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Wednesday, May 31, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 31, 1995

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks World No Tobacco Day. I wanted to take this opportunity to offer my support to the call for reduced use of tobacco products.

When I was in the riding last week I had the opportunity to take part in a special event to acknowledge World No Tobacco Day. I helped launch the Muskoka—Parry Sound health unit's anti-smoking campaign to highlight the importance of maintaining the momentum toward smoking reduction in Canadian society.

The federal government initiated its own tobacco demand reduction strategy not long ago as a major component of its anti-tobacco smuggling action plan. This strategy includes legislation, enforcement and public education.

A recent survey conducted by the health unit in my riding indicates two of the high schools in our riding have over 30 per cent usage of tobacco on a regular basis. This is much higher than the provincial average and is a trend I would like to see reversed.

I ask my colleagues to join with me today to encourage young people to stop smoking.

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[*Translation*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question from the hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm, the Prime Minister referred to Lise Thibault, who is currently president of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, as the president of an association for cripples—he used the French word “in-

firme”—right in the middle of National Access Awareness Week.

The use of the French word “infirmes” by the Prime Minister of Canada is a disgrace and an insult to all persons with disabilities. This word perpetuates a stubborn prejudice suggesting that a handicapped person is ill and must be taken care of.

Although all persons with disabilities do have limitations, the vast majority of them are not ill. The Prime Minister should have the decency not to use disabled people for partisan purposes, let alone refer to them in a patronizing way.

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[*English*]

MISSING CHILDREN

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the month of May has been the month of the green ribbon of hope campaign for our missing children. May 25 was Missing Children's Day sponsored by Child Find Canada.

Every year over 55,000 Canadian children under the age of 18 are reported to the RCMP's missing children registry. Many of these children leave their homes voluntarily because of harsh and unbearable conditions. Others are abducted and disappear, often becoming the victims of heinous criminal acts.

Child Find Canada is a charitable non-government funded organization dedicated to the elimination of this problem through its education and awareness programs such as its all about me ID program. This is a program that works with parents and local community organizations to document information about a child's basic identity.

The problem of missing children is all too real. It reinforces a need to pursue policies that strengthen our criminal justice system and strengthen and protect the Canadian family.

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[*Translation*]

BOVINE SOMATOTROPIN

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the seven person working group appointed by the Government of Canada to study the safety of recombinant bovine somatotropin for animal and human health should release its report very soon, that is, before the moratorium

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imposed by the government on manufacturers expires on July 1st.

At present, this hormone provides only financial and economic benefits and may be prejudicial to the health of all Canadians.

I am therefore asking the authorities concerned, and especially the Minister of Health, to ensure that all necessary studies, including the one on insulin growth factor-1, a hormone that may in some cases be linked to excessive limb and chin development, are conducted.

If these studies do not prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that BST is safe, the Minister of Health should seek an indefinite extension of the moratorium.

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[English]

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to inform the members of the House and all Canadians that May has been Cystic Fibrosis Month.

Although significant scientific discoveries such as the identification of the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis have been made in recent years, the challenges of developing better treatments and a cure remain.

(1405)

The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Canada is a national voluntary health organization dedicated to improving the lives of those who suffer from this disorder. It supports a Canada-wide network of specialized clinics providing diagnostic treatment and care as well as information to patients and health care providers.

Please join me in congratulating the dedicated scientists and volunteers who contribute to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Canada for their excellent work and in wishing the foundation and its volunteers a very successful future.

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PORT OF SAINT JOHN

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, records fell as the port of Saint John reached new levels of throughput in many of the major commodities handled at the port, such as petroleum, potash, salt and sugar. Cruise ship passenger volumes increased dramatically in 1994 due to calls by Carnival and Princess cruise lines. Significant traffic gains and expanded shipping services were realized at the port by shipping lines like Star, Kent and National Shipping of Saudi Arabia.

Two million dollars has been spent on facilities development at the port of Saint John. Its strengthened financial performance has resulted in improved revenues.

The men and women who work at the port of Saint John look forward to challenges and opportunities ahead. Working with its stakeholders the port of Saint John has confidence in its collective ability to take advantage of new opportunities.

As we celebrate Transportation Week, let us remember that the port of Saint John continues to play a major role in supporting Canada's international trade and making a significant—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

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[Translation]

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is World No Tobacco Day, and I would like to take this opportunity to make parliamentarians as well as the people of Quebec and Canada aware of the importance of this day. This year, the theme of this annual event sponsored by the World Health Organization is "The cost of tobacco is higher than we think".

It is worthwhile reminding people that smoking is one of the main causes of potentially fatal respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. And what about the effect of second-hand smoke, not to mention the miscarriages suffered by mothers who smoke and the low birth weight of children born to these women? The need to educate the young and the not so young about the health hazards associated with tobacco use is unquestionable.

Today more than ever, we must make everyone, old and young, aware of the hazards of tobacco use. This campaign should have significant and lasting results.

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[English]

EXPO 2005

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have yet another example of the Liberals shafting the west and rigging a decision to favour Ottawa.

Last year the Minister of Canadian Heritage decided that Canada would support a bid for Expo 2005. He appointed an independent committee to recommend to him which city, either Calgary or Ottawa, would represent Canada in the bidding process. The process was completed and Calgary was the unanimous choice recommended to the minister.

The minister promised to follow the recommendation of the committee and he has failed to do so. He has tainted the process

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by allowing Ottawa to continue lobbying. It appears that the minister is rigging the bid so that Ottawa gets the Expo. It appears that the fix is in.

Calgary has the strongest of the bids. It has the financial backing of the city of Calgary and the province of Alberta. Calgary has a volunteer network which is the best in Canada and which will make the Expo a tremendous success showcasing Canada to the world.

The minister promised to make a hasty decision but has failed to act for more than two months. I urge the minister to immediately follow the recommendation of the committee and give the Expo bid to Calgary.

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ADULT ONLY FILMS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many constituents of mine are outraged at a recent mailing that every home in the riding received advertising a package of so-called erotic adult only films. The increased availability of such films called original, uninhibited and sexually explicit in the advertising brochure is openly attributed to the benefits of free trade which, according to the same brochure, has led to such films now not only being permitted but also encouraged.

The wonders of free trade never cease to astound me. Good Canadian films still have a problem making it to market but American porn is given new opportunities.

I share my constituents' feelings that this kind of junk mail should not be handled by Canada Post. So-called erotica may have its place but its availability should not be imposed on people whether they like it or not through such universal mailings.

I call on the minister responsible to speak to Canada Post about this with a view to seeing what can be done to prevent further such mailings.

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[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give another example of what this government is doing to promote business development and, thus, the economic development of this country.

The minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development in Quebec told the Standing Committee on Industry that he will intensify efforts to make small business aware of how crucial innovation, design as well as research and development are.

(1410)

He is mainly concerned with identifying new technologies and integrating them into the daily operations of this industry.

FORD-Q will pay special attention to ensuring that knowledge is shared and that the products and techniques developed in high-tech projects are marketed.

In Canada, job creation has been spurred on by the vitality of our small business industry since 1992. That is why FORD-Q is committed to creating the conditions required for this industry to remain the driving force of economic growth. In a word, we can say—

The Speaker: I am sorry but I must interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Beaches—Woodbine has the floor.

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[English]

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to remind members of the House that May was Multiple Sclerosis Carnation Month.

Multiple sclerosis, or MS, is a degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system. An estimated 50,000 Canadians suffer from this disease, one of the highest prevalence rates in the world. There is presently no known cure.

Research into finding a cure and better treatments for patients with MS is ongoing. Health Canada has contributed research dollars to help improve the lives of MS sufferers. However, there is still much work to be done.

During the month of May, volunteers from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada were out in our communities selling fresh carnations to raise money for research and support services for those affected by MS. As in previous years, the Multiple Sclerosis Society hopes to raise \$2 million throughout the carnation campaign.

Of course the success of this campaign depends greatly on the involvement of volunteers. To recognize their contribution this year's campaign slogan was "volunteers can work wonders". I salute the many Canadians who contributed their time.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont.

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[Translation]

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec minister responsible for restructuring just released a fifth study, this time on the human development index, its concept and its use.

The author of the study tends to show that a sovereign Quebec would have the required potential to develop further and that its quality of life could even be better than that of Canada.

We really wonder how the minister can attach any value to a study whose main conclusions, as the author himself admits,

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were reached by deliberately changing the criteria used internationally to determine the human development index.

The PQ minister can release all the studies he wants; Quebecers will never forget that Canada is still the best country in the world.

The minister should stop wasting taxpayers' money on studies which do not serve their interests at all.

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CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the harassment campaign conducted by CSIS against Pierre Laberge and his wife since Mr. Laberge declared his support for Quebec's sovereignty is scandalous. Worse still is the fact that the government and the Prime Minister condone this witch hunt.

The reason the government is letting the situation with the SIRC deteriorate is now clear. Indeed, the Security Intelligence Review Committee currently has only two active members, instead of the five provided for in the legislation.

The basic freedoms of Quebec sovereignists are jeopardized by the actions of CSIS and the laxness of this government. The Bloc Québécois demands that the next SIRC appointment be made in close co-operation with the official opposition, so as to protect the freedom of speech of every citizen.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about broken promises and one of them is on page 92 of the red book which says: "In the House of Commons, a Liberal government will give MPs a greater role in drafting legislation through House of Commons committees". Is it true? Well, let us have a look.

On Bill C-68, the government invoked closure at second reading, limited the number of witnesses and refused to give time for legislative counsel to draft amendments.

On Bill C-64, only four witnesses out of the 50 who gave testimony came from a list submitted by Reform. Reform MPs were not allowed to submit amendments in the language of their choice. They were refused the right to speak to some clauses due to a time allocation of five minutes per clause.

On the MP pension bill, only expert witnesses are allowed to testify. MPs and ordinary Canadians are shut out.

These arrogant actions by the Liberals make a sham of an MP's role in drafting legislation. This is another example of how the red book promises are being broken, one after the other.

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(1415)

ONTARIO ELECTION

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the people of Ontario prepare to vote next Thursday they are discovering where their provincial leaders stand on the issues.

Recently on employment equity and disabled persons Conservative leader Mike Harris is quoted as saying:

Now here is a disabled person only 50 per cent as good as an able bodied worker, but you must hire them and you must pay them as much as an able bodied person.

To make such uninformed statements of the disabled person's ability to compete is totally unacceptable.

Liberals have always brought out the best in every Canadian. We have always celebrated and encouraged what every member can contribute to society. People with disabilities deserve better than this. The common sense revolution only appears to be for the strong, the powerful and the fit, but above all it lacks common sense.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

BOSNIA

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although he claims he will redefine the mandate of our peacekeepers in Bosnia, the Prime Minister has clearly indicated that his government does not intend to send additional support in terms of logistics and equipment. Meanwhile, the situation is deteriorating following a refusal by Bosnian Serbs to allow the Red Cross to visit the hostages and now that the Canadian government has no direct contact with Captain Ryan Lapalm, who is being held in Sarajevo.

My question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. How can the government expect to be taken seriously when it says it wants to redefine the mandate of our peacekeepers in Bosnia but at the same time refuses to send adequate equipment like France and Great Britain?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first on the question of Captain Lapalm, it is true that we have had no

direct contact with him for the last number of days. We have heard indirectly from our sources in Sarajevo that he is okay. We are trying to confirm this and we are trying to work through third parties such as the Red Cross to ascertain his true condition.

With respect to Captain Rechner, I dealt with that yesterday. There has been no change. There has been no change with the other people who have been detained and held hostage in Ilijas.

With respect to the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I think we have made our position quite clear. There is no requirement at this time to send additional Canadian forces. None have been sought by the United Nations.

I should point out that the secretary-general of the UN a few moments ago called for the gradual reduction or scaling down of the UNPROFOR mandate so that it could be reprofiled in a way to carry out those tasks that it could best be suited to carry out. This mirrors the position that has been taken not only by Canada but by many of our allies.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister just referred to an important statement from UN headquarters. We know that Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has proposed scaling down the number of troops while at the same time redeploying on site resources.

I want to ask the minister what the Canadian government's position is, and perhaps he could tell us, not about what other countries think and do and the meetings that will take place but about what the Canadian government thinks and what it intends to do.

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the secretary-general flatly rejected a withdrawal from Bosnia, as has been advocated by some. He flatly rejected the status quo. He is talking about a redefinition of the UNPROFOR mandate in that country, and that is the position of Canada.

As to how we do it, that will become evident in the next few days. As the House will know, my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is meeting today with his counterparts. A meeting has been called by the Prime Minister of France for defence ministers on Saturday. I shall represent Canada there with the chief of defence staff. We will try to see how we can adapt our positions into a common front to deal with what I think is the emerging consensus, one that we enunciated in the House in the last few days, that the UNPROFOR mandate is still valid. It can still work, but there has to be some reshaping or redefining of the mandate to lessen the exposure for the troops that are concerned.

Oral Questions

(1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is of course the very delicate matter of deciding whether to send more troops. I realize the government wishes to tread very carefully in this respect. However, there is also the matter of adequate equipment. We know that on a number of occasions, Canadian soldiers have mentioned the problems they had due to inadequate equipment.

I want to ask the minister whether he would agree that any delay by the government in sending our troops adequate equipment will expose them to further hostage taking?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of the charges about equipment are simply charges that no longer bear reality. Whether it is helmets, reinforced flak jackets for the very difficult situations, reinforced turrets of our M-113 armoured personnel carriers and other equipment including very modern machine guns, we believe the troops in the last number of months have been given additional resources that give them better protection for more dangerous situations.

That does not mean to say that we cannot improve that equipment. However, with respect to sending heavy armour, artillery and all of the rest of the paraphernalia of a greater entwining in a conflict over there, that is something that is not part of the government's agenda at this time. It may very well be part of the government's agenda should there be an eventual withdrawal, but that withdrawal would have to be all-encompassing, requested by the UN and discharged by NATO. At that time we will be prepared to add additional resources to effect the evacuation of Bosnia.

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[Translation]

CARE CANADA

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

A CBC program reported that, in addition to spending donations from the public extravagantly, the \$300,000 that Care Canada raised in its campaign to relieve hunger in Somalia never made it to its destination. Given the seriousness of the allegations and Ottawa's financial support of Care Canada, the Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa has announced the government's intention to investigate this agency.

Ottawa funded Care Canada to the tune of \$28 million in 1993. Therefore, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell us whether the federal government's grants to Care Canada, especially its

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contribution to the campaign for Somalia, were really used for their intended purpose?

[English]

Hon. Christine Stewart (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague's question.

The CBC program last night made very serious allegations against Care Canada, but I should like to say at the beginning that those are allegations and not facts. We have to make sure that we make that distinction.

CIDA carries on a regular program of auditing of all agencies that it has contracts with and which it funds. It has done that with Care Canada and has found that all the funds provided to Care Canada in whatever program were used properly as indicated through contracts.

[Translation]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, regarding the federal government's financial commitments to Care Canada, does the Deputy Prime Minister intend to suspend all federal grants to this agency until the announced investigation gets to the bottom of the troubling allegations against Care Canada?

[English]

Hon. Christine Stewart (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CIDA currently has ongoing contracts with Care. As I said before, we have no reason according to our audits to say that it is using its funds in any but the best way.

On the other hand, we have very serious concerns about the allegations that have been made. CIDA is immediately starting its own investigation of the agency as an institution. That will include a review of the allegations that have been made.

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BOSNIA

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that Canadian peacekeepers were not in the former Yugoslavia to make war with anybody. Unfortunately that view is not shared by the Bosnian Serbs.

They have declared the 320 UN hostages, including 55 Canadians, to be prisoners of war. They have declared that all agreements with the United Nations are null and void.

(1425)

In response, NATO is calling on the UN to beef up its mandate and the contact group is asking for the power to aggressively attack the warring factions. The UN is at the brink of a protracted war with the Bosnian Serbs.

Will the government today formally acknowledge that the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia is over and that our soldiers are now being asked to play an aggressive peacemaking role in that region?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a question of semantics. Peacekeeping in the traditional sense has rarely been followed in both Croatia and Bosnia. It was not followed in Somalia. These are not traditional peacekeeping situations, but we all refer to them in the generic sense as peacekeeping because that terminology developed by former Prime Minister Pearson is an accepted role for the international forces.

The Government of Canada does not accept the notion that the mandate of the United Nations in Bosnia is invalid. We feel it can still work and we feel it can work with a modification of the mandate in a number of areas. I outlined them in a speech the other night and the leader of the Reform Party heard them.

We feel that the United Nations, the world community, has so much at stake that we should do all possible to ensure that a reformulated, redirected mandate can be discharged.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are not arguing about semantics but about the substance of the situation.

The major NATO allies are deploying reinforcements in the Balkans. The secretary-general of the United Nations is proposing to change the mandate and UN soldiers are being asked to play a more aggressive role in that part of the country.

Our peacekeepers have become peace enforcers, a role which goes against the original mandate and for which they are not properly equipped.

Given that our role is changing, no matter what words the minister wishes to use to describe it, and that the lives of Canadian soldiers are being placed at greater risk, will the government now demand a place for Canada in the UN decision making contact group?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contact group is not a UN sponsored organization. It is a group of nations largely European—it includes Russia and the United States—that have come together and have tried to effect a solution. We have made our position clear that we would have preferred to have been part of that group.

As I said the other night, we have to look forward and not look back. As a result of some of the comments that have been made by our Prime Minister with respect to the specific issue, it has been agreed over the last number of months to expand the consultative process among troop contributors, of which Canada is a significant player. That will mean we will have even more

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consultations, including the meeting I have just described that will take place in Paris on Saturday.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not just want to be consulted. Canadians want to have a say in key decisions that affect the lives of the forces in Bosnia. Canada invented peacekeeping. We have been major players in every key UN peacekeeping mission. Our soldiers have taken on some of the most dangerous assignments in the former Yugoslavia.

The fact that Canada has no real decision making position in actions that have a direct impact on our soldiers is completely unacceptable to the House and the Canadian people.

If the government is insisting on staying in Bosnia, a decision with which we profoundly disagree, will the minister at least insist on membership in the contact group as a condition for remaining?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without getting too much involved, the answer to the specific question is no.

We have a forum that has worked well in the last few months and is expanding and will meet again on Saturday. It is the troop contributing nations.

(1430)

I have been at other meetings of this group in the past number of months. It will be a decision making body; it is a decision making body.

The hon. member quibbles about having a say not meaning consultation. We will be having a say, we are having a say. He obviously does not remember that when it came to the question of application of NATO air power Canada was very much in the forefront not just in consultation but as part of the decision making process and withheld approval until many of our key concerns were met. Those concerns were valid then, they are valid now and they will be valid in the weeks to come.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance, who is also responsible for regional development in Quebec.

The federal government is preparing to review all of its regional development activities. In the future, the Federal Office of Regional Development will concentrate its activities on a single program focussed on small and medium businesses

cutting its aid budgets by 60 per cent at the same time. With Bill C-91 on the federal bank, Ottawa intends to sign agreements directly with agencies that are under Quebec's jurisdiction.

How can the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec talk of harmonizing federal and provincial action, when he is preparing, with Bill C-91 among others, to intervene, indeed to act as the representative of Quebec regional development agencies over the head of the Quebec government?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not understand this bill at all. It establishes a new mandate for the Federal Business Development Bank, among other things.

I can tell the hon. member that the excellent co-operation between the bank and the federal regional development agencies will help small and medium businesses throughout Canada, particularly in Quebec.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in this House, we can see that the real person responsible for regional development in Quebec is the minister from Ontario.

As Quebec is increasingly decentralizing and regionalizing, are we to understand, with the establishment of a new mandate linking the federal office and the Federal Business Development Bank, that the minister, through the ever popular flexible federalism the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs referred to yesterday, is setting up a central Canadian agency to increase overlap and duplication and to attack Quebec's regional development policy head on?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say that the question of the hon. member, whom I hold in high regard, is completely absurd.

Let me begin by saying that, when a question concerns the Federal Business Development Bank, it is directed to the minister, and this is why he responded. When a question concerns regional development, that is the federal development office, I am happy to reply.

First, I am pleased to say that we asked Quebec whether it wanted to align itself with our policies, and we are awaiting its reply. The ball is now in Quebec's court.

Second, we adjusted our operations to the requests of local authorities.

Third, at the annual conference held by the Université de Chicoutimi in Quebec City two weeks ago, the provincial government was asked to do exactly what we are now doing at the federal level. So the hon. member should listen to what his fellow Quebecers are saying.

*Oral Questions**[English]***GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals in the red book promised to wipe out patronage appointments and bring integrity to government. Word now comes from British Columbia that at least three legal firms with no previous prosecution experience have been awarded standing contracts to act on behalf of the crown in putting criminals behind bars.

(1435)

Since the government is so fond of citing the merit principle whenever it becomes clear we are really talking about the patronage principle, could the Minister of Justice explain the merit in handing over the responsibility for prosecuting criminals to law firms with absolutely no experience in that field?

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to answer a question when we do not know what the case was and we do not know who the law firms were. All we know is there was work supplied by the Department of Justice.

Contracts by the Department of Justice are given very carefully with a great deal of forethought, and all the firms with which the Department of Justice does business are very competent in the field in which they are to be working.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary might be interested that all three law firms in question have absolute Liberal pedigrees.

The law firm partner James Hutchison happens to be the president of the revenue minister's Victoria riding association. Another contract was given to David Mulroney who happens to be the vice-president of the minister's Liberal association.

In light of the Liberals' promise to wipe out patronage appointments and bring integrity to government, why has the justice department failed to deliver on this important promise?

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is saying that because the Liberal Party was able to associate itself with very competent people during the election campaign and so many throughout Canada, as the popular vote would indicate, there will be quite a few of them who are Liberals.

That person is a Liberal certainly does not discount them from being a capable lawyer. If we were to discount all the capable

lawyers who are Liberals we would have a difficult time in awarding contracts.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux-Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

In reply to the question I asked him on May 18, the minister said that the sale of CN would be conducted in the best interests of taxpayers. But, this morning, it has come to light that, in the sole interest of reducing CN's debt, Ottawa will be sinking anywhere from \$400 to \$600 million into the purchase of CN buildings for which taxpayers have already paid.

How can the Minister of Transport claim that the government is acting in the Canadian public's best interests by acquiring CN property, when the sole purpose of this operation is to meet the liquidator's condition that CN's debt be artificially reduced to make its balance sheet more attractive, to—

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, I am finding today's questions somewhat long and would ask you to be a little briefer.

The Minister of Transport has the floor.

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question of the commercialization of CN is very complex.

I know the hon. member has had the opportunity to sit in committee and listen to people we consider to be as expert in this area as anyone in the country, who try to explain the need to provide an opportunity for CN to be sold in a viable way, to elicit enough investment interest to carry the issue to be put out this fall, but also to allow it to continue to compete on an equitable footing with Canadian Pacific.

The hon. member knows representatives of the competitor of CN, CP, have gone before the committee and explained they understand the need to have a reasonable debt-equity ratio, that we have to qualify for a triple B bond rating in order to raise funds on the investment market to operate CN and provide money for the acquisition.

(1440)

I know it is a complex piece of business. I can only encourage the hon. member to take the word of the Minister of Transport and the government and also to listen to the people who understand the business principles involved in the commercialization of CN. It is in the best interest of taxpayers, the best interest of shippers and the best interest of competition that we are trying to do the best job we can.

Even the *Financial Post* and the *Globe and Mail* agree that on this one we are doing a fairly good job.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Mercier (Blainville—Deux—Montagnes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer in fact confirms that the government is reducing CN's debt to lure buyers, American buyers for example.

Now for my brief question. Will the minister acknowledge that taxpayers are going to have to pay not between \$400 to \$600 million in the effort to privatize CN, but as much as \$1 billion, and that this public support of \$1 billion is nothing less than an indirect subsidy Ottawa will be offering to the future owners of CN?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a fundamental question that has to be addressed by all members of the House of Commons as we deal with the commercialization of CN is whether members want to do it.

We can address all the theoretical questions. We can discuss whether the deal is absolutely perfect or whether the taxpayers of Canada will get an absolute best value on every aspect of the deal.

The Bloc Québécois will have to decide whether it wants to support the commercialization and the privatization of CN. If it does, we will listen to its recommendations as to how we can do it well. However, if it does not want to do it, if it just wants to carp about it, it should simply oppose it and not try to deal with issues it obviously has no understanding of whatever.

* * *

ETHICS COUNSELLOR

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1988 Georges Clermont, then vice-president responsible for real estate at Canada Post and now the president of Canada Post, was at the Hotel Ritz in Barcelona, Spain. His bill was paid for by none other than José Perez, the developer of the Canada Post headquarters complex in Ottawa. Mr. Clermont has admitted this payment under oath.

Is this now sufficient evidence for the Prime Minister to finally allow an ethics counsellor investigation or must we wait until even more damning evidence is made public?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, quite clearly the government is not willing to face up to issues of ethics which are hounding it.

Oral Questions

It seems clear to me there is now considerable evidence there is more than a casual acquaintance between Mr. Perez and Mr. Clermont. Canadians have a right to know the extent of this symbiotic relationship.

If there will not be an independent investigation, why not? What is the explanation to the Canadian people?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member takes an allegation to the floor of the House of Commons.

The hon. member will be aware the subject matter is under investigation. It would be most inappropriate for a minister of the crown to comment on that.

The hon. member had an opportunity on a previous occasion before the Standing Committee on Government Operations to put questions he deemed appropriate and sufficiently important to the president of Canada Post Corporation.

If the hon. member has evidence of those allegations, I would be happy to forward those to the appropriate individuals. This activity took place a considerable time ago and is presently being investigated by the proper authorities.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In an internal memo dated May 11 and addressed to employees of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC president Perrin Beatty announced that the McKinsey firm would be asked to examine the operations of the CBC. The memo also announced that as part of its planning strategy, the CBC expected to cut a total of \$350 million over three years, although the reports of the Canadian Heritage committee and the Juneau committee have not yet been released.

(1445)

Could the minister confirm whether the \$350 million mentioned in Mr. Beatty's memo is the same amount that was announced by his deputy minister, Mr. Rochon, to former president Manera before the last budget?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the president of the CBC made it very clear that his budgetary framework was the same one established in the government's latest budget. If the hon. member read what it said in the budget, she would have the answer to her question.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister keep denying the extent of the cuts at the CBC

Oral Questions

over the next three years, when the board of directors of the corporation is about to implement these cutbacks by hiring an outside firm to find ways to cut and slash services at the CBC?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely biased interpretation of what is being done by the CBC board of directors. It is not the first time we have heard such interpretations. The board of directors of the CBC is looking for the best possible advice on how the CBC can be made more efficient to deal with the challenges of the information highway.

* * *

MINORITY LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Last summer, the Government of Canada announced that 26 departments and agencies would be required to prepare action plans for promoting the development of Canada's minority language communities in accordance with sections 41 and 42 of the Official Languages Act.

Can the minister tell us today what measures he will take to ensure that the 26 departments and agencies in question submit their plans before the deadline, that is, before the end of next month?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's very relevant question gives me an opportunity to inform the members of this House—those who are interested in getting information, of course—that the Department of Canadian Heritage has already received half the proposed action and business plans from these departments and agencies and expects to officially receive all remaining plans by June 30, as requested. Furthermore, the 26 organizations concerned have designated co-ordinators in both Ottawa and elsewhere in the country—for organizations represented outside Ottawa—to ensure that plans are developed properly.

* * *

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first question about one of many, many broken Liberal promises. It concerns the government's promise to replace the GST with a system that, among other things, is fairer to consumers. The Deputy Prime Minister promised to resign if such a replacement was not completed within one year after the election.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Why has the government failed to deliver on this promise?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government needs no incentive to repair the damage created by the GST, but if we did I can think of no greater incentive than to keep the Deputy Prime Minister in place.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Reformers always knew that there exists no GST replacement that quoting from the red book “raises equivalent revenues, is fairer to consumers and small business and minimizes disruption to small business”. There is not one replacement that could be created within one year.

(1450)

My question is also to the Minister of Finance. Is this broken promise symptomatic of Liberal incompetence, or is it a sign of Liberal willingness to promise almost anything in order to get elected?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member's citation at the beginning, I will take that as a representation from the Reform Party that we keep the GST as is.

However, it is with profound regret that I say to my colleague that as in many other things we are not going to accept the Reform Party's representation.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In another memo dated May 23, the CEO of the CBC informed his employees that 1,000 positions would be cut by September 1995 and that 350 employees would be laid off in the short term.

Mr. Beatty added that the exact number of positions to be cut in the various facilities remained to be determined, since management plans had not yet been approved by the resources planning and allocation committee.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage realize how anxious the French network staff, particularly in Quebec, are about the decisions this committee is about to make, given that francophones are a very small minority on this committee?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained time and time again in this House that we have several initiatives under way which should lead to fundamental decisions being taken concerning the CBC.

Oral Questions

There is, for instance, the heritage committee, which will hopefully table a report in a few days, a few weeks at most. There is also a task force reviewing mandates. It is quite normal for the president of the CBC to care about the restructuring that his house, so to speak, is about to undergo in order to make it more effective.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that the budget for the CBC's French network is 40 per cent lower than that of the English network, in spite of similar viewership, does the minister undertake to direct the board of directors of the CBC to spare the French network?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government will do much more than issue directives. It will implement policy in due time, and I have just said when that would be, when we have in hand the reports we requested.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the President of the Treasury Board.

I want to first congratulate the minister and the leader of the public service union on reaching an agreement to work together on managing downsizing of the public service.

For all of us who are concerned about the future of the public service and about the tens of thousands of employees who are worried about their jobs, I wonder if the minister would explain exactly how this agreement will help those affected by downsizing and how it will improve relations with the employees and unions.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I signed a joint agreement with union leaders that will provide for joint adjustment committees to assist employees who are leaving the public service as a result of the downsizing that is taking place. This is in order to help them find alternate jobs. This will provide transition support services. For example, one such committee here in Ottawa next week is providing a job fair for a number of people who will be leaving the public service. So these joint management and union committees right across the country will assist on a regional, local, and departmental basis to help the people who are being displaced by downsizing to find new jobs.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

According to the auditor general, in the next 30 years, it will cost \$9 billion to safely dispose of the mountains of high-level radioactive waste mainly caused by electric power companies such as Ontario Hydro.

(1455)

The federal government has already subsidized the development of these companies to the tune of \$370 million, without devising safe ways and sites to dispose of such waste.

How can the Minister of the Environment justify that Canadian taxpayers are currently subsidizing Ontario Hydro to get rid of its nuclear waste, which accounts for close to 90 per cent of all such waste in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, The hon. member is right that the auditor general quite rightly identified that we have a long term radioactive waste disposal problem in the country.

The government is working on the problem. In March I went to my cabinet colleagues with a long term strategy to deal with the problem and I will return to cabinet in November with a timetable and with cost estimates as to how we will proceed in the future to deal with the nuclear waste problem in the country.

[Translation]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after investing hundreds of millions of tax dollars in the construction of Ontario Hydro's nuclear power plants, how can the Minister of the Environment now guarantee that she will not ask Canadians across the country to absorb the costs of an operation which is Ontario Hydro's sole responsibility, while the federal government never invested Canadian taxpayers' money in Hydro-Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I should make something very plain here. When I talk about developing a plan to deal with long term costs for radioactive waste disposal, I am talking about historic waste.

The hon. member is quite right that various utilities across the country generate energy through nuclear power and they are responsible for the disposal of those wastes. We operate on the basis of a polluter pay principle and we as a government are

Oral Questions

working closely with those utilities to develop the safest and most cost-effective disposal mechanisms.

* * *

UPPER NICOLA BAND

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, May 27, the Indians of the Upper Nicola Band erected barricades and dug trenches on the Douglas Lake Ranch road. The RCMP were met with threats of violence when they served a court injunction to remove the illegal blockade.

What action has the government taken to stop this illegal roadblock?

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that the off reserve nature of the dispute makes it a provincial matter. I understand that it is being addressed by the relevant parties.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982 state in section 24 that the federal government has a statutory responsibility for Indians and lands reserved for Indians. Clearly this is a federal government responsibility. These people are breaking the law.

Will the government desert the people of my riding, as it has done before, or will the government cut off the funding to the Upper Nicola Band until it removes the roadblocks?

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just said that these people are breaking the law. I did not get the first part of the question. I was not sure whether he meant the people who own the Douglas Lake cattle company are breaking the law or the aboriginal people are breaking the law.

However, if requested by the First Nations and the province, my departmental officials would be prepared to assist in resolving the dispute.

* * *

UPPER NICOLA BAND

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indian

Affairs and Northern Development, regarding the same issue of the Upper Nicola Band.

(1500)

The matter of grievance is definitely in the federal area of responsibility. A major confrontation is taking place. Nearly 200 First Nations people are on site this afternoon. There is bound to be violence on that blockade if action is not taken.

Will the parliamentary secretary ask the minister to involve himself personally, go out to the site and attempt to resolve these critical issues before violence occurs?

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I just responded to the previous question. I am sure we are all aware of the potential for an accident and that cooler heads should prevail on this issue. If requested the minister will be prepared to meet, but only if requested by the First Nations, the province and the others involved.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

As there is an upcoming NAFO meeting in Toronto, can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans provide the House with any new information on the status of the enforcement and quota measures that were agreed to in April? Could he also tell us what Canada's position will be at this meeting?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and for her interest in the NAFO meeting in Toronto next week.

At this meeting all of the NAFO member states will consider the enforcement provisions contained within the Canada-EU enforcement agreement. It is our hope, indeed our desire, that the provisions contained in the agreement will be endorsed by members of NAFO.

I spoke as recently as yesterday to the ministers of fisheries from Norway and Iceland. My officials have spoken with representatives of other countries to ensure good strong support for these measures.

The current status of the agreement is that we have 100 per cent observer coverage working quite well offshore.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were two parts to the economic plan outlined in the red book. The first was to get our finances under control and the second was to stimulate job creation.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. We have been bold in setting targets for reducing the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP. Why is there no target for a reduction in the level of unemployment?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member does not ask easy questions.

Canada, like many other countries, is undergoing a fundamental revolution in the job market. That is why the government is acting as it is with its reforms in employability by HRD, in research and development, in industry. It is why the access to capital for small business is so important.

All of these are in the area where one sets the climate for the private sector. Therefore the questions that arise are: Should government be setting targets in areas where it does not have at least as much control as it should over the public finances? What about the kinds of jobs, part time or full time? What about the problem of the working poor, which is almost as important? These are questions I believe have to be addressed within the context of the member's question.

The real answer is that no level of unemployment is acceptable.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Colleagues, I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of Baroness Brigstocke, the Conservative whip of the House of Lords of Britain.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

(1505)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages and

Routine Proceedings

pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), the government's response to four petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Industry concerning the order of reference dated Tuesday, February 28, 1995 relating to the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons.

The committee has considered vote 15 under justice in the main estimates ending the fiscal year March 31, 1996 and now reports the same.

FINANCE

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee of Finance on votes 1, 5 and 10 under national revenue in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996.

May I thank the members from all parties for their splendid co-operation and constructive suggestions in our report.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the examination of the estimates of the Department of National Revenue, I pointed out department estimates on vote 1 were about \$10 million higher than the amount specified in the federal budget submitted in February.

The transcript will show the motion that: "We approve the estimates in principle, reconciling them with the budget" was passed unanimously. The motion to reconcile was ruled out of order and is not reflected in the minutes being tabled today.

Because the department estimates of all departments are printed before the finance minister presents his budget, we have noted there will be discrepancies between ministry estimates and the finance minister's dollar allocation to these ministries.

The solution might include Your Honour recommending to the Minister of National Revenue that he submit a reconciliation, as unanimously requested by committee members. If this was taken as precedent, your ruling would take a giant step to putting the members in charge of expenditures of taxpayers' dollars.

Routine Proceedings

In summary, as a standard procedure when there is a difference between estimates and the budget, a reconciliation should be tabled by the minister when department estimates are tabled by a standing committee.

The Speaker: The Chair is in an in between position here. It is not for the Chair to make specific suggestions, but I wonder if the hon. member might recommend that this request be made through the committee itself when bringing in its report.

Second, perhaps this question could be brought up later on when supply is discussed. However I do not believe it is the position or the prerogative of the Chair to intervene on this and I would decline to do so at this time.

(1510)

HEALTH

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Health, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) and 81(7), following consideration of the evidence heard over the past month from the Minister of Health and a number of her officials, as well as representatives from the Medical Research Council, the Patent Medicine Price Review Board and Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission.

We are pleased to report the votes for the main estimates for the year 1995–96.

[Translation]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table the eleventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, February 28, 1995, our committee has considered the budgetary vote for the office of the auditor general in the main estimates and has agreed to issue a report. The public accounts committee has analyzed vote 35 under finance in the main estimates for the 1995–96 fiscal year and gives its unanimous consent.

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 the 79th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. With leave of the House, I intend to move for concurrence in this report later this day.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 80th report of the Standing Committee of Procedure and House Affairs. The

committee considered Bill C–85, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and to provide for the continuation of a certain provision, and has agreed to report it without amendment.

I may say that due to the very persuasive testimony given by the President of the Treasury Board, the committee adopted every clause in the bill without amendment unanimously.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

I bring to the attention of the House that unanimous agreement on Bill C–85 includes only the Liberal and Bloc Québécois members. Reform members did not agree with the one-day fast tracking of Bill C–85, and refused to participate in the 12-minute clause by clause.

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second and third reports of the Standing Committee of National Defence and Veterans Affairs, concerning the main estimates for 1995–96.

The Speaker: Forgive me, were you presenting the second and third reports together?

Mr. Proud: Yes.

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, regarding the information under the heading “Human Resources Development” in the main estimates for 1995–96.

The committee reviewed the main estimates and submits its report without amendment.

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996.

* * *

[Translation]

ADM AGRI-INDUSTRIES LTD. OPERATIONS ACT

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to withdraw my private bill, Bill C–308.

Routine Proceedings

(1515)

This bill is similar to Bill C-313 which was debated in this House on May 19.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill withdrawn.)

* * *

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, with leave of the House, I move that the 79th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which was presented to the House today, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 36, I wish to present a petition signed by over 3,000 people from Halifax West and other areas of Nova Scotia. The petitioners believe that all those who commit crimes of a serious nature regardless of age should be tried before the adult court system.

TOBACCO

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this petition on the negative effects of tobacco was commenced during national non-smoking week 1995. Over 25,000 young people and 40 youth organizations from across the country have signed on.

Four representatives of this group are in the gallery today I am told. They have met with leaders and representatives of all federal parties, including the Deputy Prime Minister. These young people recognize that the tobacco industry is targeting young people. They are calling on all legislators to begin to target this industry as its product continues to addict and ultimately kill thousands of young Canadians.

[Translation]

This petition will have a profound effect on the welfare of our young people.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions before me. The first is signed by 236 members of my riding. It calls for Parliament to oppose any attempt to include sexual orientation in the human rights act or the charter of rights and freedoms. The petitioners feel such inclusion would infringe on the historical rights of Canadians and I share their views.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 342 people from my riding. It concerns the subject of high risk offenders who commit personal injury crimes.

The petitioners call on Parliament to enact Bill C-240 and future legislation that permits detention of high risk offenders after the completion of their sentence. This measure is suggested by the petitioners to lower the occurrence of personal injury crimes committed by these individuals. I agree with the petitioners.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I have before me is signed by 670 members of my riding. It has to do with firearms control.

These individuals ask Parliament to support legislation that severely punishes all criminals who use firearms and commit criminal act, supports the Criminal Code provisions that protect the rights of law-abiding citizens to own and use recreational firearms, and supports the repeal of legislation regarding firearms that has not lowered crime, has not been cost effective or is overly complex, making it inefficient or unenforceable.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to present another petition in this course of action undertaken on behalf of constituents who wish to halt the early release from prison of Robert Paul Thompson.

These petitioners urge the government to enact legislation in order to make our streets safer for law-abiding citizens and the families of victims of convicted murderers.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present two petitions. One has been sent to me from Frankfort, Ontario and the other is from constituents of mine.

These petitions come from two different provinces yet they request the very same thing, that Parliament refrain from implementing a more restrictive control of firearms that will affect only law-abiding citizens.

(1520)

They request that more effective prosecution and tougher sentencing of criminals be carried out. The target for gun control

Routine Proceedings

laws in the Criminal Code of Canada must be the criminals who are either a danger to the safety of the public or those who have criminal intent, not law-abiding responsible firearm owners.

I thank all of those who signed the petition. I concur with their sentiments.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by 1,042 people from my constituency who are very concerned about the sexual orientation phrase being included in the charter of rights and freedoms. I concur with their concern.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as a member of Parliament, I am presenting five petitions dealing with objections to changing various pieces of federal legislation involving the extension of criteria in those pieces of legislation.

DRUNKENNESS DEFENCE

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present a sixth petition which calls on Parliament to make it impossible to use extreme drunkenness as a defence in any criminal case. I am very pleased to present this petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 36, I rise today to present several petitions as requested by constituents of Essex—Windsor from Amherstburg, Maidstone and La Salle, Ontario regarding their views on sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I present a petition signed by a number of constituents from Fredericton—York—Sunbury. They call on Parliament to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition which is signed by hundreds of residents from throughout British Columbia and particularly from Vancouver Island.

The petition draws to the attention of the House the fact that the current Criminal Code denies people who are suffering from terminal or irreversible and debilitating illness the right to choose freely and voluntarily to end their lives with the assistance of a physician.

The petitioners call on Parliament to amend the code to ensure the right of all Canadians to die with dignity by allowing people

with terminal or irreversible and debilitating illness the right to the assistance of a physician in ending their lives at a time of their choice, subject to strict safeguards to prevent abuse and to ensure that the decision is free, informed, competent and voluntary.

[Translation]

BREAST CANCER

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NPD): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. First, a petition from women across Canada concerning breast cancer. More than 5,400 Canadian women will die of breast cancer this year and about 19,000 new cases will be diagnosed.

Your petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to urge the government to co-operate with the provinces and territories on establishing centres of excellence in each of the provinces and territories, to establish a national information and telephone support service, and to provide the requisite basic funding for support groups that help breast cancer patients.

[English]

GUN CONTROL

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this petition is from constituents of mine from all communities in Yukon.

These petitioners state that whereas there is no connection between gun control legislation and a decrease in occurrence of criminal activity. Whereas all handguns in Canada are required by law to be registered, they feel that implementing more restrictive firearms controls will affect only law-abiding citizens and is unjustifiable. They feel that responsible governments should follow more effective prosecution and tougher sentencing of criminals.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege for me to rise today to present 343 petitions signed by 9,144 concerned Canadians primarily from the province of Saskatchewan.

The petitioners protest the following provisions of Bill C-68: the universal registration of long guns; the replacement of the firearms acquisition certificate by a firearms possession certificate; restrictions and controls on the purchase of ammunition; provisions to ban the purchase and use of .25 and .32 calibre handguns and handguns with a barrel length of under 4.14 inches; and regulation by orders in council.

(1525)

These petitioners call on Parliament to refrain from passing Bill C-68 as it presently stands with the above mentioned provisions.

I will not go through all of these petitions because of the great number of them.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present four petitions on behalf of 162 citizens, many of whom are members of my constituency of Trinity—Spadina.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act so as to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

On behalf of my constituents I humbly submit these petitions.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present on behalf of constituents.

The first petition deals with palliative care and the decriminalization of assisted suicide.

RIGHTS OF GRANDPARENTS

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the rights of grandparents.

JUSTICE

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition deals with returning convicted persons to jail.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I present a petition which has been circulating across Canada. This particular petition comes from the Cold Lake, Alberta area.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society. They also state that the Income Tax Act discriminates against families who make the choice to provide care in the home for preschool children, the disabled, the chronically ill, or the aged.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to pursue initiatives to eliminate tax discrimination against families who decide to provide care in the home for preschool children, the disabled, the chronically ill, or the aged.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to present a petition on behalf of a few hundred residents from Kamloops, Logan Lake, Fraser Lake, Endako,

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Salmon Arm, Sorrento, Burns Lake, Fort Fraser, Prince George, Vanderhoof, Vernon and Barrière.

The petitioners point out that the mining industry is a mainstay of employment in over 150 communities across Canada and is an important contributor to our country's gross domestic product. Its total exports are a cornerstone of our economic future. The petitioners simply point out to Parliament that the Canadian Mineral Industry Federation has proposed a 10-point plan of action. They are asking the Government of Canada to take action on these recommendations to ensure that we rebuild Canada's mineral reserves.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition to present which has been signed by a number of residents of the central interior of British Columbia.

The petitioners point out that Canadians, mainly women and children, are becoming increasingly fearful of walking on our streets and in our neighbourhoods. They believe that many violent and sex offenders are being paroled prematurely, are being released without proper treatment and rehabilitation, and a whole number of other issues.

The petitioners ask that the House of Commons and the Minister of Justice take whatever steps are necessary to amend Canada's Criminal Code and parole system to ensure that safety and peace return to our neighbourhoods.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 176 will be answered today and I would ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

[Text]

Question No. 176—**Mr. Harper (Calgary west):**

With regard to the multiple cheques issued by the government to individuals within a short period of time, for example OAS, CPP, civil and military service pensions, (a) what consideration has been given to combining all of the cheques sent in a month to an individual into a single payment, (b) how much does it cost to issue and mail each individual cheque and (c) has the possibility of issuing a single cheque to married couples been considered?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Public Works and Government Services Canada is continuously looking at ways of improving service delivery and reducing the costs of cheque production and distribution, from the consolidation of cheque processing sites from 11 to 4, which will save \$4.8 million annually after implementation, to increased use of direct deposit.

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Public Works and Government Services Canada, PWGSC, issues payments on behalf of other program departments in the amounts and according to the schedules determined by those departments. Program departments determine individual entitlement to benefits in accordance with the policy and legislation governing specific programs. This process precludes PWGSC from adding up the benefits under various programs and issuing a single payment to an individual.

Should the department decide to consolidate various benefits paid monthly into a single payment, individual program departments would require legislative and policy changes for their specific programs. Major changes would also be required to the computer systems of program departments and PWGSC.

Public Works and Government Services Canada issues approximately 193 million payments annually. Approximately 34 per cent are currently delivered electronically in the form of direct deposit.

The average cost to issue a cheque, including production costs, banking fees and postage, is approximately one dollar. With the use of direct deposit significant savings are realized through reduced postage and banking fees as well as reduced cheque production costs. Direct deposit costs the government only one cent in banking fees compared with 10 cents for each paper transaction.

As another important step to streamline operations and reduce costs, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services recently announced that direct deposit will become the government's standard method of payment. This expansion of the use of direct deposit is expected to save the government \$18 million to \$20 million annually by 1998-1999.

Program departments accord benefits in accordance with their legislation. In cases where individuals are entitled to payments based on individual characteristics separate payments must be issued as there is no authority to treat a married couple as a single beneficiary.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

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: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

ACCESS TODAY, 1995

The Deputy Speaker: Colleagues, I am very pleased to lay upon the table a document entitled, "Access Today, 1995", a review of the initiatives taken by the House of Commons to serve Canadians with disabilities.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 1995

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 1995, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: The form of the ruling on the report stage of Bill C-76 will depart from the manner normally used in the House. Following consultations with representatives of the House leaders' offices, it has been decided that whenever the nature of the ruling is complex we will use a more simplified form to explain to the House how report stage amendments will be grouped and how the voting will proceed. We are doing this for the sole purpose of demystifying, hopefully, the process.

(1530)

[Translation]

I propose to deliver in the House a short form of the ruling, giving only the groupings of amendments for debate. Of course, the entire ruling, including the voting patterns, is available to you at the table. The Chair will inform the House of the patterns for each group at the time those motions are to be voted on.

[English]

There are 78 motions in amendment standing in the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the 1995 budget.

Motions Nos. 13, 15 and 16 have been withdrawn.

Group No. 1 is Motions Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

[Translation]

Group No. 2 is Motions Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 74.

[English]

Group No. 3 is Motions Nos. 20, 21, 22, 75, 76, 77 and 78. Group No. 4 is Motions Nos. 23 to 45. Group No. 5 is Motions Nos. 46 to 63. Group No. 6 is Motions Nos. 64 to 67.

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[Translation]

Group No. 7 is Motions Nos. 68 to 73.

[English]

I would now propose Motions Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 to members of the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-76, in Clause 3, be amended:

(a) by replacing line 10, on page 3, with the following: "of the program,"; and
(b) by replacing line 17, on page 3, with the following: "able job offer, and

(iii) shall in no circumstances make a payment to a surplus employee who has not performed any work."

[Translation]

Hon. David Anderson (for the Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-76, in Clause 7, be amended in the French version, by replacing lines 8 and 9, on page 7, with the following:

«ou à toute personne appartenant à l'administration publique fédérale.»

[English]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-76, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing lines 26 and 27, on page 7, with the following:

"the employee, under a closed competition exclusively open to employees declared surplus within the meaning of the Workforce Adjustment Directive under the Public Sector Compensation Act, to another".

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-76, in Clause 8, be amended by adding after line 37, on page 7, the following:

"(6) Under no circumstance shall the Commission appoint a participant in a program designated by the Treasury Board as an employment equity program to a position that could be occupied by a surplus employee within the meaning of the Work Force Adjustment Directive under the Public Sector Compensation Act."

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to point out to the House that on page XVIII of today's Notice Paper, Motion No. 4 in English should be read as standing in the name of Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge) and amending clause 8.

[English]

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss Bill C-76 and the amendments thereto.

I want to make general comments then some specific comments with regard to the amendments.

With regard to the amendments before us that deal with public service measures, we generally support the government's decision to suspend the workforce adjustment directive and eliminate some 45,000 positions in the public service. However, we feel there are some concerns and because of that we have moved Motions 1, 3 and 4.

With regard to our first motion, on clause 3, we are concerned that some employees will be declared surplus and be paid for a period of six months without doing any work. Officials have confirmed to us that this would be possible with the way the bill is written at the present time.

With regard to clause 8, we have concerns that the legislation gives the Public Service Commission too much flexibility in appointing surplus workers to jobs in other departments. We would prefer that the appointments be subject to the competitive process in order to prevent any type of favouritism, cronyism, or unfair competition. We think the commission should be given the power to hold a closed competition confined to surplus employees only.

With regard to clause 8, we are concerned the employment equity programs will be used to further the goals of employment equity during this period of downsizing. As I recall, earlier in this session the minister responsible for the public service mentioned that this would be one of the criteria taken into consideration. We feel that this could happen as a result of people being appointed without competition to jobs that would otherwise be occupied by surplus workers.

(1535)

Those are the motions that will be looked at with regard to that. My colleague, the critic who is responsible for that in terms of the public service, will be making further comments on those amendments to the House.

I think we have to understand the broader picture and the reason for Bill C-76. Bill C-76 has as its purpose to deal with the fiscal circumstances of Canada. It is to deal with the deficit in some way.

We have to recognize that we have a very serious circumstance. We have said this many times in this House. My hon. colleague from Vancouver points out to me often that every day we have a deficit of some \$100 million between the revenue that is available for us to take our responsibilities as a federal government and the expenditures that take place on a daily basis. That is \$100 million a day in terms of a deficit. If we put that over a one-year period we have the accumulated deficit of this country, as projected in the current budget for 1995-96, of some \$32.7 billion.

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If we look at what has happened with regard to the public debt charges during that period of time from 1994–95 to the budget of 1995–96, our debt charges in this country have increased from some \$42 billion to \$50 billion. They have increased for two very basic reasons. First, the deficit is not being dealt with by this government. It continues to add on to the accumulated debt of the country of some \$550 billion today. This is heading toward a major sum. From the government's own figures, it points out that the net public debt by the end of 1995–96 will be some \$578 billion and by 1996–97 it is projected to be over \$600 billion.

Because of that increased accumulated debt, the interest costs to the Government of Canada continue to increase. This has a major effect on the budget of Canada and the revenue available to administer and take care of the responsibilities that have been delegated to the federal government in this country.

That is certainly one of the factors, the fact that the deficit continues to add to the accumulated debt and that larger accumulated debt creates a larger base on which the interest costs are enormous.

The second factor, which is very obvious to all of us, is the increased interest costs that have occurred during the past year. For example, in the United States the Federal Reserve Bank has increased the interest rates over the last year seven times, and every time the interest rates have increased in the United States it has had a direct effect on the interest rates here in Canada. Over the year, we have had an increase of 3 per cent in interest rates, which has again affected the amount of interest we pay as a government annually.

It is seriously affecting the programs that are to be delivered by the federal government. I have already mentioned that for 1994–95 the cost of our debt charges from the cost of interest was in the \$42 billion range. Now in 1995–96 it is projected to be \$50 billion. We have had an additional \$8 billion of interest costs because of that 3 per cent interest rate increase and also the larger base of debt in this country.

What has that done? It means that in order to try to deal with the deficit we must in some way eliminate expenditures of some \$8 billion just to cancel that out. Well, that is not that easy to do. The government has come up with certain measures. For example, it has increased tax revenue by \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. Well, that is only 25 per cent of the increased interest costs. Where does the other \$6 billion come from?

(1540)

The government has attempted through other means to secure that expenditure reduction and at the same time in its budget is attempting to reduce the cost of program spending from \$118 billion down to \$114 billion, a reduction of \$4 billion.

If we could have maintained at least the base from which interest is calculated, if we could have stopped the accumulation

of debt by eliminating the deficit, we would have had more money to reduce the expenditures of government. There would have been more confidence in the Canadian economy and the interest rates would have been lower because we were balancing the budget or we had a plan to balance the budget.

Missing from the budget is the fact that the Liberal government has not put in place a plan to reduce the deficit from the projected deficit in 1996–97 of \$24.3 billion down to zero. It is afraid to take the next step and say to Canadians we are going to take the deficit to zero by this plan. The government is afraid to stick its neck out and make that commitment to Canadians. That is costing us billions of dollars in higher interest rates.

If we had at least held our interest costs in 1995–96 at \$42 billion, where they were in 1994–95, rather than the increase of \$8 billion I have talked about, we would not have had to reduce our expenditures by \$4 billion. We would have had an extra \$4 billion to work with. That is what the government should have been looking at.

We can go through all these amendments and all the items we are going to deal with in Bill C-76, but we must get back to the basic problem we are facing. That is, the Government of Canada has not declared to the people that it will balance the budget during the term of this Parliament. It has not clearly said that, and it is incumbent upon them to do so.

Moody's and the Dominion Bond Rating Service have told the Government of Canada clearly: "In order for us to give you a better credit rating, which reflects on interest rates, you must commit to a plan".

As we go through these amendments we must keep in mind the very first item on the agenda, which is dealing with the deficit and stopping the growth of debt, which is destroying the country.

Mr. David Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with each of these four amendments in turn, because they hit on some of the essentials of what we are trying to do as a government to deal with the public service.

I extend my thanks to the critics from the official opposition and from the third party for their work in the finance committee under the chairmanship of the member for Willowdale. I thought it was an outstanding collegial example of how to deal with a very difficult and major piece of legislation. I describe the treatment of witnesses as exemplary by all members of Parliament.

With regard to the first motion, I would like to clarify what the intent of the legislation is. The surplus period is a notice period that the employee's job will end in six months. By definition the surplus employee will have a job for six months. I do not want the amendment to leave the impression that there is a system set

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up where people will be sitting around for six months. It has always been the practice of departments to plan their surplus declarations in this manner.

(1545)

There are some exceptions to this rule which should be clarified. I can give an example of a military base closing prior to the six month period. We consider it costly for the government to transfer surplus employees to find jobs which may only last a month or two. It is more practical to leave them where they are until the six months have run out. In that case the legislation will have to build in these rare exceptions.

Motion No. 2 is a technical change dealing with the wording the drafters have which now has to be changed.

[*Translation*]

The motion reads as follows: "That Bill C-76, in Clause 7, be amended in the French version, by replacing lines 8 and 9, on page 7, with the following: «ou à toute personne appartenant à l'administration publique fédérale»."

[*English*]

The third motion by the member for Lethbridge deals with clause 8. It appears the purpose of the amendment is to ensure competent employees are retained through the exercise of priority for surplus employees. Surplus employees are generally highly competent and their employment is in jeopardy for reasons beyond their control. The priority accorded to them ensures these competent people are retained in the public service and that the investment made in their training and development is not lost. A surplus person must be determined qualified in order to be appointed. It is not necessary to hold competitions to ensure competent employees are retained.

Section 10 of the Public Service Employment Act which establishes that employments are to be based on merit does not require that these appointments be made by competition.

The purpose of clause 8 is to make it possible for deputy heads to place their own surplus employees before having to consider priorities from other departments. The intent is to allow departmental restructuring and downsizing in a humane and efficient way.

The delays involved in holding competitions lead to a longer period of uncertainty which is destructive to morale. Further, there are significantly greater costs involved in running competitions rather than considering people on a non-competitive basis.

While competitive processes may be seen as being fairer and more transparent there are a number of reasons why other

considerations may be overriding in certain situations. For some surplus employees there is a very limited period during which they can be considered for the positions. If a competition had to be run, especially national in scope, this period could be exhaustive while the longer processes that would have been involved in that competition have gone through.

The amendment is also not consistent with the other provisions for priority entitlements in the act which provide for appointments without competition in priority situations.

As drafted, the amendment creates internal inconsistencies within the clause that would require redrafting. In particular, the need to hold a competition is in conflict with the discretion given to the public service commission to formulate an opinion as to whether an employee is qualified.

The fourth motion presented by the member for Lethbridge is also an amendment to clause 8. The effect of this amendment is to remove the commission's current discretion under paragraph 35(2)(d) of the Public Service Employment Act to exclude appointments made under employment equity programs from the operation of the various sections of the act which give priority entitlement.

Parliament chose two years ago through the Public Service Reform Act to give the commission the discretion it now enjoys. It also is currently considering amendments to the Employment Equity Act which would give employment equity programs more rather than less precedence in the public service. It is the government's place to decide what emphasis it wishes to put on these areas.

Although the commission has chosen not to exclude these programs from consideration of priorities, this does not mean there would not be times when this would not be the right thing to do. The amendment would prevent the commission from exercising this discretion in future where it considers it necessary to achieve employment equity objectives.

In reality the effect of this amendment is to defeat the effort made by the government for disadvantaged groups. This would be a setback in that it would allow surplus priorities to be placed ahead of disadvantaged group members. I know that would not be the objective of this member who has had a long public career and has been involved with disadvantaged groups in his home province before coming to the federal scene.

(1550)

It is still the objective of the government to have the public service reflect the demographic configuration of our society. This motion would stall the effort we have all been making.

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[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a number of things have already been said about the amendments to Bill C-76. However, much remains to be said, and we fully intend to do so in the days to come. I would now like to comment on the motions being presented by our Reform Party colleagues.

The first motion says that a surplus employee who has not performed any work should not receive any money. I am afraid that if this amendment is passed, employees who lose their jobs would no longer be eligible for severance pay. That would be unfortunate, since severance pay is not intended as a gift to the employee who loses his job. It is meant to compensate him for the fact that he is penalized by the loss of his job. Severance pay is also a reminder to the employer that there is a price to pay for getting rid of a certain number of employees.

It would be too easy for the employer to say: I am going to cut my staff and get rid of 25, 50, 100 or 200 employees, depending on the size of the company. It would be too easy to be able to do this with impunity, without having to compensate people who, after all, are human and, in most cases, have dedicated a good part of their lives to their employer.

Severance pay must be included, and under no condition should we pass amendments that would allow the employer to dispense with severance pay.

Motion No. 2 says that the text is to be amended by replacing it with «à l'administration publique fédérale». The wording of the bill is as follows: "Any person authorized pursuant to subsections (1) or (2) to exercise and perform any of the powers and functions of the governor in council or the Treasury Board may, subject to and in accordance with the authorization, authorize any other person. . . who is part of the Public Service of Canada—"

There are certain distinctions in the public service, and I am afraid that other agencies that are part of the public service might be excluded if this kind of amendment is passed, because one is not necessarily under the jurisdiction of the public service when one is part of the public service. The government still has certain obligations to those employees.

As for Motion No. 3, there would seem to be a better case for this amendment because it would oblige the government, when it wants to replace a surplus employee, to offer the position "under a closed competition exclusively open to employees declared surplus within the meaning of the Workforce Adjustment Directive under the Public Sector Compensation Act, to another".

Still referring to clause 8 of the bill, according to its present wording, the Commission could, before the layoff becomes effective and if it is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of

the Public Service to do so, appoint the employee, without competition and in priority over all other persons, to another position under the jurisdiction of the deputy head for which, in the opinion of the Commission, the employee is qualified.

We believe that this particular wording gives the Commission too much discretionary power and that the Commission should be more strictly regulated.

(1555)

I think that the purpose of Motion No. 3 tabled by the hon. member from the Reform Party is to require the commission, whenever such a situation arises, to replace the employee by way of a closed competition, not by a competition that would bring another person into the system so that the number of employees would rise again. No.

I think that the amendment is justified because it is aimed at restricting the competition to public service employees declared surplus. Instead of leaving these people without protection, in case other jobs are ever created, this amendment gives them a kind of recall priority. It would allow those already declared surplus to be called back to work—after a competition, of course—because the goal is to put people in positions for which they are qualified. We think that a closed competition would be more equitable to surplus employees and give much less discretionary power to the commission.

Motion No. 4, which is also part of the first group, would prevent the commission from appointing a person already participating in a program designated by the Treasury Board as an employment equity program. In other words, the commission would be prohibited from appointing a participant in an employment equity program to a position that could be occupied by a surplus employee within the meaning of the work force adjustment directive.

I think that we would be replacing one form of discrimination by another, for example, in favour of employees who are already protected as members of what we call visible minorities. It has been agreed that visible minorities would be those minorities currently recognized, that is to say persons with a disabilities, aboriginal people, people of a different ethnic background or non-white in colour, in a word those visible minorities the legislation was intended to protect. But with an amendment such as this one, we would be giving even more prominence to these minorities by saying in essence: "You guys will get to take the place of employees who have been declared surplus." It is bad enough for employees to be declared surplus and lose their jobs, without making matters worse by discriminating against them, in favour of a visible minority group that is already afforded a certain degree of protection. Women are also considered a visible minority under certain agreements.

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When employment equity and fairness to all is the goal, it is not by penalizing one group of employees that the goal will be achieved. That has just not happened. An employer who wants to achieve employment equity in his business does not start laying people off, only to replace them with a larger number of people from a group described as a visible minority. What he does is take advantage of jobs opening up to make adjustments, to restore balance within the organization and attain some stability, a certain degree of equity between various groups, gender equity, wage equity, racial equity and equity between people with disabilities and those who do not have disabilities. That is how an employer can manage to meet modern standards, decent standards of employment equity.

He does not tell an employee already penalized by a layoff: "What a shame. We have an opening, but instead of rehiring you, we will give the preference to an employee who already enjoys some degree of protection as a member of a visible minority".

(1600)

All employees should be on an equal footing. I think that there should be no exceptions when the time comes to recall employees who may have lost their jobs prematurely.

I do not know how much time I have remaining. Do I have time for a few more comments? I gather that your silence means that I do, Mr. Speaker.

Based on the foregoing, the Bloc Québécois cannot support Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 4. On the other hand, Motion No. 3 appears to be much more reasonable, seeking a form of equity at work that is in line with our standards of sound human resources management. We will therefore support Motion No. 3.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having given me your undivided attention. For the time being, those are the comments I had on this bill.

[English]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will be listening just as religiously to my arguments as I talk about Bill C-76, the Budget Implementation Act.

It is a little unfortunate that at this late date we are discussing the implementation of February's budget some months later. It seems that as time passes and we get away from the budget process the government is hoping people will forget about some of the fiscal crises the country will still have to go through because of some decisions taken and some decisions not taken in last February's budget.

It is interesting how we get taken up with other issues in Parliament when this overriding fiscal issue will drive the

agenda in the months and years to come whether or not we like it. It is good to get to the fiscal issues.

I would like to speak specifically to the first group of amendments to Bill C-76. I am most interested in Motions Nos. 1, 3 and 4 within the group. I remind all members that the first 10 clauses of Bill C-76 contain changes to the way we address the public service and changes to the workforce adjustment directive brought in by the government in the February budget.

These changes mark a breach of a very clear and explicit promise by the Liberal government upon implementation of the budget. On July 22, 1994 the President of the Treasury Board wrote to the public service union. I think members opposite will be very interested in what he said. I quote from the letter to the public service union:

This government has stated in the past, and remains committed to the principle, that the employment protection provisions in the workforce adjustment directive will only be changed through negotiations.

We all know what happened in the February budget. Like so many other Liberal promises, the promise to negotiate changes to the workforce adjustment directive went by the wayside. The government is now legislating change and the promise made by the President of the Treasury Board on July 22 is no longer being upheld.

We in this party have always said we felt the workforce adjustment directive would have to be changed. We said that consistently. We said there would be some layoffs in the public service. We said that consistently. We did not change the story after the election. We kept the same story with the same truth from start to finish. It is unfortunate that the double tongued Liberals have decided to change the directive after they promised not to do so.

(1605)

They should never have promised it in the first place. If they knew they would not keep it, that they would not be able to do it and that they would legislate it, they should have been honest enough to say that up front. At least the Reform Party has been consistent in its belief of what would have to happen to the workforce adjustment directive. I remind the public service unions and members opposite that the government has backed out on another promise.

Another firm promise was made by the President of the Treasury Board in the House with respect to Motion No. 1. He promised that no public servant would be paid if he or she was not doing work. The promise was made in response to reports that this was happening in the public service. We tried to find out more particulars, but it seems there are no reporting requirements from departments to the Public Service Commission on how many people are being paid to stay at home or paid not to work under the workforce adjustment directive. Unfortunately we cannot get exact numbers, but we extracted a promise from

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the President of the Treasury Board that no one would be paid if he or she were not working.

However, from the briefing departmental officials gave us on the bill, we learned that there may in fact be a six-month period when a public servant's position might be declared surplus. Then the public servant would be paid for six months without having a job to do.

The first amendment simply calls on the government to fulfil the promise it made in the House which basically said that if a person is not working he or she will not be paid. That is something Canadians want and expect. Even public servants recognize that obviously they cannot be paid if there is no work to do.

The second motion I would like to speak to amends clause 8. It would give power to the Public Service Commission to appoint employees without competition. The last part of clause 8 reads as follows:

—the Commission may, before the lay off becomes effective and if it is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of the Public Service to do so, appoint the employee, without competition and in priority to all other persons, to another position under the jurisdiction of the deputy head for which, in the opinion of the Commission, the employee is qualified.

We have some real problems with the power that provision would give to the government. It flies in the face of the whole idea of competition and merit in the public sector. Western democracies have always depended on a series of checks and balances. This is born out of a basic mistrust of government, an attitude that says: "We might think you are nice right now, but we do not know what you will do later on if there are not checks and balances in place, so we need to put those checks in there while things are still smooth". One of the reasons we have opposition parties in the House of Commons is to provide checks and balances.

Checks and balances are vital to the health of the country. When we see that an opposition party, for example in some third world country, is being mistreated by the government, we see that democracy and the country in general are in trouble.

There are checks and balances in the system in Canada. One check against nepotism, bribery and other forms of corruption in government is the competitive process developed in Canada for public service jobs. This means that people get jobs through merit, not because they are someone's friend or they contributed to someone's campaign or happen to know someone in an inner sanctum somewhere. The process is open. It is fair. It means that we get the best person for the job. That is what competitions do. The selection process within the federal government is quite fair for the most part. That is why I felt such a concern when I read clause 8 of Bill C-76.

I realize we are in a period of flux in Canada following the Budget Implementation Act. Departments are downsizing and things are a bit chaotic. During this time of downsizing and readjustment within the priorities of the departments, controls and vigilance on the merit principle are perhaps not as strong as usual. The clause as it stands now would empower the Public Service Commission at this chaotic and stormy time to:

—appoint the employee, without competition—to another position under the jurisdiction of the deputy head for which, in the opinion of the Commission, the employee is qualified.

(1610)

This is a dangerous trend to get away from the merit principle. Reformers believe that a system of checks and balances is the only way to ensure that corruption is weeded out of the system and that the competitive process is the check on errors in hiring in the public service. It is missing because of this clause.

All sorts of irrelevant qualifications could be used here from good friends of decision makers to relatives, to political friends and so on, if it is just in the opinion of the deputy head that a person should be appointed. We think that is wrong. The way the clause reads now, a manager could use it to settle a score with someone. He or she could use the clause as a tool to get back at someone who has not been co-operative in the downsizing. At any rate people can be appointed without consideration of merit by using the clause.

We agree with the idea that the commission should be able to appoint surplus employees to different departments because during this time the government needs the flexibility to preserve the best of our human resources. However to do it outside the competitive process is a big mistake.

Our amendment would ensure that the Public Service Commission still has the power to appoint employees, but it would require that a competition be held among surplus employees for the jobs across the public service. This would ensure that the merit principle is preserved and would be fair therefore to surplus employees. Even government members would be able to support the amendment.

I have another motion I would like to talk to. Perhaps in the next round of motions I will speak to a very important motion about how employment equity is affected by the bill.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Motions Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be voted on separately. The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion No. 1 negatived.)

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order because I need some clarification. I know that like motions are grouped, but do we vote per motion or do we vote for the group of motions?

The Deputy Speaker: It is very confusing. The member is quite right. As I indicated earlier, we would vote on the four motions individually. We voted on the first one and it was defeated. We are now voting on Motion No. 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion No. 2 agreed to.)

The Deputy Speaker: The next question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

(1615)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 4. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

We now move to group No. 2, which includes Motions Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 74.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-76, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing line 11, on page 9, with the following:

“12. Paragraph 47(b) of the National Transportation Act, 1987 is replaced”.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 16.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-76, in Clause 17, be amended by replacing lines 20 to 22, on page 10, with the following:

“branch line or a segment of it than to continue to make payments under”.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-76, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing lines 1 to 7, on page 12, with the following:

“20. The portion of sub-section 178(1) of the Act after subparagraph (b)(iii) is repealed.”

Hon. David Anderson (for the Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 12

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That Bill C-76, in Clause 21, be amended by replacing lines 4 and 5, on page 14, with the following:

"subsequent crop year shall be determined by".

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-76, in Clause 21, be amended:

(a) by replacing line 6, on page 16, with the following:

"181.18 (1) During 1999, the Minister shall, in"; and

(b) by replacing lines 13 to 15, on page 16, with the following:

"and on the sharing of efficiency gains as between shippers and railway companies.

(2) The Minister shall, as part of this review, determine (a) whether the repeal of this Division and Schedules I, II and III will have a significant adverse impact on shippers; and (b) whether this Division and Schedules I, II and III should be repealed.

181.19 If the Minister determines, pursuant to paragraph 181.18 (2) (b), that this Division and Schedules I, II and III should be repealed, then this Division and those Schedules shall be repealed on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council."

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 74

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Schedule I, on pages 39 to 45.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this series of amendments to Bill C-76, more specifically to the part of the bill which repeals the Western Grain Transportation Act and which transfers, at least as regards that part of Bill C-76, the railway line regulations to the National Transportation Act, 1987.

These amendments are tabled for a simple reason. We feel it is unfair to apply a double standard when it comes to streamlining railway operations in western and in eastern Canada.

Indeed, several sections of Bill C-76 seek to maintain western lines used for grain transportation, for reasons of public interest. In other words, under Bill C-76, a western line will be maintained if it is deemed to be of public interest, even if it is not cost effective, as long as it is used to transport grain.

However, the rules are different in eastern Canada, and that is why we speak of a double standard. Indeed, at least until the Minister of Transport tables appropriate legislation, some branch lines and main lines are being closed in the east, particularly in Quebec, based only on cost effectiveness. This is why we say there is a double standard. In the west, railway lines are being protected.

(1620)

But the east is passed over because it is not cost effective. Just look at the double standard regarding the west: a huge compensation package, literally huge, will be paid to western producers to offset the decision to abolish the Western Grain Transportation Act.

And when the federal government commits to paying \$1.6 billion in tax-free compensation over the next three years to prairie farmers because it is going to phase out the Crow rate, a preferential rate, over a period of six years, that \$1.6 billion tax-free is really worth \$2.2 billion.

The federal government did not compensate Quebec industrial milk producers when it reduced dairy subsidies. Neither did it compensate them when it announced, after GATT negotiations, that it will be opening up our borders more and more to foreign competitors. Quebec farmers were not compensated when federal subsidies were cut here and there. They were told: "We are cutting, so deal with it".

The federal government is asking all Canadians, all Quebecers, to tighten their belts while it hacks away at the unemployment insurance fund, social assistance transfers to the provinces, post-secondary education and health, tax benefits for seniors. For example, when the Minister of Finance's first budget abolished the old age tax credit, it took \$500 million out of seniors' pockets. There is also the threat of cuts to old age security. But, at the same time, the federal government' old double standard comes into play: it is greasing the palms of western producers, the "cattlemen", to the tune of a \$2.2 billion package to compensate for the gradual phasing-out of the preferential rate for western grain transportation, which was already loathsome in itself. There was no uproar from Reform members regarding that move.

When subsidies are paid to their constituents, there are no shouts of protest. Not a peep from the hon. member for Capilano—Howe Sound, who merrily keeps hitting at the neediest in our society, day in, day out, and who even suggested abolishing all social programs in Canada. There were no protests from him when it was about subsidizing the people in western Canada, the people he represents. It is perfectly proper to pay billions of dollars to grain producers in the Prairies.

Yes, a double standard, because by getting rid of the Crow rate and paying a subsidy of \$2.2 billion, the government is upsetting the balance achieved at the end of the last century, in 1897, when this rate structure was introduced. It upsets the competitive balance that developed over time between western grain producers and eastern producers who are mainly involved in meat and dairy production.

Although the gradual phasing out of the Crow rate destroys this balance, there is no mention of compensation for eastern producers. Not a word about compensation for farm producers in Quebec. However, destroying this competitive balance will

result in losses estimated at from 24 to 40 million dollars annually, losses that Quebec farm producers will have to absorb. The federal government, which has always applied a double standard in the case of eastern farm producers and farm producers in Quebec is not providing any compensation for Quebec producers.

Negotiations between the federal government and Quebec producers have just ended. Last week, I was told that what the federal government offered was peanuts, a small amount that might be paid at some time in the future, provided Quebec producers keep quiet and do not condemn the inequities of this system.

A double standard, because abolishing the Crow rate means that local grain prices in western Canada will go down—not the international price but the local price. This provides an incentive for animal production.

(1625)

As the preferential rate is phased out and ultimately abolished in 2001, western beef and pork producers are being given a considerable competitive edge over Quebec producers. And on top of this, as I said before, they are getting \$2.2 billion in federal funds, part of which, in fact 23.8 per cent, is paid for by Quebec taxpayers.

And so federal subsidies are being given to western farmers, subsidies paid for in part by Quebecers' taxes, enabling western pork and beef producers to come and compete with Quebec producers in their own market.

If this is fair federalism, what can unfair federalism be like? If flexible federalism means looking only at the collapse of a balance in the west and not looking at the other part of the country, which is affected by a decision such as the one to eliminate the WGTA and then compensate western farmers, there is a serious problem here.

We would have preferred, and this is the thrust of our amendments, first, that the Crow's Nest rate, the preferential Crow's Nest rate, be eliminated immediately and not over the next six years. The debate on this issue has been going on in Canada since 1978. I was present at the first, the second and the third debate, in different positions. Quebec's position has remained unchanged: if the preferential Crow's Nest rate, which has no equivalent in the east, is to be abolished, let us get on with it. As for the producers, and here I agree with the Reform Party on certain points, when they talk about areas other than those they serve, they should be made competitive right away.

Why gradually reduce the Crow's Nest subsidy and why gradually get around to increasing railway transport rates, when, according to the Reform Party, all of the west should operate as a free market system, efficiency driven and subsidy free?

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They are engaging in double talk. When it suits them, they oppose subsidies. When it does not suit them, because the pressure in their ridings is too great, they say nothing. Look at them. They have no amendment to eliminate the \$2.2 million in compensation to western grain farmers.

We in the official opposition would have preferred this rate structure and the compensation to be dropped immediately, because Quebecers and Canadians everywhere else are being asked to tighten their belts. They are not getting any compensation. There is no transition.

When the Minister of Finance decided to withdraw \$2.5 billion from the unemployment insurance fund, he did so in one shot, all at once. He said nothing about transition. He said nothing about transition for the poorest families either, for those who are the most disadvantaged whom we have deprived of their only way out, through public housing, for example. He made no mention of transition, the Minister of Finance. There was no talk of spreading these decisions over five or six years.

It is outrageous that, for election purposes, the Liberals, who, as we know, are not strong in the west, are offering gifts to western voters and forgetting about voters in Quebec and the rest of Canada in general.

I find this double talk, this talk of the extreme right, from those beside us really distasteful in the context of subsidies to the most disadvantaged to ease their misery. The Reform Party's attitude toward our society's most disadvantaged is of the extreme right, but when it comes to paying out \$2.2 billion to western producers, it becomes most conciliatory, nearly socialist.

The thrust of our amendments is: let us get rid of the Crow rate.

[*English*]

Mr. David Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are now looking at 12 motions in group 2. I will explain the government motions and the reasons for them and then return if time permits to some of the motions being presented by the other parties.

(1630)

The two motions being presented by the government are Motions Nos. 12 and 14. In Motion No. 12 the Minister of Finance is proposing that subsection 181.12(2) of the National Transportation Act, as contained in clause 21, be amended so that the agency will establish maximum regulated rates from and after the 1996–97 crop year.

This motion, together with Motion No. 14, which I will explain in a minute, will amend the NTA so that the maximum regulated rate provisions will be retained beyond July 31, 2000

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as currently provided in Bill C-76. The motion is a consequential amendment required as a result of the proposed amendments to sections 181.18 and 181.19 as set out in Motion No. 6.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture and Prairie Pools Inc. both proposed to the Standing Committee on Finance that the review to be conducted by the Minister of Transport be expanded to include whether efficiency gains are shared between shippers and railroad companies.

In proposing this amendment and the amendment to section 181.18, the government is being responsive to the concerns of farmers, as expressed widely throughout western Canada and by many industry spokespeople. I compliment the minister for the number of hours he spent with groups across the country making sure that the bill is absolutely correct.

Many of these farmers ask that the Minister of Transport conduct a review of the grain handling and transportation system and whether efficiencies of the grain transportation system are being shared by shippers and railroad companies before moving to a deregulated system.

In Motion No. 14, the Minister of Finance is proposing that the review conducted by the Minister of Transport pursuant to subsection 181.18(1) be broadened to include whether efficiency gains are being shared between shippers and railroad companies.

Under subsection 181.18(2), the Minister of Transport will also consider whether the repeal of the maximum regulated rate provisions will have a significant impact on shippers and if those provisions should be repealed.

Section 181.19 will be amended so that if the Minister of Transport in conducting his review determines that the maximum regulated rate provisions should be repealed, those provisions will be repealed as of a date fixed by order of the governor in council.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture and Prairie Pools Inc. both proposed to the Standing Committee on Finance that the review to be conducted by the Minister of Transport be expanded to include whether efficiency gains are shared between shippers and railroad companies.

In proposing this amendment to section 181.18 the government is being responsive to the concerns of farmers who asked that this review be done. In addition, the Minister of Transport in conducting his review in 1999 will take into account the interests of both the railroad companies and the shippers in determining whether the maximum regulated rate provisions should remain in place. Both the shippers and railroad companies will have ample opportunity to make their views known to the minister before he completes his review.

The motions being presented, first by the official opposition, will completely undermine the efforts being made to modernize the western Canadian grain transportation system. I do not have to tell members that there is a lot of history in the legislation we are presenting. It is one in which the farming community has been back and forth on for one generation after the other.

This is that rare time when the major actors in the industry have come together to support legislation that will be a giant step forward in the reorganization of the grain industry. Like others, there is lots of speculation on what these changes are going to mean. Nevertheless people see many positive benefits coming out for western Canadian agricultural producers.

Considering how much wealth they contribute to this whole country, anything that benefits the farmers of western Canada can very quickly benefit the rest of the country.

Motions Nos. 5 to 11, because of the nature of the official opposition amendments, would result in the deletion of the provisions that identify grain dependent branch lines and exempt designated grain dependent branch lines from certain provisions of the NTA, such as the notice of intention and conveyance provisions with respect to abandonment of branch lines. These motions would make it more difficult for rail companies to improve the efficiency and reduce the cost to ship grain from the prairies.

(1635)

In Motion No. 5, the financial critic for the opposition party is proposing that clause 11, which amends section 4 of the National Transportation Act, 1987 to add a definition of grain dependent branch lines, be deleted.

The definition of grain dependent branch lines is necessary as this and other provisions in Bill C-76, identify grain dependent branch lines and exempts designated grain dependent branch lines from certain provisions of the NTA, such as the notice of intention and conveyance provisions with respect to abandonment of branch lines.

This provision and other provisions in Bill C-76 will make it easier for railway companies to abandon inefficient and costly grain dependent branch lines.

The motion proposed by the official opposition would make it much more difficult for railway companies to improve the efficiency of the grain transportation system and to reduce the cost to ship grain from the prairies.

Motion No. 6 proposes that the heading of clause 12 be amended by replacing the words "the act" with the National Transportation Act, 1987. This is a proposal which follows from the changes and the refusal of the opposition to deal with the changes we are proposing.

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The official opposition is proposing in Motion No. 7 that clause 16, which exempts grain dependent branch lines from the notice of intention provision under the NTA be deleted. As I stated, this proposal would make it more difficult and cumbersome for railroad companies to abandon inefficient and costly grain dependent branch lines.

I will not take the time of the House to go through some of the other motions. In these I have reviewed the major differences we have with the official opposition. As I stated before, the changes being proposed in Bill C-76 will be of great benefit to the western Canadian agricultural community and that spills over to the rest of the country. People in every province will see a much stronger Canada as the western grain farmers and other agriculture producers gain maximum advantage from changes in our regulations and laws.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this group of proposed amendments. We have some difficulties with some of the clauses of the budget implementation act. Some of the clauses give arbitrary powers to cabinet to make decisions.

It reminds me a little of earlier in the bill of some of the powers given to the Public Service Commission, for example, where it is allowed to appoint people without competition. Arbitrary powers are never a good thing to give out.

Under the powers of the Public Service Commission, members will know that over the next three years the government will be spending some \$41 million to, among other things, recruit new public servants from designated groups under the special measures initiatives run by the Public Service Commission. At a time of substantial layoffs it is a huge amount of power given to a commission to recruit people at the cost of tens of millions of dollars, when we are laying off 45,000 others. It seems a little ridiculous to me. It is obviously unfair to be hiring new workers at a time when thousands of surplus ones are eager and willing to work at any of the jobs.

It is particularly an insult to hard working civil servants who have spent many years working in a position only to come to work one day to find that their desk has been cleaned out and a fresh new face is in the office doing their work and the job they are fully qualified for, but they lost it because another person was hired under the special measures initiative or the employment equity program.

That is the kind of arbitrary power we do not think the Public Service Commission should have. We believe that arbitrary powers giving cabinet or in the case I am talking about, the Public Service Commission, the ability to bypass merit or the regular way of doing business, to hiring, promoting, firing and so on, is not a good thing.

(1640)

We need checks and balances on government. The bill gives too much power to a select few people. The power I mentioned the Public Service Commission has under the bill is typical of that. Other clauses in this transportation area give the cabinet in our opinion too much power but I will leave it at that.

[Translation]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-76, which is the continuation of the budget and deals with the Work Force Adjustment Directive, is a rather important one. It drew many comments, especially from the Reform Party and the Bloc. I believe there are some fundamental elements we should take into account in Parliament. For all intents and purposes, we are the voice of our fellow citizens, and it is important that they know exactly what is at stake here.

I listened to the Reform members talk about the deficit, government spending, and the debt which is growing at the rate of \$100 million a day, and also to all their arguments to the effect that the government must cut expenditures. As we know, it has been proven, on many occasions, that at the present time, except for the debt service, the regular operating expenditures of the government do not exceed its revenue. The debt service is very high in Canada because we have an accumulated debt of close to \$500 billion.

Members opposite keep on talking about government spending. But we must not forget that expenditures are only one of the elements of the deficit we are facing in this country. One must not single out the expenditures of the Canadian government as the only reason for our deficit.

In the past, deficits were very high, as compared to total expenditures. Expenditures were high in the past, as we saw under the previous government. I am not trying to say that we were blameless in the past; in some instances, expenditures went well beyond what should have been tolerable. In any case, what is important now is to correct the situation. One must not lose track of the fact that expenditures are but one element.

Second, we must recognize that our tax system being slightly obsolete, the in-depth reform of our tax system is one of the elements which is going to put our economy back on a level that is acceptable to all Canadians, especially the middle class.

Third, and this is important, it is the monetary system of this country which causes our interest rates to be too high. We must recognize that the Bank of Canada has a role to play. In the past, the Bank of Canada played a very important role in controlling interests rates nationally. But, because of our deficit, we lost this power. However, with good management, it should be possible to get it back. We are trying. It will take several years, but let us hope we will succeed within one mandate or one and a half at the most. We want the Bank of Canada to really play an

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active role, we want complete fiscal reform, and we hope that our monetary system, which is not working to our advantage, will be modified.

So three different elements come into play.

Furthermore, the Minister of Finance proposed some work-force adjustments. Since we are being told to reduce spending, we tried to achieve this by streamlining of the public service.

(1645)

When I hear that 45,000 employees will lose their jobs, I think this is a bit of an exaggeration, because this will happen over a three-year period, and most of these 45,000 people will either take normal retirement or early retirement, or accept what we call a buy-out.

In conclusion, therefore, I would like this House to understand that our problems cannot be ascribed to one thing only, that is spending alone. High interest rates, largely the result of our monetary system of the last 15 to 20 years, made it difficult for us to carry out reforms, especially the reform of the tax system which is sorely needed because of the very heavy tax burden on the middle class.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor to talk about the amendments to Bill C-76. When I heard the hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre talk about the monetary system and cuts in the public service, when the subject is really amendments to the Crow's Nest Pass policy and to the subsidy to Western grain farmers, I thought I had got my day wrong.

Well, we cannot very well prevent him from talking about the subjects dear to his heart, but I am happy to hear that he does not share the views of his Minister of Finance, and I urge him to point that out to the minister, who is following a monetary policy basically similar, if not identical, to that of his Conservative predecessors. I also urge him to mention it to his constituents.

This is a good illustration of a policy which makes it difficult to deal equitably with an issue. It happened in the past, and it continues in the budget, which treats dairy producers from Quebec and grain producers from the West differently. This is the continuation of a long series of historical decisions regarding agriculture and rail transport which, in both cases, worked to the advantage of Western Canada.

I am quite pleased to point this out, because we still hear Liberal and Reform members criticize the fact that Quebec receives, in some areas, transfer payments or equalization payments. They called them gifts to Quebec, but they do not criticize this policy which, for a long time, has allowed the West

to develop. The development of the railway system cost billions of dollars, and allowed a lot of farmers to grow and prosper in Western Canada. However, we seem to forget all the money that was poured into this because it is less visible nowadays, since it was done over a period of time.

But now, with all the financial choices and spending cuts we face, this resurfaces. A moment ago, my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot talked about that. When the unemployed are victims of cuts, we do not say to them that we are going to allow them transition, adjustment periods. Soon, we will be making changes to the Canada pension plan or looking at the income security program, and throughout this debate that will be held in the fall, I am sure that these changes will not provide for long transition periods for the persons affected.

But when we speak about capital gains, family trusts, and other matters, then we have to have long transition periods to give people a chance to adapt. However, when the ordinary people, who are the most affected, are concerned, we forget about that.

I talked briefly about the impact of this policy on the development of the railway system. This has also encouraged farmers. For years now, in Quebec, we have been told that every rail section must be viable. When they are not, the tendency is to privatise them, to get rid of them, to give them to anybody, and not to keep them. Under the same policy out west, we have always supported the maintenance of this system, because they were very clearly linked to the development of the farming industry.

Earlier, I tried to describe the situation in this way: if you are a grain producer, it is not the dairy truck which goes by your house, but the rail system, to help you, support you or allow you to send your crop to the export points. Over the years, things have evolved. At the beginning, almost 90 per cent of the financial support came from the government.

(1650)

And now, financial choices have to be made. In its budget, the federal government says that it must cut in that area, but it is planning a \$1.6 billion compensation package. An important factor to consider is the fiscal side of the equation. When we talk about non-taxable money, the amount is higher than that, perhaps more than \$2 billion.

In the same budget, we are told that tens of millions of dollars will be cut for milk producers in Quebec, but no mention is made of any compensation. So, we have the unfair treatment given by the federal government which has supported the railway system and supported Western Canada to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, on the one hand, and has funded development differently in Quebec, by giving it less support, on the

other hand. And now, this historical imbalance is being perpetuated, under the pretext that market forces must now be left to come into play.

In Quebec, there is no compensation package, no transition measure. The federal government is saying to milk producers that they can raise their prices, and that they have the flexibility to do that. In other words, it is saying to Quebec consumers that they will pay for that. We account for some 23.8 per cent of total tax revenues, so we will also pay 23.8 per cent of the compensation package given to Western producers.

In this bill, there are many examples of the federal government's approach toward development in the different regions, particularly those in Quebec. This is the same bill sets up transfer payment negotiations which, for Quebec, can only lead to reduced transfer payments, and a smaller percentage than what it is getting now. No matter what solution is found, I am convinced that Quebec will not receive more than before.

The Ontario government will come to the negotiating table with many huge claims. This has been going on for several years, and just because Ontario changes government does not mean that these claims will also change. Quebec is facing cuts that will affect it more than the other provinces. It is said that more than 40 per cent of the cuts will be made in Quebec. In the same bill, dairy producers are also being hit harder, because they will not get any compensation package.

There are many reasons why, once this bill is passed, the federal government will be even less committed than before to supporting Quebec's development. These people are the same ones telling us that this system is cost effective, that it is good for Quebecers.

I want to raise a point in response to what the hon. member for Gatineau—La Lièvre said about federal public servants. Whenever the issue of sovereignty comes up, the people across the way are eager to tell us that it would spell disaster for the Outaouais, although they are saying very little about the roughly 15,000 jobs they are cutting in the region. The hon. member was very subdued in the House, probably because he has a carefully crafted quote for his next householder. He does not criticize his government's decisions in the newspapers or anywhere else. He did not defend them in committee. Where was he? Where are these great champions of the Outaouais who enjoy telling us that we are very well served by the current system? This bill also contains provisions affecting federal public servants.

The government whip did not rise either. Government members make timid speeches to keep their constituents happy; their remarks are never very searing. There are fiscal choices to be made. If the Western Grain Transportation Act must indeed be repealed, they should stop trying to provide indirect financial support and incentives, and stop attempting to raise the Liberal

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Party's profile in the West, as was recently done in Manitoba. Although we understand why they want to improve Liberal prospects in that region, \$2.2 billion is a lot to pay just to buy votes. We have serious reservations here. If this policy must be scrapped, they should have the courage to do so now and to respect the commitments made by the Bloc Québécois.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The vote is on Motion No. 5. All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

(1655)

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred. Accordingly the recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19 and 74.

The next question is on Motion No. 17. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-76 be amended by deleting Clause 29.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.) moved:

Motion No. 75

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That Bill C-76, in Schedule II, be amended by replacing line 10, on page 47, with following:

"criteria".

Motion No. 76

That Bill C-76, in Schedule II, be amended: (a) by replacing line 26, on page 47, with the following: "applicant after the payment is received;"; and (b) by replacing lines 33 to 44, on page 46, and lines 1 to 4, on page 48, with the following: "respect of an outlay or an expense."

Motion No. 77

That Bill C-76, in Schedule II, be amended by replacing lines 27 to 35, on page 48, with the following: "transition payments; and (c) how interim and final transition pay—".

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 78

That Bill C-76, be amended by deleting Schedule II, on pages 46 to 48.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this part of Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget that was tabled on February 27, 1995.

At the outset I want to say that while we are speaking on a number of sections of the bill we find that this is one of the more regressive pieces of budgetary legislation that this country has ever seen in terms of moving Canada backward into a bygone era. I had hoped that a budget would be brought in to advance the economic, social and cultural agenda of the country. I do not think anyone can say anything other than this will set us back. It is like looking only in the rear view mirror while driving.

The provisions we are looking at under group 3 by and large eliminate the Crow rate benefit from the legislation. It takes the whole matter of the demise of the Crow outside of this piece of legislation. Farmers in western Canada developed their grain industry on the basis of three fundamental pillars and in close partnership with the federal government.

One pillar was a grain transportation system built around the Crow subsidy. I recognize that to compete particularly with the United States which has a whole set of subsidy programs for its western grain producers and the fact that our grain producers were some distance from the coast where the grain would be exported, having some kind of a grain subsidy built into the transportation system made a lot of sense. It enabled us to become a global bread basket as a result.

The second pillar was the orderly marketing system through the Canadian Wheat Board on the basis of equal delivery opportunity and a price pooling system. We could say if people were to evaluate this objectively that over the years this has served this country well.

The third pillar was a grain handling system owned by the farmers through a western Canadian co-operative system.

When I look at this particular initiative of the government, which in a sense is abandoning the Crow rate, it reminds me of a previous Prime Minister who spoke of certain sacred trusts. He said that as a result of these trade deals we would not see any diminution in the quality of our social programs. We know that did not take place. We have seen the erosion of virtually every social program. We have seen the disappearance of social programs as we have moved our social programs to harmonize more closely with those in Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee and east Texas. That is not the kind of Canada we expected.

(1700)

Prior to the government's taking office it said it did not agree with the provisions of NAFTA either; that unless the provisions of NAFTA were dramatically shifted, altered and amended it would abrogate the deal. That did not take place at all. As soon as it took office there were a couple of little tinkers; it has now become a NAFTA cheerleader like we have never seen before.

I do not think the government has a mandate to proceed with this section of the bill. On May 10, 1993 the present Prime Minister said the following at a press conference he called to unveil the party's election campaign farm policy platform: "As federal Liberal leader, our government would prefer to retain the existing Crow rate benefit method of payment rather than change it as the Conservative government is proposing". That was on May 13, 1993 from page 17 of the *Western Producer*.

In other words, heading into the election campaign the Prime Minister, articulating the Liberal Party's agricultural policy, in a sense said they want to retain the Crow rate; the Conservatives do not, but they do as a political party. On that basis people, particularly from the Canadian plains, voted Liberal in such sufficient numbers that they were able to form the government. Now they are doing exactly the opposite. They are abandoning the Crow rate provision.

I do not think it take a rocket scientist to figure out if they say their party policy is to maintain the Crow rate and as soon as they become a government they decide to abandon the Crow rate, they seem to be pulling a fast one on the electorate. They seem to be saying one thing and doing another. I do not think it is unreasonable for us to question whether the government actually has a mandate to proceed with this. Strictly on the basis of principle we are suggesting this section be abandoned.

There is another reason we are suggesting this section of the bill should be abandoned. What are the implications of abandoning the Crow system? I know we have differences of views in the House of Commons. Some people feel this is a good idea for all sorts of reasons; others feel this is a bad initiative. Most people

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probably wonder about the implications of making this major change to the way the western grain sector is supported.

To my friends on the government side and to my good friends in the Reform Party and in the Bloc, I encourage those endorsing this initiative to articulate what the implications would be of this major change. How will this affect the future of western grain farming?

Before we proceed as Parliament with agreement on this provision we should have a clear understanding of whether this will or will not cause difficulties. My colleagues and I believe very strongly this will not be in the best interest of western grain producers. We will be hearing some of the reasons in detail, particularly from those who represent prairie constituencies.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring forward these amendments in hopes of retaining what I think every grain farmer felt was a sacred trust.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the transportation of western grain.

Most of the amendments now being discussed concern the compensation to be paid to western producers since, by the year 2001, the preferential Crow rate applied to the transportation of western grain to the main points of export will be abolished, as will the Crow rate itself.

(1705)

The government is trying to transform a grain transportation policy which has been in effect since the end of the last century into a western agriculture development and diversification policy. The Crow rate has been an issue for many years. Many attempts were made to abolish that tariff system dating back to the 19th century, but no consensus was ever reached on how to do it.

Eliminating the preferential rate has the effect of triggering a decrease in the price of western grain. Consequently, abolishing the preferential Crow rate on grain exports provides a competitive advantage to western beef and pork producers. According to various studies, that advantage is estimated at somewhere between \$8 and \$15 per metric tonne of western grain. So, by triggering this \$8 to \$15 decrease in the price of a metric tonne of grain, the elimination of the Crow rate destroys the competitive balance between the western and eastern economies, which are respectively based on grain and livestock production.

The abolition of this transportation tariff provides a competitive advantage for western pork and beef producers, who will be in a better position to compete with their Quebec, Ontario and even international counterparts.

During the numerous debates that we have had in recent years concerning the Crow rate farmers in Quebec, Ontario, the maritimes and some in the prairies and British Columbia said that they accepted this fact. The accepted fact that abolishing the preferential rate would have an impact on the local price of grain in western Canada and that it would change the balance.

If my memory serves me well, even in Quebec, the Union des producteurs agricoles was saying in 1982: "Abolish the preferential rate, stop paying hundreds of millions of dollars a year to maintain this rate structure and we are prepared to accept the fact that such a measure will lower the local price of grain and will thereby help increase livestock production in Western Canada". And now, not only will the reduction in the local price of grain help increase livestock production in the west to the detriment of eastern producers, but the government is telling western producers that it will compensate them for the elimination of the Crow benefit, that it will give them \$1.6 billion tax free in transition payments, which is more like \$2.2 billion.

Not only has the government reduced local grain prices thereby encouraging livestock production in the west, but it is giving western producers \$2.2 billion based on the farmland they own, and that goes for grain producers as well as for beef and pork producers. It is ridiculous to abolish a transportation rate structure and, at the same time, to give compensation payments that will serve to subsidize western economic diversification and the development of livestock production.

It makes no sense that this part of the bill provides for the payment to western producers of \$2.2 billion, when 24 per cent of this money, which is federal, comes from producers in Quebec. It makes no sense that these subsidies are being handed out so that western pork and beef producers can compete with our producers in Quebec. In any event, there are many who say that that is not how they see the federal regime. It makes no sense at all.

Those who are sceptical about the effect of this approach on the production of pork and beef in Quebec need only look at what happened in Alberta in recent years with the Crow offset, a policy that my Reform colleagues probably know all about. The result was a 10 per cent annual increase in Alberta's pork production with a policy that was almost identical, but that was provincial in scope.

(1710)

So that is clear. We are saying that this policy is inequitable. It is inequitable because it disrupts the balance between the east and the west and, in addition, gives western businesses a competitive edge over their eastern colleagues, particularly those in Quebec.

If at least some thought had been given to the effects of this subsidy on eastern producers and some sort of compensation considered for eastern producers, had the funds been available, that would already have been a slight improvement. Furthermore, it has been estimated that just abolishing the Crow rate

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would have an effect on Quebec's agricultural economy of between \$24 million and \$46 million. So we were told by the UPA president himself, Laurent Pellerin, when he appeared before the finance committee two weeks ago.

Quebec is offered nothing, even though it is recognized that there is an imbalance that goes back to the end of the last century.

We find it deplorable that this second crop of Liberals are doing exactly the same as the first crop. In 1982 a similar bill was tabled, a bill that provided for compensation to the west. The federal government was not in the financial situation that it finds itself in today, compensation could perhaps have been considered, but no thought was ever given to the negative effect on Quebec producers.

Now, they come back, because that bill was put aside, when Mr. Eugene Whelan was the Minister of Agriculture. At the time, they said: "Since we cannot come to an agreement, we will put it aside".

Today, they come back with this bill, at a time, moreover, when the financial situation is far from rosy, and they want to pay western producers \$2.2 billion as compensation for the elimination of the Crow rate, just like that.

The official opposition is strongly opposed to such a decision, because at a time when the UI funds, the transfers for the underprivileged and the transfers to the provinces are being slashed, the government is able to come up with \$2.2 billion to meet the electoral needs of the few Liberals out west and to try and win over the Reformers' supporters.

We support the elimination of the Crow rate, but it should be eliminated immediately, without any compensation. We also deplore the fact that the Reform members, who are usually so eager to protest when the underprivileged are subsidized, are keeping quiet, because this compensation is being granted to their own constituents. I find that most deplorable.

What I also find deplorable is not only what the Liberals did, but also what the Reformers did. They did not attend the sittings of the finance committee when we talked about ways to improve or to repeal some of the provisions found in Bill C-76. If I were in their shoes today, I would be ashamed to put forward amendments, since they refused to hear anyone, except for a few witnesses from western Canada who are as far to the right as the Reformers have been since the election.

This is totally unacceptable. The decisions of the government concerning the western grain transportation sector are unacceptable, and the attitude of the Reform members in this House is unacceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Burnaby—Kingsway, health; the hon. member for Québec—Est, Agusta.

[English]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the group 3 amendments before us which affect the Western Grain Transportation Act, the National Transportation Act and the Crow rate for the future of western farmers.

(1715)

Reformers said it very clearly during the election campaign. We were not like the Bloc Québécois or the Bloc finance critic who stands up and says that they are going to cut certain things in the House of Commons while back in Quebec they talk about greater and more handouts for the people of Quebec.

There is a continual inconsistency. The hon. member has just spoken as the finance critic for the Bloc Québécois. He talked about not giving the western farmers anything, that the Crow benefit and the Western Grain Transportation Act benefits should be cut off as such. The Bloc wants to cut it off but not give the western farmers any kind of transitional payment whereby they will then take the responsibility of paying the full amount for the freight rate.

Let us look at Quebec. Let us look at some of the tax expenditures that never get raised in the general public. In committee I raised the tax expenditures for the labour venture capital fund, \$360 million in terms of tax expenditures. Three hundred million of that is to the people of Quebec. Other Canadians do not benefit from that tax expenditure. In raising the matter in the finance committee I asked the hon. member what he had to say about that because other Canadians are not getting a fair deal. There is a broad base of Quebecers benefiting from this tax expenditure.

One day the hon. member is against tax expenditure when it supposedly relates to the rich or those who are planning for their estates; the next day when it is in their home political ground, it is a great thing to do. The hon. member should think about that when he talks about the benefits the western farmers are going to get with regard to a payout on the Crow rate.

Let us look at that payout. Most likely, some \$2.2 billion will be paid out over a two year period. What does it amount to in terms of the farmers of western Canada? It is not a major amount of money. It will be a one time payout, most likely of \$16 to \$18 per acre. How much money does that really amount to? What will that do for a farm operation? Not very much when putting fertilizer on irrigated land costs \$40 to \$60 an acre.

What is \$18 an acre? The spray for crops costs \$5 to \$10 an acre. What does that \$18 really mean? In that portfolio farmers will have to pick up the major cost of shipping their produce to the coast by rail. They will pay 100 per cent of that in the future.

Within a year the farmers will not be dependent on the federal government for the transportation allowance. Farmers are willing to buy that and accept that responsibility but it does not hurt government when phasing out a program like that to have some type of transitional support system. It has done that and I commend the Liberal government for taking that specific position on this matter.

Although the Crow benefit, the Western Grain Transportation Act, will have an effect on western Canada, we have to look at transportation on a broader base. The government must give some leadership there as well.

When the free market system goes into transportation, the government will have to assure Canadians and assure the western farmers that they have access to alternate routes by which products can be shipped into a variety of markets in the world. That must be looked at.

I raised the question with the minister of agriculture as to whether there were any impediments that would prevent western Canadian farmers from shipping their grain through the railway system or the port system of the United States. I asked whether we could use the Mississippi River to ship our grain if that were a more expedient, more efficient and less costly way of doing it.

(1720)

The minister has assured me there are no impediments and that we will be able to do that kind of thing. I ask that the government ensure that will happen because we farmers in western Canada will look at innovative ways by which we can market our produce. We will look at the means by which we can come up with different crops. We will diversify our agriculture. That is a spinoff benefit of terminating the western grain transportation allowance and also the Crow benefit. That is a spinoff benefit which will be there. It will restructure agriculture.

It is unfair for a member of the House to say that western farmers should not have any type of transitional compensation to make the adjustment over the next year or two. It is certainly unfair when that member sits in committee and talks about tax expenditures of over \$300 million which are specifically targeted at a group within his province, when other Canadians do not have access to those kinds of tax expenditures. It seems to be an attempt to speak in two different arenas. There is one arena here but there is another arena back home that wants to hear those kinds of political words.

We cannot support the amendment of the hon. member for Kamloops. It is a rather traditional approach to what has happened in Canada with respect to transportation. We think changes are needed and we are prepared to support them.

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We also oppose vehemently the comments and the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot which ask the government to terminate the benefits to western farmers.

That is where we stand. We believe that under those circumstances we can clearly and with good conscience vote as we feel is right.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put in my two cents worth on the report stage motions. It is not a loonie, it is two cents worth today.

An hon. member: A double loonie.

Mr. Taylor: The member wants to hear about the double loonie. I am very pleased to have aroused some interest from members opposite. It is a pleasure to know they are listening at such an important time.

The report stage motions before us relate to Bill C-76, the budget implementation bill. The amendment put forward by my colleague from Kamloops, which was seconded by me, proposes to eliminate those sections of Bill C-76 which deal with the government's proposal to remove the Crow benefit. That is the benefit that applies to western Canadian farmers for the movement of their grain from farm gate to port.

I have been engaged in this debate for quite some time. The constituency I represent is rural and relies heavily on agricultural income to survive. The constituency which I have represented for six years has been engaged in the debate over the future of the Crow benefit for quite some time. My constituents have advised me frequently and constantly of the need to retain the Crow benefit.

Through the motion which is before the House today, I ask members to consider eliminating these sections from the bill in order that we can study in greater detail the future implications of this very rash move which the government has undertaken.

(1725)

The minister of agriculture will recall that at the beginning of this debate I asked the minister to withhold the sections of the bill, the intention to eliminate the Crow benefit, until such time as we did investigate the full implications of this move on the prairies.

I put forward that proposal before this debate began and here we are at report stage, prior to third reading, and the government has not indicated any understanding of the implications of what the elimination of the Crow benefit will mean to the prairie economy.

The argument comes down to the fact that for each elevator point on the prairies those communities will lose \$1 million in income currently in those communities. I have previously used Glaslyn, Saskatchewan, a community of about 350 people, a

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fairly large elevator market area with a very good, strong delivery point.

Currently \$1 million in that community will not be there after August 1 when this bill comes into effect; \$1 million from that community, \$4 million from the city of North Battleford and millions more taken from rural Saskatchewan as a result of the implications of this bill.

What does that mean in terms of the future of those communities simply because they are growing wheat which is demanded by countries all over the world, countries not paying the freight on that product but expecting our farmers to pay the freight to get it to port position so that it is competitive?

A presentation by the prairie pools to a committee in Ottawa on April 27, 1995 concluded: "The termination of government transportation assistance and the resulting decrease in farm incomes not only threaten the vision but the ability of the Canadian industry to even maintain its current competitive position in the world markets".

These are people who deliver a product to that competitive marketplace telling us very clearly in response to this move on this bill the vision of agriculture as presented by the government enhancing our competitive position is threatened and that our ability to compete is threatened. We should pay heed to some of these experts who have been commenting on this over the years.

I also quote from another presentation made before the finance committee studying Bill C-76. The national farmers union's report concluded that the cuts in the federal budget, which are in addition to the elimination of the Crow benefit and including it, will have an unprecedented impact—

The Deputy Speaker: I am very sorry to interrupt the hon. member but the time has expired for this debate. Unless there is unanimous consent, we will be into Private Members' Business.

Mr. Boudria: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the House would agree to allowing the member to conclude his comments. I also think a member of the Reform Party attempted to rise. If the House would consent to adding 10 minutes or so to do that I would have no objection. This would then enable us to finish that clause.

The Deputy Speaker: If members wish to do anything by unanimous consent they can do exactly what they want. Is there unanimous consent to extend the time?

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party would be happy for the hon. member for the Battlefords—Meadow Lake to complete his speech and then we should move on to private members' business.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the official opposition's opinion on this point. Do you agree?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Members are giving the hon. member two or three minutes to finish his speech.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the largesse of the government and opposition members on this matter. I did not request the opportunity to finish my remarks, but I am very happy to do so. I regret cutting into the time provided for private members' business, because to me it is a very important time in Parliament. I will wrap up my remarks very quickly.

When private members' time arrived I was quoting from the conclusion of the presentation made by the National Farmers' Union to the committee. I will start the quote again: "The cuts announced in the federal budget will have an unprecedented impact upon Canada's agriculture sector. These cuts, from the loss in transportation subsidies to the cuts to food inspection, increase producers' costs of production, making us less competitive".

Members will recall that one of the red book promises of the government was to reduce the input costs of farming. These matters have increased the costs of farming. Therefore, the red book promise on agriculture has certainly been broken.

I will finish the quote from the National Farmers' Union: "The Canadian government has cut far beyond the requirements of the GATT agreement, leaving farmers alone to fight the European Union and the United States treasuries. The government should reassess its policy of unilateral disarmament, which leaves Canadians vulnerable in the international marketplace".

This is a very serious matter. We have long term implications to communities on the prairies and to the future of Canadian agriculture in the international marketplace. We should be setting these provisions aside until we have had a full study of everything that has been done. We should not be dealing with it in terms of just balancing this year's budget.

[Translation]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

GRAND PARENTS' DAY ACT

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.) moved that Bill C-274, an act respecting a national grandparents day, be now read the second time and referred to committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I recognize there are many grandparents in the gallery. I appreciate their presence and I thank them for taking the time to join us in the debate.

It is an honour for me to stand today in the House to speak on Bill C-274, a private member's bill that I introduced on September 27, 1994. Bill C-274 is an act respecting a national grandparents day in Canada. It would set aside the second Sunday in September every year as a national day to honour grandparents in Canada from coast to coast.

It is a pleasure for me to address a generation of individuals who may be older but surely are wiser. They should not be forgotten or left behind.

As I said earlier in the House, we have the honour of having 20 grandparents and members of the growth society, an organization whose purpose is to safeguard the vital grandchildren and grandparents relationship.

I have received numerous letters in support of Bill C-274. I will read part of one letter I received: "On behalf of our grandparents group and all other grandparent groups in Canada, I commend you for introducing Bill C-274, an act respecting a national grandparents day. Many of us will be here in the members' gallery for a debate on your bill. We sincerely hope that you will have the full support of the House and that it will be voted on favourably".

(1735)

Another letter, sent by the vice-president of focus on the family association of Canada, states: "Thank you for your request for the designation of grandparents day. Our calendar printed by focus on the family U.S. has the second Sunday in September marked as grandparents day. We applaud the effort you have put in to recognize this day in Canada".

I have received numerous letters of support from my riding from seniors groups and organizations in favour of this day to be celebrated in Canada. Ironically tomorrow, June 1, 1995, will also mark the beginning of senior citizens month in Canada.

At this time Bill C-274, has been deemed not votable by the subcommittee on private members' business. I ask for unani-

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mous consent so that the order be discharged and the subject matter of the bill be referred to the health committee for further consideration.

I did not have the pleasure or the honour of having grandparents. My grandmother passed away when I was very young. I missed that link between a grandson and grandmother or grandfather. I hope that no one will have to miss that link between grandparents and grandchildren anywhere in the country.

Grandparents day would give national recognition to the growing number of grandparents in Canada. I will attempt to raise the emotional conflict of interest drama that grandchildren face when one parent assumes custody and they no longer have the opportunity to see their grandparents. Many provinces and municipalities have already recognized that grandparents do contribute greatly to the family and they are a basic and fundamental element of our society. It is time the federal government recognized this fact as well.

The focus of Bill C-274 on grandparents day will serve a child's best interest and show Canadians that grandparents are a significant part of our family structure. Most important, without grandparents a child will lose a valuable role model and nurturing.

In the United States in many homes of the aged grandparents day was celebrated as a national holiday as far back as 1961 and was officially declared as grandparents day in the U.S. in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. It is the second Sunday in September every year.

Last year in the province of Quebec the Quebec senior citizens federation urged Quebec families to mark the occasion of grandparents day by getting the different generations together. Obviously this is not possible in all cases, especially for those grandchildren who do not live nearby. I am sure they could get the long distance feeling by calling them on grandparents day.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren has taken on even greater importance as the result of the number of broken marriages. As we approach the 21st century we see more and more single parent families. Single parent families would be helped a great deal if we have grandparents' recognition and grandparents' connection tied to the younger generations so we can build for a stronger future and face it with more confidence.

Grandparents day was officially proclaimed in 1978. Since then every year the United States observes the second Sunday in September as grandparents day.

I call on my colleagues to accept the bill and refer it to the House committee on health in order to adopt it as soon as we can for the coming September. We have tremendous support. There is no harm in doing it. There is no one who opposes it as far as I

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know. Let us go forward and have grandparents day, which will give the proper recognition they deserve.

(1740)

The Deputy Speaker: If I understood the hon. member correctly, he has asked for unanimous consent that the order be discharged and that the subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Health. Is there unanimous consent among the members present for this to happen?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There was an indication that one of the members does not give unanimous consent to that happening.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the hon. member for Don Valley North for his bill. Indeed, who could be against a bill aimed at honouring the contribution grandparents make to society by designating the second Sunday in September of each year as “National Grandparent’s Day”?

Such bills always put us in the same dilemma. On the one hand, there is the honourable intention of designating a grandparent’s day but, on the other hand, we wonder if the government will go beyond good intentions and pay close attention on a daily basis to these seniors who helped build our society.

The old age pension plan is a case in point. As you may recall, there have been previous government attempts to reduce seniors’ benefits, and a reform of old age pensions is planned for this fall. In every golden age club, people like the directors in my riding who have already retired or will do so in a few years have a lot of questions about their future financial security.

While it is nice of the hon. member to ask that the second Sunday in September be designated “Grandparents’ Day”, we should be checking with his government to see if the member’s wishes will be acted on and whether these seniors will be guaranteed fair and equitable treatment.

This bill also gives us an opportunity to look at the way seniors are treated sometimes. Take for example the voice box issue. Do we really show seniors respect when they need information about a pension cheque that is late in coming or a in different amount than usual, or any other matter, and we cannot provide it to them? Having dealt myself with the voice box at the Department of Human Resources Development, I can tell you that there is cause for frustration, and serious frustration.

I think that we would show much greater respect for seniors and grandparents by remedying this kind of situation effectively

than by simply dedicating one day out of the year to them. We would be showing that we care year-round.

The other example I would like to give you is that of repeated computer errors in recent months. I have received dozens of calls at my office about computer errors, and the problem was from coast to coast. Pensioners were no longer receiving the income supplement they were entitled to. They were not always provided with adequate information in this matter. Again, this is a case where the really respectful thing to do would have been to treat them fairly and with compassion.

At any rate, this bill on grandparents’ day is very commendable. We can all dig out an anecdote from our pasts. My paternal grandfather has always been a model of honesty to me. He was a man who wanted the matters he discussed with others to be clear and to get settled. That is something that he taught me and that is now part of my background. Each and every one of us in this House could tell a similar story.

(1745)

The same is true of my maternal grandmother. I could tell you about her strength of purpose and about how she inspired me through my studies. We have to realize that we are definitely influenced by such role models, and grandparents do make an important contribution to their grandchildren’s education. As we get older, we realize the full significance of that contribution, particularly when we know what grandparents have gone through and what a source of wisdom they can be.

Who knows? Having a grandparents’ day might trigger a debate on how to better benefit from their experience. I remember my grandfather telling me about voting on conscription during the Second World War, and about the political context of the fifties. The past is a treasure trove of information to help us make decisions, now and in the future.

We often notice that young people lack a sound knowledge of our history. One way to remedy that might be to rely more on the experience of grandparents, who can bring us a lot, in a concrete way, in our daily lives, rather than in terms of our formal history. When we think about the grandparents’ contribution, it should not only be in terms of their role with grandchildren, but also with the parents who are sandwiched between the two generations.

In the daily grind of raising children, it is sometimes useful to take time out to turn to grandparents, who have often raised much larger families than those of today and have been through all sorts of situations that have equipped them to give us useful advice.

It seems to me that this bill is a good idea. It is recognition that is only reasonable and which our grandparents deserve. But this recognition should be given in the same spirit year round, it should be reflected in government services for seniors, in our

concern for their basic financial security, so that we are sure that the way they are treated on Grandparents' Day is the way they are treated every day.

I will conclude by saying that in addition to the idyllic images of grandparents that we often see on television, the traditional families, but there are also much more difficult situations. Grandparents are often excluded from family life and live alone in cramped quarters, and I think the setting aside of a national grandparents' day, as with everything to do with the family, would be an opportunity to recognize that there is no one model of a family, any more than there is no one type of grandparent. These seniors have contributed in a variety of ways to the growth of our society.

I hope that by recognizing grandparents' day we will make it possible for values to be transmitted from one generation to another, that we will realize what the past has given us and what we must still seek in order to attain our vision of the future, and it is for these reasons that the members of the Bloc Quebecois support this bill.

[English]

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to second the bill on grandparents day, declaring the second Sunday in September every year national grandparents day.

(1750)

Earlier this month I introduced a bill which would declare 1995 the year of the grandparent. I believe this is the third time this year grandparents have been recognized by various parties in the House. During the last debate, on May 2 of this year, there was a unanimous endorsement of that private member's bill.

It was rather disappointing that the committee assessing the bill considered it non-votable. Whether the arguments I put to the committee were not convincing enough, I am not sure. Perhaps I should bear some responsibility for that. Nevertheless, the feelings in the House crossed all party lines, a rare occurrence. I wonder whether in this, the third instance of recognition of grandparents this year, the hackneyed phrase family values has again risen to the fore in our society.

In the debate on May 2 there some statements registered very strongly with me. One was that grandparents are a pillar of our existence. I had the privilege of having one grandparent whose strength and values were imparted to me as strongly as those of my parents. He was a pillar of my existence.

I have underlined showing the way by example. Grandparents do their very best in leading by way of example. They impart those examples to their grandchildren. The word wisdom caught my attention. Grandparents are most often much wiser than

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parents because of the accumulation of experience and the way they can interpret life for their grandchildren.

Another word which came up was tolerance. As we grow older we tend to be either more tolerant or less tolerant. I have found the grandparents of our children and my own grandfather had tolerance. They set the standard for tolerance.

They provide strength and enrich the family. When things go wrong, as they often do in family life, grandparents are often a source of strength and security. Children need to feel secure on a continuing basis. It cannot be a start and stop affair or catch as catch can. Very often grandparents can fill the role of providing security. That leads me to one of the great concerns all of us in the House share. With the divorce rate and the break-up of families very often grandparents at the present time find themselves without access to their grandchildren.

(1755)

I will be doing everything I can to make sure that state is changed so grandparents in future will be able to have proper access to grandchildren especially at the time in their lives when they need them so badly.

Other words I found are grace and dignity. I have talked about family strength. The grandfather I had a great experience with lived by a very strict code. He imposed a code of conduct on himself, for which he was admired by so many in the small community where we lived.

He did not always preach about it. He did not always try to impose it, although sometimes he looked with wonderment at the way the world seemed to change. We all agree the more things change, the more they remain the same.

As I get older I find myself more appreciative of that code my grandfather imparted to me. I hope some of that has by example been shared with our children who did not know that great-grandfather.

They also knew grandparents; they grew up with more grandparents than I had. Those grandparents were wonderful people in the way they helped our family, the graciousness with which they accepted responsibility we often imposed on them when they took care of our children, when we needed them.

Grandparents have a much stronger role to play in family life than society has acknowledged to this point. The year 1995, with the recognition and debate we have put forward in the House, should set the stage for the years to come as recognizing the importance of the family and the role grandparents have in it.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-274, proposing to make the second Sunday of September every year national grandparents day.

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When I arrived at the House I had some good feelings about this bill and I was in a good mood. Then I watched as the member for Don Valley North sought unanimous approval to have his bill made votable. I understand the member for Don Valley North first sought in committee to have his bill made votable and was denied. I just wonder what kind of heartless minds exist in the Liberal Party opposite. The member for Don Valley North simply sought to have his bill recognized by a vote in the House, hoping for a majority vote for a bill which would stir the emotions of Canadians and was denied.

(1800)

I proudly support this bill. It was put forward by a member of the Liberal Party and I am very pleased to support because it does not cost the Canadian taxpayer one red cent. It is very unusual for a bill to come forward from the Liberal Party that is not going to cost the taxpayer some money. I congratulate the member for Don Valley North for putting it forward because it is something we have not been used to in the House.

In the past a number of bills have been forced through the House by the Liberal Party. Bills C-33 and C-34 will cost the taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars. They were rammed through the House using closure. The government tried to put Bill C-22 through the House. It would take away the freedom of private citizens to challenge the government in a court case.

We saw the Liberal government try to put through a budget in the House last February that is going to increase our national debt by \$100 billion over a three-year term and add about \$10 billion or \$12 billion to our annual interest payments. The government is trying to put through Bill C-68 which will cost the Canadian taxpayers perhaps \$500 million.

It is a great day in the House of Commons, a great day for the Liberal Party and a great day for Canada to have a member of the Liberal Party try to put through a bill in the House that is not going to cost the taxpayers one red cent. I congratulate the member for Don Valley North for this bill.

That is a celebration in itself, but I have another reason for speaking to this bill. As a member of Parliament I get a special perk today. I can stand up in the House of Commons of Canada and on national television I can announce that yesterday I was informed that I am going to be a grandfather before this year is over. Therefore this is absolutely appropriate. This proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that you do not have to be old to be a grandfather.

I am proud of my daughter, Lisa, in Vancouver. She will be a mother some time later this year and she will make me a grandfather. I am going to be able to realize some of the personal satisfaction that you get from being a grandfather, particularly

when I get to babysit and the kids get cranky, I will know the parents are coming home sooner or later that night.

In a more serious vein, it is very important to recognize a day like grandparents day because it not only recognizes the important role that grandparents play in the lives of families, but it also recognizes the tremendous contribution that our ancestors have played in the building of the country.

I am a firm believer that it is the family unit; the mother, the father, the children, the grandparents, the aunts and the uncles who built this country as strong as it is now. I also believe above all else that this Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that the family unit is not broken down any more than it is already. Parliament has a responsibility to try and rebuild the family unit as it was prior to the 1960s.

(1805)

The taxation levels since the mid-sixties have risen to a point where it is almost a demand that the mother of a family go out to work in order for the household to have enough disposable income to support the family. That is a tragedy and is one of the things that has broken down the family unit.

Grandparents can and do play an important role when the two spouses in a household are working. It is an absolutely critical time in the lives of children who become, through no wish of their own, latchkey kids. The parents of these kids, because of their jobs, are too busy to spend time with them. This makes the grandparents' role even more important.

I want Parliament to recognize that grandparents are part of the formula for making a family unit strong. For that reason alone, just that one reason, we should support this bill.

Another thing about grandparents that I find very important is they tend to pass down family values and history from one generation to another. Grandparents who spend a lot of time with their grandchildren generally have more time to talk to the kids about how their parents are working so hard to try to provide a home for them, to try to provide an education for them, something the parents often do not have time to do. This is a very important role for grandparents and they should be recognized for that as well.

A huge number of grandparents have also played an important part in the protection of democracy. They fought in the wars. They fought against fascism and communism in order to preserve the democracy we hold in such high value. They should be recognized for this as well.

I can speak from experience because I was a child in a one parent home. My mother worked every day while we were being brought up. Many times the only people I had to turn to for help with problems were my grandparents. I am eternally grateful for

the role they played in my life and the values they tried to instil in me that became beneficial when I grew up and started a career.

Grandparents day would provide an excellent opportunity for all Canadians to recognize the very important role grandparents play in a family.

I move that the House respond in a fashion that would come from the heart and not from instructions received from a committee and that unanimous consent could be given today that Bill C-274 become a votable motion.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, is there unanimous consent for transforming the motion on Bill C-274 to make it a votable motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

(1810)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address the House on the private member's motion to establish a special day in recognition of grandparents for their enormous contribution to families and society. Liberals recognize this.

There is a process whereby private members' business gets to the House. The procedure was followed by an all party committee with the member across the way being a member of that committee. Tonight I will address the private member's motion on the recognition of grandparents.

Creating a special day for grandparents will afford Canadians the opportunity to further demonstrate their continuing commitment to the family. As Liberals we believe this. It is not dollars and cents. It is a philosophy Liberals believe in and share with members across the way.

I fondly remember my own grandmother. She was a wise woman, though uneducated in a schooling sense. She affirmed me with words like: "Child, you can do it". It is women like my grandmother that most of us in this room do remember. Maybe most of us are here as a result of the affirmation we received from our grandparents.

In December 1991, Canada ratified the convention on the rights of the child, a landmark in Canadian social history. Countries agreed that children should grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding with the protection and assistance required for the full development of their personalities to better prepare them to become responsible adults. One of the central truths of the convention is based on the conviction

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that the family is a fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all of its members, particularly children.

The role of a grandparent is vital to the child. Grandparents can be companions, becoming friends more than parents. The relationship can be a major source of satisfaction to both the grandparent and the grandchild. Other members have referred to the fact that in today's society with marriage breakdown and single parenting, some grandparents take on the role of surrogate parents.

According to a study conducted by the British Columbia council for the family, grandparenting provides the older adult with a feeling of self-worth, a source of love, respect and support. Being a grandparent is a potential source of giving and receiving affection.

Grandparenting is also a means of establishing a link between past and future generations. Continuity, together with unconditional love, forms the cornerstone in the development of a child's self esteem and sense of trust. Among the riches that are passed down are language, culture and the wisdom that comes from experience.

A recent television show characterized the role of grandparents as one of providing both the roots and the wings of a whole generation of people. This is an apt definition of grandparenting.

Seniors, the majority of whom are grandparents, are a vital part not only of their own families, but also of all aspects of community life. They are active members of their communities. Some continue to do paid work, as does the member across the way. Some are members of churches, seniors organizations and clubs. Fitness and sports groups and cultural organizations such as art galleries, drama and musical groups all have the talent of our seniors. Seniors are involved in social action. They are teachers. They are board members. They are volunteers and they are politicians.

(1815)

As we consider a grandparents day we should also contemplate our collective Canadian family in which seniors play a critical role. The uniqueness that grandparents bring to the family is in my opinion and that of many others worthy of being celebrated with a national grandparents day in Canada.

Grandparents and seniors in general deserve a day to commemorate their extensive and important contributions. This is why I support the private member's motion that is before us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-274, an Act respecting a national grandparent's day, introduced on September 27 by the hon. member for Don Valley North.

Private Members' Business

I want to commend the hon. member on his praiseworthy suggestion that throughout Canada, and each year, the second Sunday in September shall be known as grandparent's day. He can count on my full support and that of the Bloc Québécois. I have a special interest in this proposal, being myself a grandfather and representing the riding of Bourassa in Montreal North, where 15 per cent of the population is in the 65 and over age group.

In 1994, the AQDR of Montreal North was founded as a branch of the Association québécoise pour la défense des droits des personnes retraitées et pré-retraitées, whose basic objective is to improve the living conditions of this group: income, taxes, health, accommodations, transportation, social policies and so forth. The organization already has more than 300 members.

I would like to express in the House my profound gratitude and best wishes to the members of the executive elected at the annual meeting held on May 29, the day before yesterday: Jean-Claude Potvin, president; Roger Lagacé, vice-president; Pierrette Vallières, secretary; Martine Leduc, treasurer; and advisers Umberto di Genova, Audette Thibault, Régine Daigle, Guy Baril, Claude Ouimet, Pierre Grondin and Joseph Zara. Like many other seniors, these people do a lot of volunteer work and are known for their dedication and generosity.

Bill C-274 is justified in every respect. This day should have been established long ago. Fortunately, a number of provinces and municipalities as well as many organizations and seniors' homes already unofficially celebrate a day known as grandparent's day. I think the time has come to officially recognize the second Sunday in September of each year as the day on which we pay tribute to our seniors and especially to grandparents.

In 1978, U.S. President Jimmy Carter decided that the first Sunday after Labour Day would be set aside to pay tribute to grandparents. A dynamic and remarkable grandmother from West Virginia, Marion McQuade, had fought for years to have a special day set aside for senior citizens in the United States. I hope that Canada will be inspired by this example and act accordingly.

The government, in particular the Minister of Canadian Heritage, must take the lead on this issue. Grandparents are extremely important for their grandchildren, especially until they reach adolescence.

Seniors are becoming a proportionately larger sector of our population. We estimate that their numbers will increase by 40 per cent in the next 15 years. Therefore, the government must take real steps to recognize the important contribution they make to society. Unfortunately, despite its many promises, the Liberal government has done nothing to improve the situation of seniors.

(1820)

On the contrary, they cut their tax credits, and, knowing this government's philosophy and vision, it is quite likely that they will take even more away from them, in particular in the area of old age security benefits.

Furthermore, I would ask the government to stop reducing grants for organizations which finance seniors, in particular programs like New Horizons.

I have had the great joy of being a grandfather for two years now. In fact, the wife of my oldest son gave birth to little Olivia in 1993 when the election campaign was in full swing. My whole family, including the child, was a great help to me during that period. I regret that my work as a parliamentarian does not leave me much time to play with and take care of my granddaughter Olivia.

According to recent statistics, 90 per cent of all children have at least one living grandparent. Unfortunately for me, my grandparents all passed away before I was born. I even lost my mother and father when I was 11 and 13 years old respectively. Admittedly, one half a century ago in Chili, a developing country, life expectancy was not very high.

The fact that I never knew my grandparents did not prevent me from understanding and valuing their importance for families and society, be it for children, adolescents or adults. They convey stability, link the generations and transmit certain fundamental values which must be preserved. And today, with so many break-ups in couples, their role has become even more important. In certain instances, they are the ones who raise their grandchildren and care for them.

Three Canadians out of four 65 years of age or older are grandparents. Naturally, you do not have to be 65 to be a grandparent. Some grandparents today are even in their forties or fifties.

I am proud to point out that Quebec has officially recognized the role of grandparents in article 611 of the Civil Code, which reads as follows: "In no case may the father or mother, without a grave reason, interfere with personal relations between the child and his grandparents".

This provision, therefore, accords grandparents the right to visit and take their grandchildren out. Unless there is an agreement between the parties, the terms of these relations are decided by the court. In all cases, the judge will consider the welfare of the children first and will consult them as need be.

Grandparents are very concerned about the happiness and well-being of the children and do everything within their power to improve their world.

For all these reasons, I enthusiastically support Bill C-274.

*Adjournment Debate**[English]*

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize that private members' hour is coming to an end, but I want to take the opportunity to thank the member for Don Valley North for raising his private member's initiative.

Private members' bills very rarely get selected to be votable in the House and very rarely get passed. That does not mean they are not important. They are extremely important. I assure all members of the House and all the people of Don Valley North that their member has worked extremely hard lobbying all members of the House to support this important initiative.

I do not know anybody who does not like grandparents. Everyone has stories. One of my grandfathers was a butcher and the other was a carpenter. From one I learned how to do carpentry work in my home along with other related home improvements and from the other I learned about foods and about eating. He had a grocery store as well. It was wonderful to go there to see him work. He loved his grandchildren so much. They are both gone now.

(1825)

The grandmothers, the matriarchs of all families, took care of us and loved us as if they were our mothers. They took very good care of us when we were young and learning. They were always there when our parents had problems. They were always there to provide the support and the love we all need. Obviously grandparents play a very special role in our lives.

I want the hon. member for Don Valley North to have a couple of minutes for his final rebuttal, but I simply reiterate that he has worked hard to bring recognition to an important aspect of our lives, our grandparents. I congratulate him and all members of the House who have taken the time to thank the member for raising it and to make special mention of their grandparents.

The Deputy Speaker: The mover of the motion will speak last and will have the right to close the debate.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank all members who spoke in favour of the motion. I notice that nobody spoke against it.

However I would like to set the record straight. The hon. member for the Reform Party said that Liberal members did not support the motion. The subcommittee on Private Members' Business did not recognize the motion as being votable. Once the subcommittee says no it is highly unlikely members of the House will say yes because we respect the independence of the subcommittee. On that subcommittee there are members of the Reform Party, of the Bloc Quebecois and of the Liberal Party.

Once again I thank all members who supported the motion. As the expression goes, he who runs away may live to fight another day. We will come back to the issue at some other time. We will ensure we pass the motion with the support of all parties before this Parliament is dissolved in 1997 or 1998. We will ensure that the grandparents of the country have a day to celebrate.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS*[English]*

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

HEALTH

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the middle of March I asked a question of the Minister of Health concerning the betrayal of budgetary promises for federal funding for the community action program for children, or CAPC, a program for vulnerable and at risk children. At the time I urged the minister to reconsider the drastic cuts in funding for the program and pointed out to her that in effect she and her government were cutting the deficit on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable children.

In response the Minister of Health stated that the budget did not dramatically cut CAPC. She said that it reduced the actual growth of the program.

I have a memo written by the regional director for health promotion and social development in the British Columbia region who confirmed that in fiscal year 1996–97 there will be an approximate 30 per cent reduction to the original allocation and the following fiscal year, 1997–98, will see an approximate 50 per cent reduction to the original allocation. If that is not a dramatic cut in funding for programs for poor, at risk, and vulnerable children, I do not know what is. It is a shameful betrayal of the promises that were made. Certainly groups such as the B.C. coalition for children and individuals who are working with poor children share that sense of concern. Minister Joy MacPhail with the B.C. government has spoken out strongly against these cuts.

(1830)

It is very clear that these cuts are part of a broader agenda of the government. We see it in Bill C-76, enormously destructive legislation, which this government is now ramming through the House without even allowing the public to have hearings across

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the country, without even allowing the possibility of a committee of eminent persons to review the destructive impact of this bill.

We know that the bill will gut the Canada assistance plan of its national standards. This will open the door to workfare and cheap labour standards. We know as well that it will dramatically cut funding for post-secondary education.

It is in the area of health care and medicare that I want to raise a couple of very grave concerns as well. The implications of this government's policies in the area of health care are very serious, the implications of Bill C-76. There is no doubt that we are going to see the possibility of a massive erosion in the quality of health care. We will see two tier health care. It is a direct consequence of the North American free trade agreement. We know that once the provincial governments move to de-insure any medical services it is open season for private insurance companies. Under NAFTA this is considered to be a market commodity. That is why the private insurance companies are just waiting to get in and make money.

This legislation is enormously destructive for the social fabric of the country. It was the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who said that these cuts will cause considerable harm and pain to a segment of the population that has already been hit very hard. He said: "The cuts are not only wrong in principle, but contrary to what we said in the red book, contrary to what we did during nine years in opposition, and completely junking all of the principles we stood for".

I call on the government to reinstate the funding for the community action program for children. I call on the government to reverse Bill C-76, to recognize that the United Nations committee on economic, social and cultural Rights has been very critical of this legislation and recognized that we are in breach of our international obligations under the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

There are alternatives. The Prime Minister has suggested that medicare was only intended to be temporary in terms of federal involvement. He said it was only intended for catastrophic illness. Well it is time for this government to look at alternatives. It is time they rescind Bill C-91, which was a gift to multinational drug companies. It is time they implement the 1995 alternative federal budget, which was a very different approach. It is time in the area of health care that we place far more resources into preventative health care, as was recommended by the Canada health coalition, the Hospital Employees Union in British Columbia, the National Federation of Nurses Unions, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Labour Congress, and many others.

It is time that this government came to its senses and recognized that the impact of Bill C-76 and of its budget and

budgetary policies is to shred the social safety net, is to mean that poor kids are going to get even poorer, that the gap between rich and poor will be greater, and that our health care system, the Canada assistance plan, and post-secondary education will all come under attack.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the member for Burnaby—Kingsway's question of March 15, and not really the last gospel that we just heard recited.

Children continue to be a priority for the Government of Canada, especially those who currently live in conditions of risk and poverty. As the House is aware, given the fiscal realities that all Canadians face, the federal government has had to make some very difficult choices.

The budget for the community action program for children, CAPC, has not been reduced dramatically and is still quite substantial. In the next two years over \$92 million will be available through the community action program for children.

Let me assure the hon. member that the reduction to the community action program for children was applied in an equitable manner. All jurisdictions, including British Columbia, will continue to receive the percentage of total CAPC funds originally agreed to in the respective protocols signed with all provinces and territories.

(1835)

The community action program for children remains a model of how different levels of government can work together with community groups to address the health and social needs of at risk children.

In addition to the children's action program, the government is making significant investments in new programs. For instance, the aboriginal head start and the Canada prenatal nutrition programs also address the social and health needs of children at risk and their families.

As stated in the red book, we must give our children the best possible start in life. Investing resources in our children is investing in the future of our country.

[*Translation*]

AGUSTA

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have another instance of lobbying, patronage, and maybe corruption with the Agusta affair involving an Italian firm, Agusta S.p.A., a manufacturer for the EH-101 helicopter contract which was cancelled and for which there was to be no compensation.

The present Prime Minister said that there would be no compensation. And I quote:

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[English]

“The program is cancelled and there isn’t any compensation for anybody”.

[Translation]

And yet, there has already been some compensation. The firm Unysis has received \$166 million in compensation. There are ongoing negotiations with Agusta, and with Westland, regarding compensation, despite the fact that the Prime Minister said that there would be no compensation, despite the fact that some ministers have already spoken against it and would have liked an inquiry into this affair.

This is serious. As we know, Agusta was found guilty of corruption in Belgium, and gave bribes in Italy. This firm has a very bad reputation. Yet, the government is now reaching agreements with lobbyists, some of whom, like James Deacey and Daniel Despina, are well known Liberals with very close connections to the party, are currently negotiating compensation for a firm. At the same time this government is cutting social programs. It has reduced the social housing program by some \$300 million in Canada. Of course, the poorest people are getting hit, but the government is about to give millions and even hundreds of millions of dollars to a firm which does not deserve it at all.

This is another example of the power lobbyists exert on the federal government, as was seen in the case of Power DirecTV, which was perhaps an even more serious example of nepotism. As we know, the son-in-law of the Prime Minister had succeeded in having a CRTC decision overturned, in favour of his own company. This is yet another example of the power of lobbyists and of the patronage which prevail with this government.

The issue concerning Agusta is whether or not to provide compensation. We asked the minister responsible and he seemed to indicate that he was negotiating to that effect. But do we compensate or not? I know that the government’s answer will be very vague. We will not know for sure. The government will tell us: “Well, we are negotiating, we are discussing, but this is not really about compensation”.

We are suspicious because, in fact, the government will once again try to find a few hundred millions and give that money to a company which does not deserve it, all this at a time when it makes cuts in social programs and social housing in this country.

Can we say that the Prime Minister of Canada is keeping to his word, since he said this regarding the EH-101 helicopter program:

[English]

“The program is cancelled and there isn’t any compensation for anybody”.

[Translation]

Those are the Prime Minister’s own words. Is this Prime Minister keeping his word or not? We want to know if there is any compensation. If there is, and if there are negotiations, perhaps we should even have an inquiry into this case, because Agusta, as I said earlier, has a very bad reputation, and has already been convicted of corruption in Italy and in Belgium.

So, I ask the question, and I hope to get a clear answer from the government.

[English]

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have never been nebulous in my life.

Which word did my hon. friend not understand? I will do this very slowly to make sure the member gets it. The Government of Canada did not breach the contract with EH industries. The government terminated the contract in accordance with the termination clause and in accordance with our promise in the red book which we kept on November 5, 1993 as soon as the Prime Minister took office.

The Prime Minister did say absolutely that there is no compensation for anybody. Furthermore, he said that ministers involved would make sure we do not pay a cent more than that we are obligated to pay. His statements are entirely correct. The Government of Canada is not negotiating a compensation settlement with EH industries.

I ask my hon. friend to read the contract. The contract was arranged and signed by a previous government which had as a member the hon. gentleman who sits in the front row and leads my hon. friend’s party. However, a mere bagatelle.

Contractors are being reimbursed only for costs legitimately incurred up to the point of termination plus those costs arising directly out of termination. No compensation is being paid; no penalties and no lost profit for the cancellation of the contract. Which word does the member not understand?

If people should choose to hire lobbyists when the government goes forward in the purchase of other military equipment, that is their prerogative. I make it very clear that no firm requires the services of a lobbyist to do business with the Government of Canada.

We might ask, however, who is lobbying the hon. member across the way on this issue? As for the suggestion there are backroom negotiations between members of the government and lobbyists in this matter, it is simply untrue.

I am confident the errors being presented as fact by the Bloc are the results of poor research and misunderstanding rather

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than a desire to mislead. Thankfully I have had the opportunity to explain the real facts.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed adopted. Accord-

ingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.42 p.m.)

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