could be formed and the parole ineligibility period could be reviewed and revised if appropriate.

This provision was based on the principles of justice and rehabilitation, two principles which are still very sound today. Parliament added that section to the legislation because it believed individuals could improve.

They considered then, and the argument is still valid today, that the possibility for the parole ineligibility period to be reviewed could be an incentive for the convicts to make special rehabilitation efforts.

I should remind you that this provision was linked to the abolition of capital punishment which occurred in several countries where authorities instituted life imprisonment without any eligibility for parole as a compromise to please both those in favour and those against the death sentence.

[English]

No doubt the creation of section 745 was unique in the criminal law of the country. However the section was included in the first reading of the original bill in 1976. It was fully reviewed and discussed by the justice and legal affairs committee at that time before it was finally debated and passed by the members of Parliament.

In fact, rather than the original proposal to have three judges to hear a case, Parliament amended the bill so that a jury would decide the case instead. This was done specifically to increase public participation in the process.

Clearly there was debate and communication in the public arena. Efforts were made to make the resulting judicial review hearings as public as possible.

Let me review briefly how the provision works. I think the Reform Party—

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Pearson International Airport is a vital asset to the Canadian economy.

(1920)

I recently chaired a Toronto Liberal caucus task force investigating the immediate needs for runway construction at Pearson. The task force reviewed the available documents and held two public meetings. There were several issues considered: the immediate completion of a second north-south runway; the construction of two additional east-west runways and the impact these runways would have on the travelling public, the economy and the surrounding communities.

Currently air traffic at Pearson is handled primarily on two east-west runways. Five per cent of the time, about 70 times per year, severe cross winds force planes to change to the one available north-south runway for periods of up to five hours, a total of 350 hours per year. Capacity is cut in half, disrupting airline schedules, forcing delays and re-routing, allowing potentially dangerous landings to occur on the east-west runways at higher cross wind limits than are allowed at U.S. airports.

Does Pearson need a second north-south runway at this time? The Minister of Transport recently announced a second north-south runway will be tendered for completion. This construction will not increase the overall capacity at Pearson, only the efficiency and the safety.

An environmental assessment report completed in 1992 recognized that a second north-south runway was needed to eliminate the current imbalance of two east-west with only one north-south. They wanted a safety and operational feasibility of a shorter 4,500 north-south runway investigated. This short runway would have had less noise impact on the local residents.

Two studies were undertaken by Transport Canada and the Canadian Airline Pilots Association in 1992 and 1993. They found that 85 per cent of the aircraft that use Pearson could not land on a 4,500 foot runway. Arriving aircraft would have to be kept at high altitudes of 10,000 feet to facilitate sorting and sequencing. These restrictions would increase the probability of mid-air collision. The operational separations imposed for safety reasons might even result in less capacity than exists now.

Both reports concluded that safety concerns would have to be given priority over all other considerations. They recommended

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against the short runway. The caucus committee concurred that a full length north–south runway is needed at this time. It further recommended the new north–south runway should be used for landings only during severe cross wind conditions only.

Does Pearson need two more east–west runways at this time? The Air Transport Association of Canada has provided figures which indicate aircraft movements are down 12 per cent from their pre–recession high. Currently Pearson processes 20.5 million passengers per year, a volume easily handled by the two existing east–west runways.

Travel replacing technology such as faxes and tele and video conferencing are being increasingly utilized with fewer people travelling for business purposes.

Our committee concluded that any additional runways should not be contemplated until the threshold of passengers exceeds 30 million per year. This will not take place before the proposed Canadian airport authority takes over the management of Pearson.

I endorse the minister's decision to complete the second north–south runway for economic and safety reasons. I applaud the innovative plan to turn the operation of airports over to local airport authorities so they can be financed and improved in a self–sufficient, cost–effective, businesslike manner.

I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport to expand on the concept of the Canadian airport authority for the residents of Mississauga. What assurance do we have that this will be the most efficient and economical solution to Pearson's current problems?

Mr. Joe Fontana (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Transport I would like to respond to the question from my hon. colleague, the member for Mississauga West.

Let me first assure my colleague that she can reassure the residents of Mississauga that when the new north–south runway is completed at Pearson it will be used primarily for landings. In recognition of the concerns of the residents living near the airport about noise I want to reiterate that the new runway will only be used 5 per cent of the time when severe cross winds make landings on the two east–west runways unsafe.

The only time the new north–south runway would be used for take–offs would be on those extremely rare occasions when, combined with adverse weather conditions, the existing north–south runway is unavailable due to emergency or repairs. On these occasions only take–offs toward the north following the established departure path of the existing north–south runway would be permitted.

The minister wants to assure the member and her constituents that absolutely no decision will be taken on the matter of additional east–west runways until the Canadian airport author-

ity is in place and functioning at Pearson International Airport. In any event it is anticipated that the additional east–west runways would not be constructed until traffic warrants it. This is not expected to happen until the turn of the century.

(1925)

One of our colleagues from the Reform Party has said that we do not intend to move on the new Canadian airport authorities for Pearson until 1998. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As the minister has made very clear we will be moving to establish CAAs at many airports as soon as the communities involved identify their representatives and pass the necessary local resolutions which is indeed the case for Pearson. There is no question about waiting until 1998.

The fact is that the local municipalities have named their representatives and the minister has indicated that we will proceed with all that needs to be done at Pearson. The only logical option though is to work with these representatives in an advisory capacity for the time being.

We will move to activate a Canadian airport authority which we believe is in the best interests of the Canadian public as soon as the Senate puts the interest of the taxpayer ahead of its rhetoric.

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, October 17 I put two sets of questions to the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs. The minister effectively declined to answer those questions at the time saying they were hypothetical. However, the exchange after question period between the leader of the Reform Party and the Speaker would indicate the questions as put were of course not hypothetical and were in order. The questions were in order because they dealt not with the government's political plans but with its competence, jurisdiction, and role in the matters of constitutional law and the possible separation of Quebec.

The first question was formed from a quotation from the Prime Minister of Canada. He said a Prime Minister of Canada has a constitution he must respect and there is no mechanism in the Constitution permitting the separation of any part of Canadian territory.

While that is very narrowly true in fact the Constitution does have provisions relating to amendment of various things that would be required in the event of the separation of a province. These are things as elementary as the transfer of the legitimate powers of the federal government to a province which would generally speaking require the consent of two-thirds of the provinces representing 50 per cent of the population. In other cases where it actually involves institutional change it would require unanimous consent. These clauses are laid out in part 5, sections 38 through 49 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

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My question to the government was merely that it affirm that it is the position of the Government of Canada that the constitutional status of a province could only be changed legally and would be done through this amending formula. This would of course not apply simply with a separation scenario but to any constitutional change. I would maintain that it is the duty of the federal government which purports that national unity is its highest priority to recognize that it does have an obligation to uphold the Constitution.

I would also note that politically there would be considerable advantage for it to make clear to the people of Quebec that when they are being told that separation can be achieved unilaterally that this is legally untrue. In fact, it would also be political untrue, politically unfeasible to pursue in that manner.

We would also of course be interested to know what the position would be of the leader of the official opposition on such an illegal position as unilateral separation. However I do not expect the parliamentary secretary to comment on that particular question.

My second question concerned an article recently written in *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Autumn 1994, by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. He held that today the federal government retains full constitutional options to allow or not to allow a referendum vote, to control the content and wording of any referendum question, to control the actual timing of any vote, and to launch its own pre-emptive nationwide referendum legally superseding any Quebec vote.

As you well know, the opinions of the member for Vancouver Quadra are of some interest not simply because he wrote the article but because he is a noted constitutional expert and also a member of the governing caucus. While I do not subscribe necessarily to all his constitutional views I would certainly think that the government would take note of them and would be prepared to comment on whether it believes these are in fact the constitutional powers of the federal government.

I would note that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs himself has previously commented that the federal government should consider the option of a national referendum. I believe this is an option our own party would suggest should be considered, not necessarily acted upon but certainly considered given that ultimately the unity of the country and its future constitutional status is the business of all Canadians.

I put that question and hope to receive more enlightenment than I did on Monday.

Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. It is quite an extended question and is obviously a subject of considerable debate.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for whom I am answering believes that the Constitution Acts do not provide any rules or procedures for secession of one of the provinces.

The argument which has been presented by the hon. member for Calgary West that the amending formula can be stretched to include the secession of a province is a point of view. However as the hon. member suggests there are many points of view on constitutional questions. Colleagues of mine have expressed constitutional views. Members of the opposition have as well.

It is very clear that when the time comes there is international precedent and there is domestic precedent in this regard. However, what I think the record shows internationally is that in cases of secession what is likely to occur is so much confusion and trouble that it would be impossible to proceed in an orderly and fashionable manner and indicate what goes before.

It seems to us that the premise of the member's question is that we should say: You cannot leave unless we let you go. That does not seem to be a very helpful approach at this time. Our approach is to argue to Quebecers that the case for secession cannot be sustained. It involves costs and risks that are unnecessary and that this country is too precious to be destroyed.

We want the question to be put fairly and quickly. We agree with the leader of the Reform Party who has expressed that point of view. I do not intend to talk on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, but I believe he said this morning in Toronto that he is a democrat and we are all democrats. Certainly we in this Chamber are all democrats and a democratic decision is appropriate and will occur we hope promptly and with a clear question.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), a motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.32 p.m.)

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