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(HANSARD)

Friday, June 9, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 9, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of Bill C-85, an act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act and to provide for the continuation of a certain provision, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and on Motions Nos. 1 to 7.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-85, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and the amendments the government proposes. I am doing it in the short time that remains, given the closure and time allocation tactics of the government.

The amendments to the bill submitted under my name and under the name of the member for Calgary Centre have four main functions. First, to bring the members of Parliament pension plan into line with the private sector, both for MPs and Senators. Second, to allow MPs in this and in all future Parliaments to fully opt out of the pension plan. Third, to impose a Canadian citizenship requirement on all plan members. Fourth, to subject members pensions to the same clawback provisions that exist to old age security, something the Liberal government had opposed when it was in opposition but now seems to believe is fully acceptable for ordinary Canadians.

We are debating the first set of motions. Motion No. 4 provides that if a province separated, members of Parliament from that province would not automatically draw a pension from the Canadian government. This is the effect of proposing a citizenship requirement. We will be very interested to see whether it is the intention of the government to guarantee

pensions to members who eventually may not be citizens of the country.

I have heard some comments from members of the separatist party in the House that they do not care what is happening in the House because they will not be here in the fall anyway. I happen to think they are wrong and they may be here much longer. In any case this raises an interesting question.

[*Translation*]

It is because the members of the Bloc Quebecois are insisting that Quebec is going to separate in the coming year, I suppose.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): This amendment in fact reveals the strength of their convictions on this objective.

Bloc members' intention to guarantee their own Canadian pension or participate in this retirement pension plan indicates a lack of confidence in the possibility of separation. I suppose there is an element of sacrifice in the sovereignty project. Interestingly enough, the Bloc Quebecois is proposing putting Quebecers in a position to lose the benefits of Confederation, including pension benefits, but is pushing here for the adoption of the Parliament's pension plan.

I would suggest that one way to show their good faith in the matter would be to vote for this amendment and to support the idea that things like pensions need to be negotiated, if, by chance, Quebec should really separate after the referendum.

[*English*]

It will be interesting. I doubt the Bloc will be prepared to take such a daring step in the House of Commons.

The effect of Motions Nos. 1 and 6 are to change the opting out provisions so members of future Parliaments can make a one time decision to opt in or out of the plan during the first 60 days the House sits after they are elected. Reform MPs will save taxpayers over \$38 million by opting out and clearly in the absence of substantive changes to the plan future parliamentarians must have this option as well.

• (1010)

We will keep in mind that the failures of the government are starting to add up. While it may reject some of the populist measures used by my party I expect the next federal election to

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be very much a referendum on issues like MP pensions. I do not believe by any means this issue will go away even if government members defeat this amendment.

We will see as in the Ontario election this is a hot issue and will still be a hot issue in the next federal election. Voters will ask for members to cut their pensions without any increase in pay, a suggestion which I think is perfectly reasonable.

Motions Nos. 2 and 3 change the bill so that a member who dies before the expiry of the 60-day decision period is assumed not to have opted in. Bill C-85 automatically opts these people in. I guess Reformers would rather assume the best of people than the worst of people.

It seems strange the government would make the default option here an assumption of action of opting in. I understand a lot of pressure is being placed on backbench Liberals to opt into this plan so the driving forces of the plan, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, do not look too bad. Forcing dead MPs to opt into the pension plan is taking the idea of party discipline to new heights or to new depths even for the Liberal Party.

We know who will bear the brunt of the public backlash of this in the next election. It will be the Liberal backbenchers who did not really support the plan, who were told to participate and who if they lose the election will lose all pension in any case. This is really a remarkable coincidence of both lack of intelligence and lack of integrity coming together on an issue.

Motions Nos. 5 and 7 change the bill to allow all members to opt out completely. Under Bill C-85 MPs who as of October 1993 already had six years of service could only opt out of benefits earned after the last federal election, thus creating the terms trough regular and trough light which we like to refer to, the two tier system.

We have talked already about how this inability for longer serving MPs to completely opt out of Bill C-85 creates the two tier system. However, this is a minor issue in my opinion. The real issue is the two tier system between MP pensions and what is available to other Canadians.

One of the witnesses who testified before the committee which studied this bill, and I use the term studied very loosely, Mr. Brian Corbishley of Edmonton, testified the pension proposed under Bill C-85 is about seven times more generous than a typical public sector plan and four times more generous than a typical private sector plan. Mr. Corbishley's testimony and others should be listened to much more carefully and much more seriously than some of the government members seem to take this issue.

In Alberta Mr. Corbishley's firm, Peat Marwick, proposed a pension scheme for MLAs much less generous than that which

existed in Alberta at the time. The plan in Alberta at the time was almost identical to what the government is now proposing.

In the heat of the pre-election build up in Alberta the government refused to significantly alter that plan to deal with the objections of taxpayers and citizens and it was increasingly looking like that government would face defeat in the election. Ultimately Mr. Klein ended up abolishing the plan, a major factor in his winning the election and doing some of the good things in Alberta he is now trying to do.

What is interesting about this, and I urge Liberal members to consider it very carefully, is ultimately a half hearted attempt to reform the MLA pension plan in Alberta resulted in MLAs in Alberta having no pension plan whatsoever, a situation which I do not think is ideal but which will result if the government follows the course it is on.

• (1015)

I urge members once again to consider some of these amendments. They will significantly alter the bill to make it more acceptable to the public. Ultimately the public will find this bill unacceptable. We know the MP pension plan will die because of the unreasonable form it is in today. It will die in any form and there will be no increase in compensation that the members on the other side so earnestly desire and do not deserve.

In any case, I ask them to consider these amendments and I thank them for their patience.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few points with respect to the amendments put forward by the hon. member for Calgary West because they deserve some comment.

They are clearly amendments—

An hon. member: You already gave your comments.

Mr. Milliken: No, I have not spoken on the bill. This is the first time I have spoken to the bill at this stage in the House. The hon. member should be pleased that he is getting a balanced approach to the bill instead of the twisted rhetoric that the Reform Party is engaging in.

I want to point out a couple of things that are important to the Canadian public in viewing the bill. We are hearing a great deal from members of the Reform Party about wanting to abolish the pension altogether. They say that if we get rid of these pensions then everything would come up roses and we would solve the problem.

I want to point out first of all that some members of the House were elected at a time when there was not significant discussion in the House or in the country about abolition of these pensions.

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I draw the hon. member's attention to the 1988 election. He was a Tory then and was working for a Tory member of Parliament who was seeking re-election and who was going to earn a pension. He may have already qualified for all I know. I do not know who he was working for in those days but he was very supportive of the whole thing. There was no public debate about pensions in 1988.

Many members who were elected at that time in good faith left their employment, took a reduction in the earnings they had on the basis of a certain salary that was stated to be the salary for members of Parliament plus the possibility of earning a pension at the conclusion of their term of service in the House of Commons.

The pension was generous. It is generous and remains generous. That is true. However the members of Parliament who entered the lists, as it were, for the election in 1988 and in all previous elections did so on the basis that at the end of their term of office they would be compensated in some way that was generous but was designed to make up for the loss of income they suffered in being elected to Parliament in the first place.

The hon. member is now saying that those people had expectations that were out of line, that they do not qualify to receive the pension to which they are entitled under the law. These people in the Reform Party want to change the law to prevent those persons from receiving those pensions.

I can understand their approach when only one of them has qualified for a pension, when only one of them was a successful candidate in 1988. In fact she lost in 1988 and then got elected in a subsequent byelection. There was not a single one of them in 1988 and they were not talking pensions big time during that election. It was a non-issue.

It was a non-issue for me in 1993. Nevertheless, the members of the Reform Party insist that members who were elected before are somehow pigs at the trough because they were elected under a system of remuneration which they are now accepting.

Most people enter a career looking at the remuneration package and seeing what it is like. When they are successful in either choosing the job or in this case getting elected to the job, they are then told by Reformers who come along later, Johnny come latelys if ever there were any, that somehow they are pigs at the trough because the remuneration package that they accepted when they started the employment is unacceptable to the new group.

First of all, that is a stupid argument. It is wrong. The members of the House who were duly elected on the basis of a package are entitled to receive the package they obtained.

What has the government done? It made two promises in 1993 to change that package. One was to prohibit double dipping and

the second one was to put a minimum age in place so that members would not draw a pension at an unduly young age.

The bill fully complies with those promises. The age change is there and the double dipping prohibition is there. The government went beyond that and reduced the rate at which the pension accrues which means members of Parliament who are elected on a certain remuneration package will in fact get less. That is a very significant change which is totally unappreciated by the members of the Reform Party for one good reason. They are all going to opt out.

• (1020)

I suggest the electorate will opt them out of the pension scheme. They will not qualify anyway. The only one that has qualified is the member for Beaver River. I suggest none of the others would qualify anyway.

The member for Beaver River has been on a rant on this issue for one good reason. She has been cheated out of her pension by her colleagues who have muzzled her, beaten her into the ground and forced her to opt out of the pension scheme so she can join their ranks. They will be taken away by the electorate anyway in the next election. They will not qualify but they have muzzled her into opting out so she is in a fit of rage.

She is the one, with her leader who asked for the opting out clause and now wants it taken out of this bill. She wants it removed from this bill because she wants her pension. She is having a fit because she cannot get her pension. I hear she is taking wrestling lessons in Calgary this weekend because she needs to be able to deal with her caucus colleagues. She is being wrestled to the ground.

I want to turn to one other aspect. We keep hearing we should cut the pension more. We have not gone far enough. However, we do not hear from the Reform Party that we should change the double dipping scheme more by preventing double dipping not just by people who take federal appointments but by those who are receiving another pension from another source. Why is that? Because there are at least three members on the other side who are earning substantial pensions from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Morrison: Federal?

Mr. Milliken: Yes, three of them are federal. They are getting big, fat military pensions and maybe others. They are pocketing that money while they sit in the House earning a salary. They do not talk about extending double dipping because their colleagues will feel it in the pocketbook. They should have more sympathy for the hon. member for Beaver River and let her express her own opinions without wrestling her into the ground on this issue.

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Look at the other pensions they are getting. When hon. members opposite stand up and say they are not taking their pensions, why do they not also stand up and say: "The reason I am not taking my MPs' pension is because I am already getting a pension from another source". Why do they not come clean and tell us about that? I do not have a pension from another source, but some of the hon. members opposite I know do have one.

Why do those members not stand up and say: "I'm getting a pension from another source, so I don't need an MPs' pension. I'm happy to opt out". I know why. They would be embarrassed if they were caught double dipping later. It is amazing the members that are double dipping now are not confessing to it. We do not hear any talk about that. Why does the hon. member for Calgary West, in his white knight charger set of amendments, not propose the kind of amendments that will cut out the double dippers in his own party? Why will he not do that? I know why he will not. Because his leader told him not to.

His leader knows all about pensions and the way to collect pensions. His father was in the Senate which is a pension haven. Everybody knows that. His leader's father was a senator for years.

It is quite unbelievable that members of the Reform Party who speak on one side saying that we have to cut the pension will not speak on the other and say that we should cut double dipping more. Why will they not? They know all about double dipping. They are pros at double dipping. They know how to get big, fat pensions from other sources. I will not mention names but hon. members opposite know who I mean when I say there are people sitting there who are getting fat cat pensions of \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year and they are earning their salary here as MPs at the same time.

In many cases those pensions are paid out of public funds. They may not be paid in every case by the federal government but they are paid out of taxpayers' funds.

We do not hear a word about it either from the Reform Party or from their friend David Somerville and the National Citizens' Coalition who is a mouthpiece for the Reform Party on this issue. The two of them have been in bed together for years.

The hon. member for Calgary West and the National Citizens' Coalition conspired together to defeat the former Tory member because of his views on the pension and on electoral reform. He knows that. He knows they have been working together to do this. The Reform Party members in the House and their performance in calling other members names, calling other members who have earned their pensions in good faith pigs, are absolutely disgracing this House. They should be ashamed of their conduct. The hon. member for Beaver River after her performance yesterday, threatening to beat up members of the House, should also be ashamed of her performance also.

• (1025)

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In reference to the member's remarks during his intervention, where he accused a member of beating someone up, if he is accusing her of doing that in the House I wonder if he could retract that statement. It is absolute nonsense and he knows it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. I have had the benefit of being in the chair for the better part, if not the entire portion, of this debate. I am well seized of the fact that it has been a very vigorous debate. I would say respectfully to the hon. member for Fraser Valley East that his point of order is a matter of debate. It is not a point of order according to our standing orders, our own rules in this House.

I would urge members on both sides participating in this debate to be judicious and to continue to be respectful of one another, and certainly of the collectivity of this institution, the House of Commons.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues I rise to speak on Bill C-85 with a heavy heart and a sense of despondency.

Yesterday we were again reminded that there is no respect for the democratic process on the government benches. Once again they have not once, not twice, but three times invoked time allocation, thus stifling honest parliamentary debate on matters of great importance to Canadians.

It is perhaps appropriate that I speak after the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader because I am one of the people who he referred to as drawing a pension from the military. I have no trouble admitting that. I served for over 36 years in the military. I paid into a pension fund 7.5 per cent of my pay for 35 of those years, which was the maximum that I could qualify for. The fund from which I draw my pension is now \$30 billion and growing as people continue to contribute to it. Therefore, the idea that the taxpayer is paying my pension is absolutely ludicrous.

I have no regrets about it. Double dipping has been adequately defined as the retirement of a member of Parliament who has been appointed to a government job and continues to draw his pension and his salary at the same time.

I earned my place here. The people who elected me knew that I was drawing a military pension and they knew that I would be keeping that pension once I was elected. I feel there is no problem, but I have some doubts about the honesty and impartiality of the parliamentary secretary in this instance.

The Reform Party is placing before the House 35 amendments to Bill C-85. First, if implemented, these amendments would bring the MPs pension scheme into line with the private sector for both MPs and senators, and failing that, second, the amendments would change the opting out provisions so that newly

elected members would have a choice to opt out of the plan to allow all MPs to withdraw from participation in the plan. Third, Motion No. 4 would ensure that all members of the plan are Canadian citizens. Fourth, Motion No. 34 is based on the private member's bill of the hon. member for Yellowhead, which would make provisions to recover former senators and MPs pensions on the same basis as other income received by a former member, if that former member was in that year entitled to receive old age security.

• (1030)

These 35 motions are important for Parliament and for the Canadian taxpayer. Unhappily, it appears that presentation of these motions is a futile parliamentary exercise as it becomes increasingly evident that the government has made up its mind and will move ahead with the legislation as it stands.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening with interest to my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I believe him to be a man of integrity. I do not think he meant to say it but he did say it quite directly. He questioned the honesty of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Under the rules, you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, it is not permitted to cast aspersions on the integrity of an individual. I would ask that you ask him to withdraw that aspersion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In listening to the member's intervention I suppose what I should do and will do is review the blues for verification of the wording and possibly the spirit of what was said.

I take the member's point of order with great seriousness and, if necessary, I will report back to the House.

Mr. Frazer: Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation to withdraw the comments the member for Burin—St. George's referred to. They were uttered inadvertently. I did not intend to cast aspersions on the parliamentary secretary's integrity or his honesty.

The House has heard many arguments as to why the proposed revisions to the MP pension plan are still too generous. Committee members have received repeated testimony from highly qualified witnesses who confirm that the plan is still far too rich and is basically poor public policy.

Let me quote Paul McCrossan, a former member of Parliament and now an actuary for Eckler Partners Ltd., who appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. He said:

My conclusion is that the bill is bad for you as members, bad for Parliament as an institution and bad for Canada because, having acted on this bill, you will hamstring this Parliament in dealing effectively with the most urgent challenges it faces, namely redesigning Canada's national retirement income and medical

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care systems to reflect the financial realities of Canada as well as Canada's rapidly aging population.

This is exactly what is now happening. Parliament is hamstringing from dealing with important issues of the day: our increasing deficit and debt, social program reform and building a stronger economy which will produce more jobs for Canadians, to name just a few key problems.

Despite the apparent futility of our efforts, Reform members cannot, with good conscience, allow the legislation to slip by without resistance. Perhaps those large pink pigs placed on the front lawn of Parliament to protest this pension scheme last week say it best. Surely there is no other place in this great nation where people are authorized to legislate the amount of their own benefits and salaries.

I would agree with those who contend that the basic pay of members of Parliament is insufficient when the responsibility and workload are considered. However, this pension benefit cannot be justified and continues to leave a foul taste in the mouths of all taxpayers.

Is our government blind to what is right? Why, rather than paying lip service, has it not undertaken realistic pension reform? Certainly there have been enough good suggestions given both in the House and in representations to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Reform member for Beaver River will refuse her million dollar payout and, under the deliberately planned punitive opting out provisions, will lose any government contributions made to that plan.

Members will know that normal pension plans see the employer matching employee contributions. Even with the revisions to the pension plan instituted by the government, the taxpayer will be contributing an excessive \$3.60 for every dollar members of Parliament contribute.

• (1035)

The government made the opting out provision punitive because it very much wanted the member for Beaver River to opt into the plan so that during the next election it could point the finger at members of Reform Party and say that we were no different from the others.

But we are different. We fought for these very principles during the last election. The parliamentary secretary's reference to the fact that it is Reformers who are bringing these measures to Parliament is absolutely wrong. Yes, we are transmitting it, but we are bringing the message from all Canadian taxpayers.

Unhappily, despite the wishes of the parliamentary secretary, it would appear that the same issue will be around again in the next election.

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I return to Paul McCrossan's testimony before the committee about the legislation. Referring to the legislation he said:

It does nothing to develop a sensible compensation package for members and may actually impede redesign. It entrenches your benefits at a level higher than those available to general taxpayers. At the same time it reduces the cost of your compensation package.

So when you come to redo a compensation package, you will be left with having then to increase it from the level you have reduced it to and it is going to make it much more difficult to do it in two steps rather than one.

It reduces compensation for future service but leaves benefits substantially above the private sector and, indeed, public sector permissible levels.

It is just this that members from this side of the House have been saying. The benefits go well beyond anything in the public realm.

Some time in the future MPs will again decide that the compensation package is not adequate and adjustments will be made.

Many take great pride in pointing out that MPs have curtailed their salaries in seven of the fourteen years since the present pension scheme was adopted in 1981. Are the salaries kept low in exchange for generous benefits? That question has been raised many times in the House and in committee.

The study by Sabeco, Ernst and Young called for a 37 per cent increase in MP salaries, accompanied by a reduction in pension benefits, also recommending that they should be limited to retirees who are at least 60 years of age.

The report further suggests that when the parliamentary wage freeze is lifted in 1996 the MP basic annual salary be increased to \$75,000, and that prior to the next election Parliament be urged to pass legislation to increase MPs' salaries to \$86,000 to take effect on the first day of the 36th Parliament.

Given the political climate, the ever present debt and deficit and this ineffective pseudo pension reform, I do not believe the government has the political will to make these badly needed appropriate changes to current MP compensation and pension arrangements.

Once again let me go back to Paul McCrossan who said:

I believe that legislating preferred treatment for yourselves, even if it is reduced preferred treatment, as proposed under this bill—will continue to foster cynicism.

Each of us holds a very privileged position and thus must make every effort to avoid abuse of that position.

As long as Parliament holds the power to set members own salaries, perks and pensions, the job will clearly not be effectively achieved. Politics will come into play as they have in this

instance and longstanding MPs will resist every effort to make appropriate changes to the pension plan.

Even in the Progressive Conservative government Wilson budget of 1986 provisions were made to lower MP pensions to private sector levels. We could wonder why this had not happened but the answer is clear. Decisions such as this cannot be left in the hands of Parliament. Rather, a competent, independent body must be assigned to ensure appropriate compensation and pension reforms are implemented.

It is not too late even at this report stage to make some important changes. The proposed reductions make only a small dent in the cost to the taxpayer. Treasury Board officials have indicated that most of the savings will result from actuarial factors rather than legislated changes.

For my own part, unless the government makes real changes which bring the MP pension scheme into line with that of other Canadians, I will be signifying my intention not to opt into the proposed plan.

I call on government to go back to the drawing board, heed the very clear direction given by its own constituents and make meaningful, realistic changes to Bill C-85. I call on rank and file members of the government to press for these changes. They know what is right and proper. They know that Bill C-85 does not meet this need, and they should know that a concerted effort on their part could influence the changes needed to fulfil at least one of the promises made in the red book.

● (1040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Let me deal with the point of order raised by the hon. member for Burin—St. George's. I express my appreciation and respect for the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for his withdrawal. I am not recognizing or ruling that it was necessary, but I welcome his initiative. I will not be reviewing the blues and consider the matter closed.

I should like to return momentarily to the point of order raised previously by the member for Fraser Valley East. I ruled that it was not a point of order and I continue to believe that to be the case. The issue which occurred yesterday between two hon. members is presently before the Speaker for a ruling. I would deem any allusion to the incident inappropriate at this time.

Vigorous debate certainly will not be curtailed by myself while I am in the chair, but I would ask that respect be extended particularly to the institution and more specifically to the two members involved.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the committee that studied the bill. I also participated in second reading debate on the bill.

[*Translation*]

Today, I am again going to take a few minutes of the House's time to give my opinion on this bill. I support the comments of

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one of my colleagues, who said yesterday that she had no qualms about accepting her paycheque and the benefits of being a member of Parliament, and neither do I. I consider that I work and that I do the job expected of me. If the voters in my riding consider this no longer to be the case at some point, I would encourage them strongly to replace me, rather than lower the salary and benefits of parliamentarians, thus probably reducing the calibre of those who stand for public office.

[English]

I take exception to something the member for Calgary said a little earlier today about members of the Bloc retiring and their MPs pension. I am paraphrasing his remarks when he said that if they lived in another country they should not receive their MPs pension. I for one hope the country never separates. I pray it does not. In the unlikely event that it would, the logic of the hon. member would be absolutely disastrous to my constituents.

I have people in my riding who work in Quebec and live in Ontario. Does that mean they would be denied the Quebec pension plan, their employers' pension plans and so on? We can see how stupid that kind of reasoning can be if applied. I dissociate myself as a staunch federalist from the comments of the hon. member. They are wrong and they further create and augment the kind of division which he and others say should not exist in the country. He is appealing to the lowest common denominator in trying to get his point across.

An hon. member: You are grasping at straws.

Mr. Boudria: I am not grasping at straws. The unity of the country is not straw. It is a strong principle. To try to run roughshod over the benefits of my constituents is not grasping at straws. It may be in the minds of some members across the way. We know what they stand for.

Before getting into the issue of MPs' pensions let me talk about the lack of understanding toward one another. Mr. Speaker has made a judgment on one incident and I will not refer to that one.

• (1045)

There is another incident that happened yesterday in which members across, in the same party, said something as follows.

[Translation]

They said the Liberal and the Bloc members were conniving in some sort of treason—that is what they said—because the three bills will be adopted by the House by June 23. In support of their remarks, they said that the reason was in order to celebrate the Saint-Jean-Baptiste holiday. First, as we know, the holiday falls on a Saturday, this year. Second, if it fell during the week,

the House would not sit that day. So, that is wrong. Third, and most important, as my hon. colleague for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine has just said, celebrating the Saint-Jean-Baptiste holiday is not treasonous.

The members opposite have no sense of our country's culture. They should learn about it. People in my riding celebrate the Saint-Jean-Baptiste holiday, and, this year, they will be celebrating in the village of Cheney. Thousands will be there, and they are not traitors. The members opposite who describe them as such are mistaken. They should apologize to the House and, more importantly, to all French speaking Canadians for having made such stupid remarks about our fellow citizens. This is what is important. Once again, the Reform Party members stooped as low as they could to support their remarks.

[English]

They are using the same kind of thing now in the MPs pension issue. The people in the third party across—it was them I was referring to, not to any other colleague—talk selectively about what they say is the unfair compensation MPs receive.

We had a member here making comments while he is receiving a lucrative pension from the federal government, claiming that he has a right to receive such a pension but that nobody else does, and saying that with a straight face.

Other hon. members have said that they would not refer to the MPs who were receiving some of these double dipping pensions. As they say in the province of my hon. colleague from Newfoundland, "What is good for Goose Bay is good for Gander". So I do not mind raising some of these things.

It has been said that the Deputy Prime Minister, were she to retire today—and not that she will, she will be an hon. member of this House for decades to come—would receive a pension. What is the difference then from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, a Reform MP, who receives a pension as a former military officer? He has a right to receive it. That is not the point. Why does he think that nobody else does? What makes him that god-like creature he thinks he is? What about the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, a general, who says that he can receive a pension but others should not were they to retire in the future?

What about the member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke, a former federal government employee? What about retired teachers across the way? What about retired MLAs who are receiving an MLA pension from a legislature across this country? They stand up in this House and say they are not going to get an MP pension. Do members know why? Because they are getting one from elsewhere already from the public purse. That is the truth.

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No matter how they try to camouflage and wrap that truth, the truth will always be the truth. We know. That is not grasping at straws, that is stating fact. Fact sometimes gets in the way of Reform Party policy.

Reform Party MPs have said that the taxpayers of Canada contribute these huge amounts toward MPs' pensions. I have here the document tabled by the President of the Treasury Board. It is a report on the administration of the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. There is not one year since 1952 in which the contributions to the plan were less than the money going out of the plan in pensions—not one year.

• (1050)

Mr. Speaker, I will give you examples of various years. For instance, the total receipts for the year 1990–91 were \$7 million to the plan and the disbursements were \$6 million. The disbursements in 1989–90 were \$7 million, with \$6.3 million in withdrawals, and so on—total receipts, total disbursements.

When some members opposite claim that the amount creates a huge debt of some sort, that is factually incorrect and they know it. This report was tabled in the House by an officer of the government. It was designed to show these numbers. But they refuse to listen to that. They invent, they concoct numbers of their own, supported by the likes of David Somerville, whose claim to fame is to draw little pigs in newspapers. That is all they have to support their argument.

Between that and the nonsense we heard today that only some MPs should be entitled to a pension and others who have different political views, such as Bloc members, are not entitled, and that members should be able to get a military pension and an MP's salary but that other people should not get a pension, that is the kind of logic that works for Reform thinking but not for logical thinking.

[*Translation*]

It is time to inject an element of intellectual honesty into this debate. I am not ashamed of my salary as a member of Parliament, I earn it. If the voters of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell do not think I am worth this salary, they should not lower it, they should find someone who can do the job better, if that is what is required some day or other.

I say to the members opposite that, if they do not think they are earning their pay, they should work harder and not claim that salaries should be cut. If they are embarrassed about their lack of ability, they should improve their skills. If they are ashamed because they are not working hard enough, let them work a little harder for the voters who sent them here. I was elected by the voters in my riding to do my best, and that is what I intend to do so long as I am here.

That is what the members opposite should do instead of continuing to make Canadians believe things that are the opposite of the truth, to say the least.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thought it might not be necessary for me to speak to this bill on the parliamentarians' pension plan.

I have been a member of this House since 1984. I did not go into politics because of the pension but because I had a vision of the future. I did not run for Parliament because of the salary; I did not even know how much members made until after I was elected. So you can see, my first concern was not about salary and pension. It was to defend the public interest, the interests of the people of Longueuil, as well as my party's policies, which I believe in.

Since the Reform Party says that Bloc members should not receive a pension from the federal government if Quebec ever becomes sovereign, I wish to reiterate what I said on several occasions in response to English speaking journalists. I asked them if someone now working for a U.S. company, who has contributed to this company's pension fund for 10 or 15 years, will not be entitled to receive his pension from a U.S. company because he is Canadian.

I think that is the major issue in this case. I have been working for the Canadian government for 11 years. We as members are not employers, but we still work for the Canadian state, and the day Quebec becomes sovereign, I will have made my own contribution to a pension fund. I do not see how anyone can say today that I would not have the right to receive what I paid into this plan.

• (1055)

That is why I think that such statements are totally disloyal and a little twisted coming as they do from the Reform Party, and from some journalists who have often argued that it would not be legitimate for us to receive a pension should Quebec achieve sovereignty.

I am feeling very legitimate and very comfortable, because I have contributed to this pension fund and I am simply entitled to it, whether it comes from an American or Canadian company or from the Canadian government. I am entitled to it because I have already contributed to this fund for 11 years.

Whenever I hear talk of a gold-plated pension plan, I think that, as far as I know, the majority of people who go into politics do not come here for the fat pension we receive after we leave. Most politicians, at least those I know, did not go into politics for the pension fund; they came here to further the interests of their party and put forward what it stands for.

Such arguments do not seem valid to me, and I do not think that the Reform Party will score very many points by trying to give the public the impression that members of Parliament are overpaid and that their pensions are too generous. I think that this is of little concern to the people of Canada.

All they want is, first and foremost, to have jobs and healthy businesses that can create more jobs. Canadians want the kind of climate that will be conducive to a sound economy that will lead to job creation. I think that is what they want. Whether MPs make \$64,400, \$64,00 or \$75,000, they really do not care, but they care about their member's performance. They also want their MP to fulfil their aspirations in many respects. In any case, people of my riding of Longueuil have seldom told me that I was making too much money. Their comments had more to do about whether they felt I was doing a good job or not or representing them well or not.

As the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said earlier, the reason why constituents complain about their MPs is not because they are making too much money but rather because they are not paying enough attention to fulfilling their wishes. That is the spirit in which this bill, which seems reasonable to me, should be supported.

The government has come a long way, and if there is one aspect that I might have questioned myself, it is the fact that pensions are paid as soon as MPs leave public life one way or the other, but this bill provides for pensions to start when MPs reach the age of 55, and that sounds reasonable to me. Reducing slightly pension benefits, which may have been on the high side, also seems reasonable to me.

For these reasons, I support the bill on pensions.

The Speaker: My colleagues, it being 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to statements by members under Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the chemical weapons convention opened for ratification in January 1993 and will become law when ratified by a minimum of 65 states. According to authoritative doctrine, it codifies the general principles of the international law of war already recognized in customary international law from at least the time of the Geneva protocol of 1925.

The treaty itself symbolically caps an historical process of lawmaking already in place on interdiction of chemical weapons, which applies legally whether or not and until the treaty itself should become law in its own right.

[Translation]

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QUEBEC CITY BRIDGE

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, because of the federal government's inertia when it comes to adequately maintaining the Quebec City bridge, 25 organizations, including Quebec City authorities and municipalities located on the south shore, formed a coalition to ask the federal Minister of Transport to do what is necessary to save and promote this part of our national heritage.

The coalition is also asking that the bridge be excluded from CN's assets for the purposes of the bill on the privatization of that railway company, as was done in the case of the CN tower, in Toronto.

Quebecers are more and more fed up with the federal government's double standard policy.

* * *

[English]

TAIWANESE CANADIANS

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society has brought to my attention an example of discrimination against Canadians that should not be tolerated by this government.

It seems that when Canadians of Taiwanese origin apply for visas to China their visa applications are refused. We know what the policy of China toward Taiwan is. There probably is not a lot the Canadian government can do about that. However, when Canadian citizens are discriminated against overseas because of the country of birth they list in their passports, then it is incumbent on our government to get involved. This is not an issue of two countries disagreeing over sovereignty. This is a matter of the fair treatment of Canadians around the world.

I call on this government to get involved and to use its newfound influence in China. We must not put trade above the fair and just treatment of citizens of Canada. We must defend what is right and attack what is wrong. End the unfair treatment of Taiwanese Canadians.

* * *

THE LATE CHARLES RITCHIE

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that we note the passing of one of Canada's most distinguished diplomats, Mr. Charles Ritchie.

Charles Ritchie did much to enhance Canada's stature in the world community in the troubled years of the post World War II period. In nearly 40 years of service with the Department of External Affairs, Charles Ritchie served in high profile and

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demanding diplomatic posts as high commissioner to Great Britain, ambassador to the United States, UN ambassador, ambassador to NATO, Germany and in Ottawa as deputy undersecretary of state for external affairs and special adviser to the Privy Council Office.

After retiring in 1971, Mr. Ritchie enjoyed a successful career as an author. He was later named a companion of the Order of Canada.

On behalf of my colleagues, I express condolences to Mrs. Ritchie, the family and friends.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Transportation Week is a fitting time to recall the historical role played by transportation in the prairie provinces.

We understand the importance of an efficient and cost effective transportation system. We live surrounded by immense distances. At one time in our history we relied completely on the railway to link us with the rest of the country. Now we are served by air and road as well as by rail. What is needed is an efficient and cost effective national transportation system, not subsidies.

Western grain producers are ready to compete with the world. With the repeal of the WGTA and the proposed amendments to the National Transportation Act regarding efficiency measures, we believe they will be even better prepared for the challenges of the global economy.

The theme of this year's National Transportation Week is "Careers in Transportation: Opportunities, Training and Skills". It should remind us that the future holds opportunities as well as challenges.

If Canada is to have the transportation system it needs, we will need to start now to recruit, educate and train those who will keep the country moving in the years to come.

* * *

ST. BRIEUX, SASKATCHEWAN

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in praise of my home province of Saskatchewan, in particular the town of St. Brieux in the northeast corner of my riding.

St. Brieux is an extraordinary town. It is 90 minutes northeast of Saskatoon with a vigorous farm equipment manufacturing plant, lots of employment, business opportunities, schools and is bilingual. The gateway to the northern lakes, it has golf, hockey and no crime. So ran the ad in the *Toronto Sun* about two weeks ago. A four bedroom house can be purchased for a mere \$48,000.

If it is quality of life they are seeking, Torontonians will soon be flocking to St. Brieux, especially after last night's election results. The possibility of living in a kinder, gentler and economically robust environment should make Saskatchewan a more attractive alternative than ever.

* * *

[Translation]

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said he had no objections to letting a House committee review the recommendations made by the Senate committee on euthanasia and assisted suicide.

However, the Minister of Justice does not consider these issues to be priorities. Indeed, while he did acknowledge yesterday the importance of discussing these matters, the minister would not say when and how Parliament would be asked to review them.

● (1105)

Could it be that the personal opinions of the Minister of Justice might prevent Parliament from looking at these sensitive issues in the near future? Let us not forget that the minister already stated his opposition to legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide at the 1994 convention of the Liberal Party of Canada. The attitude of the Minister of Justice says a lot about the real will of this government to debate these important issues.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for two weeks we have heard those opposite stand and plead with the citizens of Ontario to vote Liberal in the provincial election. Their pleadings were to no avail.

Ontario has spoken and told those opposite they do not believe Liberals will provide justice for victims of crime. The people of Ontario have chosen instead the Reform ideal of putting victims first. They voted for mandated discipline and structure in the lives of young offenders as the best policy for preventing further youth crime. The people have chosen the Reform principle of holding criminals accountable for their crimes and that the best form of deterrence is swift sure punishment for criminal activity.

I am proud to say that the people chose Reform common sense and abandoned the false ideology that criminals are victims and must not be judged.

In Ontario the Liberal justice philosophy is dead. May it rest in peace. Are you now listening Mr. Justice Minister?

DAWNDALE FARM SUPPLIES LTD.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to offer congratulations to Dawndale Farm Supplies Ltd., located in Hunter River, Prince Edward Island, on the occasion of its 10th anniversary and its recent investment in new milling equipment and expansion of its business.

David and Jean Tingley have worked very hard over the past 10 years devoting their time and energy as well as money into making their business a successful one. It is this type of entrepreneurship which leads to economic prosperity, not only to communities and provinces but to the country as well. When communities thrive and prosper, everyone benefits. The Tingleys are not just working for their community and their business but they are also supporting community events like 4-H.

Congratulations to David and Jean and best wishes for continued success with this latest investment not only to their business but also to the farming communities they serve and work with so well.

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POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day police officers across Canada face many tough challenges.

Perhaps the most delicate challenge is balancing what is politically correct and what needs to be done to maintain law and order. Police officers put their lives on the line. Often many of them perish in the line of duty while making our communities safer.

In my experience as a community representative for the past nine years I have dealt with our local police on a number of occasions. I am proud to say that we have one of the finest police organizations anywhere in North America and perhaps in the world.

I would like to congratulate the Ottawa-Carleton police on a job well done. It is our duty and our responsibility to work with our law enforcement officers and to support them so they can continue to provide their excellent services to our communities.

* * *

REFORM PARTY

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my outrage with recent developments in the Reform Party of western Canada's tactics in this Chamber. Its new American style smear campaigning reflects the Reform Party's underlying approach: no principles unless they are politically expedient for the moment.

The Reform Party sends different messages to different regions of the country on issues of importance to Canadians.

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Take for example the recent comments by the Reform member for Fraser Valley West who has been telling the people of Atlantic Canada that the Reform Party opposes tolls on highways. However, his boss, the leader of the third party, in speeches delivered as recently as May 25 in New York City, said that the rebuilding of roads will include everything from privatization of publicly owned infrastructure to user pay systems and public-private ventures.

What is the Reform policy? Who is telling the truth? Why the mixed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval East.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during this past week, political events have shown how quickly ethical issues, so dear to the heart of the Liberal government, are being sidetracked.

When the members of the party in power formed the official opposition, they called for a stricter code of political conduct and an end to Conservative patronage. However, now that their party is in power, the government has been quick to adopt the system cherished with such enthusiasm by its predecessors. Unlike the Conservative government, however, the Prime Minister did not ask his Minister of Canadian Heritage to resign and he turned a blind eye to the minister's benefit dinners, attended by guests who a few months later just happened to be awarded major contracts.

• (1110)

The Prime Minister will not admit that the lobbyist and political organizer who made the arrangements was also awarded contracts and represents associations that receive money under government programs. This government's code of ethics is obviously just a smoke screen.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform principles we ran on in 1993 have once again been embraced by the voters in Ontario in their overwhelming support of the Mike Harris common sense revolution.

Once again, the voters have shown they are miles ahead of the politicians who still practise the top down, we know best politics of the 1970s and 1980s. The common sense of the common people as outlined in the Reform blue book will not be denied and the common sense revolution responded to that.

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It is ironic that yesterday, while the Ontario voter was rejecting undefined sexual orientation, gold plated pensions and gun registration, this government was introducing closure to ram legislation dealing with each of those through this House.

The Liberals did not win in 1993; the Tories were thrown out. Yesterday this government provided the voters in Ontario with three very good reasons to throw them out in 1997 and elect a government that is listening and responding to their concerns, the Reform Party.

* * *

CHILDREN

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for some time now I have been speaking in the House of the importance of direct parental care for preschool children.

Research done by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and the National Foundation for Family Research and Education has shown clearly that poor quality care means a higher likelihood of problems in the health, social and criminal justice areas.

In 1961, 65 per cent of families with preschool children had one parent in the home. That figure reduced to only 12 per cent in 1991. What is the impact of reduced parental care? One example is that the suicide rate for youth between the ages of 15 and 19 has increased by 600 per cent over the same period of time.

We must invest in our children. An investment in our children today is an investment in the future of all Canadians.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers in my Dauphin—Swan River riding rely on the ribbon of steel that unites our country from east to west to move their high quality commodities to market. Therefore it is crucial that shippers from Dauphin—Swan River and across the prairies have access to a rail system that moves their commodity quickly and at competitive rates.

It is fitting that National Transportation Week comes at a time when the Liberal government is making massive improvements to our national rail system. These measures will increase competition and lead to greater efficiency. It is crucial that these efficiencies are passed along to prairie farmers, the highest volume shippers in Canada.

I strongly encourage the Minister of Transport to ensure that the interests of prairie farmers are at the forefront of all decisions made regarding the future of our rail system.

ONTARIO ELECTION

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last night the Liberals got yet another taste of how quickly they can go from the top of the heap to official opposition. Despite a commanding lead at the beginning of the campaign, Ontario Liberals finished a distant second. That makes three provinces which have provincially stated: "We do not like the example the federal Liberals are giving us".

As for the resurgence of the PCs, look at the federal Tory policies and then look at the Reform policies. Tell me whose platform Ralph Klein and Mike Harris are really following.

On the subject of mergers, the leader of the federal PCs should merge not with Reform but with the Liberals with whom he has much more in common, especially since Liberal cabinet ministers started to follow the corrupt patronage practices of the former Tory government.

I am not one to wish my life away, but I am looking forward to 1997.

* * *

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I had the great pleasure of manning the telephones for two hours to raise money for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Once again the people of this region proved their generosity as volunteers and hundreds came out.

This year they were helped by a marvellous group of young people. Over half the pages of the House of Commons were out volunteering for the telethon for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

● (1115)

I had the great pleasure of having one of them bring me a message and as I looked down I saw the message was coming from another two pages down there answering phones and scribbling out pledge forms.

On behalf of all the people of this region, I thank the pages who come to our community, often from far away, and who start fitting right in and making a contribution.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

COUNCIL FOR CANADIAN UNITY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs stated that during the referendum campaign in Quebec, the

federal government would comply with Quebec's referendum legislation as it did in 1980, which is not very reassuring, when we consider the contempt shown for this legislation by the Trudeau government and its Quebec lieutenant, the present Prime Minister of Canada, who spent millions of dollars and ignored the spending limits imposed on the "yes" and "no" umbrella committees.

Are we to conclude from yesterday's statements by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that in 1995, the federal Liberals, like Trudeau did in 1980, intend to ignore the letter and the intent of Quebec's referendum legislation, which sets democratic rules for all such campaigns in Quebec?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made it very clear that we complied with the legislation in 1980 and intend to comply with the letter and the intent of the legislation in 1995.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the following figures will illustrate the extent of this compliance. In 1980, the federal government spent at least \$17 million, although the spending ceiling for umbrella committees was set at \$2.7 million. It was slightly out of line here. And according to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the federal government intends to repeat this exercise during the next referendum campaign.

Should we conclude that the Trudeau government's behaviour during the 1980 campaign was a model of good faith and transparency, which the present federal government intends to follow during the next referendum campaign in Quebec?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of compliance, I may remind the members of the opposition that they made a promise there would be a referendum, and they should keep that promise.

They promised it would be held in the first half of 1995, in May or June, but they did not keep their promise. Now they promise it will be in the fall. I hope that promise will be kept.

When I look at the money their big brother, the Parti Québécois, spends on regional commissions to sell sovereignty, I think they should show some respect for the democratic system in the province and for the spirit of the law, in addition to making people abide by this legislation, which in fact we do.

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Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we said it would be in 1995. For the minister's information, there are twelve months in 1995, and the year ends on December 31.

Speaking of big brothers, what about those subsidies to big brother, to Power Corporation, the real big brother of the Liberal Party?

While the Government of Quebec acts openly, the federal government acts behind the scenes by handing out subsidies that are directly related to the referendum campaign. A few examples: \$35 million for tourism advertising, in addition to the \$15 million already budgeted; \$6 million for the unity operation; \$1.1 million to celebrate the 30th birthday of the Canadian flag; \$2.2 million for the Charles Bronfman Foundation, friends of the government. This plus the other hidden costs.

Is that what the federal government means by complying with the spirit of Quebec's referendum legislation?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that we on this side will refrain from mentioning the advertising in the Montreal subway, the Commission on Quebec's sovereignty and the regional commissions.

• (1120)

We will refrain, because we already abide by the law and intend to comply with the spirit of the referendum legislation. However, what this country needs is for the referendum to be held as soon as possible, with a clear question, so that we will be able to deal with this problem once and for all and can start dealing with the real issues: creating jobs in Canada, including Quebec, and reducing poverty in Canada and Quebec.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. The federal government gave \$32 million to the Council for Canadian Unity last year for its prerferendum campaign and the government has pledged funding again for the coming year. In addition, the Department of National Revenue has granted it charitable status, and its number is 0333054-59.

Can the minister explain to us how the Council for Canadian Unity can be considered a charity?

[*English*]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained to the House a number of times how the charitable status for organizations is given out. It is given out on the basis of court decisions. There is no legislation. It is not decision of the minister but a series of court decisions which has determined that various areas of activity

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considered to be in the public interest should be permitted charitable status to encourage that. It has resulted in substantial improvements in Canadian living standards, in health and in all sorts of other areas.

I am afraid, however, with respect to the specifics of the hon. member's question I do not have in my hand the number he gave out. If he would like to give it to me I could check out that number.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of National Revenue justify that big businesses get a tax deduction for their contributions to the Council for Canadian Unity, when charitable status is usually granted on the basis of the following criteria: relief of poverty, promotion of education or religion and other efforts to the benefit of the community like the relief of suffering or sickness?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again with respect to companies as opposed to individuals the rules are quite clear. A company can make expenditures and provide money to organizations but the final line in terms of determining this, which again is in the courts and not in the hands of the department, is whether it advances the business interests of the company involved.

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MINISTER OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot seem to get its story straight over the heritage minister's contract for dollars dinner.

Yesterday the Deputy Prime Minister stated there was no breach of ethics and therefore there was no need for the ethics counsellor to investigate this paid access to the minister. However, today we learn the ethics counsellor is investigating the matter. It appears Mr. Wilson feels there is more to this affair than meets the government's eye.

Is the ethics counsellor conducting an open investigation into the minister of heritage's dinner? Will Mr. Wilson's report be made public?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister informed the House two days ago that he had consulted Mr. Wilson about the question. I spoke to the Prime Minister at approximately 10.45 a.m. and he advised me, as he has stated publicly in the House many times, that if there are questions about the ethics of the government the ultimate arbiter of those questions is not a bureaucrat, it is the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I guess that is a question mark.

The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the heritage minister have suggested all the information on this matter has been made public. However, the heritage minister refuses to provide the House with a list of the people invited and those who contributed to the dinner.

• (1125)

With the latest revelation that Guylaine Saucier donated \$1,000 to the minister's debt fund and was appointed chairman of the CBC six months later, we have to wonder who did not get a contract from the minister's private dinner.

When the Prime Minister appointed Guylaine Saucier as chairman of the CBC, did he know she had contributed \$1,000 to the heritage minister's debt fund?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Guylaine Saucier happens to be the first woman to be president of the Quebec Chamber of Commerce. She has served on several boards including the board of the Bank of Montreal, the board of Bell Canada, the board of Petro-Canada. She has been active in a number of community events including the University of Montreal, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal. She was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1989 by a government that was not Liberal.

Madam Saucier has said she has contributed to numerous political parties. She is a federalist and supports the role of federal political parties in Canada.

If the member has a problem with the appointment of Madam Saucier, then let him so state in the House because her credentials speak for themselves.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, her credentials were not questioned in any way. I asked if the Prime Minister was aware that a donation had been made to that fund before the appointment was made. The question was not answered.

Canadians want ethical and honest government. The success of Mike Harris' populous grassroots campaign proves that. Instead of honesty and ethics, the Liberals are giving Canadians the same old Mulroneys style government they had from the Progressive Conservatives.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage specifically targeted clients of his department, invited them to a dinner to pay off his campaign debts and then rewarded all of them, every single one, with grants, contracts and chairmanships. This is a direct conflict of interest and it is about time the government recognized this.

What is this government afraid of? Why will it not release the invitation list of those who contributed to the dinner? Why will the Minister of Canadian Heritage not do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I challenge the member to review his first question. Implicit in the question was the

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suggestion that somehow Madam Saucier bought her position in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I pointed out, as she has publicly pointed out, she has contributed to several political parties over a great number of years.

Every political party has the responsibility of collecting funds. I refer the member to an article he might have missed: "The Reform Party will soon be knocking on corporate doors in Nova Scotia in search of political donations for its election war chest. Nationally the party says it—has banked \$2.4 million to bankroll the next vote where it will be running candidates in 295 ridings. If you have an extra \$125 and you would like to break bread with Preston Manning, you are in luck. Reform's chief will be in Halifax—for a fundraising dinner".

Political parties raise money. I am sure the member would agree with me that it would not be reasonable to exclude every Canadian who donates to a political party from ever serving in a capacity with the Government of Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BOSNIA

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs demonstrated Canada's lack of leadership in the Bosnian crisis by refusing to publicly state Canada's position on the rapid reaction force, while at the same time, behind closed doors, the Minister of National Defence supported the initiative at a NATO meeting.

Now that we know, thanks to the media and the Minister of National Defence, that Canada supports the creation of a rapid reaction force in the former Yugoslavia, and the UN's leadership of it, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell us whether the government intends to contribute troops or to contribute logistically to this rapid reaction force?

[*English*]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

As he knows, there are activities under way by other allied countries participating in Bosnia to look at a rapid reaction force.

The Prime Minister stated in the House earlier in the week that we are aware of the plans being made but at that time Canada was not part of that activity. As I stand in the House today I have to say the same thing. Canada is not part of that activity and the decision has not yet been made.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the United States' reaction to the rapid reaction force is lukewarm, which is seriously hampering the effort of the international community to consolidate the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell us whether she shares the opinion of the British secretary to the Foreign Office that, if the rapid reaction force does not get up and running, the only other option will be to withdraw the peacekeepers from Bosnia?

[*English*]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there are 35 countries involved in the former Yugoslavia. Canada is one of them. He has asked me questions about other countries, but I can only answer the question for Canada. I have answered that question and I can do no more.

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BILL C-69

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, almost since this House began sitting early in 1994, the government has been attempting to redo the redistribution of boundaries in the House of Commons. This latest bill, C-69, which has been bouncing back and forth, is coming back to this House. It will increase the size of the House and add \$6 million in redistribution costs. We saw last night in Ontario that the people of Canada do not want to spend this kind of money on the House of Commons.

I would ask the government House leader if he would now consider doing the right thing by withdrawing Bill C-69, saving \$6 million, and allowing the redistribution to go ahead?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in his question is reflecting adversely and unfairly on the work of members of this House who for the first time under the rules of parliamentary reform actually brought in and drafted a bill. Instead of his unwarranted criticism, he should be recognizing this good work and urging his friends in the Senate to respect the wishes of the elected people of this House and let this bill go through.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many friends I have in the Senate.

In the Ontario election last night premier-elect Harris defeated the Liberals partly by proposing that there be a 25 per cent reduction to the number of seats in the Ontario legislature. If the government is not willing to at least let the redistribution go

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ahead, would it consider combining the redistribution with the modest 10 per cent reduction to the number of seats that the Reform Party has proposed?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the increase in seats that would come into effect, not just in the bill he is talking about but in the redistribution process that was interrupted by it, is provided for in a formula in the Constitution of Canada.

This government does not propose opening a new round of constitutional discussions. I am surprised my hon. friend wants to take up the time of the country with a new round of constitutional discussions. I am sure the people of Ontario and British Columbia would be most displeased and disheartened to learn that he does not want them to have fair representation in the Parliament of Canada.

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[Translation]

BOVINE SOMATOTROPIN

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

In response to the Official Opposition's questions in the House regarding the fraudulent use of the growth hormone somatotropin, the Minister of Agriculture announced close to a month ago that he would investigate dairy producers and single out the ones that are guilty of fraud.

Will the minister tell us whether, as part of his inquiry, he requested and obtained the collaboration of producers' associations, Canada Customs officers and Health Canada inspectors, and will he reveal to us the fruit of his research?

[English]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the hon. member that no further information has been drawn to my attention since the issue was first raised a number of days ago in the House.

The issue is obviously one, as he implies in his question, that would involve co-operation among a number of departments, most particularly the two departments he referred to, the Department of Health and the customs department.

If and when there is further pertinent material that is drawn to my attention as a result of the inquiries we are making, I would be most happy to inform him and all other hon. members.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the minister has already had the question in his hands for one month, not just for a couple of days and that we are waiting for the results.

Will the minister tell us whether, as a follow up to his inquiry, he intends to pursue this issue further and to take legal action against those who used somatotropin illegally, given that the hormone had not yet been declared safe by Health Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at this point I think it would be imprudent and inappropriate to make any references to the possibility of illegal conduct.

Obviously if in the course of these inquiries or any other inquiries that are being made there is evidence that comes to light of activity that would be in violation of the law, the appropriate action would be taken.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

All the polls and pundits have indicated that a major reason behind Mike Harris' victory last night in Ontario was due to his position on employment equity. He was not messing around; he said he was going to scrap the employment equity plan.

On this side of the House we are very interested to know if the federal government is going to take a lesson from this victory last night. I realize that the Charest-Mulroney gang brought in employment equity, but is this government going to stop now trying to bring in an expanded employment equity plan? Will it withdraw its plans on Bill C-64?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member had better make up his mind. His colleagues were running around saying that the victory was as a result of gun control.

The Speaker: My colleagues, just to remind you very gently, when we refer to each other in the House, sitting members, we refer to our ridings as opposed to our names.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I suppose there are quite a few Reform policies that got the Mike Harris government elected.

The director of communications for the Prime Minister's office said that the federal Liberals would be helping the Ontario

Liberals in their campaigns. The quote is: "They helped us, we help them. A Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal." I am sure Lyn McLeod is saying to herself this morning, "With friends like this, who needs enemies?"

Since the voters of Ontario totally rejected the Liberal concept of employment equity, will the minister listen to the voters and back down on the government's own employment equity plans, its plans to expand employment equity, or is it going to take a federal election defeat for the Liberals before they listen to the people and understand that employment equity is not wanted?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Unlike the Reform Party, we actually believe in employment equity, and unlike the Reform Party, we actually believe in political democracy.

Unlike the Reform Party, we did not put the jackboots to provincial Reformers who wanted to run in the Ontario provincial election. We allow and encourage everybody to become members of the Liberal Party because we are not afraid of a little competition at the provincial level.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

* * *

[Translation]

BOVINE SOMATOTROPIN

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is Friday, everyone is a bit on edge.

My question is for the Minister of Health.

Although the studies on the impact of somatotropin on human and animal health are not yet complete, Quebec and Canadian consumers are finding this hormone in dairy products they purchase, since, despite the Health Canada prohibition, certain producers are not afraid to use it, particularly since the Minister of Agriculture seems in no hurry to do a serious investigation.

Would the Minister of Health tell us what measures she has taken to ensure that somatotropin, the sale of which is prohibited by her department, is not found in dairy products?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, so long as this hormone remains unapproved, it is illegal to use it. We will do all we have to, not only at the Department of Health, but at customs and at the Department of Agriculture.

• (1140)

As my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, has just said, it is early yet to really assess the situation and lay any charges. If you have any information that can help us, please let us know, because we are interested.

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Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I have understood the minister's response, she is counting on her colleague in agriculture to do the investigating. What the Minister of Agriculture has told us, unless I misunderstood him, is that he was not exactly sure where he was going.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health whether she can explain why she is letting the Minister of Agriculture carry out the investigation all by himself, when she is responsible for prohibiting the use and sale of the hormone somatotropin in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in reply to the earlier question, the issue that has been raised relates to the jurisdictional responsibilities of several ministers, including the Minister of Health, the Minister of National Revenue, with his responsibility for customs, and agriculture with its obvious interest in the dairy industry. All of us are endeavouring to be as vigilant as we can to ensure that the laws of Canada are fully and faithfully respected.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment.

It is very important that the government lead by example in all things, including environmental matters. One of the most visible symbols of government is the national capital region. Our national capital is beautiful at this time of year, but I ask the Minister of the Environment what she is doing to ensure that it is and remains truly green.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the intention of the Government of Canada is to ensure that every part of Canada is green. Obviously one of those very important parts is the national capital region.

We believe that some of the recently announced policies on issues like the Commission for Sustainable Development and also the very excellent initiative of Bill S-7 by Senator Colin Kenny, which will begin to create a market for alternative fuels in this country, will get smog out of the air and keep those tulips growing and make sure that all urban areas of the country also benefit from a cleaner environment, which is something we owe our kids.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister first claimed that his gun control legislation would cost

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the taxpayers no more than \$85 million. Estimates the justice minister tabled later with the standing committee revealed the cost to be \$118.9 million. These estimates did not include the cost for the gun inspectors who will now have to be hired and trained to ensure compliance with the Firearms Act.

I ask the justice minister, how much will the hiring and training of these new gun inspectors add to the cost of the gun legislation?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the entire cost of the program was put before the committee, of which the hon. member was an active and hard-working member. The committee examined the cost estimates and for weeks heard 70 witnesses discussing costs, among other things.

I conclude from the committee's work and its report to the House, which is due next week, that it found that the estimates presented by the government were indeed accurate and complete.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if that were true then I would not be standing here asking about the cost of the program.

I have been told by the justice minister that he will not even reply to requests from some authorities in areas of the country regarding the failure of the federal government to reimburse them for the cost to administer the present gun control legislation.

Did the justice minister discuss with the provinces and the territories the additional cost of hiring and training the required gun inspectors before he imposed these conditions on them through his amendments to his gun control legislation?

• (1145)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the the hon. member knows, we have told the provinces and territories the cost of establishing, implementing and designing the registration system will be borne by the federal government. We have also told them the cost of administering the registration system will be paid by revenues generated through the reasonable fees that will be charged.

Based on the figures we put before the committee and the very reliable estimates we produced, there is no basis in cost to oppose the registration of firearms.

I wish the hon. member would put aside the details he is trying to raise which have been fully explored in committee, and explain to the House and the country why he is opposing something the police forces in his own province, and by a margin of two out of three, the people in his own province want to see the House put in place.

[Translation]

BOVINE SOMATOTROPIN

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health must be aware that the European Community has declared a seven-year moratorium on the use of recombinant bovine somatotropin because this product is a health hazard to both humans and animals.

Given that Health Canada has not yet completed its studies and that the voluntary moratorium expires in 22 days, does the minister intend to take action by imposing a real moratorium?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada's role is to determine if a product is safe and does what it is supposed to do. The moratorium that has been in effect for a year was arrived at through negotiations between Agriculture Canada and the producers, with the approval of Health Canada. Health Canada's only responsibility is to ensure that the product is safe.

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, my colleagues reminded this House of the illegalities committed during this voluntary moratorium. How can the minister condone the use of a product that is banned in Canada, when her department does not even enforce the legislation? Will she allow the lifting of the moratorium? Is this what she calls taking action?

[English]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after consultations with officials in Quebec, with Customs Canada, with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, we have not found any evidence that the product is being used illegally in Canada.

If the hon. member has any evidence of that nature please bring it forward. It is not being sold in Canada nor is it about to be sold unless Health Canada proves it is safe and effective and that has not happened.

It was a voluntary moratorium arrived at through negotiations with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the producers of the product. If there is going to be an extension of the moratorium I believe it has to be negotiated again between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the producers of BST.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In my riding of Peace River some farmers have diversified and are now growing organically grown wheat. This is a special-

ty product which the Canadian Wheat Board simply cannot handle. Organic farmers have had to find their own markets, yet the wheat board insists these farmers go through all its costly red tape.

The fine for bypassing the Canadian Wheat Board on this issue is \$12,000 and two years in jail.

Will the minister allow organic farmers to sell their product without jumping through all the wheat board hoops necessary?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last number of months the Canadian Wheat Board has made a substantial effort to find the appropriate regulatory and other means to accommodate the needs of organic producers.

It is my view, which I think is shared by the board, that in the future organic production, whether of wheat or potentially a great many other commodities, will be able to find very significant and valuable niche markets that may over time grow to be much more than just niches in terms of the future marketing potential.

• (1150)

The hon. member may rest assured that we will be endeavouring by all possible means to promote the maximum marketing opportunities because those opportunities are valuable not only to the individual producers of the organic product but also to the entire grains economy.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister of agriculture.

As he knows, the current system is simply not working. It is penalizing farmers who are struggling to diversify. It is ironic that at a time when the federal government has spent millions of dollars on western diversification, the wheat board is standing in the way of those farmers who have already found their markets and simply want to market their grain.

Will the minister at least amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act to remove organic crops from wheat board jurisdiction and allow this industry to develop?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman knows, there is a substantial division of opinion in western Canada on the issue he has just raised.

It is important for all producers, whether they be organic producers or others, to have the opportunity to examine the marketing system and all the various options, all the pros and the cons, all the benefits and the consequences, to understand completely what is involved in the marketing decisions that need to be made in the future.

Oral Questions

The opportunity for that kind of dialogue and discussion among farmers and farm organizations will be forthcoming very soon.

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns Canada's tourism industry.

Over the last number of years Canada has lost a large part of its tourism business from all over the world, but in particular, from the United States.

Is the current campaign having any effect on our tourist business and at what cost?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first let me stress for the hon. member the importance of the tourism sector to the government's jobs and growth agenda.

I am pleased to tell him the \$50 million commitment that the government made to the Canadian Tourism Commission has already leveraged an addition \$30 million from the private sector, no strings attached.

The campaigns are under way, both on television as well as in newspapers. The responses are formidable. I would like to mention to the House that in the first quarter of 1995, we already have very encouraging numbers.

Travel receipts are up by 19.5 per cent and the travel deficit figures for the same period are down by 11.3 per cent. Tourism is jobs for Canadians in all parts of the country. It is jobs and growth.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 1990, the Canadian government banned the export of PCBs to the United States without prior authorization by the U.S. Environment Protection Agency, which systematically refused PCB shipments, thus making any PCB export virtually impossible.

This created an opportunity for a fledgling PCB destruction industry to develop in Canada and Quebec. In the spirit of the Basel convention, Canada now tends to look after the disposal of its own hazardous wastes, thereby avoiding the serious problems associated with long haul shipping of these products.

My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Is she prepared to make a public commitment to maintain the policy position that Canada must manage its own waste, no matter what decisions the EPA may make in the future, and does she undertake to press the U.S. to do the same?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the regulations proposed by the former environment minister, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, were designed to govern PCB exports, but these were never approved. This is what the minister proposed but it was never confirmed in the legislation.

That said, we have taken the position at the EPA hearings currently going on in Washington that we would rather see to the disposal of our PCBs ourselves.

• (1155)

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that the situation has evolved since 1990, does the minister undertake to amend the PCB Waste Export Regulations to prevent once and for all Canada from being tempted in the future to dispose of its PCBs by shipping them to the U.S., which would compromise the development of emerging industries in Canada and Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat in English what I said in French. The former Minister of the Environment promised to ban the export of PCBs in 1990. It was announced but never proclaimed. Therefore, it is not currently the law that PCBs cannot be exported.

However, it has been the policy of Canada, despite the fact that the minister of the day did not follow through on his commitment to make it illegal. It is still the position of the government that the handling of PCBs should be done in Canada by Canadians.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the agriculture minister.

Farmers have notified the minister of their deep concern over the questionable activities of the Canadian Wheat Board. Very simply, when will the minister take these people seriously and address their concerns about the grain marketing system?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I presume the question relates to the discussion which has been ongoing in western Canada for some time about the appropriate jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board and the issue that some have referred to as dual marketing or other types of marketing options.

As I indicated in reply to an earlier question with respect to organic crops, it is important for farmers and all of the stakeholders in the Canadian grains industry to have the opportunity

to examine the issue of their preferred marketing options and marketing systems in a fully informed, fully comprehensive and rational manner.

I undertook some time ago to provide a forum within which that dialogue could take place. As I said in response to the previous question, that forum will be forthcoming very shortly.

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is not just about dual marketing or whatever system. It is about mismanagement.

It is reported today that the Canadian Wheat Board is hauling barley to be shipped to Japan by rail from Thunder Bay to California at a cost of \$82 Canadian a ton. This is \$9 a ton more than the farmer gets for it initially, plus they have to pay the freight to Thunder Bay.

When will the minister start acting like a minister of agriculture and look after the concerns of western farmers?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been following closely the developments with respect to barley sales and marketing over the course of the last number of weeks and months, he would have known that the Canadian Wheat Board has had considerable challenges before it in enticing the right kind of barley into the system to meet the sales opportunities we do have.

The board is obviously, in the circumstances referred to by the hon. gentleman, going to some extraordinary lengths to make sure that Canada meets the marketing opportunities it has before it. The wheat board would not be engaging in that pattern of marketing unless it was convinced it was in the best interest of farmers in making money for farmers.

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TRADE

Mr. Barry Campbell (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Both the Prime Minister and the Minister for International Trade have spoken recently about the need to strengthen economic ties between North America and Europe.

Would the Minister for International Trade please bring the House up to date on the status of this initiative?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister some months ago raised the question of closer economic ties between Europe and North America, including the possibility of an eventual free trade agreement. He did so because on this side of the House we recognize that in the post cold war period, the era of the cold war having past, the security emphasis is no longer so central to our

relationship and should be further underpinned by closer economic ties.

• (1200)

In addition, we are a government that recognizes the possibilities of going beyond the commitments we made in the World Trade Organization to reduce trade barriers. We believe that initiative could be embodied in a freer trade agreement with Europe, as we have already committed to over a longer period with Asia Pacific and the western hemisphere.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it was reported yesterday that the minister of immigration is considering granting minister's permits to up to 17,000 refugees who cannot be given permanent residency in Canada. They cannot get permanent residency because they came to Canada with no identity documents and we have no idea who they are or what crimes they may have committed. We do know that most came from a country that was ripped apart by bloody civil war and terrible violent crime.

Will the minister promise to protect Canadians by not granting residency to one single individual if we do not know the full background and complete history of the person?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this issue is under active consideration. There is a concern that a number of individuals have accepted refugee status from the Immigration and Refugee Board. On their application for landing, according to law, they clearly have to demonstrate documentation.

A number of individuals are in this catch-22 situation. They come from countries where there is not only no government but no valid documentation to obtain. It is not an easy black or white situation. The government and the department are seriously looking at this file to try to come up with a solution which will clearly protect the Canadian community and also try to benefit individuals who have been accepted as refugees and want to become members of the Canadian family.

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[Translation]

ART BANK

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Following the last budget, the minister announced cuts to various cultural organizations, including the Canada Council. On March 1, the Canada Council itself announced the closing of the Art Bank. That decision was strongly denounced

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by several organizations in Quebec and in Canada, including Quebec's association of visual arts artists.

Given that the Canada Council did not first consult visual arts stakeholders, what action will the minister take to force it to reconsider a decision which was made in stealth and seemingly in a hurry?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Art Bank is the exclusive responsibility of the Canada Council. It is up to that organization to decide what it wants to do with the bank. However, I would be very pleased if arrangements can be made with the private sector and other interested parties to ensure the survival of the bank.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 27(1), I move:

That, commencing on June 12, 1995 and concluding on June 23, 1995, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays the House shall continue to sit until 11.30 p.m. and, on Fridays until 5 p.m., for the purpose of considering Government Orders, provided that proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 shall, when applicable, be taken up between 11.30 p.m. and 12 a.m.

• (1205)

He said: Mr. Speaker, this motion is a normal proposal at this time of year. The standing orders anticipate that there will usually be a backlog of business before the House in June. Therefore, as part of what might be called a trade off in the rules which provide for an automatic summer adjournment beginning on June 23, there is a provision for an extension of sitting hours during the two weeks prior to that date, the intention being that the additional time be used to complete business that the public interest requires.

When the House resumed the session last September, there were five government bills on the Order Paper and seven in committee. Fifty-two more government bills have been introduced since that time. We have passed 34 of the bills and have made progress on 20 more, but we are now at that point of the parliamentary calendar when the rules I mentioned were designed to come into effect to facilitate a special effort to help complete the legislative agenda.

I should like to outline for the House the business the government would like to see done by June 23, which I repeat is the date of adjournment for the summer period specified by the rules.

It is our intention to seek completion of all remaining stages of Bill C-68, the firearms bill; Bill C-41, the sentencing legislation; Bill C-85, the parliamentary retiring allowances

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bill; and Bill C-72, dealing with the defence of criminal intoxication.

We also will give similarly high priority to the completion of the debate on the motion for a special joint committee of the House and Senate to consider an update of a code of conduct for parliamentarians, that is, both members of Parliament and senators.

We also would consider it a high priority to deal with, if necessary, any messages from the Senate concerning Bill C-22 regarding Pearson airport and Bill C-69 concerning electoral boundaries.

There are a number of other bills to which it would be very much in the public interest for the House to give third reading before we adjourn on June 23. Some of these are bills which have an impact on the fiscal position of the government or on economic development for the country. These include: Bill C-70, amending the Income Tax Act; Bill C-82, regarding the Royal Canadian Mint; Bill C-86, concerning the Canadian Dairy Commission; Bill C-88, regarding the removal of internal trade barriers; Bill C-89, the CNR commercialization legislation; Bill C-91, regarding the business development bank; Bill C-92, regarding the Canadian Wheat Board; and Bill C-94, regarding the fuel additive MMT.

There is also an international commitment which Canada has for quick passage of Bill C-87 regarding chemical weapons.

In addition, there are a number of bills that have been before the House for some time which ought to have their report stage and third reading completed so they can be moved on to the Senate very soon. I am speaking about Bill C-45, to update our parole and corrections system; Bill C-52, reorganizing the Department of Public Works and Government Services; Bill C-54, concerning administration of the old age security and Canada pension plan systems; and Bill C-65, to reorganize or eliminate certain government agencies.

• (1210)

We would also like to send to the appropriate parliamentary committee for consideration before second reading two rather complicated bills, Bill C-62 regarding regulatory reform and Bill C-84 also concerning regulations.

This is a rather heavy legislative agenda. It is for this reason that we are proposing extensive additional sitting hours for the next two weeks, that is until June 23, the normal date of adjournment for the summer provided for to come into place automatically under the rules.

Our proposal is for the House to sit until 11.30 p.m. with an additional half hour for the adjournment debate Monday through Thursday, and until 5 p.m. on Friday. We have opted for later hours than in the past because of the heavy agenda, but we are prepared to be flexible on a day to day basis.

To conclude, I want to say accordingly it is our hope to be able to work with the opposition in the detailed scheduling of the business I have outlined with a view to serving the public interest, the interests of all Canadians. Therefore we seek the co-operation of all members of this House. I make special reference to the opposition parties in this effort.

I urge the House to support this motion. It is very much in the public interest that this motion be adopted and the legislative agenda I have outlined be completed.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, by way of comment I might draw to the solicitor general's attention the fact that I have just made a list of the number of items he has given to this House. If my addition is correct it is 22 items. Unless I am mistaken there are only nine working days in which we are supposed to be putting the 22 items through.

He speaks in grandiose terms about serving the public interest. Truly in this House of Commons as members of Parliament we come here to serve the best interests of the people of Canada. I have to ask the solicitor general, how does it possibly serve the public interest when he comes to this House two weeks before the time when he wants to end this particular session, two weeks, nine working days, and gives the House 22 items? To any reasonable minded Canadian reading *Hansard* or watching this debate on television, does it not give the appearance that this government is treating the House of Commons like a rubber stamp?

Coming forward with 22 items to be dealt with in nine days in my judgment is irresponsible. Would the solicitor general care to comment on that?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend would look at the list of bills I have mentioned, they are almost all bills that have already had extensive debate in this House and extensive consideration in committee. With respect to most of them we are only asking the House to move on the final stages of debate, report stage and third reading.

Why would the hon. member want to hold up for months more Bill C-45, to update our parole and corrections system? I thought that would be something the Reform Party would want to see in effect. Why is it backing down on something like this? This is the kind of thing we want to make progress on. We are providing extensive additional hours of debate.

There are some measures that we are simply asking to be the subject of motions and referred to committee for more detailed study. Almost without exception we are talking about measures that have already had very extensive debate in this House and in committee. We are only asking that the final stages of debate, report stage and third reading, be proceeded with. We have extensive additional hours, which we hope all members of the House will be willing to use to complete these stages.

Business of the House

• (1215)

That is the answer to my hon. friend's question. Again, I hope we will have his and his party's co-operation in making progress on these bills in the overall public interest.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the House leader. The Reform Party is alleging this list was provided to it just now in an effort to adjourn the House, according to what the member says is the House leader's wish, on June 23.

Is it not true that opposition parties have been consulted about the agenda on a weekly basis and that the list provided today or something close to it was submitted to the opposition many times before? Is it not also true that the rule provides that we can start using this mechanism of extending hours only next Monday? Finally, is it not also true that when we tried to extend hours in the past, very often the same people have refused to extend the hours when we wanted to complete the particular bill that day?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, we ordinarily do not discuss before the House consultations we have with other parties outside the House with respect to the business of the House. Under the circumstances, I can only agree with what the hon. member has said.

We have shared this list or one very similar to it with opposition parties, not today in my speech for the first time but a number of days ago. We have sought co-operation—I point especially to the Reform Party—on working out the schedule to get this set of measures completed.

The attitude of the Reform Party speaks for itself as to the degree of co-operation it has offered. I would not like to say the degree of co-operation it has offered can be characterized by the word zilch because I am not sure the word zilch is parliamentary; if it is not, I will withdraw it. If it is all right I will leave it on the record and everybody will know what I mean.

It is quite correct that under the rules we could not move this motion for extended hours until today. There have been other occasions, I have been reminded by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, when efforts have been made to extend hours on individual measures, and opposition members, especially Reform members, have always blocked that. They could easily have had additional time to consider some of these measures individually in the past, and I am informed they blocked efforts to do this.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has raised some interesting points. I hope my comments have shed some light on these matters.

I further add that contrary to what was suggested by the leader of the Reform Party in some quite unwarranted remarks I saw

reported in the press this morning, the date of June 23 is the date for the adjournment of the House for a summer break, which comes into place automatically under the rules of this House and has been part of the rules for some time. This should be borne in mind in assessing measures being taken to facilitate the business of the House in the days leading up to June 23.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when Bill C-68 came before this House everyone knew it was a very contentious bill. Yet all members were denied the opportunity to express the concerns of their constituents on that very extensive bill.

Then the bill was rushed into committee and a deadline was set for the committee hearings. I did not object to that. I was only concerned that we were able to get the necessary witnesses before the committee in order to consider their testimony. Then we were rushed into clause by clause on this committee.

• (1220)

I ask the solicitor general why that we are in such a rush to move such a huge bill through the House in such a hurry when it is not going to become mandatory until 2003. What is the rush? Why could we not at least allow that bill to be set over until this fall, when everyone would have an opportunity to examine the large number of amendments that will be tabled before this House on that bill?

I understand that there are well over 100 amendments. Yet time allocation is being imposed. Why is Bill C-68, many portions of which will not become mandatory for eight years, being looked at with such urgency? Why could we not relieve the demands upon the government, upon this House, and upon the members by simply allowing that bill to be moved and taken up when we resume sitting in the fall? I do not understand that. Would the solicitor general care to comment?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, I should remind the hon. member that Bill C-68, the bill to which he refers, was debated for days and days in this House. It was then studied for weeks and weeks in committee.

The hon. member speaks of 100 amendments. Most of them are his party's amendments. I can ask why the amendments of his party were not proposed in the parliamentary committee, which is the normal time and place for amendments. Is the purpose of the hon. member at this time to use the device of proposing amendments simply to engage in what amounts to a filibuster? That is a question the majority of Canadians, who want this legislation, can validly ask the Reform Party, although the majority of Canadians who support this legislation already know the answer.

The hon. member should be aware that in our parliamentary system the other place still has to consider this measure. That is its right and duty under our Constitution. If the hon. member does not want to see this bill and its implementation delayed

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even longer than the date provided for in the statute, and if he wants to have adequate time for its orderly and fair implementation, then rather than urging that there be further delay until the fall for the consideration of this bill in this House of Commons, he will be applauding our efforts to have it voted on before June 23.

In my view, this is a fair and reasonable step to make sure that the bill is not only law but is adopted and implemented in a fair and reasonable way to serve the overall public interest when it comes to protecting Canadians from improper and unlawful use of firearms, which the majority of Canadians indicate over and over again in public opinion polls that they want from this Parliament.

I am surprised that my hon. friend, interested as he says his party is in listening to people, refuses to listen to them on this important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Colleagues, the period for questions and comments has expired.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the official opposition on the motion to extend the sitting hours in the House of Commons for the next two weeks.

I would first like to clarify a few points concerning our party's position regarding extending the hours of the House of Commons.

In the past, the Bloc Québécois has never objected, far from it, to extended sittings in the House of Commons, because it wanted to ensure that the parliamentary machine ran in a calm, democratic and efficient way. Each time it was proposed to extend the House's sitting hours, we have always replied "count us in".

• (1225)

For example, during the last debate on the railway conflict, our members came to the House in great numbers over the week-end, Saturday and Sunday, which was quite exceptional—apparently these hours of sitting were unprecedented—to discuss the measure proposed by the government, whereas our colleagues of other political stripes were less diligent in this regard.

The same thing will apply this time, but do not think that the Bloc Québécois will support the government's motion lightly. In fact, the sore point in this case is the timing of the government's decision to impose extended hours on the House. First of all, we must ask ourselves why the federal government waited until now, just before the session adjourns, to extend the hours of sitting in the House.

Why did the government not extend the hours in a more balanced manner, in the weeks preceding the usual end of the Parliamentary session? There are several possible explanations, but the most plausible is that the government has again been laid low by two ills that have dogged it since it was elected, and by which, it would seem, it continues to be dogged. They are amateurism and improvisation.

The amateurism is nothing new. As one example among many, we had the federal government calling an emergency debate with less than 24 hours' notice to discuss whether or not the peacekeepers should remain in the former Yugoslavia, just as their mandate was about to expire. Then, we were treated to a technical presentation by the Department of National Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs only two hours before debate began. As they say, incredible but true.

And yet, more recently, this same government had to be pushed to hold an emergency debate on whether our troops should remain in the former Yugoslavia, following the dramatic and tragic events that took place in that country not so long ago. Amateurism and improvisation still characterize the actions of this government now, for if it truly wanted to see its legislative menu passed before the summer, it should have known, it should have seen that at the rate things were proceeding, it was going to be virtually impossible to complete all business before the present session was adjourned.

With all the resources at its disposal, the federal government should have foreseen that, in the present context, the House was going to have to extend the hours sooner or later. Although all the signs were there, the government preferred to stick its head in the sand, which has led to the present situation in which we must rush through a number of important bills. Unfortunately for the people of Quebec and Canadians in general, the proposed extension of the hours of sitting until late at night from Monday until Thursday will make it more difficult to follow the proceedings of the House of Commons on television.

Similarly, the extremely heavy legislative agenda the government wants to ram through over the coming weeks could well compromise significantly the quality of debate in this House. The normal democratic process will thus be negatively affected. I mentioned earlier that a number of reasons could underlie the government's decision to extend the hours of work of the House of Commons beyond the usual times.

I have just pointed out that the most plausible reason is the amateurish and improvisational approach of the government, which prevents it from planning its legislative agenda. However, I would like to come back to the point that, by extending the hours of work of the House beyond the normal times set out in the Standing Orders, the federal government will use the opportunity to push through major legislation that will hit Quebec's interests hard.

In this regard, and unfortunately for Quebec, the federal government has already used its majority in the House to have a number of bills passed, which have hurt Quebec's interests significantly. I refer to Bill C-76, among others, which concerns the budget provisions for the 1995-96 fiscal year and which implemented the provisions on the reduction in transfer payments to the provinces.

• (1230)

Perhaps you will also permit me to say a few words on this bill, which is now before the Senate, in view of the extent of the damage it is causing to Quebec interests.

Bill C-76 is nothing less than the implementation of the latest disastrous decisions in the federal government's most recent budget. This is the budget in which, need I remind you, the government made the unacceptable decision to transfer \$7 billion of its own deficit to the provinces. You will agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that \$7 billion will likely make a substantial hole in the provinces' budget.

Unable to properly manage the money of taxpayers in Quebec and Canada, this minor league government, through Bill C-76, is shirking its responsibilities by transferring to the provinces \$7 billion out of its deficit.

It goes without saying that Quebec will receive its share of this poisoned gift, which will directly affect its own public finances in the years to come. However, unlike the federal government, the Quebec government has already indicated in its last budget that it did not intend to offload its own deficit onto the municipalities. In doing so, Quebec has shown that it can take its responsibilities in public finance management, despite the blow it just took from the federal government.

The federal government will merge into a single program, called the Canadian social transfer, two of the three transfer payments to the provinces, namely the Canada assistance plan and established programs financing. In 1996-97, after merging these two programs, Ottawa will cut \$2.5 billion from transfer payments to the provinces.

In the following fiscal year, the federal government will cut by \$4.5 billion the Canada social transfer to the provinces. These unfortunate actions by the federal government will translate into a \$650 million shortfall for Quebec in 1996-97. And, in 1997-98, this shortfall could go up to \$1.9 billion.

In fact, Bill C-76 helps us understand better the federal government's talk about cost-effective federalism. What could be more cost-effective for Ottawa than cutting the funds to be transferred to the provinces, when it is unable to manage its own

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finances? That is the cost-effective, flexible federalism they have been harping on about for several months.

The federal government's actions with regard to Bill C-76 hide a problem that is more serious than simply shovelling the Canadian deficit into the provinces' backyards, although this is indeed a major problem.

Canada is facing a fiscal crisis, and transferring the federal deficit to the provinces is only the beginning of the central government's inevitable process to withdraw from its obligations.

In this regard, we must remember that, in 1980, during the first referendum on sovereignty, the federal debt amounted to roughly \$90 billion. Fifteen years later, the federal debt is nearly \$550 billion. At this rate, according to the available estimates, the public debt accumulated in Canada will push its way past the \$800 billion mark by the year 2000. You will agree with me that there is cause for concern and that these figures are telling us something.

Bill C-76 is clear proof of the fact that, unlike Canada, Quebec is already able to take charge of its own public finances and would do well to take full responsibility for them as a sovereign State. Also, Bill C-76 is underhanded in that it provides for the establishment of new national standards. While cutting back transfers to the provinces, the federal government will not only maintain national standards for health but also introduce additional national standards for social assistance and post-secondary education, areas which, must we be reminded, both come under exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

• (1235)

This means that, under clause 48 of this bill, Ottawa will be able to interfere in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. With the federal government holding the purse's string, Quebec would be exposing itself to being cut off by the federal government any time it failed to comply with these federal national standards.

Moreover, in an area as important as education, one can wonder how Canadian standards can possibly meet the aspirations and expectations of Quebecers in that area, when Canada cannot even recognize Quebec as a distinct society.

As we say where I come from, you can see just by looking. We did not need a constitutional agreement to see—it is clear as day—that Quebec is a distinct society. Given that even this obvious fact could not be recognized, what can we hope to get from this system?

In fact, Bill C-76 gives a free hand to the federal government to regard post-secondary as a social program. From now on, Ottawa will be able to enforce national standards in this area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. If Quebec rejected the stan-

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dards and refused or failed to comply with them, the federal government would be authorized to stop all transfers, even though this money is our own money, money coming straight out of Quebec taxpayers's pockets.

Similarly, there is nothing in this bill to force the federal government to look for a consensus amongst the provinces before putting these new national standards in place. Indeed, while the federal government must consult the provinces, at least in theory, it is not required to get their unanimous consent before going ahead and implementing new national standards.

Moreover, Quebec and the other provinces could, at any time, be the victims of new federal rules, since Ottawa has the authority to unilaterally amend the legislation.

I want to say a word on the government's legislative agenda, assuming of course that it has one. Not long ago, the federal government informed the official opposition of its intention to pass, in the next two weeks, several important bills, including Bill C-88 on internal trade.

The purpose of Bill C-88 is to implement the Agreement on Internal Trade. As shown during the debates on NAFTA and on the Uruguay Round agreements establishing the World Trade Organization, the Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of trade liberalization and it supports the principle underlying that bill. It is common knowledge that Quebec is a free trader, and has been one for a long time.

However, the wording of some provisions, particularly clause 9, poses some problems. Clause 9, in particular, provides for a wider interpretation which could allow the federal government to intervene and impose retaliatory measures even when it is not involved in the dispute. The federal government is giving itself very important powers.

Then there is Bill C-91, which concerns the Federal Business Development Bank. That bill, which is a new attempt by the federal to centralize, will again result in useless and costly duplication which will increase the government's deficit.

While the trend, at least in Quebec, is toward regionalization, the federal government pursues its secular centralizing tradition. This is mind-boggling. I can only hope that Quebec's interests will not suffer too much when these bills are reviewed. This is doubtful though, considering what happened with Bill C-76.

Should this government hurt Quebec's interests with these bills, as it usually does, it will find us in its way, like it has since October 1993. We will vigorously and tenaciously defend Quebec's interests, as we have done since we were elected.

• (1240)

The contempt shown toward Quebecers will only last for so long. Soon, with the referendum, the federal government will realize the price to be paid for constantly attacking Quebec's interests and basic values.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the hon. member's speech, and you will not be surprised to learn that I am not entirely in agreement with some of the things he said because, of course, the Government of Canada, and the Liberal Party in particular, has made it a habit of defending Quebec's interests and that is what the Government of Canada will continue to do with the same level of interest as it has shown in the past and that is what it will continue to do in a prosperous and united Canada.

I would ask my colleague to look at his own track record and that of his party regarding the number of times they have supported attempts to extend hours in order to increase the number of bills which could be voted on by the hon. members in the past, before accusing the government of not moving fast enough to get certain bills through. We have appealed to them many times. Will he tell us how many times his party came out in favour of this? I think that the answer is zero.

Will he also tell us whether he is aware that Standing Order 24 and Standing Order 28 in particular provide for the Parliamentary calendar, and whether he is aware of Standing Order 27, which stipulates that we could not propose before today a systematic extension of sitting hours for the coming weeks? Since it is the first day and the first hour of the first day, how could we possibly have proposed a systematic extension of hours before today? After all, it is the first day.

Mr. Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on some of the things the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said. He says the federal government has always made a point of defending the interests of Quebec. I have my doubts about that.

If ever a government chose to ignore the interests of Quebec, it is the Liberal government. Or should I say governments, to be as specific as the hon. member for Louis-Hébert, the successive governments under the Liberals.

People tell us: You have good representation in Ottawa, you have ministers from Quebec, you have a Prime Minister from Quebec. For more than 20 years, Canada's Prime Ministers have been Quebecers. The word window dressing comes to mind because, basically, has it done Quebec any good to have a prime minister or powerful cabinet ministers from Quebec in Ottawa? Did it prevent the implementation of the War Measures Act in 1970? Did it prevent the unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982? Did it prevent the demise of Meech Lake? What does

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Quebec have to show for the fact that a number of federal cabinet ministers and prime ministers were from Quebec?

Mr. Paré: An illusion!

Mr. Bergeron: An illusion, as the hon. member for Louis-Hébert said. It was the illusion of French power. We have realized since then it was only an illusion, and Quebecers have realized this as well and will act accordingly this fall.

That being said, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell talked about a prosperous and united country. United it still is, at least theoretically, under the constitution. We will see about that this fall. But prosperous is something else. Prosperous, I am not so sure. I talked about this in my speech, and if the hon. member had listened carefully, he would have noticed that this country is not as prosperous as he says it is.

But first of all, to answer his question, I wonder why the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell asked me a question in the House when he already knows the answer; in fact he gave the answer himself.

• (1245)

I said we had always shown we were ready and willing when asked to sit for extended hours, especially during that one weekend when we debated the government's outrageous proposal to deal with the railway dispute. Many of us were here when the House sat throughout the weekend to express our objections to the federal government's proposals. I said earlier that some of our colleagues did not show the same stamina, but that is not the point.

As for the other question about Standing Order 27, I may remind the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who says he listened to my speech, that basically, my point was not that the government had failed to extend the sitting hours of the House before. I said that because of the government's poor planning, now, towards the end of the session, we have a kind of bottleneck and will have to pass a number of bills at breakneck speed, which will not improve the quality of debate in this House.

That was the point I was trying to make in my speech. The hon. member should listen more carefully next time.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is always unfortunate that when a Bloc member speaks, we end up dropping into this whole us versus them; Canada, Quebec discussion and so on and so forth. The real issue here, as far as this motion is concerned, has more to do with the management of the affairs of the government.

I wonder if my friend from the Bloc might not agree that what is going on here is the government has purposely backed up legislation to the point that it will be able to put pressure on

certain issues and certainly on certain people in its back bench by bringing in time allocation on some of the so-called hotter issues.

I would suggest—Mr. Speaker, you will have to correct me because I got away with this word the other day—that it is legislation by stealth. It is unfortunate that in Canada, where we live in a democracy, that the government would bring in time allocation, or closure by any other name, and then go forward with this knowing full well that we are coming to the 23rd. It is no surprise to the government any more than it is a surprise to my leader or any of the members in the House that we are coming to this point and yet we have this backlog.

I wonder if the member from the Bloc would not agree with me that the motion we are talking about really goes to the whole core issue of the lack of management on the part of the government or, in the alternative, that the government is attempting to bring in legislation and treating members of the House as though they were rubber stamps.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Kootenay East for his question. I thank him, because he is allowing me to drive home my message. I agree with him entirely. This is exactly what I was saying in my speech and in my response to my colleague for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I said that, with its motion today, the government is behaving with unprecedented amateurism and lack of foresight.

I agree entirely with my colleague when he says there is a complete lack of planning on the part of the government. My remarks were in fact intended to point out the government's bad planning of its activities, leaving us at the end of the session with a bottleneck of bills to consider and adopt in a very short period of time. This will affect the quality of debate and the quality of speeches, particularly, I would say, for my colleagues in the Reform Party in connection with the bill on gun control. I imagine they would have liked to say more about it, although I think a perfectly reasonable amount of time has been accorded it. I expect it is a concern for them.

Our concern is for other bills, which will have to be debated in great haste and which perhaps could have been debated longer, in our view. The government, however, decided to submit a series of bills at the last minute, and so here we are with all these bills to consider, debate and adopt within two weeks.

• (1250)

So it is a planning problem. It has nothing to do, as my colleague for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell explained earlier, with the fact that the hours of debate should have been extended earlier in the session. It has to do with the fact that the legislation now before the House should have been tabled earlier.

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[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my question to my colleague from the Bloc the fact that the government and everyone in Canada knew June 23 was coming. We can all look at a calendar.

In my question to the House leader I asked how it could be that we have 22 items that are supposed to be jammed through the House in nine days. I suggest now, as I suggested in my question to my colleague, that I cannot help but believe the government purposely and intentionally backed up the legislation to the point that when we come to debate these bills, the quality of debate will not be there because it will not be extensive enough.

I can speak for myself on the issue of Bill C-68. As revenue critic I had an opportunity to speak on an amendment we had brought and discuss the question of how the revenue minister and the customs department were not going to be able to enforce the provisions in the bill. However I have not had an opportunity to express to the House, to these members, to Canada the concerns people have in my constituency over the issues that have arisen on the issues in Bill C-68.

Reform has tried to encourage the government to deal with issues Canadians really care about, namely the deficit and debt. Bring in legislation, bring forward motions that deal with the whole issue of deficit and debt. Instead, on Tuesday night we came to the House and again worked like rubber stamps because that is the way the system works.

Why are we not discussing how the system is going to be changed so that the members, as the representatives of the people of Canada, can regain control or even gain control over some aspects of the expenditures of the government?

We should be here talking about tax reductions. We should be here talking about the issue of crime, not the paper thin way the government has come forward with its amendments, for example on the Young Offenders Act, but something with some real teeth.

We should be talking about referendums, citizen's initiatives and free votes. We should be doing things that are going to make a change for Canadians. What has the government done? "Oh, we are going to have a big change. We're going to bring Bill C-68", which I submit is nothing more than a warm fuzzy. It makes people feel good.

People are not dumb. Canadians have looked at that legislation. While many of the people who may want to see registration may say that they register cars and they register this and that. But when they are asked if they think registration will make any difference to society, to violence on the streets, they say that it will not make any difference but that it will make them feel better.

The government is bringing forward things like affirmative action which was repudiated by the people of Ontario last night. The members know one of the major things Mike Harris won on was the issue of employment equity or quotas which the government is trying to bring forward and to strengthen. Come on.

The government is also talking about bringing forward a toonie, which is the duplicate of a loonie. Why are we worried about \$2 coins? Why are we not worried about making sure the coins get to stay in Canadians' pockets? Why are we worried about those kinds of things? Of course the government is going to say that the Reform Party is just trying to be obstructionist, to block things.

• (1255)

An hon. member: True.

Mr. Abbott: The member says true, that is exactly what they are trying to do.

The people in my constituency and I suspect anybody in a coffee shop anywhere in Canada is starting to become familiar with the word "spin". What kind of spin is the government going to put on an issue? It is really unfortunate that there are times when the spins are done in such an intentionally dishonest way.

For example, I read in the *Montreal Gazette* an article with the name of my leader mentioned which talks of treason in a closure deal. "The Reform leader charged that the federal Liberals made a deal close to treasonist with the Bloc to close down the House of Commons for the summer by June 23 to allow separatists to begin campaigning for Quebec sovereignty on St. Jean Baptiste Day".

I find this next part really very unfortunate because there is spin and then there is unfortunate spin. It says that the Reform Party leader's accusation became distorted before it even got off Parliament Hill: "To pretend the celebration of St. Jean Baptiste Day is somehow associated with treason is I think an insult to all French Canadians", said the government whip. That is what he told reporters.

We had some fun the other evening during the votes when the Reform Party whip stood and complimented the government whip, saying what an intelligent person he was. There was a bit of bickering and some fun over that compliment.

I will say again that as with all members the government whip is an intelligent person. Therefore I have to ask if he was not intentionally distorting the words of the leader of the Reform Party when he was referring to the fact that the government had done a deal with the devil so that the House would be able to rise on June 23. This would allow Bloc members to get involved in all their separatist games on St. Jean Baptiste Day.

That is exactly what my leader said. Unless the member has been misquoted, let us assume that Terrance Wills from the *Gazette* Ottawa Bureau misheard what the government whip said. However, for him to pretend that the celebration of St. Jean

Baptiste Day is somehow associated with treason is an insult to all French Canadians. That is just an absolute total distortion of anything even remotely close to reason.

Why do we have this kind of pressure situation right at this moment? Let us take a look at some of the bills that the government thinks are so important.

When Reformers came to the House, unlike most of the government members, we had been listening to the concerns of Canadians with respect to the porky pension plan that MPs have. When we arrived here, for an extended period of time, almost three and a half months, we hammered and hammered at the Prime Minister: "Will you do something about these pensions? Will you get them revised? Will you open the door so that we, as members of Parliament, can say: "No, we do not consider ourselves a special group a people. We are not on a special plateau". Will the Prime Minister do something about this?"

That went on through the spring of 1994. The Prime Minister said: "Well, you know there will be an election in 1997. Nobody will have to worry about pensions until 1997. We will get around to it. Sooner or later it will happen. There is lots of time".

• (1300)

Then out of the clear blue sky the President of the Treasury Board introduced Bill C-85. Interestingly, he just happened to choose a Friday afternoon. It was a very slow Friday afternoon. Because the Tory convention was happening over in Hull that afternoon, there was no attention in the news media to the fact that Bill C-85, the little bit of fine tuning the government was doing on the porky pension plan, was being introduced.

Then the Liberals brought it back to the House and with a number of different procedures attempted to get it out of the House. Reform Party members, to a person, have stated it is unconscionable that members of Parliament would put themselves on a different level from other Canadians. As a consequence, we stood against it. We stood and we stood until, oh, my goodness, we suddenly have it in committee.

So government members could understand the frustration Canadians feel, I have suggested it might have been a good idea to expose that bill to Canadians so that Canadians could have some input on it. But no, the Liberals decided they were going to have their very own hand chosen experts. I would suggest to their embarrassment the vast majority of their hand chosen experts really did not come forward with the kind of recommendations or testimony they were looking for in order to fit into their little porky plan.

When the Reform member for Calgary West got up and left the room at the end of the testimony, in disgust I might add, the members opposite did the clause by clause study on Bill C-85 in

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12 minutes. It is called lightning speed, the speed of light. All of us know that the whole parliamentary system and a glacier have a lot in common. To get something through in 12 minutes makes me think that maybe it was sliding along on pig fat it went so fast.

What we are looking at in the whole issue of legislation is the issue of exposure to the Canadian people. I use a three legged analogy when I speak to students. I enjoy speaking to students because I want them to appreciate the wonderful democracy we have. In spite of some of the things the government does, we still do live in a democracy.

There are three legs to the stool of democracy in order for it to work. The first leg is the people. The people become involved. The second leg is the politicians. The politicians come forward with proper, sound, right thinking legislation. The third leg is the press. If we did not have the press, and if we did not have what the politicians are doing exposed to the people by the press, we would not have a three legged stool. We would have something that would not stand.

With the issue of Bill C-85, the government, knowing that the press is not necessarily going to run and jump on this issue all that quickly, wants to get it in and out of the House as quickly as it possibly can. The government tries to destroy that one leg and the whole process of democracy ends up falling over.

The government House leader raised a number of interesting bills. For example I cite Bill C-72. As a matter of fact, my colleague from Wild Rose was trying to get the government to move forward so we could have vote on this bill weeks ago.

• (1305)

We were prepared to put Bill C-72 through the House in one day. What is the bill about? It has to do with the self-induced intoxication defence. This defence cannot stand. This is wrong. Students and other people in my community have asked me what the government is going to do. To its credit, the government has come forward with Bill C-72. If we, and I do not doubt for a second, the Bloc were prepared to put it through in one day, why now is he raising issues like this and saying that we must hit the June 23 deadline?

The hon. member for Wild Rose has also brought to the attention of the House the issue of the admissibility of DNA testing in criminal cases. We have absolutely tragic situations, hearings pending in court where DNA evidence will not be permissible. If the government wants to sit all night long, the Reform Party will be here to put through the legislation so that DNA evidence can be admissible in court. That is a commitment I know I can make on behalf of the members of my party.

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The issue is not that we are trying to stop legislation. In fact, we are trying to get the government to move on things like self-induced intoxication, DNA and fiscal issues. We are trying to get the government to move. For it to turn around and suggest we are trying to be obstructionist is an awful stretch of the truth.

Let us look at Bill C-41, the much desired bill. Is this the bill which all Canadians are clambering for? I think not. Bill C-41 has to do with sentencing. As many people in Canada know, there is one clause in particular which is singularly troublesome. That clause in the judgment of the Reform Party basically creates categories of victims. We believe that all Canadians are equal regardless of race, language, creed, colour, religion or gender. For us to be applying a test, to be applying a shopping list to create categories of victims is a step backward. It puts people who do not fall into that shopping list at a disadvantage.

We would be voting against that bill on the basis of that clause alone as it presently stands. The most difficult part of that clause is putting the undefined term of sexual orientation into the shopping list. I believe that at least 80 per cent of Canadians are opposed to the inclusion of the undefined term of sexual orientation, yet the government is prepared to go ahead against the wishes of Canadians and against the wishes of many of its own backbenchers. Government backbenchers know there is a problem.

Another thing which has happened is that there has been the passage under pressure of Bill C-76, the bill which got our friend from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce into so much trouble. The whip will be turfing him off his committee, trying to get everybody whipped into line. I guess that is why he is called the whip. The hon. member I just mentioned, although I absolutely disagree with his position, nonetheless is a person of principle who is prepared to stand and say that the Liberal Party does not have a mandate to go ahead with Bill C-76 and that he is not about to support it.

• (1310)

The red book promised openness, protection of health. I suggest that the government is prepared to ram things through the House, to treat the House like a rubber stamp. I suggest if it walks like a pig, if it grunts like a pig, if it smells like a pig, it is probably a pig. If the government is trying to jam things through the House of Commons with closure, time allocation and with extended hours, it is legislation by stealth.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like most members I would like to get on with the business of the House. However since the member thought to take up 20 minutes of House time to babble on about a number of things

which he obviously knows nothing about, I want to question him on a couple of matters.

First, the member said that the House should be talking about matters such as tax reductions. Why is it that his party when it proposed its budget to the House did not include any tax reductions in its plans and simply cut social programs?

Another reason I think the member knows nothing about what he was talking about is his comments to do with the proposal for a \$2 coin. He somehow trivialized the proposal for the \$2 coin. The member ought to know because it has been presented and debated in this House that the introduction of a \$2 coin will save Canada \$250 million over a 20-year period, simply because of the savings on reprinting \$2 bills which erode. It is a very simple reason.

The impact to the Canadian economy, to small business people who operate coin vending machines, is also going to be very substantial. The member has trivialized a move that will save Canadians \$250 million. He has trivialized the impact on small business, all for partisan and opportunistic purposes. This member should explain himself.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I will be very happy to explain myself.

On the issue of tax reductions, anybody who knows anything, and I know this member has an accounting background, would know that the biggest single problem Canada is faced with today is that the government refuses to acknowledge that we are spending \$1,800 per second more than we are taking in right now. The problem is expenditures.

We can come forward with tax reductions when we reach the point that this or any other government is prepared to bite the bullet and tell the people the truth. As the member for Willowdale, who is the chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance said the other day, until this government realizes that there must be cuts in the area of social spending under its CHST, there cannot be any balancing of the budget. Until there is a balancing of the budget, there cannot be tax reductions.

On the matter of the toonie, what we are really coming down to is a question that has never been asked to the best of my knowledge, which is whether or not we need a \$2 denomination. If the hon. member is talking about saving \$250 million by replacing a \$2 bill with a \$2 loonie or whatever it is going to be called, I wonder how many dollars would be saved if we just did away with the \$2 denomination. I want to make my position clear. I am not suggesting that nor am I recommending that. I am saying we should be looking at that before the bill comes before the House. I do not believe there has been any study done on that.

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• (1315)

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak against extending the hours.

It seems to me that we have a contradiction on the basis of what happened yesterday. We have the government invoking closure three times so that it can ram through some very unpopular legislation. On the one hand, time allocation or closure is being forced on the House. On the other hand, we are talking about extending the hours.

If the government were serious about quality discussion and quality debate on any of the bills, the last thing it should be looking at is closure so that we cannot have a full airing and debate of issues that are important to the Canadian people.

In view of what happened in this place yesterday and what happened in the province of Ontario, it is interesting that closure was being rammed through the House on three very contentious bills. At the same time voters in Ontario went to the polls and rejected the bills, the government is attempting to ram through the House of Commons. It is unbelievable.

It raises the suspicion that perhaps that was the agenda, that some very unpopular bills were not to be allowed to remain in the public arena for further exposure because things are starting to fall apart and they have to be rammed through. The wheels are falling off. MP pension plans, gun control and undefined sexual orientation are three issues that were overwhelmingly defeated in the Ontario provincial election.

The government talks about zilch co-operation coming from the opposition. In my experience there has been zilch shown by the government in the way in which it has organized its agenda and brought to the Canadian people very important issues that need to be discussed.

Two other things were very big factors in the Ontario election. One was that the common sense revolution was very much opposed to employment equity or hiring quotas based on race and sex, another bill the government is determined to put through in spite of the fact that it has been rejected by the people of the province of Ontario.

I should like to talk a bit about the three bills because they are key to closure and trying to ram through legislation. I will start with the MPs pension plan. While it does not represent a whole lot of dollars, it is the flashpoint with the Canadian voter.

We have seen it in Alberta where the premier of that province started out a campaign being less than double digit in the opinion polls. He started to listen to the people and realized that a gold plated pension plan was not supported in any way by them. Therefore he did away with it in Alberta. As a result he gained some credibility and the people started listening to him. It was leadership by example. Somebody was showing real

concern for the problem of overspending and debt by doing something about a gold plated pension plan.

Let us move into Ontario. Mr. Harris stood and said that the gold plated pension plan was gone. That was a big part of his platform. It was the part of his platform that gave Mr. Harris the credibility he needed when he addressed other issues. Two provinces have addressed the concern and because of it have been rewarded by tremendous support by the voters. It is unbelievable that the message has not reached the House. The government thinks the bit of tinkering done on the bill will satisfy Canadian voters. It is an absolute sham.

When I was campaigning and after I was elected I cannot think of a public meeting where questions and comments were invited at which the issue of the MPs pension plan did not come up. Voter after voter said to get rid of it, and I agree. It is an abuse of our office. We want fair compensation. There is no argument about that, but the pension plan is not fair. It should be made more in line with what is available in the private sector.

• (1320)

Here we have an issue of high profile that touches all Canadian voters. Many of our citizens would love to have pension plans. Some do not have them. Some are struggling without work. Many people are unemployed. Indeed many young people are underemployed. Because the government is showing no leadership in attacking that serious problem the dilemma continues.

The MPs pension plan is nothing more than another broken red book promise. I know the red book was loosely worded. I have suggested that perhaps it should have started out with: "Once upon a time". The problem with loose wording is that while it may get us off the hook by saying that we did not exactly say this or this is what we meant to say, the voters will make the same interpretation and say that they think this is what was said. When we do not follow through it is indeed a broken promise to voters.

The comment made by my colleague from Calgary Centre about the \$150,000 compensation has been referred to many times by the opposition. The point that was missed and continues to be missed by the government was that whatever our compensation the total package should be up front and on the table with no special deals and no tax exempt expense accounts. That was the point he was making regardless of the number. Perhaps he used the wrong number, but the main point he was making was that whatever we were to be paid should be up front and fair and we should make sure that all Canadian people know exactly what we are being paid.

It goes back to the heart of credibility. Because of the failure of the government to attack and do something about the gold plated pension plan it lost all credibility on the deficit and the debt. How can we go to Canadian voters and ask them to accept

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spending cuts when we are not prepared to show some leadership by example in making some sacrifice?

The thing that continues to mystify me on the pension plan is that poll after poll clearly indicates Canadian people overwhelmingly want the plan changed. It is not even close. When a poll is broken down by party affiliation, the Liberal supporters also show overwhelming support for having it changed.

We might have a problem with what is known as selective hearing. We hear what we want to hear and we ignore what the Canadian people are really saying.

Money should never be the motivating factor for coming to this place. I do not think it is with many members. When I came to this place I had no idea of what the total package was and frankly I could care less. I was more concerned about the issues and bringing some fiscal sanity to this place. Compensation was secondary. We do not dispute there should be fair compensation. That is all Canadian people are asking for.

The arrogance and the contempt for Parliament shown yesterday in the House have to be coming from the inflated popularity opinion poll numbers that are coming out. Liberals think they can do no wrong and the people love them. We saw what happened in Ontario to a Liberal party that thought it was up in the polls and could no wrong. It said: "We will do nothing. We won't rock the boat. We will just ride this out".

Mr. Penson: The same thing happened in Manitoba.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): That is right. The same thing in Manitoba.

On the basis of inflated opinion polls that have no depth and when the rubber hits the road as it did in Ontario and Manitoba, the real poll comes out and the voters respond to politicians who are not listening to them. I am proud to say I opted out of the pension plan and all my Reform colleagues have opted out of it. I am looking forward to the next federal election. I am looking forward to a debate on MPs pension plans, anytime, anywhere, anyplace. I would relish it.

• (1325)

I have mixed emotions when I deal with the matter. While I want change on the one hand, I am absolutely convinced the Liberals are digging a hole they will never get out of. They are ensuring a Reform victory in 1997. There is no question about it. They do not understand. They are not listening.

They think they won the election. They did not win the election. The Conservatives lost it. The Conservatives were thrown out. The Liberals just happened to be there. Canadian voters were very sure of what they did not want. They were not

too sure who they should vote for but the message was that Canadian voters were voting on the issues. They are watching the politicians. They are watching the promises being made and for integrity. Not following through on the promises made will cost them very dearly in the next election. So many of the promises in the red book have been broken at this point that I cannot see how the Liberals can possibly survive.

We just had an indication of how good the red book is because the daughter of red book that was used in Ontario did them absolutely no good at all. It destroyed them.

So much for pensions. I dealt with pensions because even though it is not a whole lot of dollars it is a major issue with the Canadian voter. It was in 1993 and it will be even bigger in 1997. There is no question about it because our financial position will have worsened, absolutely. There is no doubt about that. With the road the government is taking us down our debt situation will be far worse than it is today. We will be \$600 billion in debt. We will still be overspending by \$25 billion and we will have interest payments of \$50 billion a year. When we try to balance the books to accommodate \$50 billion in interest payments it is a real challenge for any government. The Liberals are not meeting their target.

Let us talk about the gun control bill, one of the three being rammed through the House so that we do not have quality debate and we as the opposition do not get an opportunity to fully air all concerns. The gun control bill is a red herring. It is a smoke screen. It is an attempt to make the government look like a government in action. If we asked Canadian people what the 10 most important issues are in Canada today, gun control would not make 11. Here we are wasting all this time and all this discussion on a bill that will do absolutely nothing to clean up the problems it is supposed to address: unsafe homes, unsafe streets and unsafe communities. It will do absolutely nothing.

Mr. Ramsay: It will not come into effect for eight years.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): It will not come into effect for eight years. The Liberals have made a major issue of something that is not a major issue. They have not been dealing with major issues like the deficit and debt, the criminal justice system and creating jobs. Those are the issues Canadian people want addressed and they are not being addressed. Gun control was just a sham to make the government look like a government in action.

When we talk about the gun control bill I hear comments from the other side indicating that it is supported by the people. That support is diminishing. When we ask people whether they support gun control they answer: "Yes, we do". When we ask them whether they think it will achieve a reduction in crime they answer: "No, we do not". They support gun control and admit at the same time that it will not do what the government says it will do.

How do we adjust to that? Why would the government not respond to that?

Mr. Hanger: They will spend money anyway.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): They say: "Let's spend it because we said we were going to. It does not matter what the voter wants. Let's give it to them. We know what is best. Never mind the mindless masses out there. The government knows what is best". Members are told: "Don't listen to your people. We know what is best for them". Do not let them fool you. They really do not understand; we do. We have some kind of superior intelligence here and we know what is best out there".

• (1330)

Mulroney thought that and he found out to his sorrow that when politicians do not listen to the Canadian people, as his government did not, they pay very dearly when they go back to the voters at the next election.

During the Ontario election, Mr. Harris said he was opposed to gun registration. That is the other part about the bill which makes no sense. It is almost like it was an intentional deception. We are mixing apples and oranges in the bill. It is unbelievable. It is mixing law-abiding citizens with the criminals. It makes absolutely no sense.

We made an attempt to have the bill split. There is 100 per cent support, I am sure in all parties and in all parts of Canada, for getting tough with the criminal misuse of firearms. That is where the problem is. That is where we have to address our attention. That will contribute to making our homes safer, our streets safer and our communities safer. No, we had to have the whole package. We had to have the harassment of the legitimate gun owner and combined with that the spending of all the tax dollars we do not have to accomplish nothing.

Poll after poll has indicated the bill will not do what the government has said it will do. Time after time polls have shown that. It is a charade and the voters will see through it. The government is not listening. It is not paying attention. Perhaps it is selective hearing.

On hate crimes, Ontario voters said they do not want the undefined phrase sexual orientation in there. Mr. Harris won on that. Here again we have the government pushing through one of three bills which nobody wants. The voters do not want them. I cannot believe the government does not the message. It is not listening. It does not want to hear. It will dearly; one term members. I am looking forward to the next election.

The deficit and the debt is the issue we should be dealing with. We wasted all of this time on other bills which are not on the main agenda. We will extend hours to debate bills secondary in importance to the majority of Canadians. The number one issue,

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the burning issue, is the deficit and the debt, and we continue to fiddle while Rome burns. It is unbelievable.

Unfortunately the first part of the budget did absolutely nothing. It is amazing the government took office after being in opposition for as long as it had and did not know what the major problem in Canada was and or know how to deal with it. We heard: "Give us a year. We did not realize how serious the situation was. We need some time to have a look at it and see if we can do something about it". It wasted a whole year. The government had been in opposition supposedly preparing to take office.

Then we hear the government inherited the problem. At first the government would not even admit that it was a problem. What we heard about the deficit was: "Do not be too concerned about it. Be happy. It is all right. Take an Aspirin, go to bed, wake up in the morning and you will be fine".

We were honest with the Canadian voters. We said this is a serious problem when we were campaigning. We were the only party to put in writing a plan to eliminate the deficit in three years with no new or increased taxes. We are the only party that had the courage to do that. We produced a document which actually had some numbers in it, not a red book full of rhetoric; a masterpiece of writing, an absolute fairy tale.

• (1335)

We did worse than waste a year in the first budget. In that first year we gave away what it said was to be \$350 million when we gave in to the smugglers. The government said it would cost only \$350 million; \$350 million when we were in debt to the point that we were is unbelievable. However, we found out later the government's numbers were wrong. It underestimated by about \$500 million—only \$500 million.

In effect we gave away almost a billion dollars to the smugglers when we were so deep in debt and in overspending it was absolutely unbelievable. That is typical. It is avoidance of this issue and here again is where the gun control bill comes in, smoke and mirrors, let us hide the fact that we are not dealing with the real problem.

I am looking forward to the next election because what happened in the House yesterday has absolutely ensured a victory for the only party listening to the Canadian voter and that will respond to the concerns we are hearing.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said something I agree with and that I think all members agree with. When we ran to become the elected representatives of our constituents and to serve in this place we did so because we wanted to make a contribution. We wanted to do what we could to make Canada a better place.

The hon. member discussed what he felt was a number of deficiencies. Gun control came up, that registration will do nothing. I will share examples of how registration will help to

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reduce crime. Some 47 per cent of crimes involving firearms in Canada are committed with long arms, as reported by the Canadian chiefs of police.

Today we have registration of handguns and this piece of legislation will now bring all firearms under registration. A specific example has to do with imported guns. Today a legitimate importer does not have to register the guns. In a case recently in Toronto guns imported were then turned around and black marketed to the criminal element.

Under this legislation imported guns must be registered at the time of importation. As a result those weapons now cannot be very easily sold to the criminal element and used in criminal activity. That registration element alone will help to reduce the number of weapons getting out of the hands of law-abiding citizens.

The member also made reference to Bill C-41. He referred to it as the sexual orientation bill and the hate bill when he knows full well it is a sentencing bill. There are some important things in that bill. I have a motion at report stage, which I hope all members will support, concerning sentencing provisions as they relate to aggravating circumstances. There are two circumstances, first where bias, prejudice or hate is involved and second where there is an abuse of trust or authority relationships. The motion I have raised with all parties and all members is to provide stiffer sentences for spousal abusers.

• (1340)

This is an important element of the bill and I have asked all members and particularly this member for support on a very important issue. Bill C-41 is not about one issue. It is a sentencing bill, an extremely important bill that will help deal with crime in Canada.

The member referred to the member for Calgary Centre's saying we should eliminate all forms of alternative compensation for members of Parliament and that members of Parliament should be paid \$150,000 a year instead. This unacceptable.

The member also said he may have used the wrong number. He has used the wrong number. What he has failed to recognize is that if we incorporate legitimate business expenses in income grossed up those expenses also become deductible on a tax return and there would be no limit. The tax act presently says all expenses directly or indirectly associated with earning income will be deductible. As a result there would be virtually no limits on what members could spend for what purposes. If \$150,000 a year is not the number, what is the number?

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments and question from the member for Mississauga South.

Dealing with the compensation package and the real number, we do not know what that number is. We are not putting a number forward. We are saying the total compensation package has to be looked at and all the loopholes have to be eliminated so that whatever we are being paid we have no special deals, no gold plated pension plan, no tax exempt status. We can put it all right out on the table and let the voters, an independent group, decide what our compensation figure should be, not the members in the House. I am quite prepared to do that.

The burning issue with Canadian voters is get it out in the open, stop this double standard of a better deal for us than they can get in the private sector. They are infuriated by that. You miss the message and you continue to miss the message and that was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I know that with great enthusiasm at times in debate we become more animated but I remind colleagues on both sides of the House that all interventions must be made through the Chair and not directly to one another.

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I did get carried away and I apologize for that. I will go through the Chair.

On compensation the mistake was putting a number when a number did not need to be put. The point by the member for Calgary West was it should be above board.

If we were to ask the Canadian people the top 10 issues they want to see the government dealing with, gun control would not make that list. It is a sham because we are not dealing with those issues. In dealing with the gun control bill we ask for proof that the registration program will do what the government says it will, but we do not get that.

Polls show that people who say they support the bill do not believe it will achieve what the government says it is will. It is incumbent on the government to prove if it can that the bill will reduce crime. It cannot do it and that is why the voters are rejecting it. That is why Mike Harris won with the huge majority he did.

On Bill C-42, it is a sentencing bill. It contains something the voters do not want. I keep hearing in the House it is what we want. What is important is not what we want but what the people we are representing want.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Obviously a lot of people want to speak on this topic but I can only give the floor to one at a time.

• (1345)

Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to remain focused on you rather than getting into a debate.

The point that I was making is that it is what the voters want, not what we want or what we think they want. The point I made when I started out was that Mike Harris won in Ontario because he listened to the voters and adapted his agenda. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, provincially and federally, are not listening to the voters. They paid the price for it in the province in Ontario.

My suggestion to the member and all members of the government is that you will pay the price for it in the next federal election because you are not listening to the Canadian people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I will make a suggestion. I think if we could all be somewhat conscious of the fact that when we use the word "you" it leads to something less than what we desire in the Chamber. I will leave it at that for today. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hear the howls of dread on the other side and I do not understand why. I can only imagine it is because fear of the truth is striking the cords of their vocal organs.

I can understand their reluctance to hear some facts. I have come today armed with the odd fact to deal with the question of time allocation that members have raised in the course of their remarks and the extension of hours that we are going to enjoy together next week.

The first thing I want to say is that the hon. member for Simcoe Centre talked about what the voters want. He seems to have forgotten the lesson of October 1993.

Mr. Abbott: Talk to us about the Ontario election.

Mr. Milliken: I am talking about this House, not about the Ontario legislature. The Liberal Party of Canada put forward the most comprehensive and acceptable program that has ever been put forward by a political party in the history of the country and that was the red book.

I am sorry I do not have my copy here today because I know the hon. member who is making all the noise over there and who I urged a few weeks ago to get a copy and put it under his pillow, would not be so vociferous this afternoon if he had spent a little more time studying the red book. I can tell him that the voters of Canada chose the Liberal Party of Canada to be the government because of the promises in the red book.

In other words, the voters chose what they wanted when the election was held. They made their choice on October 25, 1993. They are getting delivered to them what it was they voted for in the red book. Every one of the campaign promises from the red book are being enforced in legislation today. The legislation we will be dealing with next week under time allocation was

contained in the red book. The government is living up to the commitment it made to the Canadian electorate in 1993 in the red book.

I notice the Bloc is silent and agreeable on these points because it knows that governments are elected to fulfil certain commitments. Frankly, its members recognize the commitments we made were good and valid ones so they are agreeing with us in this respect. However, the members of the Reform Party like to think of themselves as a government that got elected but in fact, because of their success, having had no one here before except the hon. member for Beaver River, they think they won the election because a whole bunch of them got elected. However, what percentage of the vote did they have? Did they break 10 per cent or was it 15 per cent? Whatever it was it was not a number that inspires confidence in the hearts of Canadians.

While hon. members in the Reform Party can argue that they may have won the confidence of the people in their constituencies, which some of them did, one of them had the lowest percentage anyone had to get elected, I think it was 28 per cent or 29 per cent of the vote. He still managed to get in. It shows how badly split the electors were in that riding. The fact is they did not win the confidence of Canadians with the votes they had. In my constituency the Reform candidate had 12 per cent of the votes. Canadians did not vote for Reform policies. They voted for Liberal policies. They voted for Liberal policies as outlined in the red book. Those are the policies that are contained in the legislation we are debating, and were contained in the list of bills presented by the government House leader during his remarks earlier today when he presented the motion to extend hours.

• (1350)

While I can understand a certain disagreement between the Reform Party members and the members of the government because of ideological points of view or differences in policy—I remember the little blue book had other promises in it—the fact remains our party was elected with a substantial majority of seats in the House, a very substantial portion of the popular vote in the country and we are proceeding to fulfil the promises we outlined to the electorate in 1993.

Instead of asking us to substitute—

Mr. Abbott: Allmand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I am going to draw on an experience of a previous life, that of a hockey referee.

One of the principles we strived for was not to have "rabbit ears". I am not seeking to hear more than I would customarily hear. I would not want to put in question or in doubt the validity of the convention of not mentioning members in the House by name but in fact by their ridings.

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The Chair understands the vigour of the debate, of the co-operation necessary within the rules and spirit of that debate in this Chamber and I hope all of us will keep that in mind.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I hope I did not refer to someone by name. I try to avoid that. I apologize for doing that if I did. I do not recall.

As I was saying, hon. members opposite may feel their views represent the majority of Canadians but it is not an opinion shared (a) by the majority of Canadians, and (b) by the vast majority of the members of the House. While they might want us to substitute Reform Party policy for the red book we will not do it. We will not be dissuaded from proceeding with the policies outlined in the red book because of a lot of shouting and yelling from the other side of the House. Nor will we do so because of obstruction practised by members from the opposite side of the House. I want to refer to that right now. I have some statistics that hon. members opposite may want to hear.

In respect of Bill C-68, about which we heard a lot of bleating and whining yesterday when we applied a time allocation motion to the debate on it, I want to point out what has gone on here. This bill was introduced in February, debated at second reading on February 16, February 27, March 13, March 27, March 28 and April 5 for a total of 20 hours and 21 minutes. Over 38 members of the Reform Party spoke in the debate on second reading of this bill.

Mr. Abbott: And we're proud of it.

Mr. Milliken: They may be proud of it but I would have been embarrassed at some of the speeches I heard. After 20 hours of debate the bill went to committee where it spent something like five or six weeks. I have forgotten the amount of time.

Ms. Meredith: How many witnesses were refused to be heard?

Mr. Milliken: "How many witnesses", says the hon. member. Hundreds. The committee heard witnesses night and day four or five days a week for four weeks. Then it spent over a week studying the bill in committee with something over 200 amendments, I am told.

Mr. Morrison: Four hundred and five.

Mr. Milliken: Four hundred and five, the hon. member says. He only serves to prove my point. Hon. members opposite are wasting the time of the House and Parliament. They are deliberately trying to obstruct the bill. They have no interest in seeing that democracy takes its full course. Members of the House are entitled to express their view by a vote. That is the normal way of concluding debate. That is what the government is seeking to do by the time allocation motion it has brought in respect of this bill.

I do not know why the government House leader was so generous as to allow six hours on each stage but he did. The fact is we will be debating this bill next week. Hon. members opposite will have a chance to express their views along with the other members of the House, the members of the official opposition and the members of the governing party.

I am pleased we will have an orderly debate and that we will conclude debate with a vote to see what happens to the bill. I strongly suspect it is going to pass, notwithstanding the objections of hon. members opposite.

Let us turn to Bill C-85, another bill dear to the heart of the hon. member for Calgary West. This bill was also debated in the House at great length. We are hearing bleats and whines again from the Reform Party about the time allocation motion in respect of this bill. It was debated on May 4, May 9, May 10 and May 12 for a total of 15 hours and 57 minutes. That is almost 16 hours of debate. Then it was referred to committee.

• (1355)

The committee proceedings were expeditious. The matter was dealt with in a day. We heard five, six or seven different witnesses during the course of the day. Then, as I pointed out when I tabled the report from the committee, every clause was carried unanimously in the course of the clause by clause study in that committee.

Now the hon. member for Calgary West is objecting. He has a whole string of amendments which he wants to bring to the House. He did not bring them in committee. He got up in a huff and huffed and puffed and blew himself out of the room. He was not there to propose his amendments. We did not have any discussion on any amendments. Now he thinks maybe we had better change the bill, so we are busy debating amendments in the House.

We have allocated four hours to debate the amendments of the hon. member for Calgary West, then we will have a vote and then four hours on third reading. After 16 hours on second reading, four hours on third reading, four hours in report stage and a full day in committee, I do not know what objection there could be to passing the bill. The bill was in the red book. Everything in the bill was promised in the red book except the extra things we have added which can only help make hon. members feel more comfortable.

What did we add? Opting out of the pension plan, which they asked for. They asked to be allowed to opt out and that has been granted in the bill. They asked that the pension be reduced and it has been reduced in the bill. It is not enough for them, but it has been reduced.

Let us turn to Bill C-41. This is another bill which hon. members opposite think should not come under time allocation. We have heard nothing but complaints from hon. members opposite about the bill; not about the whole bill of course, just about one clause. Again, we have another red book promise being implemented by the government. Hon. members opposite

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were not elected on the red book so they should not ask us to substitute their opinion for ours. We chose what we were going to run on. We put the platform forward in the red book and the people voted for it in droves.

Let us look at the record on Bill C-41. It was given first reading in June 1994. It was debated in the House on September 20, September 22 and October 18 for a total of 8.5 hours. It went to committee on October 18, 1994 and did not come back from committee until March 22.

Yet the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley is bleating from her seat about the fact that the bill was in committee for six months. What did she do all that time? Did she sit and obstruct the bill? Why did she not call witnesses and move amendments then? There has been a whole pile of amendments moved to the bill. The hon. member clearly does not want a decision in the House, she just wants to obstruct and cause delay.

The government has to make a decision. That is what governments are elected to do. This government made a decision. Its decision was outlined in the red book. It brought the bill before Parliament. It has allowed ample time for debate, ample time for discussion, ample time to hear witnesses and ample time to consult. There comes a day when you have to bite the bullet and make a decision and, by George, we are going to do it next week. The great thing is that we are going to be able to sit until late to do it.

Mr. Abbott: Just what we all want.

Mr. Milliken: Exactly. It is just what we all want, as the hon. member says. I am glad he is as enthusiastic at the prospect as I am. I will have supper with the hon. member in the lobby.

As we look forward to next week's late night debates and, undoubtedly, very late night votes, I can only say that I hope the weather stays a little cooler. I know that debate will be heated on many of these bills. I recognize there is a difference of opinion. However, the fact is that the government has to bring these matters to a decision at some point in time and the time has come. These bills have been around and they have been debated extensively in Parliament.

An hon. member: No, they have not.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says they have not. I have just been through the facts. I wish he would listen to my speech. If he would listen he would agree with me.

The fact is these bills have been debated extensively and Canadians have been consulted. There is disagreement. Of course there is disagreement. We recognise that. However, the government made a commitment to the Canadian people in the red book. The government made a series of commitments, and

those commitments form the basis of government action in the House and will continue to form the basis of government action in the months and years to come.

• (1400)

The Prime Minister made it very clear when he was campaigning, and I remember hearing him say this, that at the end of the day Canadians will be able to turn to the red book, go through it and say this government lived up to its commitments. As Prime Minister, he will be going to Canadians in the next election, whether it is 1997 or 1998—it cannot be too soon, and hon. members opposite must be very nervous at that prospect—and he will say: “Here is the red book. Here are the commitments we made. Here are the promises that we kept, one after the other.”

Mr. Abbott: That would be a short speech.

An hon. member: What about the ones you did not keep?

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says what about the ones we did not keep. We were not elected for two years, we were elected for four or five. There is ample time for us to live up to the red book commitments. It was a blueprint for action, not for one or two years but for the full term of a Liberal government. That is what the government is doing.

Hon. members opposite refer to the Ontario election as though it is some kind of setback.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Milliken: I can only say to hon. members opposite that in spite of their laughter, the setback is going to be with them. If we go to most of the ridings around Ontario—and the hon. member for Simcoe Centre knows this very well, and it is Ontario they are now concerned about because of this election, which is why I am referring to those particular seats—we have to add up the Reform vote and the Tory vote in the last election and see what it comes to. Had the two been together—and of course we know they are becoming bedfellows over there—they might have won a few more seats than the one they got in Ontario in 1993.

The success in the Ontario election can be attributed to the fact that the Reform Party failed to field any candidates in the provincial election. We know why they did not. As a national party they are going to have a tough time the next time living this down.

Mr. Abbott: It is because our members said no.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says it is because their members said no. We know it is because their leader said no, not because their members said no. Their members in Ontario wanted to run, but their leader said no. We all know about the dictatorial powers possessed by their leader. Let me get the little green book again, if members do not believe me on that score.

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I know hon. members opposite do not like me to quote from the little green book, the little book of Reform, the gospel according to Preston Manning and the Reform Party.

Mr. Abbott: Is that an authorized publication?

Mr. Milliken: If the hon. member who is doing all the yelling kept this little book under his head at night he would not sleep well. I suspect that is the problem.

Listen to this on the struggle against the usual charges. I cannot really read this; it is in small print. It says: "Reform candidates must effectively combat the charges of separatism, extremism and eccentricity, which are invariably levelled against any new party originating in the west". That is on the Reform Party questionnaire, but it does not say how they do it.

Ms. Meredith: If you are going to use a prop, give us the name of it.

Mr. Milliken: I will read one more quote from the leader: "People make assumptions that we are eccentric, that we have weird baggage"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The hon. member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia on a point of order.

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. parliamentary secretary is using a prop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): No, I would rule that is not a point of order. In fact he is quoting from a document, as I understand it.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would suggest it would be valuable if the parliamentary secretary were to identify the document he is reading from. I am making a statement that there is no such authorized publication by the Reform Party in that form.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I say respectfully to the hon. member for Kootenay East that the accuracy of the actual document being quoted from that might be debated. But it is certainly not a point of order.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I understand the members' discomfort. They are simply trying to run out my time.

Mr. Abbott: Well, identify the document.

Mr. Milliken: I did. I read the title to the hon. member. It says: "The Little Book of Reform: The Gospel According to Preston Manning and the Reform Party". It is published by Little Red Book, Arsenal Pulp Press. It is compiled by Christopher Gudgeon and Mark Leiren-Young.

Mr. Abbott: A little red book? Oh.

Mr. Milliken: I am sorry that hon. members do not have copies. Anyway, I would like to quote from their leader before my time runs out.

• (1405)

He said: "People make assumptions that we are eccentric, that we have weird baggage on policy, that we are extreme and that we are separatists. We are not extreme. We are not crazy. We are not separatists." That is the hon. member for Calgary Southwest.

With great respect, hon. members opposite are asking us to substitute Reform policy for Liberal policy. The Liberal Party, as a government elected on principles outlined in the red book, will not do that. I ask hon. members to stop asking for that. Vote against these bills if members want to do so, but for heaven's sake, recognize that the government has an obligation to do what it said it would do.

If the Reform Party were in government I hope they would try to live up to their promises, as we are succeeding in living up to ours.

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I have two points of order. One, is it common when one quotes from a book or whatever that the member would table that document?

Second, during his remarks the member made mention that the Reform Party was somehow in bed with the Conservatives. He is imputing motives, and I so not think that is right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Let me be brief and succinct. That is no point of order.

And more than five members have risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 27, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, 1995, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages and pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), the government's response to 21 petitions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 2.08 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

Before we proceed to private members' business, I get indication from a number of members who were possibly waiting for tabling of petitions. Regrettably, in terms of process, given the events of the day, daily routine of business in those circumstances is cut off after government bills. If any further information might be required by any member I would simply advise members to seek the expertise of our table officers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ALTERNATIVE FUELS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-7, an act to accelerate the use of alternative fuels for motor vehicles, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): There are six motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill S-7, an act to accelerate the use of alternative fuels for motor vehicles. Motions 1 and 4 have been withdrawn.

• (1410)

Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 6 will be grouped for debate. A vote on Motion No. 2 applies to Motions Nos. 3, 5 and 6.

[Translation]

I will now submit Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 6 to the House.

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.) moved:

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Motion No. 2

That Bill S-7, in Clause 2, be amended by deleting lines 11 to 14, on page 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill S-7, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing line 32, on page 2, with the following:

“federal bodies will be”.

Motion No. 5

That Bill S-7 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill S-7, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing lines 9 to 15, on page 4, with the following:

“end of each fiscal year, by the President of the Treasury Board, a report for the year on the application of this Act in respect of all federal bodies.”

He said: Mr. Speaker, of these four amendments, the amendment of substance, which required the tabling of the other three, is Motion No. 5, that Bill S-7 be amended by deleting clause 5. The objective is to remove crown corporations from being covered by this bill.

Historically, crown corporations are supposed to act at arm's length from political interference. In recent years they have even in some cases been expected to make money and to run their operations in the same manner as private business. Therefore, although this House can, if it wishes, proceed to pass laws to regulate the operations of federal departments, I suggest that when it starts delving into the minute detail of the operations of a crown corporation it is exceeding its authority. Therefore I have tabled these amendments.

If we are going to talk about what government should and should not do, I would like to elaborate a little more on that. It is not the business of government to pick winners and losers in the marketplace. I have received more intense corporate lobbying in favour of this bill than I have ever encountered in the brief year and a half that I have been in this place. Let us be clear about something. I do not have a problem with the practical purposes of this bill. The objectives are fine. The intentions are fine. But we know where the road goes that is paved with these intentions.

The bill is very general in its wording, but it mandates a market specifically for propane and natural gas. There is mention in passing in the bill to ethanol, to hydrogen, to electricity, but let us be realistic, let us be honest: what we are talking about is propane and natural gas. The propane and natural gas companies have been doing the intense lobbying, along with various manufacturers and jobbers who would have a special interest in converting the government fleet.

I do not have any problem with the products of these corporations being used as automotive fuels. Propane and natural gas have a very legitimate place in the energy mix and they have a well-defined applicability for vehicle fleets with high usage rates, especially in urban areas.

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In my riding we produce large amounts of both natural gas and liquid petroleum, so I do not believe I can be accused of geographic bias. My objections to this bill are based on technological, economic, and environmental considerations. In other words, I am not lobbying for anyone.

• (1415)

I previously stated that there are certain applications where the use of these alternate fuels makes economic sense. Unfortunately, within the government fleet a very small number of vehicles have a sufficiently high annual fuel consumption or cover a sufficiently high annual distance to make them economically viable for conversion. This has been brought out by one of the government's own studies, the Bronson study, which indicated that only some 10 to 20 per cent of government vehicles are really good candidates for conversion.

However, in this bill the schedule of conversions suggests that by April 1, 1997, 50 per cent of all new vehicle purchases have to be for vehicles with alternate fuel capacity, one year later it is 60 per cent and finally building up to 75 per cent of new vehicle purchases in 1999. Ultimately 75 per cent of all vehicles in the fleet will have to run on some alternate fuel.

An amendment has been presented and passed in committee adding the words "where it is economically feasible". When this was discussed in committee nobody seemed to know exactly what that meant. Frankly, I do not know what it means either because where economically feasible can mean whatever one wants it to mean depending on who is presenting the argument. This muddy bill has been muddled even further with this amendment.

Let us do what we are supposed to do in this House which is to formulate policy. Let us not tell our fleet managers for heaven's sake how to manage their fleets. How nitpicking in detail do we get and for what reason?

I would suggest that the lobbyists who are pressing for this bill want to set a precedent. They want to show that there is an opening for their product. If they cannot sell it in the marketplace or convince people to convert on the basis of sound economics then they say: "Let us have the government mandate a market for us, even if it is just a little tiny one of 39,000 vehicles". If my amendment is accepted, it would be 25,000 vehicles out of some seven million cars and vans. It is not going to make a great deal of difference to them on the spot. However, it sets a precedent of government interference in the normal course of doing business in the fuel industry. That is what I and the Reform Party do not want to see.

I mentioned the environmental aspects. Everything is not black and white on the environmental effects of converting from gasoline or diesel over to natural gas and propane. Some

emissions actually are worse with the compressed gas products than they are with gasoline and diesel.

I refer specifically to nitrous oxides. Because of the higher compression ratios of the gas powered vehicles they are produced in considerably higher quantities than they are in gasoline and diesel motors. This has a profound effect on acid rain among other things. Other pollutants such as carbon dioxide are produced in lower quantities than the gaseous fuels. However, it is not entirely black and white.

Therefore, I am stating flatly that these decisions should be left to the experts, the people we pay to operate our motor pools. We as politicians should keep out of it. We are not all mechanics or engineers. Let us let the marketplace decide what will happen here. If the product is good these lobbyists should be out selling it to the people who have to do the buying, not selling it here in Parliament.

• (1420)

I almost hate to admit it but in part of our government we do have some good management, in the RCMP fleet. It has 32 per cent of the vehicles owned by the federal government apart from the crown vehicles. It certainly does not want to be put in a position of being mandated to do a conversion. Can we envisage pursuit cars on the highway powered by propane? The RCMP could change its slogan from "we get our man" to "we sometimes catch him if he does not have a good start".

Propane has its place; natural gas has its place. These places should be decided on the basis of practicality and realism, not on the basis of what some high powered lobbyist wants the government to do.

During first reading there was some comment about ways the government, if it is sincere about wanting to do away with emissions, could solve some of the problems without getting into conversion. I believe my hon. colleague from Macleod suggested the ministers with their big fat limousines could have their chauffeurs turn the motors off once in a while in winter when they are parked out front.

Maybe they could even go to smaller vehicles. I would like to see all the ministers put in very small cars. If the government really wants to cut down on the emission of noxious gases in the precincts of government it could drive the whole bunch of them into the Ottawa River. That would be a good form of closure.

[Translation]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you have been very patient so far, and I hope you will be patient with me, too.

This planet was loaned to us, so to speak, so that we could improve it if possible. If we want to leave a valuable legacy to our children, we must protect the earth. Obviously, I am in favour of Bill S-7, because its purpose is to convert 75 per cent

of all federal vehicles by the year 2004 so that they can run on fuels that are less damaging to the environment. I think that this should have been done a long time ago.

The bill defines alternative fuels as fuels that are less damaging to the environment. What I find harder to understand is that the expression “less damaging” is not defined in the bill. What does that mean?

In proper French, propane gas should be called “propane” instead of “propane gas”.

Here are some facts. The federal fleet now includes more than 39,000 vehicles, which emit some 156,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. This is terrible.

Every year, 570 million tonnes of various greenhouse gases are emitted into the air from coast to coast. This is called pollution. For the past 18 years or so, the gases accumulated in the air have caused a gradual warming of the planet. The best experts predict that the earth's average temperature will rise by 1.5 to 4.5 degrees Celsius within a few years, which is almost unbelievable.

• (1425)

This rise in temperature will have a major impact on sea levels, on ecosystems, of course, on the amount of drinking water and, as a result, on agriculture and human health.

Every year, new diseases appear. We do not know where they come from, but we know very well where they are leading us. They are leading us to our death, of course, without our realizing it. By polluting the environment, thus aggravating these diseases, we are killing thousands of children.

We will then spend enormous amounts on detecting these diseases. It is an endless cycle because, humans being what they are, they cannot keep adapt to nature. You know, nature is brilliantly organized; yet, with all our brains, we are going to destroy it.

The Canadian government has committed itself in front of the international community to stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at their 1990 level by the year 2000. The problem is however that, while she was prepared to do that much, the hon. minister was unable to get Cabinet approval. This means that there are several ministers on the other side of this House who are not aware of the consequences. That is a tragedy.

Carbon dioxide emissions in Quebec are half the Canadian average. We, in Quebec, have been taking our responsibilities in this regard for many years. If only the federal government would follow our lead. I am not saying that everything is hunky-dory in Quebec; much needs to be done, but compared to others, we are certainly on the right track.

Some, like the Reformers, question the validity of scientific results pointing to the existence of a greenhouse effect. I would

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like to share with you some of the reasons why I am for Bill S-7. In addition, this bill was introduced by a senator, and I congratulate him on that.

In a speech to this House, I said that the senators were creatures living in a large aquarium, in which they swim now and then, although not too fast, and then rest. But seriously—I must be logical and responsible here—there are senators who do an excellent job and the sponsor of this bill is one of them.

By passing Bill S-7, we will force the Canadian government to set an example. It will have to practice what it preaches, which it has never done yet.

Of course, Treasury Board directives were issued regarding the conversion and improved management of the federal fleet. However, we are forced to recognize that these have hit a wall of inaction and resistance to change. Only through legislation will the government departments and agencies be forced to comply with the new environmental priorities.

In addition, the federal government will save approximately \$43 million in fuel over five years and another \$15 million in the following years. Of course it will be a little more expensive. It will cost almost \$1,500 more per vehicle purchased, a total of approximately \$38.5 million more over a period of five years. However, it should also create savings of \$7 million over five years.

• (1430)

Converting the federal government's fleet will have a ripple effect which will break the vicious circle of the low demand for converted vehicles because of the small number of outlets selling the fuel, which itself is caused by the small number of converted vehicles on the road, etc. etc. We hope that the large car manufacturers and fuel suppliers will take this opportunity to develop new models and to cultivate new markets.

Clause 2, however, sets three conditions in the legal definition of an “alternative fuel”. The three conditions are the following. The fuel must be: (a) for use in motor vehicles to deliver direct propulsion; (b) less damaging to the environment than conventional fuels, and (c) prescribed by regulation.

I have some doubts about that definition, even though we support this bill.

One can, nevertheless, not help but wonder about the relevance of designating specific fuels which, after scientific analyses and the development of new technology, could very well be condemned within a few years as more harmful to the environment than other fuels.

I will give you an example. According to an article in *Le Devoir*, a study carried out by Carnegie University revealed that a 1988 vehicle which ran on electricity emitted 60 times more

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lead into the environment per kilometre than a comparable vehicle which ran on leaded gasoline.

What is considered less harmful at a given point in time can change drastically because of new developments and new technology.

Despite these reservations, we support Bill S-7. Canada, the second largest producer of garbage in the world, the second greatest energy consumer and second highest emitter of greenhouse gases per capita, cannot afford to once miss such an opportunity.

[English]

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I join in the debate today with a mixed message. Very few things we encounter in Parliament and in life are entirely black or entirely white. They are usually a shade of grey, with the notable exception of the ongoing pension debate which is fairly direct in black and white. One is either on the side of the angels on that one or not. Today we are talking about Bill S-7, the alternative fuels act. In my opinion it is not quite so cut and dried.

Our party is basically a free enterprise party. Our position is that if it can be done in the marketplace by the marketplace that is probably where the motivation and the determination for what happens in life should be made, primarily if we are talking about things commercial.

The legislation is typical of government's desire to somehow manipulate the market or determine what is best for Canadians rather than let the marketplace decide what is best for Canadians.

• (1435)

On the other side of the coin is the fact that most people are very much aware that some alternative fuels, specifically propane and natural gas, are far less polluting to the atmosphere. They are in great supply in Canada and are relatively cheap.

If we could induce the marketplace to convert to propane or to natural gas, we would definitely be in a win-win situation, especially if the inducement for the marketplace to convert was of a moral suasion nature rather than an inducement by having to spend taxpayers' money to do it.

Other aspects of the bill on alternative fuels are not so benign. My colleague who spoke before me raised the point about electric cars. There is a possibility that electric cars put more lead into the atmosphere than people had anticipated. When we talk about converting to ethanol we have to look beyond the immediate where it makes sense to use ethanol as a replaceable product. We can grow it. We can get it from the farms. It is not a

depleting resource. It makes sense, especially if it is mixed with gas. However, as we dig into the ethanol situation we discover the cost to the environment to produce ethanol is not so benign. It has to be fertilized. It costs a fair amount to grow the crop. Then resources have to be put into the refining of ethanol. The cost relative to gasoline is substantially higher.

The bill is not quite so easy. While part of it deals with alternative fuels which are readily changeable to and are very good for the environment, part of it also deals with other alternative fuels that may not be.

I should like to put on record a few thoughts about what happened in Brazil's mandate to move to ethanol:

Brazil's ethanol program is the world's largest and most ambitious government initiative supporting alternative motor fuels. In 1979, Brazil's passenger car fleet was comprised almost exclusively of gasoline vehicles; a decade later, about 30 per cent of its vehicles were built to run on ethanol. In the period 1975 to 1979, ethanol was blended with gasoline as a fuel extender in a 20 per cent ethanol-80 per cent gasoline blend.

In 1979, as a result of large oil price increases, the government decided that a new fuel—96 per cent ethanol—was needed to replace gasoline at the fastest possible rate. This decision meant that new fuel and automotive infrastructures were required. A large expansion of ethanol production capacity was needed to meet the government's new target of 10.7 billion litres by 1985. This changed the cost and character of the program: until 1979, ethanol production had been increased by using existing distilleries at sugar refineries; the 1985 ethanol production target could only be met by building new free-standing distilleries dedicated to producing ethanol. There were also new demands placed on the fuel distribution system. For example, local fuel stations needed to add pumps dedicated exclusively to dispensing ethanol fuel.

Consumers who had converted vehicles to take advantage of ethanol prices encountered problems with poor quality conversions. Also, after 1980, consumers faced higher fuel prices when the government increased ethanol prices [previously as low as 40 per cent of the price of gasoline].

This begs a question. We were going through the effort then to convert to alternative fuels that are cheaper today. What will happen when the market supply is such that suddenly there is enough demand? The price is likely to go up and we will not have a price advantage. That is the way the marketplace tends to work.

• (1440)

The quotation continues:

Consumers reacted rapidly, and ethanol vehicle sales fell to less than 10 per cent of total vehicle sales by July 1981.

The government then renewed its support for the program by holding ethanol prices at 59 per cent of gasoline prices for two years and extending ethanol vehicle purchase incentives. Auto makers improved ethanol vehicles by using corrosion resistant materials, adding a small pump to inject gasoline to reduce cold starting problems and improving ethanol vehicle warranties. Public confidence in ethanol vehicles steadily recovered, with purchases peaking in 1985 at about 95 per cent of the vehicle sales.

Ethanol demand began to outstrip production as early as 1986. From late 1989 to early 1990, there was an acute shortage of ethanol, and consumers with dedicated ethanol vehicles waited in long fuel lines. Ethanol vehicle sales dropped from over 50 per cent of the 1988 market to less than 4 per cent of vehicle sales in

mid-1990. Most cars made in Brazil now are designed for ethanol/gasoline blends rather than neat ethanol.

That was a long quote, but I thought it important to refer to the fact that once the government gets into the marketplace by regulating either the gasoline that can be sold, or the types of vehicles that should be sold, or in one way or another artificially changing the cost of a particular fuel, it sets up an intrinsic, automatic adjustment in the marketplace. The marketplace will be its own master. No matter how beneficial or how benign the intent behind a government motion might be, we cannot automatically assume that the result in the marketplace will have the same benign reaction.

As I said earlier, there are conversions which on the face of them make great sense: the conversion to propane or to liquefied natural gas, particularly the conversion to propane in Canada. I believe there are over 3,000 stations in existence today in Canada that will allow people to fill up their vehicles with propane. Propane is significantly lower in price than gasoline. It has wide acceptance in fleets of taxis. It has wide acceptance in other industrial fleets. It is a consumer recognized good product.

There is really no need for the government to provide any particular incentive for people to use common sense. We as a nation do not have the money any longer to be inducing consumers or changing the marketplace at our whim.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to this issue today. You can tell by looking at me that I am a person who believes in great efficiency.

We ought to do everything possible to utilize our available fuel sources in the most efficient manner and to conserve our environment. They are two very worthy goals and probably there is no debate from anyone on that point. There should be no difference. I believe all Canadians in general would agree.

If the goals in terms of moving people and materials in a transportation system are the most efficient use of limited resources and the elimination or reduction as much as possible of pollution of the air, ground and water environments, how should those goals be accomplished?

• (1445)

Once again we have an example of a government thinking that unless it legislates it, it will not happen. I reject that hypothesis forthwith. I am sure people who come up with ideas to pass these laws are well motivated. There is no doubt about that but when one thinks of producing a law such as the one we are looking at today, it does start out with the assumption that if this law were not passed nothing would happen.

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That is not true. By and large Canadians are becoming more aware of their environmental responsibilities and simply because of that they are beginning to make adjustments in their lifestyles. Members of my family and I have been doing this for a long time. We used alternate fuels to the day many years ago. When it was possible we rode our bicycles.

Maybe what the government should do is say everybody in the federal civil service instead of having a vehicle should have a bicycle. Maybe we should ask our Prime Minister who has gone from his Cadillac, Lincoln or whatever he had before to the Chevy to get a bicycle built for two. His assistant could help him provide the power. He would come toddling down Sussex Drive to the Hill every day.

Mr. Abbott: He rode a bike in Beijing.

Mr. Epp: He has proven he is athletically oriented and that would be a wonderful statement of government leadership in how to move passengers in an efficient way.

Members may know if they have ever read *Scientific American* that of all the modes of transportation the one requiring the least amount of energy per kilometre is the bicycle; the clear winner over every other form of transportation. If we want to reduce costs and pollution we ought to be pushing bicycles.

Bill S-7 specifies we should go for alternate fuels. One of the things that disturbs me or causes me the most amount of concern is here again we have the push toward quotas and legislative requirements. I know it is good to set goals. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with saying we ought to set a goal but the error in this bill is instead of using the legislation to set a performance goal we are using the legislation to set a method goal.

In other words, we are not saying we want to have vehicles run with better and cheaper fuel that pollute the atmosphere less. We are saying we require a certain quota of vehicles converted for alternate fuel.

I noticed in scanning the bill there is an internal contradiction. It states that by a 2001 the goal is to have 75 per cent of vehicles on alternate fuels. If 75 per cent of the vehicles are on a certain type of fuel, the other ones are the alternate because these are now in the majority. If we did that our definitions would have to be changed. That is a moot point but it is one where we need to be careful in what we say.

Most important, is it really cost effective? We know that to convert vehicles manufactured for one type of fuel is a costly activity. The return economically on that conversion is only there if the vehicle is driven a sufficient distance per year. For most of these conversion costs the fuel source is also less expensive and so there is a financial gain to be had. However, unless one drives the vehicle a sufficient distance it is not economical.

Private Members' Business

• (1450)

Approximately 70 per cent of vehicles owned by the federal government or its agencies are driven a distance less than the critical point at which it is economical to do the conversion. We need to go back one step and say that instead of converting existing vehicles we need to produce vehicles in the first place with the ability to handle current or alternate fuels.

Here again we have a great problem because it is impossible to predict with accuracy the future. It could well be because of certain economic or environmental disasters or things beyond our control that certain types of fuels will become unavailable in sufficient quantity. As the hon. member for Edmonton South-west mentioned, there have been examples of vehicles designed to run on one kind of fuel suddenly being parked because no fuel is available. It is wise to have dual fuel vehicles not only for the availability of the fuel but also in the event it goes out of the range of the alternate fuel station.

There are many dual vehicles. I have been a passenger in a vehicle in which there is a switch on the dash. It drives along on propane and as soon as the propane is gone and the propane station is out of range, the driver can flip a switch and the vehicle will resume running on gasoline as it was originally intended. That is a cost item. Vehicles which run on two fuels require a greater cost in manufacturing if it is done at the manufacturing level and certainly involves a cost if done at the conversion level.

Another factor is what proportion of the cost is the actual cost of producing the fuel and what proportion is the taxation. Provinces and certainly the federal government have fuel taxes. There has been a bit of publicity given to the latest fuel tax the government had the audacity to introduce in the last budget. It was a nominal 1.5 per cent per litre. Many Canadians do not realize that figure is not accurate; it is a new tax of 1.605 cents per litre since GST is paid on the tax as well. The government is not happy unless it is taxing the taxes.

Propane, compressed natural gas and normal gasoline, as we call it, have different taxation levels. It is no secret, at least in Alberta, that one of the main reasons propane is economical is simply that the government is not taxing it. At the manufacturing or refinery level the cost of the two fuels was not that much different. The tax differentiated them.

Perhaps we should simply change the tax structure to give a slight advantage to one fuel if it can be proven advantageous to the environment. Here again I express caution because we are now intruding in the marketplace and what we ought to be doing is setting performance standards, not method standards. In other words, we do not care how the goal is achieved; rather we do care the stated environmental goal is achieved.

I can think of specific examples in which governments have tried to encourage good environmental practices. I remember the \$100 tax on air conditioning. That was really a very bad tax, because there were a lot of vehicles that were much more efficient with air conditioning than without.

• (1455)

I would simply urge the government to think very carefully about passing bills of this nature, which are so coercive and are not clearly defined in terms of objectives to be met.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying for the Liberals: "If it moves, regulate it; if it does not, tax it". It seems to me that this bill is yet another one of them that is being supported. I recognize that it came originally from the other place of great rest. We took a look at it and we are wondering what we should be doing about it. Then when the Liberals took it under their wing as if it were one of their own, we really started to take a look at it and we realized that it fit the principle of "if it moves, regulate it".

One of the biggest problems we have in Canada today, whether it is this bill or anything else, is the constant, never-ending interference of all levels of government in everything we could possibly imagine: if it is interaction between people, let us legislate it and get it made right by legislation; if it is interaction between people relative to commerce then we have to make sure we have that absolutely airtight.

What do we have motor pool managers for? Why do we have departments in the government and crown corporations that look after matters like this? What is their job? If their job is not to manage, if their job is not to make good sound judgments that can be based strictly on economics or can be based on a combination of economics and environment or can be made strictly for the purpose of environment, what are they there for? The government desires to consistently interfere and get into the faces, get into the lives, get into the wallets, get into the back pockets of every Canadian. It is a piece of work.

In doing a little research for this, I reviewed a document called "Comparative Analysis of Alternative Transportation Fuels", put out by Clean Fuels Consulting Inc. in Toronto with branches in the States. I was interested in page 5 of the document which relates directly to my question of what do we have motor pool managers for, why are they there, do they not have any level of expertise. I do not profess to have any expertise so I went to the source.

As an example: "High alcohol fuels have problems with cold starts because the fuel does not vaporize easily. This problem does not exist for compressed natural gas and propane, where the fuel is already in the vapour phase to begin with. However,

these gases have a high ignition temperature and a high ignition delay, which could cause some cold start problems.”

Rather than taking the time of the House to read more of this documentation, I just cite that as one example of the little bit of research that even a novice like myself can do to come across the fact that there are some serious problems that professional motor pool managers, people in the whole business of moving vehicles, moving people or materials in those vehicles, should be able to have a handle on. I would bow to their wisdom before I would bow to the wisdom of any member of the House, unless they had equal understanding, background, and schooling.

For example, in talking about gasoline, another piece of research that came to me is that emission controls are working. In the past 15 years, unburned hydrocarbon emissions have been reduced by 98 per cent, nitrous oxides by 90 per cent, and carbon monoxide by 96 per cent.

Again, I do not cite these numbers to in any way infer that I am an expert on this topic. I am merely asking, other than any members in the House who by pure coincidence happen to be experts, why are we as members of Parliament coming forward with this kind of legislation that will give quotas?

• (1500)

I go back to the fact the government seems to have a thing about quotas for everything. If the country does not have enough of this kind of person in this kind of industry, then we will have a quota. We have seen what the people of Ontario thought about that kind of legislation last night.

The government just does not get it. It does not understand there is such a thing as a free market that actually drives the economy, that brings us to a norm, to a proper level.

This morning I received a letter from a gentleman from Superior Propane in Unionville, Ontario via fax. I appreciated receiving the letter. He was trying to suggest to me reasons why this is a good bill and should be passed. His concluding sentence is: “I look forward to the record of the vote showing your endorsement of this valuable bill”.

I am prepared to listen to the debate on this bill and make a determination which way I will be voting at the conclusion of the debate but it is pretty obvious which direction I am leaning at this point.

He says: “I am contacting you regarding S-7, an important piece of legislation awaiting third reading in the House”. Then he explains five benefits of passing the bill like “industrial benefits resulting from increased private sector investment of \$40 million to \$50 million”.

With government mandating certain things through legislation we are going to be generating \$40 million to \$50 million worth of private sector investment. The question I have is, if we

were not mandating this would that private sector investment be happening? In other words, I want to get a balance between those things.

His second point is diversification of transportation energy, thus increasing competition among transportation fuel suppliers and economies to consumers. His third point is expanded markets for canola farmers. His fourth point is diversification of the western economy.

It raises this question in my mind. If we have literally millions of vehicles that roll up and down the road, whether private vehicles, cars, trucks or whatever, or if we have vehicles that are not in the private sector but are owned by government, what is the comparison?

The number of government vehicles is in the tens of thousands whereas the number of vehicles that are actually on the road are in the many millions. It then begs the question: Why are we doing this? We are talking about expanded markets for canola farmers. Surely converting the tens of thousands of vehicles that are owned by the federal government is not going to make a significant difference to canola farmers, and diversification of the western economies is, with all due respect to this gentleman, something of a stretch.

However, in his fifth point he suggests the savings to the taxpayers resulting from reduced operating costs in the federal fleet are estimated at \$4 million to \$6 million annually. It then begs the question: If savings of \$4 million to \$6 million annually could be had by making these conversions, and if the government presently is trying to watch every dollar it is presently spending, why is it necessary to pass legislation? If the motor pool managers and the people who are in charge of these fleets cannot see there is a \$4 million to \$6 million annual savings and they are not prepared to do it, maybe they should be fired.

I go back to page 13 of my research on this comparative analysis of alternative transportation fuels. I refer to what my colleague from Edmonton Southwest was mentioning about the situation in Brazil and I will recall one sentence. From 1989 to early 1990 there was an acute shortage of ethanol and consumers with dedicated ethanol vehicles waited in long fuel lines.

• (1505)

We have seen with this and also with the artificial level of taxation on propane that the government has a tremendous ability to manipulate the private sector. Within the bill there consistently appears the phrase “where it is cost effective and operationally feasible”. I am suggesting, is this legislation actually necessary? Are there not some other ways of achieving exactly the same thing? Surely we can reduce the amount of legislation that is currently on our slate. It seems to be pushing the government to all of these wonderful hours of time allocation and extended hours. Perhaps we could just dispose of this bill.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I remind the House that at 3.10 p.m. I will put the question.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will just make a few remarks.

My hon. friend from Elk Island mentioned perhaps buying bicycles and saving some energy that way. I would suggest perhaps we should match the speed of our vehicles to the speed that the government moves. It would mean that we would go back to the horse and buggy days.

Putting horses on the Hill might have a double advantage. We could collect the methane produced by these animals and run the little green buses. In that way we could really save energy. It would help tremendously environmentally and also help non-renewable resources.

When I heard the member for Kingston and the Islands this afternoon there was so much hot air coming from that side of the House it led me to think we could do away with the airlines and travel by hot air balloons. That would really help us conserve energy in the air industry. We have good ideas around here, if we could just get the government to move fast enough to implement them.

I have mentioned before but I will mention again that over the last two years we have been backtracking grain from the west to Thunder Bay. As we heard today, we then take it from Thunder Bay to California. If we had changed our attitude and gone the shortest route we could have probably saved enough energy for the House and crown corporations to operate their vehicles on regular fuel and still be gallons and gallons ahead as far as energy consumption is concerned.

It is always a matter of using the most reliable and most efficient system. Back in the 1940s and early 1950s a big move was on toward propane in the farm industry, especially for tractors and some other vehicles. Very soon it was realized the value of the energy was not there. It slowed down machinery and the conversions that were done quickly faded away. It was just a matter of wasted money.

One of the members pointed out that the RCMP would look very foolish with a propane car. That is probably what would happen. Substitutions would be made. Vehicles would be switched over to different fuels and because of taxes or inefficiencies of that system they would be done away with and vehicles would return to the regular energy.

I appreciate these few minutes. I hope that some day I do see the horses and buggies back on the Hill, because it will sure speed up things the way this government is moving on some of this stuff.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Colleagues, I might have inadvertently misled you when in my exuberance and it being Friday and wanting to get to other duties I said I would put the question. It was in fact the wrong technical term.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 3.10 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 3.11 p.m.)

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