



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 133 • NUMBER 005 • 2nd SESSION • 35th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, March 4, 1996**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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## CORRIGENDUM

In the column at left on page 188 of Hansard, Friday March 1, 1996, under "Government Business", the mention should read as follows:

MOTION NO. 1—NOTICE OF MOTION FOR CLOSURE

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, concerning the debate on government Motion No. 1, I give notice that, at the next sitting of the House, I will move that debate be not further adjourned.

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**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 4, 1996

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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[*English*]

## PRIVILEGE

SFT COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING BOOK

**The Speaker:** Before we begin with orders of the day, I have a point of privilege from the member for Beaver River.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time.

I rise on a question of contempt of Parliament. The issue is one that I originally raised as a question of personal privilege on February 28 on the floor of the House. After further consideration of all the information, I now raise this matter as a concern to all members of Parliament in the context of a contempt of Parliament.

I cite Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, page 192:

While privilege may be codified, contempt may not, because new forms of obstruction are constantly being devised and that Parliament must be able to invoke its penal jurisdiction to protect itself against these new forms; there is no closed list of classes of offences punishable as contempts of Parliament.

I intend to prove in my arguments that Mr. Simpson of the Prime Minister's office coerced, intimidated and incited staff of the House of Commons into not fulfilling their mandate to answer to a request for printing made by me on February 28 and that this constitutes a contempt of the House. Consequently I will be asking, Mr. Speaker, that if you rule this a *prima facie* case of privilege, this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination.

It is difficult to determine what any House of Parliament will consider as an offence and a contempt of Parliament. Erskine May describes contempt as:

Any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or

officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as contempt even though there is no precedent for the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary. Nevertheless, certain broad principles may be deduced from a review of the kinds of misconduct which in the past either House has punished as a contempt.

On October 29, 1980 a Speaker of this House had this to say:

The dimension of contempt of Parliament is such that the House will not be constrained in finding a breach of privileges of members, or of the House. This is precisely the reason that, while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.

The House shall not be constrained in dealing with this matter. It is a very serious matter and should be taken up by the Standing Committee of Procedure and House Affairs for further study.

It is very important at this time to understand the sequence of the events in this matter. Since I went through those last week I do not know if we need all the gory details again. However, suffice it to say that when I requested a printing order from the printing people they were willing to fulfil my request and had already completed 48 out of the 60 copies I had requested when not only one but two phone calls were made from the department to the Prime Minister's office to talk about the number of copies that would be available. It then slipped out erroneously from the printing department that it had run off copies and that it was for an opposition member.

At that point, Mr. Simpson in the Prime Minister's office said: "No, do not fulfil her request". It certainly limits me or any other member of the House of Commons when somebody from the Prime Minister's office can know what is going on and what members are asking to be printed, and further that somebody there would have the gall to say do not print that.

I give notice and read the following motion which I am prepared to put forward. I move:

That Mr. Simpson of the Prime Minister's office coerced, intimidated and incited staff of the House of Commons into not fulfilling their mandate to answer to a request for printing made on February 28, 1996 by the member for Beaver River, and that this constitutes a contempt of this House, and consequently that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination.

*Privilege*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will recall that I did rule on what I feel is the first part of the question which she put before the House in review. The second part constitutes something quite different from what we dealt in the first, which was an administrative matter.

• (1105)

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you have already ruled on this issue. I do not think the hon. member has all the facts. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, before you proceed we should find out exactly to whom the document belongs.

In any caucus there are documents that belong to it. All caucuses have documents such as research papers which belong to the caucus and we ask the House printer to print them for caucus members, whether from the government, the official opposition or the Reform Party.

Mr. Speaker, before you proceed you should inquire as to the exact ownership of the document. I think the hon. member is coming back on a ruling you have already made. I do not see any new facts. They are the same facts, the same document, the same person she referred to last week. Before you proceed, you should inquire more about the facts.

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard briefly some of the remarks from outside the Chamber, remarks with regard to the alleged question of privilege today.

As the deputy House leader has just indicated, the Chair has already ruled on the issue. To raise the issue again with a further belief that the same point is valid even though it has been rejected by the Chair is not usually recognized by the Chair as being valid in itself.

The Board of Internal Economy has its own entity of the board and a subcommittee on printing. If my agenda is correct, we have a meeting of the subcommittee on printing only a few days from now. There are representatives from each of the political parties on that subcommittee of the board on printing. I believe the whip of the Reform Party is a member of that subcommittee. That sounds like an appropriate vehicle through which to raise the issue even though it is not a question of privilege, as the Speaker has indicated to us.

There is probably a suitable forum to raise the issue there to see if anything that has occurred is inappropriate, notwithstanding that it is not a point of privilege, and to determine what correction or restitution is in order if an offence by someone has been committed at any time.

We do have that structure. It was created by the Board of Internal Economy, which was created by the House. The issue could be

appropriately dealt with in that forum. I understand we are only a few days away from a meeting of that group.

**Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in reference to the chief government whip's statement I would have to disagree that it is appropriate for this matter to be dealt with in that subcommittee. The issue here is not printing. The issue here is interference, bold faced interference by the Prime Minister's office.

This is a serious enough matter that we as members of the House want to redress it in the most appropriate forum, which is certainly not that subcommittee.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was in the House when the issue was first raised by the hon. member, at which time the Speaker also ruled.

My understanding is that when a matter comes forward like this in the same form after the Speaker has ruled, it is effectively a challenge to the Chair.

• (1110)

I would like to have clarification of whether it is the intention of the member to challenge the Chair's ruling with regard to the matters that have been addressed in the House. That is an extremely important point for all members. The integrity of the Chair is very important to the House.

**Miss Grey:** Mr. Speaker, it certainly is not my intention to challenge the Chair ever. You and I had a meeting along with the clerk of the House of Commons. New facts came out when you talked to me very specifically about the printing department and all those departments being under your supervision.

We are not talking about printing here. We are talking about interference by the Prime Minister's office which, Mr. Speaker told me clearly, was not under his jurisdiction. I am talking about a contempt of Parliament by the Prime Minister's office, not the printing department.

**The Speaker:** We understand that the point of privilege on which I ruled has now been set aside.

Regarding the second point, the point of contempt, I would like to inform myself, get more information, seeing as I have been asked by both the deputy House leader for the government and by the Reform Party to consider the information.

I ask that the hon. member for Beaver River table the document she referred to in her contempt of Parliament. If you will give me some time, I will come back to the House with a ruling which I hope will be clear to all members.

If that will be deposited with the clerk, it will form part of the other point that was brought up, which I will look at. I will come back to the House if necessary.

*Government Orders*

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MOTION NO. 1—MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved:

That, with regard to Government Orders, Government Business No. 1, debate be not further adjourned.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 4)

**YEAS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allmand	Anawak
Arseneault	Assadourian
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélaïr
Bélangier	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brushett
Bryden	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Chamberlain	Chan
Clancy	Collenette
Collins	Cowling
Crawford	Culbert
DeVillers	Dingwall
Discepola	Dromisky
Duhamel	Dupuy
Easter	English
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harper (Churchill)
Hopkins	Hubbard
Iftody	Irwin
Jackson	Jordan
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kirkby	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka

LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lee
Lincoln	Loney
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marleau	Massé
McCormick	McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Payne
Peric	Peters
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Ringuette-Maltais	Robichaud
Robillard	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Serré	Shepherd
Sheridan	Simmons
St. Denis	Stewart (Brant)
Szabo	Telegdi
Thalheimer	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Walker
Wood	Young
Zed—119	

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott	Bachand
Bélsile	Bellehumeur
Blaikie	Brien
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)	Canuel
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Cummins
Dalphon-DuGirard	de Jong
Deshaies	Duceppe
Duncan	Epp
Fillion	Frazier
Gagnon (Québec)	Gauthier
Grey (Beaver River)	Grubel
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harris	Hart
Hayes	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hoepfner
Jacob	Lalonde
Landry	Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Loubier	Marchand
Mayfield	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
McLaughlin	Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)	Morrison
Nunez	Penson
Picard (Drummond)	Ramsay
Ringma	Rocheleau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
Silye	Solberg
Solomon	Speaker
St-Laurent	Thompson
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)—60

**PAIRED MEMBERS**

Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Bergeron
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Blondin-Andrew
Caccia	Caron
Catterall	Cauchon
Copps	Crête
Debien	Dubé
Dumas	Fewchuk

*Government Orders*

Gaffney  
Lebel  
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)  
MacAulay  
Manley  
Ménard  
Milliken  
Paradis  
Pomerleau  
Stewart (Brant)  
Verran

Laurin  
Leblanc (Longueuil)  
Leroux (Shefford)  
MacDonald  
McKinnon  
Mercier  
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)  
Paré  
Sauvageau  
Tremblay (Rosemont)  
Wells

• (1150)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to.)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this motion calls for the reinstatement of any government bills at the same stage under the same legislative procedure and process at which they stood at the time of prorogation.

Why is this necessary? Why not introduce legislation from the session before we prorogued which is new and improved? All those bills that are at various stages and which all members know can be improved upon, why not bring them back in their new forms?

Why did the Prime Minister prorogue? To give a confusing throne speech? He talks about a national referendum in the throne speech or is there not a national referendum? He talked about creating jobs and not creating jobs. He said that maybe it is not the government which should create jobs, it should be the business community. He talked about national unity: Is it plan A, plan B or no plan at all?

• (1155)

**An hon. member:** No plan at all.

**Mr. Silye:** No plan at all. That is probably what he has.

The point is, why did the Prime Minister prorogue if only to introduce this motion to bring back any of the legislation, anytime the government wants at any stage at which the legislation was if it is similar to the current bill? Why did we prorogue?

**An hon. member:** For a photo op.

**Mr. Silye:** For a photo op. I never thought of that one.

We were happily working along in the 35th Parliament. We were happily going about our business trying to make the government be held accountable. We were working along trying to ensure that the bills that were being passed were as good as possible and trying to give our constructive criticisms.

What happened? The Prime Minister said: “Whoa, let’s clean the slate. Let’s just take three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine weeks”, how many weeks did we take off? He said: “Let’s just take

that time off. We will prorogue and we will come back with a new slate. We will come back here with a new throne speech, a new direction, a new vision and new ideas for Canada”. What do we get? Motion M-1: “Let’s bring back all the old bills whenever we want. We will not tell the opposition when; we will just sneak them in there when we can and at the same stage”.

That is anti-democratic and very autocratic. The use of closure which we just voted on is a violation of the freedom of speech within the House. It is a violation of the freedom to openly express our thoughts and our points of view. By limiting the debate, by limiting the time in which we can debate this, we are forcing members of Parliament to be quiet. We are allowing this freely, democratically elected Prime Minister to be a dictator and he is dictating to us by his very action.

Why is the government acting just like the previous government, but only worse? When the Liberal members were on this side of the House they accused the Tories of using closure and time allocation and the hue and cry went out. I can remember watching them on television saying it was anti-democratic and asking why debate was being limited. All the arguments they were using I am using now, except they are over on the other side and they are laughing. Already the Liberals have used time allocation and closure in the 35th Parliament more times than the Conservative government did during its mandate of four years.

The Prime Minister when he was opposition leader sat here criticizing former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney asking: “Why are you travelling outside the country? Why are you going all over the world when the problems are here in Canada? We have to solve our problems with Quebec; we have to solve our problems with Alberta, B.C., Ontario and the Atlantic provinces? Why are you travelling all over the world?”

Now that he is Prime Minister, the current Prime Minister has already travelled more outside this country. He is very close to being outside this country more, while we have to run this government, than he has been in the country. This Prime Minister has travelled more than the previous Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

Why is he doing this exactly in contradiction? I have already mentioned prorogation. When the Conservatives prorogued the House and they came back in, all they wanted to do was bring back five bills. That is all the Conservatives wanted to do, bring back five bills. When the Liberals were on this side in opposition the hue and cry that went out about those five bills, about how it was anti-democratic, how it was short circuiting the system, how it was changing the parliamentary rules. They said: “We would never do that if we were over there because we are better than you guys. We would be different”.

What did they do now that they are over there? Exactly the same thing as the Conservative Party did, only worse. They sat over here

*Government Orders*

and watched the Tory GST come in. They said: "That is not the way to do it. We should look at tax reform. We should look at other ways of replacing this manufacturers' sales tax. We would get rid of it. We hate it. We would kill it". What have they done in two and a half years? They have not got rid of it. They have not killed it.

On Senate appointments, how they used to sit here in opposition and criticize those Senate appointments and they are doing it the very same way. They are doing it for the very same purposes, the very same reasons as the Conservatives.

• (1200)

What has changed? All that has been done is change the faces of the people in government. The system has not been changed. In fact, it is worse. What about the latest appointment to the Senate? I am sure the gentleman is a fine, outstanding Canadian citizen but he is eight months away from having to retire after he is appointed to the job. Does it not take six to eight months to learn the job of a senator? It takes at least a year to learn the job as a member of Parliament. By the time this gentleman learns the job he is out and is replaced by someone else. Why not put someone in the Senate who has some time to learn and contribute something?

**An hon. member:** He is just holding it for another Liberal.

**Mr. Silye:** The action by this government on Motion No. 1 is anti-democratic, is short-circuiting the system and is a very lazy way of governing the country. That is, I think, the secret of the success of this government. It is a do very little or do nothing and keep the Canadian public asleep and quiet. Do not get them upset with any controversial issues. Distort the truth. Tell the Canadian public that we have broken the back of the deficit. Tell the Canadian public that this is the best bill that has ever come along since sliced bread. Then, as the leader of the country, stand up and say: "Don't worry. Be happy. Everything is okay. Quebecers are happy. All Canadians are happy. Everything is fine".

I am disappointed in the government's actions. I am disappointed that government members will not act and behave the way they said they would when they were in opposition.

I submit the following as being the real reason the government is doing this. It has no real, new, substantive legislation planned for this session. Therefore, it needs an inventory to draw on. What better inventory than the 32 bills that are sitting in abeyance somewhere in various stages? If it has a slow Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, when the member for the opposition party gets up on the Thursday question and asks: "What is in store the next week?", the government will be able to just pick one out here or there or knowing that a committee is not very busy and it will just pick another one out and get the committee busy. That is why the government did this. It has nothing planned.

Look at the throne speech. What is in the throne speech that sets out anything newer than what it said in the first throne speech? What is in the throne speech that gives it a new direction or a new focus so Canadians can feel there is something to look forward to? What is there?

**Some hon. members:** Nothing at all.

**Mr. Silye:** This prorogation was strictly for the purposes of general appearances, to make it look as if the government is still in control. As members will recall, before we prorogued things were unravelling, unsettling.

This Prime Minister bragged about that red book. He bragged about the people he was attracting to that party. He said he had the plan. He said he had the people. However, we very quickly found out that there was no plan because they spent all those months in committees trying to come up with the purple book, the green book, the lavender book and the grey book.

Talk about the people. He fired everybody. His people were so good he fired them all. He fired all the parliamentary secretaries. He fired some cabinet ministers. Where are the people? Those people he brought in, I believe 178 of them, were so good that he had to bring in two more from the outside. Now we have byelections to bring in two new members. Not only have they never been elected before, not only have they never served in public office before; they are cabinet ministers. Right away they are cabinet ministers. How good are these people? For general appearances, that was my point.

Liberals brag about how wonderful their first two years were and how the wonderful finance minister in two years of rolling targets is meeting these soft targets, how great he is and how much better he is than any previous finance minister. I will give him credit for this: the previous finance ministers have been a sorry lot. They could not even project three, four or five months ahead. At least I will give the finance minister credit for setting a target, no matter how soft, and meeting it. He made some cuts, no matter how meagre, and met them and beat them. That is good for the investment community. It just has to be done a little bit quicker.

However, that is about the only thing government members can brag about. Do they brag about abrogating the NAFTA? The Prime Minister in opposition said: "If elected I will abrogate NAFTA unless they change certain clauses". Do members know what really happened? They signed it as was. They did not change one word or one letter in the agreement. They just signed it.

• (1205)

The Liberals said that when they were elected they would protect civil servants. They did a good job of that. They fired 45,000 of them. They promised no big spending cuts. Since they have been in office, during the past two and one-half years, they have announced \$15 billion in spending cuts. That is less than what Reformers would have cut but where did they cut the most? Right

*Government Orders*

where it hurts people the most: in education, in health care and in welfare.

The Reform Party, the party that has been accused of being slash and burn, would have cut \$3 billion less than the government on health care, education and welfare. The government's combined cuts with its Canadian social and health transfer is \$6.6 billion and ours would have been only \$3 billion; that is \$3 billion more than we would have cut.

Talk about slash and burn. Talk about draconian. That is the party that should be embarrassed. That is the party that is down loading its problems to the provinces. The provinces now have to deliver the programs for education, health care and welfare. Now they just sit back over there on that side of the House and say: "Boy, did we pull a good one on the provinces, eh? We give them less money, we made our cuts. Now they have to administer it".

Guess whose Parliament gets rocks thrown in the windows? Not the House of Commons but Queen's Park. Guess which premiers get all the flack? Not the Prime Minister but Mike Harris and Ralph Klein. They have to take all the flack over health care and education when they are trying to administer the diminishing funds they are getting. They should have had \$3 billion more.

Talk about smart. That is smart. It is smart politics but it is not smart government. It is not smart investment of money.

Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech did the Liberals brag—I believe the only reason they prorogued the House was to do some bragging—about eliminating that GST? No. Once again that is smart politics. What did they do? They are now going to introduce a new national sales tax that combines provincial sales taxes with the goods and services tax, calling it the national sales tax.

Do we think the federal government is going to reduce its take from 7 per cent? No. It will expect the tax to go through, combine it with the provinces and call it one tax. I recall when the finance minister was in opposition. He criticized the GST as the replacement for the manufacturers' sales tax. I cannot quite remember the quote, but to paraphrase the finance minister he said that replacing one bad tax with another new bad tax, it still remains a bad tax. Is that not the same logic as that exhibited by the finance minister now? Does a national sales tax which combines a provincial and a federal tax not leave the rates the same? They were bad taxes separately. Is it still not a bad tax to combine them? Does it not remain a bad tax under a different name?

**An hon. member:** What will it do to Alberta?

**Mr. Silye:** What will it do to the province of Alberta that does not have a provincial sales tax? Are we going to make that government collect 15 per cent of taxes, then rebate people? The

government does not brag about things like that. That is very smart politics. The Liberals know how to pull the wool over people's eyes, to distort the truth just a little by talking about what they are doing and how they are doing it. If they say it often enough then people might just believe it.

Do the Liberals brag about all the broken promises they have made but have not kept? There must be a lot of people that voted Liberal who are very disappointed in the government's efforts. In fact, I happen to know of a lot of backbenchers that are unhappy with the government's efforts. I know why they are unhappy. They are unhappy about that GST and the promise of replacing or eliminating it. The red book says replace.

The newspapers have been quite clear that when the Liberals campaigned door to door—I cannot name the members because I do not know their ridings—many of the members around Toronto said, "We will get rid of the GST. We hate the GST. This is an awful tax. It is not going to be there. You vote for us and it is gone. The GST is gone".

The red book says replace which I understand. I understand the Prime Minister saying: "I hate it. I would kill it. We will get rid of it. Now I have to find something to replace it with". I know he did say that. He said that in some speeches. I heard him say that in Calgary when I went to listen to him speak.

However, I hear that a lot of the backbenchers around Toronto did not say that. They went door to door and said: "Vote for me, we'll get rid of the GST". They did not say that would replace it with something revenue neutral. They did not get that elaborate. A lot of the backbenchers are worried about the next election. They are saying that unless the government gets rid of the GST, harmonizes it, hides it or something, and tries to keep this promise, their chances of getting re-elected are nil. It is about integrity. It is about keeping one's word. It is about making a promise and keeping that promise. The government is slowly eroding the foundations of the word called integrity. A national sales tax will be the son of the GST. However, once again it is smart politics but it is not good government.

• (1210)

One of the biggest promises made by the Prime Minister during his campaign was made September 10, 1993, about a month and a half before the vote. He said there would not be a promise that he would make in the campaign that he would not keep. Fair enough.

Five days later he said something to the effect that anyone could go before him at any time with that red book, wave it in his face and say, where are you with your promises? By the points that I made, where is the Prime Minister with his promises?

*Government Orders*

He broke the promise on NAFTA. He broke the promise on protecting the civil service. He broke the promise on big spending cuts. He broke the promise on the GST or he has not kept it yet, although he still has time. He can still get rid of it. We will wait for him. Mr. Prime Minister, where are you with your promises? Mr. Prime Minister, why are you acting like your predecessor, but even worse? How can you sit on that side of the House?

Reformers could never do that. Once we become the government, we are going to keep our promises. We are going to run this government the way we said we would. We kept our promises. We have kept everything up front, above board and we plan to do that all the way through. The government said one thing to get elected and now its members act like the previous government did in power.

That is a great and huge disservice to the Canadian voting public. That is not the way to retain one's integrity. I do not understand how the Prime Minister can get away with saying one thing in opposition and doing another in government. Now in government the Liberals say they will do something, then not do it or do the opposite.

The Prime Minister is sending out such confusing and convoluted messages whether he says it in French or in English. No matter who is listening, it is confusing, convoluted and complicated. Why can we not get a clear direction from the government? We ask questions in question period. Are we going to have a national referendum on the issue of national unity? Should Quebecers decide for themselves whether or not they should be voting on that issue or should all Canadians have a say?

Anybody can petition for divorce but both parties have to agree to the terms. Maybe that is where some of the separatist members of the Bloc Quebecois can see the government's side. When one gets to the terms of the settlement, perhaps it does take two sides to negotiate and to decide what the consequences of that break-up would be.

This is where the Bloc members could take a look at that new cabinet minister who is not a member yet. He is suggesting that both parties look at it.

Why will the Prime Minister not run Parliament like he promised when he was in opposition? Why will the Prime Minister not live up to the standard that the Canadian public expected of him? He is a very popular individual. He has a personality that is liked by all walks of life. He is an individual who has spent 30 years of his life serving the public.

At the end of those 30 years, is it not worthwhile to be able to say that he kept his word, his promises? Is it not better at the end of 30 years to be able to say that he meant what he said, that he said what he meant and did it instead of caging this all in flowery rhetoric, confusing everybody, hiring spin doctors to give the right image and playing politics all the way through?

• (1215)

I am embarrassed for the government. I am embarrassed that it is doing a worse job than the Conservative Party ever did in terms of the rules of the House and how it is trying to force its legislation through with the use of closure, time allocation and with motions that make it appear to be a government that is not interested in following the democratic process.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Colleagues, we do not have 10 minutes of questions and comments now since the vote. We will therefore go directly to the hon. member for Mercier.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I strongly object to the motion before us. First of all, for the people watching or listening to us, I should explain what this motion means. It would allow a minister, during the first 30 sitting days of this session, to restore a bill to the same legislative stage it had reached at the time of prorogation simply by making a statement at the first reading stage of the bill. This bill must be exactly in the same form as it was during the last session.

For someone who is not familiar with House proceedings, this may sound like normal procedure but we cannot find any precedents for such a motion. Since 1938, there has been only one example of such a motion: in 1991, the Tory government tabled a motion for debate on March 28 and then imposed closure on May 29.

Before 1991, parliamentary tradition dictated that such a motion be agreed to with the unanimous consent of the House. The Liberals, who were then in opposition, strongly denounced that motion as irregular and undemocratic.

According to parliamentary tradition, when the government puts an end to a session, it usually means that it has achieved its goals. If some bills die on the Order Paper, the government has only itself to blame. A new session means that it must submit new bills to the House of Commons to be examined right from the start.

We are asking government members to object to it if they want to be consistent with what they said in 1991, when they denounced this process in very strong terms.

If they ever decided to vote in favour of this motion, we would end up with bills such as the one on employment insurance—whose number I cannot recall—which would have come before the House only at the report and third reading stages. They are bypassing all the usual legislative stages, as I recall that the employment insurance bill did not go through second reading in the usual way. The government used a parliamentary tactic that also bypassed the usual procedure.

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• (1220)

At second reading, all members were not allowed to express their views as they should on such an important bill; instead, we in the opposition had to make do with six times ten minutes. This is absolutely disgraceful, especially considering the absolutely ridiculous amount of time we were given to inform the public about the details of former Bill C-111—whose new number we are not about find out, I hope—because that is what serving in Parliament is about.

What is the use of readings, of broadcasting readings, if not to inform the public? The public has not received all the information it should have been provided with regarding this bill on employment insurance.

The government interfered with the normal second reading process. When people protested vehemently, supported by their bishops in the Gaspé Peninsula and by their Churches in other parts of Canada, instead of abiding by parliamentary procedure and withdrawing the bill, or letting it die on the Order Paper and introducing a revised bill, as requested by any and every one who cares about the ordinary people of Canada, this government impertinently seeks to bring the bill back before the House, during the second session of this Parliament, while skipping all other stages.

This is my first experience as a member of Parliament, and I thought that the House of Commons of Canada provided a certain decorum, certain democratic guarantees and a forum where the people could inform themselves and their representatives, in the opposition that is, could raise in public—and be given the time they need to make their point—the serious problems posed by various bills.

I am forced to realize that this is a far cry from how I thought the British parliamentary system was used in Canada. This government motion goes farther than anything before. This government motion is, to put it bluntly, antidemocratic. It is unusual and, as such, problematic.

That is why, as energetically as we can, we urge the government not to proceed according to this motion, but rather according to the parliamentary spirit, which provides that, within the course of any given session, a certain procedure shall be followed after a bill has been read for the first time, that allows the opposition to play its role.

Let us not forget that, unless the opposition is free and able to express its views, there can be no democratic process. The role of the opposition is a fundamental one, and a crucial one as well. And when we find ourselves in a situation like this, with a bill as fundamentally important to ordinary people as the employment insurance bill, that will go to committee without having undergone proper consideration at second reading and come back before this House only for committee report and third reading, we are dealing

with highly unusual procedures, which are totally unacceptable. Ordinary citizens are not properly served, or else this is a drastic and serious change in parliamentary procedure in the House of Commons.

• (1225)

Numerous rallies were held in various Canadian provinces, including Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, by people who are disgusted with the major changes included in a bill that was supposed to have died on the Order Paper, but that will now be referred to committee if the government passes its legislation.

People are concerned; they do not know what to do. Unemployment insurance is the only security for millions of Canadians and Quebecers. There are some who do not understand that, because they have financial security; they have money and a steady job. But for all the others, unemployment insurance is the only security they have. And I could add that it takes them a long time to get that security, often a full six weeks. However, few people can save enough to survive six weeks with no income, but it is possible to somehow manage, if one knows that one will at least get a minimum income.

Everyone is urging the minister to withdraw this bill and conduct an in-depth review of its provisions, because it changes everything. It creates conditions whereby, for example, young people, newcomers to the labour market will have to work six months before being eligible for UI benefits, at a rate of 35 hours of work per week.

Everyone knows that these conditions are hard to meet for a woman who re-enters the labour force, for a new immigrant, for someone who has been sick for more than two years or who left the labour force, or for a young person entering the labour market. It is difficult to keep a first employment. Some do find a stable first job that pays well, but this is uncommon. In real life, this is a rare occurrence indeed.

What does that bill imply? It means that, from now on, in spite of having worked at one, two or three jobs, many people who have not managed to get six months of employment at an average of 35 hours per week will have to rely on their friends and family, or go on welfare. This is what it means. It means that, instead of entering the labour market and, given existing conditions, being able to count on some help to tide them over between jobs, people entering the workforce will immediately get the feeling that they are being ejected from it.

This bill contains some discriminatory measures. It also completely changes the old rules.

• (1230)

Unfortunately, we will have the opportunity to speak of it a great deal, and I am obliged to tell you that we in the Opposition want the government to listen to the Canadian coalition and to withdraw

this bill, or rather just leave it where it is. It does not need to be withdrawn because it is supposed to have died on the Order Paper. We do not want the government to resuscitate it in its current state, for it is a bill which bodes nothing but despair.

The government may well say: "But the demonstrations involved only a few thousand people here, a few thousand people there, another hundred somewhere else." But it cannot claim that this bill has not brought out crowds in opposition. Does the government not make any move unless it is facing a large enough crowd? Has it not itself studied the economic impact of the bill?

This bill, which died on the Order Paper and deserves to be allowed to rest in peace, was adding \$640 million annually in unemployment insurance cuts for Quebec alone to the \$735 million cut annually by the Liberals since 1994. In 1995-96 and 1996-97, there will be \$735 million less for unemployment insurance benefits. If this bill were resuscitated artificially by Motion No. 1, it would impose an additional \$640 million in cuts.

What does that translate into? It means \$1,375,000,000 in Quebec alone in the year 2000. The Liberal government welcomes you to the year 2000, where if Quebec is still part of Canada—which I hope will not be the case—unemployment insurance will have been cut by \$1,375,000,000.

And how much in the Atlantic provinces? This year \$635 million, plus \$344 million, to a total of \$974 million less. What does that mean? It means \$974 million less for groceries, rent, children's basic necessities. That is what those cuts represent. They affect what goes directly into the economy, not money used for speculative investments, but money injected directly into the economy.

Did the government even look at the economic impact of these cuts in disadvantaged regions, of which there are many in Quebec and in the Atlantic provinces? Did it even give this a thought? We have been shown studies of all sorts, but no economic impact studies have been done. The only thing it came up with, no doubt because it heard rumblings, was the figure of \$300 million over three years, peanuts compared with the cuts I just mentioned.

So it is not surprising that the people in the disadvantaged regions rose up. It is not surprising that the bishops in the Gaspé rang the bells—a sort of alarm in the event of fire—because the ordinary folks will be finding themselves facing extremely hard times.

Why did the government not let the bill die on the Order Paper instead of resurrecting it? There is still time for the government to give it some thought.

It should not underestimate the anger and discontent of the ordinary people, who are facing cuts, who know there are more to

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come and who have only this little bit of security. There was indeed abuse and a system in certain regions. But individuals are not at fault, the fault lies with the labour market, which is not providing the jobs it should. We should be going after it and not after the people who are eking out a living.

• (1235)

I implore the government not to bring back this bill. The best way would be for it to withdraw this anti-democratic and exceptional motion, which the hon. members opposite opposed with virulence in 1991, in conditions that were not so harsh as they are now. Their responsibility before history, Parliament and society will be heavy.

[English]

**Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, your predecessor on May 29, 1991 ruled the following according to Beauchesne's fifth edition, citation 167(1):

The effect of a prorogation is at once to suspend all business until Parliament shall be summoned again. Not only are the sittings of Parliament at an end, but all proceedings pending at the time are quashed. Every bill must therefore be renewed after a prorogation, as if it were introduced for the first time.

I now continue with the text of the ruling of your predecessor. He said:

Thus prorogation gives Parliament the chance to start anew in dealing with the business of the nation.

While the effects of prorogation are clear, there have been many occasions when the government has sought the permission of the House to reinstate legislation considered in the previous session. This has always been considered an extraordinary procedure. In fact, on two separate occasions, July 1977 and March 1982, the House amended its standing orders to permit certain bills to be reinstated in the next session. These and other instances of reinstatement—have been dealt with by unanimous consent.

This tradition was not followed in 1991 and it is not being followed in this year's prorogation. All that the opposition demanded in 1991 is being demanded by Reformers and the Bloc now: government, please do not use an omnibus motion to reinstate all bills that died with prorogation; instead, bring them up for unanimous consent, one by one. We the opposition have not only the right but the duty to examine the reinstatement of each bill on its own merit.

Prorogation means the government decides to end a session of Parliament and suspend all business. Governments have historically used this mechanism because they have exhausted their agendas and wish to use the throne speech to set a new tone. All of this is business hallowed by long and valued tradition. It has served Canada and other parliamentary democracies well. It should be

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changed only after it has shown clearly that it no longer serves such democracies.

The change in tradition introduced in 1991 and continued with the present motion threatens to destroy the basic purpose of prorogation: the opportunity for government to start parliamentary business anew with a new throne speech.

With the quasi-automatic reintroduction of unfinished bills from the preceding Parliament, all we have left of this tradition is a throne speech with its accompanying expensive pomp and vacuous media hype. The essential element of a clean legislative slate is gone. The historic modification of permitting the reintroduction of selected pieces of previous legislation is nullified by the insistence that all such previous legislation be reinstated without proper debate on each.

• (1240)

Perhaps it is more efficient in our times to have such omnibus motions. During the 1990s in one debate one of the members of the present government, then in opposition, suggested that such an innovation should be embodied in a bill brought before the House before prorogation. Reformers agree and are ready any time to be persuaded that changing this or any other parliamentary tradition is in the interest of all Canadians. We were never given the opportunity by the government to vote on this matter.

Now here we are in the enjoyable position of being able to cite for all some of the remarks made by individuals now on the government side of the House, citations which show how power corrupts.

The former member for Ottawa—Vanier, now in the other chamber, said in a speech given on the occasion of prorogation in 1991, page 647: “I cannot understand why this government, these government bullies now want to impose their will on the House of Commons through force of numbers and then would have us believe that they are sensitive to parliamentary reform and want Canadians to see this House work in a friendly, co-operative way”.

I continue with a remark by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands:

I want to deal with the propriety of the motion that the government has introduced. I suggest that it is contrary to all the practices of this House for the last 124 years. It is a breach of the proprieties of this place. I suggest that it is morally wicked of the government to proceed with this motion and particularly then to apply closure to the motion and thereby curtail the debate on it. What the government is doing by this, and let us make it perfectly clear what is happening here, is short-circuiting the legislative process.

I suggest that this is wrong. It is wickedly wrong. It is a gross violation of the constitutional principles on which this House has operated since Confederation. Indeed it is contrary to the whole practice of British parliamentary tradition for

900 years. Nothing like this has ever been tried before. I suggest it is wrong. The government knows it is wrong.

These are remarks made and recorded in *Hansard* by members of the present government in the House to a motion identical to the one before us today when they were opposing it.

Let me continue with another quotation by the hon. member, now a minister, for Cape Breton—East Richmond: “I contend that the motion is in principle unacceptable in that it seeks to circumvent, indeed to subvert, the normal legislative process in this House”.

How can these members of Parliament look us in the eye when they stand to vote in favour of closure, in favour of this motion which they opposed with such strong words in the past?

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands a few days later in 1991 said, commenting on this motion: “In other words there was always a debate allowed at third reading of every bill that was reinstated, but here in this motion today we have a bill that is deemed passed by this House, so there will be no debate at any stage on this bill”.

• (1245)

The record notes an hon. member interrupted the speech saying: “That is terrible”. The hon. member who had the floor said: “It is a national disgrace”. Another hon. member yelled: “It is a travesty”. These are the same members who have the affront today to get up and vote for a motion which they had a short five years ago condemned in such strong words. Let me continue with the speech made by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. He said:

If this kind of thing was reported in parliamentary journals around the world, the Canadian Parliament would become a laughing stock because of the outrageous conduct of the government in introducing this motion. It violates all the constitutional principles of debating bills at three readings in the House of Commons. That is the standard practice in every British parliamentary institution and has been for hundreds of years, and this government is violating this practice.

Who is to blame for this practice aside from all the members on the other side? The government itself had a choice.

They had a choice. Remember those words. The members opposite may remember them because they came up in a debate. They had a choice. They chose to prorogue the last session and leave the business unfinished on the Order Paper. They sent us away through April and early May and said: “We do not want you in Ottawa. We do not want questions every day. We do not want to listen to you. We do not want our sins exposed to the people of Canada on national television here on the floor of the House of Commons”.

I could not have said it better. The only thing I would change in order to make this a speech relevant for today's situation is to say: You have kept us away from here and the opportunity to do things

for Canadians by debating the issues on the floor of the House until February 27, when we were supposed to return much, much earlier.

The situation has not changed. These kinds of rulings and motions simply show how people change once they get power. Once they are sitting on one side and they see the interest of the people in continuing with traditions that have served the country so well, they argue one way and in the strongest fashion one can imagine. The words were used by the same individuals who are now in power. We all know power corrupts. What do the Liberals do? They have the nerve to stand up and look us in the eye and do exactly what they have condemned so strongly in the past.

Another favoured member in the government had a few words to say on this. It is the hon. member for Halifax. I can just see her demeanour when she read into the record the following:

I can only say that the government should hang its head in shame. One wonders today why the government prorogued the House of Commons last time. Why did it prorogue? We heard a speech from the throne which did not appear to tell us anything new or different. It did not appear to give us any new blueprint for Canadians. It was remarkably low on specifics about its programs. Yet we had the prorogation. One presumes it was because the government wanted to get away from here, take some time, regroup and come back with some fresh ideas.

Instead of fresh ideas, we have today this pernicious—and I underline that word—motion of the House leader ramming through five bills. We are just supposed to pretend that prorogation did not take place. We are just supposed to accept the government's decision that these bills will come to this Parliament in the state in which they were supposed to have died in the last Parliament.

• (1250)

I challenge the member for Halifax to look me in the eye, remembering the words I have just read which she said on the occasion when the government pushed on the House a similar closure motion that is under discussion today. It is very revealing the way power corrupts.

I have a few more quotations. Some of them are quite delicious. I must say I am disappointed to read that this is the way these individuals talked. The member for Winnipeg North Centre said:

The role of the opposition is to be a thoughtful opposition and a thoughtful critic of what the government is trying to do. But the lack of opportunity as posed to us in this case makes it very difficult for an opposition party to continue to deal with the government when we do not feel the government is being honest in its motives.

I cannot help myself but read this. It is from one of the most articulate and argumentative members of this House who has departed for higher callings. Now the premier of a province, the former member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte said:

The governing party of the day, regrettably for the country—a country in desperate need of leadership on the constitutional front, a country in desperate

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need of leadership on the economic front—does not have the confidence of the people. Even as a member of the opposition, one who wants to replace the governing party, I say it is regrettable for Canada that at this time in our history only 14 per cent or 12 per cent or 8 per cent of Canadians have confidence in the government of the day.

What does this government do? Does it attempt to lay bare before the people of Canada its agenda? Does it attempt to persuade the people of Canada and the elected representatives of the people of Canada of the value of its agenda? Does it say it has a vision for Canada and such a profound belief in our vision for Canada that we are prepared to debate it and to defend it?

No, it uses the tyranny of the majority. It uses the temporary trust given to this party as a consequence of an election two and a half or three years ago to bulldoze its legislative measures through the Parliament of Canada, to deny the people of Canada a chance to be heard, to deny the elected representatives of the people of Canada—not an opportunity to speak, but their obligation to speak, their responsibility to be heard in the proper examination of bills.

This is merely a sample of the kinds of words and arguments a group of people while they were in opposition used to oppose a motion that now has been introduced in this Parliament. But the tables have turned. These same members are now part of the elite. They are part of the government. They have power.

We can see how much power corrupts. The principles they enunciated and the strength of the convictions they had at that point have gone down the drain. I challenge each and every one of the hon. members who made such strong statements, when they stand up to vote, to acknowledge that they are voting against their own words and their own arguments.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government motion before us would allow a minister or member to reinstate, in the first 30 sitting days of this session, a bill to the legislative stage it had reached at the time of prorogation, as soon as he or she proposes the motion for first reading. In theory, this would enable the government to resuscitate all bills before the House at the time of prorogation. Private bills would be treated the same way.

The amendment put forward by my colleague from Berthier—Montcalm is aimed at dividing the process in as many parts as there are bills, since a member could object to the reinstatement of any bill. The bill would then have to go back to square one, especially if it is challenged and opposed by the public. I am thinking in particular of the bill respecting employment insurance in Canada.

I think that the government motion is irregular and undemocratic. When a government ends a session, it means that it has done its job or that it faces new challenges and wants to give its mandate a new direction. The Liberals, who are now in power, held a very

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different view in 1991: they felt that such a motion was irregular and undemocratic when the Tories tried to use it for the first time.

I will quote a few statements made by the same people who are now sitting on the government side of this House. Let us look at some members' statements. I will start with the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, who is now Minister of Finance, and I quote: "We find ourselves in the situation we are now in. The bill died on the Order Paper. In its supreme arrogance and lack of understanding, this government comes to us and says: 'we would like to reinstate it'". He called a bill similar to the one now before the House arrogant and incomprehensible.

I continue with another quote. For his part, the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond felt that the government was "trying to reinstate legislation which has fallen dead as a result of the government's own ineptitude and subsequent action with regard to proroguing this Parliament". That is exactly what this government is doing. It ended the last session by proroguing Parliament.

One last quote, because I do not want to quote them all. I will conclude with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who is still a member of Parliament and an influential government member. He said: "The implications of ruling this motion in order would be such that I fear we could render—if a government wanted to, and I am not saying that it does—this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant." That is what members of this government had to say on the issue back in 1991, when they were in opposition.

If this practice was described as unacceptable in 1991, what makes it acceptable today? If the Conservatives called certain Liberal opposition members stupid and self-righteous for doing this, how are the Liberals different from the Conservatives? Personally, I can see no difference as far as this bill is concerned.

If the government decided to prorogue Parliament, it must have had good reasons for doing so: to renew its legislative agenda. What does it need this kind of procedure for then? The bills that could be reintroduced are not, by definition, new. If the government wants to reintroduce one or two of its old bills, it can do so through the normal process, which includes debating. But there is more. Some of these bills are unacceptable to the Bloc Québécois as well as to the people of Quebec and Canada.

• (1300)

A case in point is one the major pieces of legislation that died on the Order Paper, namely Bill C-111, the employment insurance bill. This bill is unacceptable to us. Clearly, and we all read the papers and watch the news on the tube, protests are on the rise. As far as I

can see, the people of Quebec and Canada are horrified at the current situation and at the decisions made by this government.

Bill C-111 penalizes the unemployed, those who do not have a job, and it penalizes women, a group that I have the honour of representing in this House. Let me tell you how it penalizes women; you will see what I mean.

An impact assessment carried out by the federal government shows that the hardest hit will be individuals earning less than \$25,000. It is a well known fact that the low income earners of our society are women, women and young people also. Second, eligibility requirements would be tighter, eligibility being determined on the basis of the total number of hours worked over a given time instead of the number of weeks worked. In addition, it will be much more difficult for first-time claimants to qualify, which means women re-entering the labour force after having been away for a long time and young people will be hit hard.

The program set out in Bill C-111 would greatly limit the number of people eligible for benefits. Moreover, while not being eligible for benefits, these people would still have to make contributions, thereby growing poorer. That is not employment insurance.

It is also proposed that workers who hold precarious and seasonal jobs would receive less benefits. The fact is that close to 70 per cent of part time workers are women. There are 1.5 million of them in Canada.

The bill is also unacceptable because the spouse's income would be taken into account in determining whether a person is entitled to the supplement. In other words, a woman whose spouse earns an income would not be eligible for such a supplement. This creates two forms of discrimination: one against all women, and the other against those who have a spouse, as opposed to living alone.

Finally, this bill seeks to reduce the maximum number of weeks of benefits. This measure would inevitably result in making people turn to welfare more quickly, and as such shifts the load onto another level of government. As we know, once a person ends up on welfare, it becomes very difficult for that person to find a job. In my own riding, it is a pity to see, on the one hand, the lack of available jobs and, on the other hand, the increasingly large number of welfare recipients.

The bill would also maintain duplication and overlap, something which does not promote the development of an efficient employment policy, nor employability for workers and women. As we know, there is a consensus in Quebec on the need to implement an effective employment policy.

Bill C-111 died on the Order Paper when Parliament prorogued, and it is a very good thing. The government should go back to the

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drawing board and take responsibility for its indecisiveness, because this is how I see this legislation.

Since it was elected, this government has shown a remarkable lack of vision. It goes nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Last week's speech from the throne did nothing to improve the situation. Its main feature is that it is as vague as possible, so as to lend itself to any number of interpretations.

• (1305)

There is a truism in Canada that says that when everyone agrees with a statement, it is because that statement is totally meaningless. To let the government's motion go through today would be tantamount to encouraging the confusion that, unfortunately, has prevailed since the beginning of this Parliament.

The government must go back to the drawing board. It must try to come up with a new and consistent legislative agenda. After all, this is what prorogation is all about, is it not?

The amendment proposed by my colleague seeks to give this House some democratic control over the issues that we debate. It provides for the speedy passing of those bills for which there is unanimity, while excluding such a possibility for the more controversial ones. This amendment is a true reflection of the democratic spirit that must govern the proceedings of this House. This is why I ask all members to support it.

I also ask the Minister of Justice to reinstate Bill C-119, on genital mutilation. Even though this measure could be improved on, it deals with an issue for which a degree of consensus already exists in the House. Therefore, it would certainly be appropriate for the minister to take advantage of this opportunity provided by the hon. for Berthier—Montcalm.

Unlike Bill C-111 on employment insurance, Bill C-119 does not perpetuate, nor does it increase, discrimination against women. On the contrary, it seeks to ensure that women can continue to hope that their bodies will not be subjected to harsh treatment. We are grateful to the minister, and we urge him to continue his work in that respect.

I therefore ask the government to withdraw this bill and to come up with a new agenda that would take into account certain social and economic realities, as well as the realities of the labour market.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to confine my comments to three general areas.

First, I would like to speak to the notion of why we are debating this in the first place, rather than the how. Quite a lot of the debate has dealt with the mechanics of how bills are introduced or

reintroduced and not a whole lot of thought has been given to why bills are introduced or reintroduced.

Second, I would like to spend a couple of minutes talking about the difference between private members' business and government business and why, in my opinion, private members' business should be treated discretely and differently than government legislation.

Third, I would like to touch on what really should be the power of the government, exactly how encompassing and how overpowering is the power of the government.

I will begin with the third point. Those of us in the Chamber are acutely aware of how this place works, but many Canadians are not. After being elected I came here full of hope, inspiration and with the brightest of lights shining in my eyes. I thought as the member of Parliament representing the people of Edmonton Southwest, I was going to have a say in how the government ran the country. Well, was I surprised. I am sure many Liberal backbenchers found themselves in quite the same state of surprise. As a matter of fact I think some of the cabinet ministers may have been surprised. I am not suggesting that the government is alone. To my knowledge, all governments in Canada run on a premise which is: "How do we go about getting re-elected?" The first objective after being elected is how to get re-elected because power is everything. If one does not have power in politics one might as well be washing floors somewhere because not very much is accomplished. Yes, one can have some influence with luck. That is what private member's business is all about. It is all of the backbenchers on the government and on the opposition sides who are trying to make our country work not a lot better but a little bit better, just incrementally to trying to do something worthwhile.

• (1310)

The path of private members' business through the House to become legislation is laborious and long. There are all kinds of checks and balances. Private members' bills very rarely become law. It is not part of the government agenda.

When the throne speech was read there was not one single word about the government saying: "We know we have 295 people in the House of Commons, most of whom are here for the right reasons: to make our country work better. Therefore, we are going to see what we can do to use private members' business to create legislation".

It has never been that way. If good private members' legislation is introduced very often it is co-opted by the government and we will see it rearing its head again as government legislation. Perhaps that is not all bad. It does not matter. If the legislation is passed it has to go through this process.

However, private members' business is very different from government business. When government puts out an agenda it is its agenda to get re-elected. If that means it is going to do whatever it has to do to meet the requirements of the perceived wants of the

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body politic that is what it is going to do. That is why governments change direction from time to time. That is why there are traditionally in a country different opinions of different values represented by different political parties.

In Canada we do not really have that differentiation. The Liberal Party changes its spots to meet whatever the expectations of the body politic are. It has worked successfully for most of our time as a country and it is likely that is the way it is going to be in the future. It does not really matter whether the left and the right or the yin and the yang is met because the country changes political parties or if the political party that is in power changes to meet the demands of the people. That happens. The government has the ability, the authority and the responsibility to bring forward whatever legislation it wants because it has a majority. It will introduce that legislation and that legislation will be passed. Nothing the opposition has to say will change that. Absolutely nothing will change the opinion of the government once it has its mind made up and it has a head of steam.

Therefore, the only possible way that any backbencher from the government side or the opposition side is able to have meaningful input into the affairs of the nation is through private members' business. These bills may be very meaningful or they may be relatively small but they are evidence of the fact that people have been elected who represent their constituents.

I have a vested interest in this debate because I have a private member's bill that made it through committee. If one is playing Snakes and Ladders, that is all the way up to just about the top of one set of ladders. The problem is that when one makes it over the top one is on the downhill slide again which is what happens with House business. When the the House prorogues and all of the business dies on the Order Paper that means all of the private members' business dies as well.

When I first heard that the government was planning on changing legislation to bring back its own business as well as private members' business, my immediate reaction was that we should be careful what we say because whatever is said on this side of the House is likely going to come back to haunt us when we get to the other side of the House. We have stacks and stacks and stacks of words that Liberal members on the government side, most of them cabinet ministers, said when another government tried to do exactly the same thing, that the government business should die and it should be brought back again. If they want to do so they should bring it back starting from square one.

• (1315)

My original reaction was that there is a fair amount of work to go through to get these things done. It goes through the legislative

branch of the House of Commons. There is a lot of work to get legislation here. If the government has a majority, it is going to come back sooner or later, why not bring it back sooner rather than later? They are the government. We will do whatever they suggest, so why not just do it?

That brings us to the how and why of this debate and why we are having it in the first place. I think that most people on this side of the House see the reasonableness in the argument that if you are going to bring back legislation, why not bring it back in the way that is the most cost effective and the easiest, leaving aside the fact that the government very probably has absolutely nothing on its platter other than the legislation it had in the last session. We are waiting of course.

The government woke from its great slumber and has decided that national unity is going to find its place on the front burners. The problem is that the government does not have any legislation so let us reintroduce the legislation that was on the books. Fine, but if this is the plan, would it not make sense for the House leaders to get together?

I could spend all kinds of time going through the hypocrisy of the litany of members opposite. They stand on that side of the House and say black is black when on this side of the House we are saying white is white. I know that if I get too far down that road, sooner or later the same thing will happen to me. Imagine what the people who are watching this debate as it unfolds today are thinking.

**An hon. member:** Stop dreaming.

**Mr. McClelland:** To the member opposite who just said to stop dreaming, it is his nightmare and my dream. They never thought they would see themselves back over there on that side of the House either.

I understand the way the government works. It is the right and the responsibility of the opposition to oppose and the government to propose and very much of what we do here sometimes goes by rote. We automatically oppose because that is what we are supposed to do. It is supposed to test and strengthen the legislation the government proposes.

**Mr. Penson:** What about accountability? They were here and they have to be held accountable.

**Mr. McClelland:** Members surrounding me are saying that perhaps the government should have been held accountable and should be accountable.

• (1320)

**Mr. Abbott:** No, they are Liberals. You cannot count on them.

**Mr. McClelland:** They will be held accountable.

*Government Orders*

I apologize to members opposite if they are trying to find some thread to what I am saying. I am trying to find it again as well.

The power of the government in our House of Commons is absolute. I was quite surprised to learn just exactly how absolute that power is. I thought there would be an opportunity for not just members of Parliament in opposition and in the House but members of Parliament in committee to work in a much more collegial atmosphere in order to try to improve legislation. We are here for the benefit of the taxpaying Canadian citizen, for all of the citizens.

Given the fact everything the government does is considered a question of confidence, I was somewhat disappointed to learn that the whole notion of being able to lose a vote or to lose an argument or to look at legislation as a possible win-win rather than a win-lose is missing. It is missing here; it is missing in committee.

Members on this side feel frustrated as I am sure members opposite do when they are asked by constituents: "Why do you not do something about this or that? Here is a situation that obviously does not make sense. Why can you not do something about it?" When we say that we are not the government, people reply: "You are the government, you are a member of Parliament. You are part of the government". We say that yes we are, but we are not the people in charge and they ask: "Well, who is in charge?" The Liberals are in charge.

**Mr. Silye:** We are not sure.

**Mr. McClelland:** The problem is this Parliament as with previous Parliaments is really run by the strategists in the parties and they are trying to figure out how to get re-elected.

**Mr. Penson:** The PMO.

**Mr. McClelland:** The Prime Minister's Office. That is the way our system works so we have to accept it.

During the last Parliament one of the promises the Liberals made to the people of Canada in order to get their support, to get their vote which gave them a majority in the House of Commons, was that they were going to change the way Parliament worked. They would make it more inclusive and would involve opposition parties in the day to day operation and would give opposition members as well as backbench Liberal members a say and a feeling they were participating in the affairs of the country. They promised to take the affairs of the government out of the backrooms and put the affairs of the country and government into the House of Commons and into the committee rooms.

Those promises were genuinely made and genuinely felt because the Liberals had just come through eight years in the wilderness. They had spent eight years atoning for the sins they committed while they were in government and in power.

Is it not funny how times change. It did not take very long before the government decided it was going to be absolute in its authority

and in its control over all of the happenings here in Parliament. For the first two years in government, the Liberals knew they were facing a referendum in Quebec. The referendum would be on the question of whether Quebec should stay or go.

**Mr. Penson:** The neverendum.

**Mr. McClelland:** In those first two years the Liberal government bent over backward to ensure it did not do or say anything that could in any way be interpreted as offending anyone in Quebec, more particularly the Bloc. The Bloc, whether the Liberals like it or not, represents many voters in Quebec, just as the Reform Party represents many voters in other jurisdictions. They were totally afraid of doing or saying anything that could in any way be interpreted as offending the Bloc. This included the election of officers in committee.

• (1325)

Think about it. There is a political party in the House of Commons, the Bloc, whose *raison d'être* is to take the province it represents out of Confederation. The Bloc's *raison d'être* is to break up the country. Its members have the perfect right to do so and they have the perfect right to be here. It is an expression of the strength of our democracy that they can be and that we can debate it. Nobody is shooting at anybody. That is a sign of strength in our democracy, not a sign of weakness. It is certainly my hope that at the end of the day Quebec will continue to be a province within Canada.

I will say that we are having a much more honest and open debate about the future of Quebec and the future of Canada today than we have ever had in the House. It is only through addressing things honestly that we are ever going to resolve the problems we have as a country.

While I do not concur and I did not appreciate it, I can understand the fact that the government in the first two years of its mandate bent over backward not to offend the Bloc, particularly in committee. However today is another day. The referendum was held in Quebec; the separatists lost. They lost on a question that was fuzzy. Here we are in the House of Commons today and have we started to take on the Bloc or the separatists head on? No we have not. The Liberals have gone right back to their attitude of not saying or doing anything that could in any way offend any member of the Bloc.

It seems to me we should be putting our efforts into making sure there is an honest representation of what the rest of the country feels rather than bending over backward to appease the people who would break up the country. It is time that everyone put all of their cards on the table and dealt with the issues as they are. I suspect that might be something the Liberals might be thinking of doing now because they know that appeasement has not worked. The problem is that the Prime Minister said this when he was out west. He mused about it, and now all of a sudden this is no longer part of the debate. What is part of the debate? Where is the debate? Why do we not have this on the table?

*Government Orders*

I will conclude by coming back to the fact that the government has the right and the responsibility to bring forward legislation it promised during the election campaign under which it was able to get the support of the people who voted for the Liberals. They should keep the promises they made and which they put in writing, like getting rid of the GST. Having made it, that is one of the promises they should keep. They have the right and the responsibility to bring that legislation forward.

The only avenue for the rest of us to have meaningful input into what we do here in representing our constituents is through private members' business. Private members' business and government business should be treated discretely. They should not be lumped together in an omnibus bill or motion and we are forced to vote against private members' business that we support. It is a kind of blackmail.

I will spend a couple of seconds talking about the how and the why. There is not very much that cannot be done here in the House of Commons with all parties if we treat each other with respect. If the government has an idea that it wishes to change the way the House of Commons works and how legislation is brought forward, then it would be appropriate for the government to come to the whips of the other parties represented in the House and say this is what it would like to do. Why can we not work together collegially, rather than having the government use the power of its majority, sort of a jackboot diplomacy, over the backbench MPs of its own side and of the opposition?

• (1330)

**Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on some of the issues the Liberals have tried to convince us are right. Finally we see the light of day and they see the light of day.

We are seeing that the electors in the last election were kind of double crossed. They are finding out they elected a party that does not keep promises, that is, a party that is not of action. It is a party of misguiding the constituents and the electors. That will change in the next election. It will be back in the opposition benches if at all.

One thing that really surprises me is that members on the other side were so honest and probably sincere with their comments in the last legislature that they were not afraid to get up and call a spade a spade, and try to run on that basis during the election.

As a farmer it has been a disappointment to me when I see they have made huge promises of how they would reorganize agriculture, how they would go to the farmers for some input in marketing, how they would allow these people to make the needed

changes and yet did not fulfil those promises. I do not think they ever intend to.

When I see what is happening in the agriculture field today, they are trying to more or less digress from what they said and put more government rules and regulations into the system to get more control over food processing and agriculture marketing.

It was astounding to me when I read an article in the *Ottawa Sun* about a year ago when the former agriculture minister was a little upset. Mr. Whelan, a man I always respected very highly in agriculture during the early years when I farmed, said: "We have gone from a corporate, capitalist, democratic system to a non-democratic, czarist, socialist system".

Hold it a minute, boys. That is something I thought I would never hear from an agriculture minister who served in the House, a Liberal saying we had gone from a democratic, corporate system to an undemocratic, czarist system. That is what eastern European countries have experienced and we know what the results have been there.

Is this something the Liberal government will keep promoting in the House when I see, during the elections of the standing committees, we do not even have a ballot to elect a vice-chair? Somebody from the hierarchy dictates to the Liberals on the standing committees how to vote.

What does that remind us of? That reminds us of a Hitler or a Stalin telling his people exactly how to vote. Is that not correct? Democracy to me means voting by ballot in seclusion where nobody knows how we vote. It is supposed to be free.

• (1335)

Look at what has been done in the House over two reorganizations. Last fall we went through the same issues and the same principles. People were told how to vote. "We would rather have a separatist party sitting as official opposition than you real Reformers".

Real reform is what the House needs; not just the word reform, it needs real reform. That is the only way we can start addressing some of the problem in the House. It will not be done by backbenchers moving their heads in conjunction with the rope those on the front benches pull. It is like puppetry.

That is not a democracy. That sounds more like a kids game, which is what I see happening a lot of times in the House. It seems we are not really trying to run the country, we are trying to control the minds of the people and their ideas by the way we influence one another, the same way cabinet influences backbenchers.

*Government Orders*

Backbenchers for some reason are trying to influence the opposition into seeing they are correct. They are trying to make us believe we really do not know what the issues are. That is very sad. When we start manipulating minds and ideas we go back to what the former agriculture minister said, an undemocratic csarist system. That really scares me. In all the countries where there has been that type of democracy, a csarist system, people began starving not just for food but for ideas and freedom to vote.

**An hon. member:** The Liberal benches are starving for that same freedom.

**Mr. Hoepfner:** They have been starving for 30 years now, ever since the Trudeau era. Mr. Trudeau ran not on ideas, not on philosophy but on charisma.

That is what we are trying to determine today. Can another election be won on charisma or on ideas? Which are we going to go for? It looks to me as though charisma and ideas are dead, and so Reformers will have to take over because we have something that has not been seen before in the House: honesty, accountability and the freedom to do what one thinks is right, not what the hierarchy tells us.

Democracy comes back to the idea that we vote on a ballot and nobody knows how we vote. Publicity can be put out saying: "I was against the government and I did not vote for it", but what was done behind closed doors? That is what I see in a lot of the backbenchers.

We do not agree with the frontbenchers. We do not agree with what the government is doing. When it comes time to make a decision, it is not willing or able or capable. Why? Has anyone ever thought why? The Prime Minister says: "If you do not do what I told you to do in the House, I will not sign your nomination papers in the next election". Does that not sound like coercion or intimidation? I would hate to have a leader who would tell me he will not sign by nomination papers because I am going after the wheat board and the commodity exchange because they are the sole entity of what I am doing.

Why are we even debating this? We should prorogue the House for the rest of the two years. We would probably do more good outside of the House than sitting here debating things we know are a fact and that we cannot change. That is the problem in the House.

What can I say to a Liberal government that does not want to listen?. We can tell the Liberals what was told to the Conservatives in the last election. The Liberals were not elected, the Conservatives were defeated. In the next election history will change and we will defeat the Liberals because the people will vote for the Reform Party. We will throw the Liberals out of the House once and for all. We will have a reformed House that is honest and accountable and that will really do something for this country.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising of course in opposition to the government motion, the motion tabled by the Liberal government, a Liberal party which was outraged against a similar motion by the Conservative government in 1991.

The Liberal government has tabled Motion No. 1 which allows a minister, during the first 30 sitting days, with a mere statement when proposing a motion for first reading, to restore that bill to the same stage in the legislative process as it was during the previous session. The bill needs only be in exactly the same form in every detail as it was in the previous session. That is the rule.

The government has incorporated into the motion amendments concerning the period for examination of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year 1996-97. These amendments are related to prorogation of the House and are of a technical nature. There is no precedent for such a motion. The only precedent that exists dates back to 1991, when the Conservative government tabled a motion for debate on March 28 and moved closure on May 29.

Prior to 1991, Parliamentary precedent required such a motion to have unanimous consent of the House, and this was democratic. If all parties were in favour of this motion, there would be no problem in proceeding case by case.

It is interesting to review the speeches made in 1991 by various Liberal members, who were then in opposition. I will begin with the member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, today a government minister, who stated that they were opposed to the government motion because "the motion attempts to place before the House five separate and distinct legislative matters which do not lend themselves to being considered together. The government should have given notice of five individual motions and this motion seeks to circumvent, indeed to subvert, the normal legislative process of this House".

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, who often rises to speak in this House, not so much since prorogation but during the past two years at least, said in 1991 "They have to be reinstated in the usual course, but they ought to have been introduced and dealt with as new bills in this session". That is the tradition, the rule, the custom. He added that "any irregularity of any portion of a motion renders the whole motion irregular. For this House to adopt a bill without any debate, without any discussion at any stage is completely irregular and improper".

In 1991, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said "The implications of ruling this motion in order would be such that I fear we could render—if a government wanted to—this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant".

*Government Orders*

• (1345)

The member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, whom I already quoted today added, on pages 657 and 659 of Hansard: “The motion before us today in its substance is totally unacceptable—[and] is designed for the sole purpose of subverting the legislative rules of the Parliament of Canada”. What the hon. member said at the time was pretty significant and fairly serious. Today, however, they are doing an about face and are saying the total opposite. Really coherent.

He went on to say: “—trying to reinstate legislation which has fallen dead as a result of the government’s own ineptitude and subsequent action with regard to proroguing this Parliament”. This is exactly what is happening today. The Liberal government decided on February 2 to prorogue the session. It knew where the bill was at. Why was it not debated in the previous session? Why did it not decide to prorogue at some other point?

The member for LaSalle—Émard, now the Minister of Finance, said, again in 1991: “We find ourselves in the situation we are now in. The bill died on the Order Paper. In its supreme arrogance and lack of understanding, this government comes to us and says: ‘we would like to reinstate it’”.

Next, I would like to quote the member for Halifax, who said in 1991: “The government should be ashamed. We are wondering today why there was a prorogation—the House leader is presenting us this pernicious motion—and I emphasize the word—in order to speed up the passage of five bills, in total disregard for the traditions of the House and the British parliamentary procedure and in disregard for the Canadian people”.

The former fisheries minister, influential member of the Liberal Party, the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, now the Premier of Newfoundland said, again in 1991: “Parliament is being systematically destroyed by the government—in hundreds of years of evolution of parliamentary government, such a motion has never been put before any parliament—because [such a motion] is a form of executive dictatorship—Parliament belongs to the people—[government] uses the tyranny of the majority—to deny the elected representatives—[their responsibility] to be heard in the proper examination of bills”.

I come back now to the member for Kingston and the Islands, who said: “The government wants to impose a new definition of democracy on Canadians, one of the greatest affronts to the House in years. It is immoral for the government to introduce this motion. The government is short-circuiting the legislative process to consider five bills. This behaviour is reprehensible. The government knows it. It has not produced a single tittle of evidence to support this gross breach of our practice, and I suggest that it is totally inappropriate”.

Next, I would like to quote the member for Winnipeg St. James, who said: “No government would want to resurrect a bill that was

deemed dead some time in the past—if the government in effect says to heck with this House, to heck with the opposition, to heck with precedent, if that is the view of the government, how much more down the road can it go?”

• (1350)

Finally, to quote the member for Saint-Léonard, the riding neighbouring mine, and now the Minister of Labour: “If the government really intended to examine these bills, it should have done it before the prorogation of the House and that should have been negotiated.”

In my opinion, this motion is anti-democratic. It runs counter to the rules, customs and traditions of British parliamentary procedure. I see no reason whatsoever for the government’s decision to introduce this motion when two opposition parties are against it.

This motion will affect several bills, bill C-111 in particular. This bill on unemployment insurance I described in a previous speech as a bill on poverty insurance or destitution insurance, since its ultimate objective is to reduce benefits to the unemployed and to attack the jobless rather than joblessness, contrary to the Liberal red book’s promise of “jobs, jobs, jobs”.

Instead of creating those jobs, it has tabled Bill C-111 which is also anti-union and anti-worker and has been criticized across Canada. We have witnessed demonstrations in New Brunswick, in Quebec, in Ontario, and last week in British Columbia. The unemployed from the Outaouais region came here to demonstrate against the bill. I personally took part in a regional demonstration against the bill held in Montreal by three labour federations. Everyone felt that the bill would be considered to have died on the Order Paper. But now with this motion we find ourselves faced with the bill at the same stage, as if there had been no prorogation. This is unacceptable to all those who have worked against this bill, which is anti-worker and anti-union.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I am vigorously opposed to this government motion.

[English]

**Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, on this government motion there are two issues that absolutely must be dealt with and addressed. First is the lack of integrity the government has demonstrated on this issue. My colleagues have said very clearly that when government members were in opposition they made a commitment not to do what they are doing today. That is issue number one, the lack of integrity the government has shown on this issue.

The second point I would like to make is with regard to the appropriateness of this motion relative to private members’ business. Can private members’ business be tied into this resolution as part of government business? The point I would like to

make is that private members' business is just that; it belongs to the private members.

Everything we do in this House, or in any legislative assembly should be to give the private member the opportunity to express his or her opinion on a special item, or an item relative to constituents, or an item relative to a special interest. In a free way, a private member should be able to express his or her thoughts without government control; without the government saying when something should be done or when it cannot be done; or the government taking away the agenda or giving the agenda to the private member.

• (1355)

That is exactly what is happening. The government has intervened in private members' business. Those are the two topics I will cover in my remarks in the few remaining moments.

First I will deal with the integrity of the government. As some of my colleagues have done, I will quote some of the remarks made by hon. members of the government when they were opposition members in 1991.

I quote the remarks of the current premier of Newfoundland, the former member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Mr. Brian Tobin, when he stood in this House. He spoke very clearly on a motion quite similar to the one we have here today. He said: "We see the decision by the government today to put this motion before the House as a confirmation of the destruction, and that is what it is, of our parliamentary system". No truer words have been spoken from this side of the House. If they are good on this side, they should be just as good on the other side of the House.

Mr. Tobin went on to say that by such a motion as we are looking at here today, the parliamentary system is being systematically destroyed by government. He went on to say that Canadians watching this debate are wondering what the fuss is all about. It is about destroying the parliamentary system.

We can look at what other participants in that debate had to say about the matter. I refer now to a current minister, Mr. David Dingwall, the member for Cape Breton—East Richmond—

**The Speaker:** I know we are just getting back in shape, but I would ask you please not to mention hon. members who are currently in the House by name.

**Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge):** Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of Health made these remarks while he was a member of the loyal official opposition. He said very clearly to the House at that time in words well spoken, as they usually are by our Minister of Health: "Third and finally, I contend that the motion is in principle unacceptable in that it seeks to circumvent, indeed to subvert, the normal legislative process of this House. In the past, this kind of thing has been done only by unanimous consent. Now the government is seeking to establish an omnibus precedent by attempting to

force this procedure on the House. This is an offensive and dangerous departure from the practices of all parliamentary bodies and it is, I believe in accordance with Beauchesne's citation 123(1) and Standing Order 1, unprecedented violation of the checks and balances written into the rules governing the normal legislative process". That says it.

I could go on to quote other members of the House—

**The Speaker:** It being 2 p.m. we will now proceed to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Jean Payne (St. John's West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the future of the aquaculture industry in Newfoundland is very promising. Announcements made by the federal aquaculture development strategy is evidence of this.

Also, the aquaculture steering committee's strategic plan for the development of Newfoundland and Labrador is further evidence. Additionally, a \$100 million economic renewal program has committed \$20 million to the industry to foster development.

Aquaculture in Newfoundland is entering a growth period where production is expected to rise dramatically over the next two to three years and well into the future. With this new growth, new jobs will be created in my riding of St. John's West as well as many other rural and coastal communities where limited opportunities exist.

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[Translation]

### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I speak on behalf of thousands of citizens who consider the mining sector vital to the economy and the lifeblood of many regions in Quebec and Canada.

In December, the Bloc Québécois supported the positions of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in an interim report. The committee proposed practical solutions for improving mining's environmental accountability while improving the environmental assessment process to include, as in the Quebec scheme, firm deadlines for the various stages of the procedure.

Although we opposed federal interference in environmental assessment, the Bloc Québécois must, for the good of the mining industry, ask the new ministers of the environment, fisheries and

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transport to use better judgment than their predecessors with respect to the Canadian and Quebec mining sectors.

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[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote criminal defence lawyer Russ Chamberlain of Richmond, British Columbia: "Victim impact statements are just venting the spleen and don't serve justice and should be outlawed, banned completely". He also said that victims want to blame everyone else for their "pathetic" lives.

These kinds of lawyers and Liberal politicians—what is the difference?

Let me identify just a few of the unconditional victims' rights that will exist in a Canada governed by the Reform Party. Victims must have the right to choose between giving oral or written impact statements. Victims must be informed in a timely fashion of the details of the crown's intention to offer a plea bargain before it is presented to the defence, and victims must also know why charges were not laid if that is the decision of the crown or the police.

Criminals have far too many rights under the Liberal government. We must devote ourselves to victims' rights as we should have done in the first place.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on March 4, 1986, 10 years ago, then Minister of Justice John Crosbie promised his government would put sexual orientation into the Canadian human rights code. Ten years later we still have not seen a federal government willing to prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians in the Canadian human rights code.

The current Liberal justice minister said initially that it was pretty hard to do in pre-election time. Then he said we had to fight separatism and that is why he could not put it in the human rights code. The Prime Minister said he would like to see it in the human rights code but we were just running out of time.

We are not running out of time. The Liberal government has run out of guts, and I challenge the Minister of Justice for once to prohibit sexual discrimination in the Canadian human rights code. Seven provinces and one territory have done it. Surely the Liberal government can do it as well.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Roger Simmons (Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's new employment insurance package has the

support of the majority of Canadians, and so it should because the old UI was desperately in need of reform.

However, certain measures in the new plan, including the intensity rule and the divisor method, must be changed, as the new HRD minister has agreed. Without that change the very people who are most in need of our assistance will be hurt. People such as seasonal workers, substitute teachers and others who live in areas of high unemployment would rather be working full time, year round but cannot through no fault of their own.

I support their cause. The long standing Canadian practice of fairness and equality for all must prevail as the government puts its finishing touches on its new employment insurance reforms.

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**GATEWAY NORTH MARKETING AGENCY**

**Mr. Elijah Harper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in January the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs announced the launching of a new agency to promote the port of Churchill, the Gateway North Marketing Agency.

The launching of this agency is good news for the port and good news for Canadian farmers. For the first time we have an agency devoted to connecting shippers and producers with the cheapest way to ship from the prairies to Europe and Latin America. The launch of Gateway North will help to make our northern ports self-sufficient and save western farmers money.

Gateway North is good news for all of us.

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**CUBA**

**Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nine days ago Canada condemned Cuba for shooting down two civilian aircraft. It was an unwarranted act resulting in the tragic death of two U.S. citizens.

Without question the United States has the right to respond to this incident, but the passage of the Jesse Helms-Burton bill, which poses a direct threat to Canadian companies doing business with Cuba, is itself an excessive use of force.

• (1405)

The United States has every right to determine its own trade policy with Cuba, but the Helms-Burton bill oversteps legal boundaries and violates the purposes and principles of the UN charter. It furthermore infringes on the sovereignty of Canada and that of other friendly trading nations in the Caribbean basin.

The Prime Minister of Canada speaks for all Canadians when he says: "Friends are friends and business is business". However, the Helms-Burton bill is no way to do business nor is it a way to treat your friends.

Therefore I urge the U.S. Congress to kill such an irresponsible piece of legislation.

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### JUSTICE

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I will read from an article that appeared in the Toronto *Sun* referring to Paul Bernardo and the mollycoddling of other sadistic criminals in this country:

In our society, it's the criminals who really count. Violent criminals get an inordinate amount of our attention. They are celebrities, and so they have all the trappings of success. For them, room service and cable. For them, counselling, university education, exercise equipment, health care, clothing, mail service, hot showers and central heating.

Commit something big enough and get your own room away from the other riff-raff, which will ensure that you are not subjected to the same sorts of abuse you have been shelling out to others.

The bottom may drop out of the social safety net for the rest of us but one sociopath and many other criminal deviants will be safe and warm.

I commend my colleague from Fraser Valley for his initiative in introducing a motion calling on the government to draft a victim bill of rights.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### HIGHWAY 50

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on March 1, the Quebec minister of transport announced the second stage of highway 50, between Mirabel and Lachute. The work, over a distance of 11 kilometres and estimated at over \$19 million, will be completed over the next three years. We are taking the trouble to point out this good news because we feel it important to stress the fact that this work is being done as part of the Canada-Quebec agreement on highway improvement.

The government of Canada has long been the favoured partner of communities in the Outaouais and in eastern Ontario. We are delighted that the Government of Quebec has finally decided to back us in our efforts to provide the appropriate tools for economic development to this important region of Quebec.

\* \* \*

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**Mr. Nick Discepola (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister of Canada appealed for solidarity and co-operation from all Canadians. Our country's economic recovery requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders to help make the various government initiatives efficient and cost-effective.

*S. O. 31*

We must all do our part to set our country back on the road to growth and prosperity. Governments across Canada are working hard to address the problem of our crippling debt and deficit. Governments are shrinking to an acceptable size and becoming more efficient. Citizens, business and labour must in turn support our efforts to create jobs and stimulate the economy. The Prime Minister is holding out his hand to all our Canadian partners. Together, let us grab it so that all Canadians can be better off.

\* \* \*

### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance picked international women's week as the time to table his new budget. It is therefore with great confidence that women are waiting to see what the minister has in store for them in the future. As you may recall, the upcoming budget comes only a few months after the fourth international conference on women, where Canada made a formal commitment to continue to help women in their efforts to achieve equality.

What women want from their government are concrete and positive measures that will improve their situation and that of their children. The Bloc Québécois supports all women's groups in Quebec and Canada. We hope that the minister, especially during international women's week, will honour his government's commitments and show some initiative. Given his track record, he has a lot of catching up to do.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

**Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to commemorate International Women's Week. Its origins can be traced to labour strikes in both 1857 and 1908 in New York city. Workers were protesting the dangerous working conditions and exploitative wages of women employed in the textile industry.

● (1410)

Later, women's rights and suffrage also became issues of concern. In 1911 the first International Women's Day was celebrated to acknowledge women's struggles.

March 8 marks a global celebration of women's accomplishments and of advancements toward gender equality. It is also a time to focus on issues that affect women's lives. The government is determined to address these issues. I stand proud of our efforts to counter violence against women, inequality in the workplace and gender discrimination.

Imagine a world in which true equality is no longer a distant dream.

*S. O. 31*

**ISRAEL**

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today another suicide bombing occurred in Israel, murdering over 20 people and injuring countless others. We deplore this atrocity in the strongest possible terms and our deepest sympathies go to the victims of this terrible crime.

This is the second attempt in two days to derail the Israeli peace process and I urge the Israeli and Palestinian people to continue to pursue the path to peace, for by not doing this will only lead to war.

To Mr. Arafat, bring the murderous element of Hamas to swift justice. Work with the Israelis to supplant the social organization of Hamas and build up the economic situation of the Palestinian people, for by doing this you will cut the legs out from Hamas' support.

Those who commit these crimes are the enemies of peace. Their intention is the pursuit of war, pit person against person and neighbour against neighbour. You must not let this happen. You must not let the dove of peace be slain by its enemies for the sake of all the people in the Middle East.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to condemn the new terrorist incident that has struck hard at Israel's population today, and jeopardized the peace process in the Middle East.

The bombing in Tel-Aviv, for which the Hamas fundamentalist movement has claimed responsibility, is the fourth such incident to occur in less than ten days in Israel and it has claimed several dozens more innocent victims.

This senseless violence not only jeopardizes the long and difficult peace process, but also adversely affects negotiations on the eventual status of Palestinian territories.

We wish to express our deep sympathy to the families of the victims and to the Israeli people.

The Bloc wishes to stress the need to resist the temptation to retaliate, and to carry on the peace talks. It is the fight against violence, and not the fight against peace, that must prevail.

[*English*]

**MANITOBA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

**Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the committee on alcohol and pregnancy of the Manitoba Medical Association is to be recognized for its healthy baby month project aimed at increasing public awareness on the ill effects of alcohol during pregnancy.

During this special month, which ends March 15, many community groups throughout Manitoba are volunteering their time and expertise, holding panel discussions, displaying posters and making public service announcements to further this cause.

Consumption of alcohol during pregnancy is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation. Hence, this project by the multi-disciplinary committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Oscar Casiro merits the support of the House.

Preventive strategies such as this one will help reduce the occurrence of fetal alcohol syndrome and thereby help ensure the well-being of our youngest Canadians, the future of our nation.

\* \* \*

**IMPAIRED DRIVING**

**Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in December Statistics Canada reported the rate of people charged with impaired driving dropped in 1994 for the 11th consecutive year. More important, over the last decade there has been a steady drop in the number of alcohol related deaths.

Statistics Canada attributes the decrease mainly to a slow change in social norms brought about by government campaigns and the involvement of community groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Many of the people involved with Mothers Against Drunk Driving are volunteers who have lost relatives and loved ones to the senseless carnage of drunk drivers. The efforts of these volunteers are most praiseworthy and laudable.

Impaired driving is the most frequently committed violent crime in this country. It has a far greater impact on society than any other crime.

We are still losing four Canadians a day because of impaired driving. These are preventable deaths.

We must continue the campaign until all Canadians know that impaired driving is not acceptable in Canada.

*Oral Questions***CRIME PREVENTION**

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to pay tribute to two Mount Royal College criminology students, Marino Mihoc and Sean Mulligan. These two individuals have developed a community oriented policing program which aims to build a stronger community by establishing innovative crime prevention projects in the middle schools and ultimately to teach kids how to become better citizens.

• (1415)

This is a unique project in that it has not been tried anywhere else in Canada. I strongly encourage all members of Parliament to become advocates of this project in their own constituency and to begin by contacting my office for further information.

This could be a project that would provide a reduction in crime throughout Canada. Crime prevention must begin at an early age. This program provides the guidance necessary to those children leaning toward destructive behaviour.

Best wishes to these two young men for this community oriented police program in Airdrie, Alberta.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of International Women's Week. I encourage all Canadians to join with the international community to emphasize women's achievements and to reflect on the initiatives that need to be taken in the coming years.

I also want to point out that Canada was awarded the world prize for greatest progress made in the last decade, regarding the status of women. The prize is awarded by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

We are making significant progress in the promotion of equality for women. However, we must pursue our efforts, particularly as regards violence against women. We must recognize that violence against women violates human rights, something which is unacceptable in Canada.

Governments, media, businesses, communities, families, as well as social, educational and religious institutions all have a role to play in making our world a safer place.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[Translation]

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in Quebec and in the maritime provinces, a growing number of demonstrations are being held to oppose the reform of the unemployment insurance system, whose net result will be to exclude thousands of workers from the scheme. In the middle of an employment crisis, the government is cutting benefits to the unemployed and, in order to reduce its annual deficit, is creaming off the surplus from the UI fund although it has not contributed to it since 1990.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Could the minister, whose role should be to protect the unemployment insurance system, tell us whether, on the eve of the budget, he has received guarantees from his colleague, the Minister of Finance, that he will stop using the fund surplus to artificially lower his deficit?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as regards the proposed unemployment insurance program, we are all aware of the concerns that have arisen pretty well throughout the country and we have said clearly that, as soon as the parliamentary committee resumes its deliberations, we will raise, properly I hope, the question of calculating benefits for the unemployed and the intensity rule.

As to the surplus, I am sure that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is aware that, last year and two years ago, we were in a deficit situation with unemployment insurance.

Frankly, I would reassure the Leader of the Opposition that the surplus has nothing to do with the changes we are going to make to the unemployment insurance program. This program must reflect reality for both people looking for work and the labour market.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Human Resources Development daring to claim that the \$5 billion surplus already being counted on by the Minister of Finance does not come from two main sources: the cut in unemployment benefits and the exclusion of hundreds of thousands of unemployed from the plan?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the moment, the program has not undergone the changes proposed in Bill C-111. The present surplus is the result of a fairly dramatic change in the country's employment rate.

No doubt the Leader of the Opposition is aware that, in recent years, the job situation has improved in the country, though it remains painful for those unemployed.

*Oral Questions*

• (1420)

I would point out to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, over the past three years, there has, each year, been a fairly small reduction in the contributions made by employees and employers to the UI program.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I must point out to my hon. colleague that the Minister of Finance, in last year's budget, counted on annual surpluses of \$5 billion in the coming years. Now they tell me that they will cut payments to the unemployed and the plan's benefits without taking into account the changes to the plan. Now I really do not understand.

My question is as follows: Does the Minister realize that, by cutting benefits to the unemployed in order to create a huge surplus in the unemployment insurance fund, he will continue to unload the federal government's deficit onto the provinces, since it is the provinces that will have to look after the many unemployed who are no longer eligible for benefits under the plan with the government's proposed changes?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of the possibility that the changes proposed in Bill C-111 could indeed result in a number of people being denied the benefits they have enjoyed for many years.

This is why my predecessor before Christmas and I, since I have been asked to take on the department, confirm that, with the resumption of the deliberations of the parliamentary committee—I am certain of it, because all members of the House have heard their constituents' claims and concerns—the members of the committee representing all parties in the House will sit down at the table later this week to begin the work that is part and parcel of the legislative process and which consists in making the necessary changes to Bill C-111, thus reflecting some of the concerns raised by my hon. colleague.

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The proposed unemployment insurance reform, that the Minister of Human Resources Development seems stubbornly determined to bring back instead of letting it die on the Order Paper as he should, contains many unacceptable measures, which we will apparently discuss, including the reduction of the maximum yearly insurable earnings from \$42,400 to \$39,000, when what is required is an increase.

My question is the following: Given that employers would no longer have to contribute beyond this \$39,000 ceiling, does the minister not realize that this will act as a very strong incentive for

all businesses, and those so-called capital-intensive operations that pay high wages in particular, to make as many employees as possible work overtime?

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this legislation contains several elements that seek to do the exact opposite of what my hon. friend has just described. In fact, I think there is ample evidence across the country that many people believe that the UI program is being abused and that there is not enough incentive for people to go out and look for a job.

We have taken the approach of having every hour worked count and including in the program right from the start anyone who has worked at least one hour. I do not quite understand the question about limiting the contributions made by high income earners. Naturally, by reducing the maximum payable, we hope to protect low income earners. It is always interesting to see how systems evolve, because today's newspapers report that Quebec plans to increase the insurance premiums paid by those with the highest salaries.

It is obvious that various people have many solutions or options in mind, and I can assure my hon. friend that, when committee work resumes, we will gladly listen to all your suggestions and, if any of them seem to meet the needs of the workers—after all, they are the ones we should be trying to help—we will pay serious attention to what you are saying.

• (1425)

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister realizes that Quebec's proposal, and not his own, may be the way to go, perhaps he should do what everyone is asking him to do, that is to say, withdraw the bill and review its basis, as it does not make any sense under the present circumstances.

Does the minister realize that, with this lower ceiling acting as an incentive for businesses to increase overtime, he is running counter to the growing consensus about the need to reduce overtime, put in place conditions conducive to job creation and make room for young people? This bill runs counter to this, as we will keep pointing out, and the minister will have to account for this.

[English]

**Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental elements in all of these proposals is that everyone in Canada recognizes the need to make sure that everybody takes up every hour of work that is available to them no matter where they live in the country.

I want to assure my hon. colleague that whatever we do when modifying the present elements of the law, under no circumstances

*Oral Questions*

are we going to consider any approach that will make it easier for people to take advantage of the system.

I do not think that anyone in the country, other than the hon. member, who has listened to what we have had to say, would believe that somehow it is going to be easier to take advantage of unemployment insurance.

What we are saying, which has offended a great number of people in the industries and in the businesses to which I think the hon. member was referring, is that they are concerned about first hour takeup. They are concerned about the fact that the legislation is going to take care of everybody in the country immediately when they go to work, whether or not they are working part time. The current legislation allows people to perform work for less than 15 hours a week which leads to the abuses to which the hon. member just referred.

Do not think it will be any easier. You might be a little surprised that it will be substantially tougher than it is now.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister said that his job was done. He was satisfied with a \$17 billion deficit projection and that now it was time to create a few jobs.

What the Prime Minister does not seem to grasp is the fact that deficit elimination is job creation. Thirty-three cents of every taxpayer dollar goes to pay just the interest on the federal debt. That is 33 cents that cannot go to health care, post-secondary education and pensions.

Does the government really feel that its job is done when 33 cents out of every taxpayer dollar ends up in the hands of money traders? Why will the finance minister not announce a firm date for a balanced budget?

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have consistently believed that a two-year rolling target is the best system to get to a balanced budget.

**Mr. Abbott:** Some people believe in Santa Claus too.

**Mr. Peters:** The finance minister has consistently said that.

I would like to read something from the *Globe and Mail* in case the hon. member missed it. It states: "It is worth noting that Mr. Martin has yet to report a deficit bigger than the one he predicted. This week he will probably say the deficit was less than that, which works out to 4 per cent of GDP or less than any deficit since 1976-77". That is not a bad record. It is a darn good record.

**The Speaker:** We are back into the second week now and I would ask members please to refrain from using names instead of ridings or titles in the House.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when the minister talks about rolling targets, how long are we going to roll along until this thing gets balanced?

If somebody puts the high jump level at one foot I would say anyone could trip over that kind of low and ridiculous target. The Liberal government says that it wants to create jobs, especially for young Canadians. However, in the upcoming budget with its \$17 billion projection, more jobs will be created on Wall Street than on any university campus: \$250 million for young people versus \$50,000 million for interest payments alone to international money lenders.

• (1430)

Why will the government not offer young Canadians real hope and a chance at a real long term job by simply balancing the budget; no rocking, no rolling, just balance it?

**Mr. White (Fraser Valley West):** You don't know what rock and roll is, so let's go back a few years.

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party is not willing to listen to answers, they just want to ask questions.

The real answer to the question is that we will. If the hon. member listened to the throne speech, youth unemployment was a key part of it and she will have to listen to the results that come up later on.

We have committed to a balanced budget. We have committed to two-year rolling targets. We have not only done that, we have met our targets which is something new in this country.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, youth unemployment is key but there is no sense lending money to kids and then charging it back later, that much plus interest. It is scandalous.

The government has tried to make a \$17 billion deficit sound like a victory and a \$12,000 a year internship amount sound like the key to fighting and winning against a 16 per cent youth unemployment rate.

The reality is that Canadian young people are less likely to find a job now than when the government took office in 1993. What is more, any young person lucky enough to even find a full time job will be paying more taxes than they can ever expect to receive in benefits from health care, social assistance and public pensions.

Why is the government condemning Canadian youth to a life of unstable employment, higher taxes and reduced benefits by its stubborn refusal to balance the books now?

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would love to to see their budget this year. We did not get a chance to.

*Oral Questions*

Last year they put out their ideas and those ideas would have condemned Canadians to lower pensions. It would have condemned Canadians to less social benefits. It would have condemned Canada's youth to even higher levels of unemployment. We are doing something. The Reform Party is just talking.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CUBA**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the U.S. government has decided on certain measures against Cuba in retaliation for the destruction of two civilian aircraft on February 24. If the Helms-Burton bill is passed, Canadian companies doing business with Cuba will be liable to prosecution and their directors will be denied access to the U.S. Thousands of Canadian jobs will thus be at risk.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs report on the current status of discussions between his government and that of the United States on this matter?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, today the Minister for International Trade is in Washington meeting with his counterpart, raising the serious objections that we have expressed since we knew the bill was being considered by Congress.

The Prime Minister is at a meeting of the Caribbean leaders in Grenada where he is working actively to try to gain their support for a statement. We are undertaking a number of initiatives with other countries to mount international pressure against the implementation of this bill.

Within the bill itself—it has not been passed—there is room for discretion. The U.S. president can waive those parts of the bill that apply specifically to countries outside their boundaries.

At this time we are really taking the leadership internationally in mounting pressure against the bill to convince the U.S. administration that the implementation of all articles of the bill would not be in its best interest internationally.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, considering that the American bill would obviously be in violation of international trade laws, will the minister commit to defending Canadians before the appropriate courts in this connection, should the U.S. Congress and the President pass this bill?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of hypotheticals in that question: one, if the bill is passed and two, if the president does not implement the bill.

Our position is that the most effective protection for Canadians is to insist that those parts of the bill that apply to Canadians and other countries not be implemented. That would save having to get into major legal wrangles or countermeasures.

• (1435)

However, it is quite clear from what the Prime Minister and other spokespersons of the government have said that we will protect the interests of Canadians. We will look at all measures that are necessary to have that protection, but the first and most effective way of doing it is to see if we can convince the Americans not to go ahead with implementing those parts of the bill that apply extraterritorially.

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**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend the environment minister said of the GST, "to deny that it's not an issue would be incorrect. People remember us taking a very firm position".

My question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Exactly what would be today's firm position on the GST? Would it be the pre-election position that her caucus came up with, which was to axe, abolish or kill the GST? Or would it be today's position, to replace and harmonize the GST into what amounts to a new super tax on consumer spending?

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our position on the GST remains completely unchanged. We said in the red book that we would replace it with a tax that generates equivalent revenue, that was fairer to consumers and to small business, that minimizes disruption to small business and promotes federal-provincial co-operation and harmonization. That was our position in the red book. That is our position now.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I really wish the Prime Minister would embrace the merit principle when he picks his cabinet.

I remind the revenue minister that two years ago she said of the GST: "As Liberals we were elected to change the tax, abolish the tax, scrap it". That is what the revenue minister said two years ago, six months after the election.

Why is she and her government weaselling out of their commitment to abolish this hated tax? Why has she changed her mind?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question because nobody is weaselling out of a commitment to reform the GST.

We talked about harmonizing that tax. I know the Minister of Finance is working diligently with all the provinces to find a solution. I worked with members of the hon. member's party on the finance committee and we agreed that finding a harmonized tax is what Canadians want, and we will do that.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC CITADEL**

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Defence. The events surrounding the mock terrorist attack on the Quebec Citadel, in 1992, brought back into the limelight the rather suspicious circumstances in which private Jonathan Brunet found a tragic death, in February 1994, at the Quebec Citadel. His mother does not believe he committed suicide and is asking for an independent investigation.

Can the minister explain why the Canadian forces gave the soldier's mother three different accounts of her son's death, and why several reports, documents, and personal effects have not yet been turned over to the family following the department's investigation in this matter?

[English]

**Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, normally I would not want to discuss matters of such a personal nature in the House of Commons. This deals with the very unfortunate death of a former member of the armed forces.

There were a number of investigations. We particularly wanted to assure that the mother of the deceased was comfortable in knowing that the armed forces had dealt with the matter in the most appropriate of ways.

There has been some concern about the personal effects of that individual. Those are being addressed. That is all I can really say at this time.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to the minister's answer, who wants to be reassuring and claims that an in-depth investigation was conducted, it has been confirmed by several sources that there was no such investigation.

Unfortunately, these recent revelations bring back to mind the wave of suicides which was revealed last year and was, to say the least, highly suspicious. Is the minister going to act at long last and

order an investigation independent from his department to get to the bottom of this matter once and for all?

[English]

**Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I felt there was need for an independent inquiry into such a matter I would have no hesitation, as the hon. member knows. We have launched an independent inquiry into the deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces to Somalia in 1993 so that is not really at issue.

● (1440)

I do take umbrage with some of the comments made by the hon. member with respect to a suicide wave. We have dealt with this in the House of Commons. These unfortunate deaths plague society at large, not just in Canada but worldwide and run about half the rate of Canadian society as a whole. We have made documents public which show there is no undue tendency of members of the armed forces to take their lives out of step with the rest of Canadian society.

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**TERRORISM**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are shocked and saddened by yet another bombing just a few hours ago in Israel. We join with all Canadians in sending our condolences to the families.

We are also outraged that terrorists receive support and funding from certain foreign countries. What measures will the Canadian government take to lead, I repeat lead, to punish the countries that fund such terrorism?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know all members of the House and all Canadians echo the sympathies extended by the member for Red Deer.

I should report to the House that the Prime Minister has already written to the Prime Minister of Israel on behalf of the Canadian people to express his deep sympathy and his outrage at the actions that have taken place. Unfortunately there was another bombing attack this morning, the third in a row. In many cases the injured and dead are children which makes the situation even more serious.

I will be making a statement in the House immediately following question period. We will outline the concerns we have as a government and the steps we will be taking as a country to help support the peace process in Israel and to counteract the very malicious and violent acts of terrorism that seem to be so rampant and which are so destructive to all.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that every country should condemn such sickening bombings. I do not think civilians are ever a legitimate target for such attacks.

*Oral Questions*

We all think of Mr. Gerry Adams and his refusal to condemn the IRA after the bombings.

Will the minister take it upon himself to contact the ambassadors in Canada for all of these countries? If even one of them refuses to condemn these actions we could then call for an investigation and make it public in Canada and at least take some action. These activities demand some sort of action.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt at all that the increasing incidents of terrorism do demand the most intense and active international action we can possibly muster.

I remind the House that just a few months ago my colleague the Solicitor General hosted a meeting of the P-8 countries in Ottawa to deal with counterterrorism. It was a major conference which looked at a number of aspects.

It would certainly be our intention to promote some of those measures at the G-7 meeting which will take place this spring. It is something we can take some leadership on in trying to get the international community to act. As well, there are actions which we can take within our own country. As I said, I will outline some of those actions in a statement I propose to make later in the House.

I certainly welcome the points of view expressed by the member for Red Deer on behalf of his party. We all want to look at ways in which we can try to stamp out terrorism or restrain or limit it so that it does not become something that will destroy what is good in the country. It is a case of the bad driving out the good. We will certainly look very carefully at the representations from the hon. member.

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[Translation]

**SECURITIES**

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In the speech from the throne, the government clearly states that it intends to create a Canadian Securities Commission.

Is the Minister of Finance aware that the securities business is a field of exclusive provincial jurisdiction in which he is not allowed to interfere?

[English]

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Securities Commission was mentioned in the speech from the throne. Its genesis was from the suggestion of the provinces. We were quite clear that it is a provincial jurisdiction but several provinces have been asking us about it. We have put forth an optional proposal to

the provinces and they will be allowed to opt in or opt out. Anyone who has ever worked in the securities business in Canada realizes that the proliferation of agencies one has to go through is a dreadful thing. A national Canadian securities commission would be appropriate and would be of great benefit to Canadian business and the Canadian people.

• (1445)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the secretary of state. It is incredible. He said that there is a proliferation of agencies and yet, the federal government is going to create new ones, top-loading the securities business. Mr. Daniel Johnson, who was Quebec Premier in 1994, wrote a letter to the minister or to the secretary of state, stating that Quebec and the then labour minister were adamantly clinging to the securities area. So, why this plan to create securities commissions?

How can the government say in the speech from the throne that it is going to withdraw from areas of provincial jurisdiction and, at the same time, that it is going to interfere in these areas, claiming there is a certain proliferation? Such an argument does not make any sense.

[English]

**Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member forgets that the provinces that do not want to follow this can opt out. Is that a compulsory system? Certainly not. Many provinces have wanted to opt in to a Canadian securities commission. It will replace the provincial securities commissions for those provinces that do want to opt in. It is an excellent measure and one that all Canadians should support.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

During the last year the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has expressed serious concerns over how the feed freight assistance transition fund would be paid out. The federation has identified direct payments to producers would be the most useful option to help the industry adapt during this transition period.

Can the minister assure the members of the House that the concerns of the Nova Scotia producers have been listened to and when can we expect a final decision on this matter?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the hon. member's important question. As he knows, for the past several months a task force has been at work consulting with all of the affected FFA

stakeholders and offering advice about how the FFA adjustment process should proceed away from subsidization.

The task force has been guided by the able leadership of my friend the Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food. The final report has been received. We will be in a position to respond in detail this afternoon. I am pleased to say that we have been able to respond favourably to the vast majority of the task force's recommendations, including the specific point mentioned by the hon. member.

\* \* \*

### IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Malachy McAllister is a former member of the terrorist organization Irish Nationalist Liberation Army. He was convicted of attempted murder of a Belfast police officer in 1982. In 1988 he arrived in Canada and claimed refugee status which was denied and he has been ordered deported. However instead of being deported, McAllister has been working here in Ottawa as a stonemason on yes, the Peace Tower.

I ask the Minister of Immigration: Does this government believe that a way of keeping track of people facing deportation is to give them a job on Parliament Hill?

[Translation]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very normal for the person in question to use any legal means he can find in our Immigration Act. So he did use all the remedies permitted by law. In February, the federal court gave a ruling on the removal of this person. At this moment, the removal process is being finalized.

• (1450)

[English]

**Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the minister is adamant in having this terrorist removed from the country.

On Friday the parliamentary secretary for immigration assured us that Bill C-44 was looking after all of these and preventing these types of individuals from using the appeal process. Will the minister continue in this vein and make sure that anybody convicted of terrorist activities in other countries will immediately be deported and be prevented from using the appeal system?

[Translation]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the priority of the department of immigration is first and foremost to guarantee the

### Oral Questions

security of Canadians. As a country, we definitely will not welcome people with a criminal or terrorist past.

However, our Canadian laws allow some legal recourse that we must respect. Once all legal means have been used, as in the present case, we must proceed with the removal of the person and this is what we will do in this situation.

\* \* \*

### AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Once more, Canada is having a commercial dispute with the United States with regard to the agri-food sector. Some 138,000 Canadian jobs are at stake, including 45,000 in Quebec.

Could the government commit itself to do its utmost to make sure that custom tariffs determined by the World Trade Organization in the area of milk, poultry and egg productions are not tampered with in any way because of false American claims?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say that in the face of the NAFTA challenge launched by the United States with respect to Canada's supply management system, all of the relevant farm organizations, all of the provincial governments and the Government of Canada are totally united in putting forward the most vigorous, articulate and thorough defence of this valuable made in Canada system for the supply management of our agricultural products.

We are launching that vigorous defence in the face of the American action for three very compelling reasons: first, because supply management has served this country very well; second, because we firmly believe we are right as a matter of trade policy and trade law; and third, because this government promised Canadian farmers, including Quebec farmers that we would defend our system of supply management. We will keep that promise.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what it did in the area of lumber, could the Liberal government promise not to make any concession to the Americans, but rather to use all its resources and all the means at its disposal to force the Americans to abide by the rules of the WTO?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year or so the United States has repeatedly invited us on the Canadian side to renegotiate these tariff equivalents with respect to supply management. The Canadian government with the full support of all the provinces and the full support of Canadian supply management

*Oral Questions*

agencies has consistently said no to the request from the United States.

We believe the United States is trying to obtain by the mechanism of the dispute settlement process what the United States could not obtain through the negotiating process. Canada intends to stand firm. Canada will not blink.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Royal Canadian Mint.

At the launch of the \$2 coin, the minister said: "In our efforts to reduce the deficit, we are examining every expenditure for potential savings". Despite this promise of frugality we find that the mint is spending in excess of \$2 million to advertise this new coin.

• (1455)

Considering that the coin was already a fait accompli, can the minister explain how spending \$2 million to promote the coin contributes to saving money? Is there a hole in the minister's logic?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I viewed the ads, as the hon. member did, I had some concerns. I contacted the Canadian Mint and am pleased to say that the ads stopped last Tuesday.

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am so happy the minister has given me that answer.

If the minister has taken such swift action to stop these ads, will she also take quick action to stop the ads currently being run by Canada Post which promotes how far we can send a letter in Canada for 45 cents? Canada Post is the only way we can send a letter for 45 cents and if it is the only option that Canadians have, why do we need to advertise it?

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will certainly look into this matter as well and take whatever action is necessary.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

As most of us are fully aware, this is currently that wonderful season for tax filing. Taxpayers throughout New Brunswick would like to know what if anything Revenue Canada officials could

possibly do to make the tax filing chore a little easier this year in New Brunswick and throughout Canada.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has put his finger directly and clearly on a key focus of Revenue Canada which is to find the strategies that make it as easy as possible for Canadians to pay their taxes.

Certainly the member is aware that we are using new technology, E-filing and electronic transfer of funds. Most specifically, I am pleased to announce the expansion of a pilot in the member's own province of New Brunswick whereby 65,000 residents of his province can now use the telephone to file their tax returns.

I look forward to working with the member and others in the province of New Brunswick and their constituents to streamline that program to make sure that it is available to all Canadians in the near future.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH CARE**

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health has recently added a page to this government's book of horrors when he stated that the health care system would be severely threatened once Quebec has achieved full sovereignty.

Since his department is a perfect example of duplication through federal interference in an area under provincial jurisdiction, will the minister not agree that it would be preferable to make cuts within his own department, which has 8,000 employees and spends more than \$1 million a year, rather than in health services to the public?

[English]

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is aware that the people in the province of Quebec overwhelmingly support the five principles of the Canada Health Act. In point of fact, in excess of 63 per cent of the people of the province of Quebec support medicare in Canada.

I want to say to the hon. member that it is vitally important for all Canadians regardless of where they live, regardless of their socioeconomic status, that they have access to good quality health care. Many royal commissions which have been put in place by provincial governments across the country have said that the question is not one of funding, the question is one of management. There is no duplication between the various levels of government, and if there were we would move forward to correct it.

• (1500)

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when the health minister was in opposition there was a huge uproar every time cuts to medicare took place. Now that he is in a position to put his money where his mouth is, will the minister stop this slow bleeding of health care? Do your job.

**The Speaker:** I presume that statement was meant for me, and I will.

**Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, Canadians in the province of Alberta and those people over there have been waiting patiently to ascertain the policy position of the Reform Party on medicare.

On two separate occasions the leader of the third party as well as its critic have made conflicting views and statements with regard to medicare. It is high time the Reform Party came clean and told Canadians where it stands.

\* \* \*

#### UNION STATION

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the regional minister from Winnipeg or for whom-ever else might answer for the proposed sale of Union Station in Winnipeg.

The minister will be aware of allegations made in the local media that a proposed sale of Union Station was not only not tendered but that Liberal insiders were given privileged information with respect to the building.

This deal fell through. However, can we have assurances that if this building continues to be for sale, although I do not think it should be, it will be for sale in an openly transparent tendered way so that everybody is given the same information? Will the government be asking the auditor general to investigate what happened the first time the place was put up for sale?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development)(Western Economic Diversification), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is making a whole series of largely unfounded accusations.

The government has set up a number of instruments for economic development and we are using these in the most independent and impartial way possible to make sure Canadians have jobs and that our young people are better off. The hon. member will see those results.

\* \* \*

#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I draw to the attention of the House the presence in the gallery of Mr. Roberto Pedraza Martinez, President of the Commission of Indigenous Affairs of the United Mexican States and accompanying delegation.

#### *Routine Proceedings*

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** I also draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the hon. Dr. Ron Stewart, Minister of Health of Nova Scotia.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

### ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSIONS

**The Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to section 23(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to lay upon the table certified copies of the 1994 reports of Electoral Boundaries Commissions for the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

• (1505)

These reports are deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### INDIAN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the first annual report of the Gwich'in land claims agreement implementation committee.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### FEDERAL ELECTIONS, FEES, TARIFF

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with subsection 198(3) of the Canada Elections Act, and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I wish to table, in both official languages, copies of recent amendments to the Federal Elections, Fees, Tariff. Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this document should be deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

\* \* \*

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to six petitions presented during the first session.

*Routine Proceedings***THE MIDDLE EAST**

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last eight days we have witnessed with horror and heartache repeated acts of terrorism in Israel.

Today in the heart of downtown Tel Aviv a terrorist yet again carried out an attack against innocent individuals. Worse still, many of the casualties appear to be children.

[*Translation*]

All Canadians vigorously condemn these acts of terrorism. We are with the people of Israel at this tragic time. The Prime Minister has written to Prime Minister Peres. I have also written to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Barak, to express our support.

Today, the Prime Minister of Canada asked the other heads of state meeting in Grenada to condemn the attacks in Israel and they agreed to.

[*English*]

Later this afternoon I will be meeting with members of the Israel committee to discuss their concerns. I will also be writing directly to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to urge him to take all steps within his power to prevent further acts of terrorism.

I acknowledge very clearly, as we all must, that Canada must also do its own part. I will be speaking to my colleague, the solicitor general, and to other ministers to review what steps can be taken by Canada to ensure terrorists find no home here.

The issue of terrorist funding was raised in question period regarding the extent of the problem in Canada. We do not know how far, how modest or how great, but whatever the amount we know they can be important to groups themselves. Therefore we are committed to doing all we can to deprive terrorists of this funding.

We will also be discussing with our counterparts in the P-8 group of nations what further actions we can take to root out terrorism.

There is no doubt the terrorists who carried out these attacks had in mind one basic target, the Middle East peace process. It is tragic in today's world that the bad drives out the good and the extremists can force what was a positive, constructive development to turn this way.

We should remind ourselves today of all that has been accomplished in the peace process. Israel is at peace with its neighbours Egypt and Jordan. It has with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat found a partner. Now these partners must work together to defeat those who seek to destroy all the peace process has accomplished so far.

[*Translation*]

We think that the peace process must continue. It is the best response to terrorism.

• (1510)

Mr. Peres has carried on Yitzhak Rabin's peace efforts with courage and determination.

[*English*]

We have learned that there are people who believe they can achieve acts of change by the sword. I think all of us in the House are of the opinion that it really is through words, discussion and dialogue that peace is brought about. The events that so deeply penetrate our hearts, just as the shrapnel and weapons penetrated bodies, we have to continue to ask why such senseless acts. We are a generation that has witnessed far too many such acts of violence and terrorism and have seen so many cut down.

I am reminded of the words of Robert Kennedy when his brother was assassinated: "What has violence ever accomplished, what has it ever created? No martyr's cause has ever been stilled by an assassin's bullet. No wrongs have ever been righted by riots and civil disorders. A sniper or a terrorist is only a coward, not a hero. An uncontrollable mob is only the voice of madness, not the voice of the people".

We are reminded this day of how fragile our societies are and how vulnerable to extremists, fanatics and true believers each of us really is. Even in our own country we receive some overtones of this.

We offer our great hope for the continuation of that peace process. We offer to the people of Israel and to all the Middle East a great hope that this terrorism can be brought to an end and that we can all work together to bring lasting peace and stability to this very tortured and troubled region.

It is my understanding that my parliamentary secretary has discussed matters with members of the opposition and they would be prepared to entertain a unanimous motion condemning the acts in Israel and offering our support for the peace process. We will circulate those for consideration during the period of motions. We ask the House to join us in expressing our deep concern.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I wish to condemn this new terrorist attack against the Israeli people, which threatens the Middle East peace process.

This bombing, which killed or wounded dozens of innocent victims, is the fourth one in Israel in less than 10 days.

The Bloc Québécois wishes to express its profound sympathy to the families of the victims, to the people of Israel, and to all Jewish people around the world, including the Jewish community in Quebec.

This gratuitous violence threatens not only the long and difficult road to peace but also the negotiations on the eventual status of the Palestinian territories. We want to stress the need to resist provocation. The peace talks must continue. The fight against violence must prevail over the fight against peace.

We cannot let Yitzhak Rabin's tragic death take with it the hope of a lasting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours. The best response to radicalism is to continue and strengthen the peace process.

The Bloc Québécois hopes that these tragic and violent events will not hamper the pursuit of Messrs. Arafat and Peres' diplomatic efforts to establish a peace plan in the region. The process initiated must prevail over the radical currents that flout democratic values and promote violence.

We were therefore happy to hear the PLO chairman state, and I quote: "Today's crime reinforces our determination to pursue our policy of fighting terrorism here and abroad. We must work with Israel to destroy their structure and eradicate terrorism".

Chairman Arafat's Sunday announcement banning the military wings of the Muslim fundamentalist movements in the West Bank and Gaza also demonstrates this commitment.

The Canadian government must offer its full co-operation in thwarting the efforts of those who seek to destroy the peace process. It can count on the official opposition's support in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to observe a minute of silence in memory of the innocent victims of the fundamentalist movement Hamas.

• (1515)

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, what can I say that would give meaning to the senseless bombing of civilians that has taken place in Israel for the third time in the last week? Friends and families of victims have once again had their hearts broken by despicable terrorists.

These cowardly acts are inexcusable and, while the vast majority of people throughout the world will condemn them, I would like to address those people and those countries who do not. To all those who make excuses for the bombers or who sit on the sidelines and give silent approval, you should look in the mirror. Do you like what you see? Do you not realize that you are the moral accomplices in the murder of women and children? We must hold these people accountable.

### *Routine Proceedings*

The time has come for the international community to take strong, unequivocal steps to crush terrorism worldwide and severely punish those individuals and countries that finance terrorism.

We all know that bombs, guns and supplies are not cheap. The money has to come from somewhere. Often it comes from abroad. If the world community can work together to cut off this financial backing, then hopefully many terrorist organizations will wither.

Therefore I urgently request that the Minister of Foreign Affairs take a leadership role in punishing those individuals and countries that support terrorism worldwide. The Reform Party will support him in this measure and so will all Canadians. There is no time to waste. The victims of terrorism are demanding action now, and it is through our decisive action that we will create a deserving memorial in their honour.

Once again, I would like to send my deepest condolences to the people of Israel and the Canadian Jewish community. I assure them that we will work with them to find justice for the victims and punish the terrorists who never should be allowed to hide and get away with their crimes.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the federal NDP caucus, I would like to express our outrage at this series of events, the most recent one being a few hours ago. I would like to express our condolences to the people of Israel and say that we share with them that sense of powerlessness that sometimes comes over us in the face of this kind of terrorism, in the face of radical evil, in the face of extremism.

At the same time as we share that sense of powerlessness, we want also to share with them a determination to see the peace process through and to make sure that the terrorists do not succeed in derailing it.

We say to the Israeli people, do not be divided by this event. Do not turn on each other. Let us not hear any cries of Perez next or the kinds of things that we have heard from certain elements in Israeli society. In spite of the pain, in spite of the terror, we want to see an Israeli people united and determined to see the peace process through.

I think there is a special place in hell reserved for people who use children as hostages and who make children the objects of terrorist attacks. I do not care whether it is a Muslim hell, a Christian hell or a Jewish hell. It is a special place in hell that is reserved for people who do this.

We ought to reflect perhaps on the way in which we are all part of the same mentality when we consider the way in which we held each other's civilian populations, including children, hostage to the nuclear deterrent for 40 years. It is part of the modern age and it is something we all have to shake. When we see it in its raw, brutal, obvious form we condemn it. Let us condemn it wherever we find it.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** My colleagues, the House has heard the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition in the House. Does the House give unanimous consent for the motion to be tabled and adopted?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

[Editor's Note: The House stood in silence.]

• (1520)

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in consideration of these very important matters, as I indicated in my statement, I would like to move a motion with the unanimous consent of the House which would express the point of view of this House concerning the events in Israel. We have not reached motions yet but considering the timing I would ask for consent to do that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The minister is quite correct, we have not reached motions yet. Is there unanimous consent to proceed with the matter?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the House for their courtesy and response. I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion to be moved and adopted without debate:

That Canada strongly condemns repeated acts of terrorism against the people of Israel, and that the Government of Canada and the people of Canada make every effort to ensure that the enemies of the peace process will not prevail.

(Motion agreed to.)

\* \* \*

**STANDARDS COUNCIL OF CANADA ACT**

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-4, an act to amend the Standards Council of Canada Act.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT**

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce the bill entitled: "An act to amend the

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Income Tax Act".

(Motion deemed agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.)

\* \* \*

[English]

**YUKON QUARTZ MINING ACT**

**Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-6, an act to amend the Yukon Quartz Mining Act and the Yukon Placer Mining Act.

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

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**CONSTITUTION ACT, 1996**

**Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-213, an act entitled the Constitution Act, 1996 (balanced budget and spending limit).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the Parliament of Canada is limited in its freedom to pass legislation by the charter of rights and freedoms.

The private member bill I am introducing today is designed to limit parliamentarians in their ability to run budget deficits, which in effect provide benefits for voters today at the expense of unborn generations who have no vote and representation in today's Parliament.

• (1525)

The record shows that Parliament has been totally irresponsible in its disregard of the interests of future generations. My bill will make it responsible by prohibiting deficits, limiting the growth of spending and imposing fines on MPs who vote for deficit budgets and excessive spending growth.

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

\* \* \*

**PROGRAM COST DECLARATION ACT**

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-214, an act to provide for improved information on the cost of proposed government programs.

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to reintroduce my bill dealing with government financing.

Members of the House are often required to vote on various pieces of legislation. It occurs to me that quite often members of Parliament and the general public have no idea of exactly what the cost will be or its future impact on taxpayers.

The bill would require that prior to all legislation being voted on that it be properly costed and the costing be attested to by the Governor General. I believe if we had had this type of legislation in the past we would not have the debt and deficit problems which now exist.

I am pleased to introduce the bill which will provide an awareness and a better focus among parliamentarians on some of the debt and deficit problems we have.

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

\* \* \*

**TAXPAYERS BILL OF RIGHTS**

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, an act to appoint a taxation ombudsman and to amend the Income Tax Act to establish certain rights of taxpayers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it pleases me once again to reintroduce my private members' bill which I have entitled a taxpayers bill of rights. Basically the bill would provide for an ombudsman who would act as an adjudicator between taxpayers and the government.

Revenue Canada has become more and more desirous of increased revenues from taxpayers. It has used some of its authoritative mechanisms to, I believe, infringe on the civil liberties of Canadians to the extent of unnecessary seizures and other onerous acts.

This bill will protect widowers and widows from having to sell their properties in restitution of back taxes or taxpayers from having to relinquish their homes. It also provides a window of opportunity for restitution and compensation for wrongful acts by Revenue Canada. It provides for \$50,000 compensation for wrongful acts by Revenue Canada on the taxpayers of Canada.

The United States and the United Kingdom have similar acts. It is long overdue here in Canada.

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

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**BROADCASTING ACT**

**Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act (broadcasting policy).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill to amend the Broadcasting Act. As more players enter the marketplace to provide television programming services to Canadians, it

is necessary that the CRTC understand that the consumer's interest is paramount.

• (1530)

To this end I am introducing this bill which will amend the broadcast policy section of the Broadcasting Act to direct the CRTC never again to permit negative option billing or other such practices.

Clearly the potential for this still exists, but in the interests of Canadian consumers the bill will level the playing field between supplier and consumer of services, something over which Canadians expressed strong opinions last year during the consumer revolt against cable companies.

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

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[Translation]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-217, entitled: "An act to amend the Criminal Code (protection of witnesses)".

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling today this bill to amend the Criminal Code so that every person who testifies in proceedings relating to a sexual offence or assault, or in which the offender allegedly used, attempted to use or threatened to use violence, is afforded the same protection as witnesses under 14 years of age are currently afforded under the Criminal Code.

During this kind of proceedings, the accused will not be able to question the victim. In such cases, the judge will appoint counsel to conduct the cross-examination.

(Motion deemed agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.)

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[English]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-218, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Young Offenders Act (capital punishment).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to impose the death penalty on adults convicted of first degree murder. Canadians are demanding fundamental changes to our criminal justice system, and almost 70 per cent have called for the reinstatement of capital punishment.

The bill provides additional safeguards against miscarriages of justice by allowing questions of both fact and law to be considered throughout the appeals process. Evidence for whether capital punishment is a deterrent for other murderers is not conclusive, but at least criminals guilty of premeditated first degree murder will not be back on the streets to kill again.

*Routine Proceedings*

Too many Canadians have died at the hands of violent criminals who show no remorse for the victims of their crimes. These people will never be rehabilitated, no matter how long they stay in prison.

The bill also addresses the growing public concern over light sentences for violent young offenders. It calls for a range of stiffer minimum penalties for youth convicted of first degree murder.

I recommend that the government allow a free vote on the bill and encourage all members to seek actively the views of their constituents on this important issue.

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

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**CANADA LABOUR CODE**

**Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-219, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (severance pay).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to remove from the Canada Labour Code the provision that denies severance pay to employees who at the time they are terminated from employment are entitled to a pension under certain plans or legislation.

Currently, no matter how inadequate a pension may be, it deprives an employee of the right to severance pay. Passage of the bill would end an injustice and would end the enshrinement of age discrimination in the Canada Labour Code.

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

\* \* \*

• (1535)

**ENERGY PRICE COMMISSION**

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-220, an act respecting the Energy Price Commission.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce the bill respecting the energy price commission. The bill responds to the concerns and complaints of millions of Canadians about unfair gas pricing, unjustifiable price increases for gasoline and government tax hikes on gasoline.

The bill establishes an energy price commission to regulate wholesale and retail prices of gasoline. The purpose of price regulation is to avoid unreasonable increases that affect the cost of living, agricultural production costs and depressed business activity.

The bill will facilitate reasonable consistency in prices from province to province, allowing for production and distribution costs. The regulation further minimizes the risk of collusion in

pricing and prevents dominant suppliers from setting unreasonable prices.

The bill also links the issue of price control to competition. Any investigation of an alleged offence under the Competition Act that is related to gasoline pricing is remitted by the Competition Tribunal to the commission for investigation and a report to the tribunal before it makes a determination or order on the matter.

Every one penny increase in gasoline takes about \$375 million out of the economy. This commission will make sure the money is either justified or not.

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

\* \* \*

**COMPETITION ACT**

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-221, an act to amend the Competition Act (illegal trade practices).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the bill would amend the Competition Act by creating an offence for manufacturers and distributors of motor vehicles and farm equipment to engage in certain marketing practices with their dealers. In most cases franchise agreements provide that a dealer shall not carry any other line or "dual" without the written permission of the manufacturer. In practice that permission is rarely forthcoming.

The consequences of this restrictive arrangement are that the dealer's investment in one line of motor vehicles or farm equipment may substantially exceed the investment actually required to efficiently supply the sales and servicing demands faced by a particular dealer in his or her market.

By allowing the dealer to offer one or more new lines of new motor vehicles or farm equipment I believe the bill would produce two positive results. First, the investment of the dealer would be utilized more efficiently and effectively and, second, the public in the dealer's market would be better served.

I urge all members to support the bill for the benefit of Canada's business community.

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House on Friday, March 1, be concurred in.

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**Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the motion before us is a debatable motion and therefore I would like to offer the following in debate.

• (1540)

If adopted by the House, the motion would establish the membership of the standing joint committee of the House. The Reform Party does not oppose the membership of any of the committees, but we do oppose the way the committees have been run over the first session of the 35th Parliament.

We have every reason to believe that there is nothing likely to change in this regard during the second session. The main question we are asking here is why this love-in between the Liberal benches and the Bloc Quebecois. We cannot answer that question. That is why we have taken the route to have a debate on the matter to expose some of the problems we see.

This situation is particular galling when it comes to the public accounts committee of the House which can be chaired and is chaired by a member of the opposition. In spite of our efforts we have found that the Liberal benches have deliberately contrived to have that chair taken by the Bloc Quebecois.

We have nothing against the individual members of the Bloc Quebecois. They are competent, professional people. What we have against it is that they are separatists. They want to divorce Quebec from Canada and we as federalists say this is wrong. It is wrong for the government benches to be saying yes, let them have all the vice-chairs, particularly the chair of the public accounts committee.

This is being done, led by the chief government whip, in spite of some of the quotes from the Prime Minister. In January 1994 he said: "I know very well that if members of the official opposition keep talking about separation and constitutional problems they are not living up to why they are here".

More recently he also said: "My blood is boiling when I see those separatists in front of me because I fought them all my life". The *Globe and Mail* quotes the Prime Minister as admitting that he would rather have the Reform Party leader as his official opponent. It was one of the few times that the Prime Minister has been so publicly clear about his displeasure over the powerful separatist role in Parliament. The words of the Prime Minister obviously do not square with the actions of his party, led by the chief government whip.

During the first session we attempted to bring these concerns to the attention of the House through various points of order. Each time our concerns fell on deaf ears. The Speaker's refusal to entertain our points of order has left us in a catch 22.

When we raised questions about the election of committee chairs and vice-chairs at the committee, we were told the Liberals were simply backing the Bloc because it was tradition. We have then been summarily dismissed by the Liberal majority. This leaves us with no choice but to take the issue up as points of order in the House. Having done that, they have all been summarily dismissed to date. We have been on this merry-go-round for two years and our members are frustrated. One can tell by the look on their faces that they have had it.

It is important for me to clarify once again that this frustration is not personal but is professional. Reform members are frustrated not for themselves but for the vast majority of Canadians who support a united country yet cannot have their views adequately represented in the committee hierarchy because of the persistent, unexplainable love-in between the government and the Bloc Quebecois.

• (1545)

**Mr. Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The member raised an issue which is completely contradictory to the ruling of the Chair with regard to the position of the official opposition. Given the ruling by the Chair as to who constitutes the official opposition, the rules of procedure and the House rules clearly state the provisions with regard to chairs and vice-chairs of committees. The member clearly is arguing a matter which is challenging the ruling of the Chair and contrary to the standing orders.

**The Deputy Speaker:** With great respect to the member for Mississauga South, I think the matter he is raising is one of debate. However, when the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan uses words like "summarily dismissed" it seems they are a veiled reflection that the Chair did not rule carefully on the matter. I ask him to avoid terms in further remarks that suggest the Chair was not doing its job.

**Mr. Ringma:** The summary dismissal I was talking of was on the part of the government benches and not of the Chair. Incidentally it may be clear that I simply do not accept the last argument put forward either.

From day one of the 35th Parliament the Liberals have displayed a total lack of regard for the legitimate election process by blindly backing the Bloc candidates while under the watchful eye of the government whip. In election after election of committees we have seen Liberals dismiss qualified Reform candidates. This trend has continued into the second session.

For example, on February 29th the procedure and House affairs committee held its organizational meeting for the purpose of electing a chair and two vice-chairs. At that meeting my Reform colleagues and I again attempted to secure the opposition vice-chair position. During the election process last week not one Liberal member attempted to determine which candidate was best

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qualified for the post. There were no questions about the candidates' background or character, only the same tired arguments we have heard for more than two years.

The main argument put forward by the Liberal whip in defence of his unabashed support of separatists over federalists is one of tradition. According to the chief government whip it is parliamentary tradition for the opposition vice-chair to be filled by a member from the official opposition. To hear the government whip argue this point one would think the practice of electing an opposition vice-chair goes back hundreds of years. This is simply not the case.

Standing Order 106(2) governs the election process and in part states:

Each standing or special committee shall elect a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, of whom two shall be Members of the government party and the third a Member in opposition to the government.

No reference to official opposition; simply opposition. This standing order came into effect only in May of 1991, not five years ago. Later that month the committees were established and held elections for chairs and vice-chairs. During those elections a member of the NDP, the third party in the House at that time, was elected the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons. A reading from the minutes of that meeting of May 29, 1991 will help illustrate my contention that this position is not reserved for the official opposition. Following the election of Dr. Bruce Halliday to the chair he stated:

I believe the new standing orders call for two Vice-Chairmen, one of whom shall be from an opposition party.

Notice the chair referred to an opposition party, not the official opposition.

• (1550)

I will quote from the same chair moments later: "We need a second vice-chairman who should be somebody from one of the opposition parties". The minutes of that meeting then indicate the member for Beaches—Woodbine, a representative from the third party, the NDP, was elected opposition vice-chair.

The minutes of this meeting clearly counter Liberal arguments. They demonstrate a precedent and show this practice has been in effect only since May of 1991. Further research shows that since this standing order was adopted in the third and last session of the 34th Parliament there was only one round of elections. That is because the committee chair and vice-chair appointments from the initial election of May 1991 were continued until the dissolution of that Parliament through a motion adopted by the House on September 21, 1992.

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines tradition as a custom, opinion or belief handed down to posterity; an established practice or custom. Given the evidence I have just laid out it is clear the Liberal claim of tradition is faulty at best. The only tradition is the

one the Liberals are creating and have been creating these last couple of years, and it is a dangerous one.

I also believe it is important for unity minded Canadians to know which Liberals are supporting separatists over federalists. We will continue to keep count. At the meeting of procedure and House affairs last week, which I referred to earlier in my speech, the following government members rejected a federalist in favour of a separatist: the members for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Mississauga West, Kingston and the Islands, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa—Vanier, Ottawa West and Edmonton North. So listen in, Canadian public, to your members who are supporting a separatist vice-chair.

I will have to throw in another little bit to illustrate some of the intrigue that goes on in committees when they are electing chairs. Committees are masters of their own fate. For example, their members can agree to a secret ballot. We have proposed secret ballots in these committees to give the Liberal backbenchers who might be inclined to support a Reform vice-chair a chance to vote without incurring the wrath of their whip or their leader.

On every occasion we have proposed a secret ballot it has been rejected and the whip has put his firm hand on the Liberals saying no secret ballot.

What we are talking about is democracy, our ability as an opposition party to function properly within the committees of the House. We are being frustrated in them and we resent it.

I move:

That the motion before the House proposed by the government be amended by deleting all the words after the words "March 1, 1996" and substituting the following: "be not now concurred in, but that it be recommended to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs".

• (1555)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion is receivable.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I simply want to make a few comments. Let us go back to the beginning of this Parliament, after the election held on October 25, 1993, because some discussions took place between the parties at that time.

I want to tell you about two statements that were made back then. One was to the effect that the Bloc Québécois was coming to Ottawa to impede the proceedings of Parliament. However, as we have seen for a little over two years now, those who are guilty of filibustering are not Bloc members, but Reformers.

Since the very beginning, we have complied, rather closely I would say, with British parliamentary tradition. To be sure, our views differ from those of the Liberal Party. However, we agree to play by the rules. This is obvious to me, and I should point out that Quebec's National Assembly, which is the oldest parliament in

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America, agreed to follow the same rules as the British Parliament as early as 1791.

I also want to say that I participated in the negotiations that took place between the parties to bring some changes in this House. We tried to settle the issues of office allocation, and Heaven knows how long that took, House agenda, speaking order in the House, as well as committee membership. At that time, the Bloc Quebecois showed that it was very open-minded and said: “Yes, we are prepared to give up a number of vice-chair positions”. The Reform Party told us: “We want to provide the chairperson for the public accounts committee and the vice-chairpersons for finance, foreign affairs, national defence, agriculture and trade. Period. We will not accept anything else”. How about some apple turnover with that?

This proposal made no sense. And with its “we take that or nothing” position, the Reform Party ended up with nothing, because it did not know how to negotiate.

Now, we are told about a love affair between the Liberals and the Bloc Quebecois. Those who see a love story between the members opposite and the Bloc Quebecois certainly do not follow current politics very closely. Sure, we respect each other, but our views and our goals are certainly different. The only such attempt took place between the hon. member for Sherbrooke and the Reform Party.

**Mr. Robichaud:** It was not consummated.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** It was never consummated, no. Absolutely not. It was wishful thinking, but they never got together. Out of sight, out of mind. The House was not sitting when this came up.

Looking at the way things have developed since then, we see that the Liberals in committee have just about all voted the same way, with a few exceptions when they could not agree on who to elect as chair or vice-chair.

The Bloc has always voted the same way and in each of the committees Reform members have all taken the same position and voted the same way. All the same. I would imagine then, if they are able of their own free will to think things through themselves and reach the same conclusions, that others are allowed to do so as well.

What is in question here and what is more problematical, I might say even with the potential to become dangerous if taken to the extreme, is that, regardless of personal qualities, regardless of the fact that they have been elected like everyone else, what is being said is that positions will be awarded according to what people think. From the outset, it will be decided that access to positions away will be denied certain people. That is the situation. They will

say: “The people in the Bloc are competent and hard working, but they are separatists”. Such a situation would be dangerous.

• (1600)

I suppose there is the risk that we would win all of Parliament over to our point of view. We do not expect that much, but we do think we have a point of view that deserves to be heard and that it is worthwhile for Canadians to hear, for the first time.

But now they have gone so far as to say that the ideas we espouse would keep us from those positions and, when it comes down to it, the whole concept of democracy is being jeopardized. What is the solution? They tell us there will be a secret vote. That is the only solution I have heard for changing the procedures, but it is tantamount to preventing the public from knowing how its elected representatives have voted. We, however, are not afraid to rise in this House to express our ideas, to be judged on our ideas, because there will be an election some day—there is one about every four or five years. We would then be told that we can sit in the House of Commons but, when the time comes to vote, we would not dare make a public statement. That is the Reform Party’s position.

I think that this would be dangerous for democracy. There is an assumption that members who are not from the Reform Party cannot vote as they see fit, that we should hold secret ballots instead of publicly expressing our ideas. I will close by saying that this may be why an editorial in the Montreal daily *The Gazette*—which, as you know, is a staunchly sovereigntist newspaper—expressed the hope that the Bloc Quebecois would win the election in Lac-Saint-Jean. Although it was an easy wish to make, *The Gazette* nonetheless felt that, at least, they would then be sure that the Reform Party would not be the official opposition.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to and support the motion to amend the government motion concerning the list of chairs and vice-chairs of all the standing committees from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The points I want to make are all about common sense and fairness. The House leader of the Bloc Quebecois seemed to be saying that we were picking on the Bloc party. That is not the case at all. At least I am not speaking on this issue for the purpose of picking on the Bloc.

I want to point out that what is important in parliamentary tradition in a democracy is fairness, common sense and looking at the total number of seats in the House. As we all know, the government of the day is formed by the party that has the greatest number of seats. In this Parliament that is the Liberal Party. Thus, we have Mr. Chrétien as Prime Minister.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** It must be monotonous to hear, but we are not allowed to refer to colleagues by their first or last names in the House.

**Mr. Silye:** Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. I would have been okay if we had had only four weeks off. That extra three weeks totally threw me and I have forgotten some of the rules.

The party that forms the official opposition is the one that has the second highest number of seats. When we came here in October 1993 that was the Bloc Quebecois and they formed the official opposition. We were the third party. Any party that has less than 12 members is not recognized as an official party in the House of Commons. Those are the rules and they are good rules. I stand by them and I would defend them.

Now there has been a drop in numbers. Representation in the House has changed since prorogation and at this time both opposition parties, the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party, have the same number of members. We both have 52 members. I personally do not disagree with the ruling of the Speaker as to which party should be the official opposition.

Now I proceed to standing committees. There is a difference between how the rules operate here in the House and how they operate in standing committees. As the House leader of the Bloc tried to point out, we negotiated in October 1993. The Bloc negotiated from a position where they had two more members than the Reform Party. Now we have the same number of members. When it comes to standing committees, each committee elects its own chair. It makes sense to me that the chair of each of those committees should be a member from the government side with the exception of public accounts because that would be construed as a conflict of interest. The chairman of the public accounts committee should be a member of an opposition party.

• (1605)

It does not say a member of the official opposition should be vice-chairs anywhere in Beauchesne. The standing orders do not refer to official opposition, it just says opposition. I wish members opposite in the government would look that up. I challenge them to quote me differently and quote me the standing order that says official opposition.

**An hon. member:** It does not say official.

**Mr. Silye:** It has now been acknowledged that it does not say official, it says opposition party. To apply some common sense, if Reform has 52 members and the Bloc Quebecois has 52 members, somewhere along the line out of 27 standing committees just one of the vice-chairs should be a member of the Reform Party. That does not happen. Not one committee has a Reform Party member as a vice-chair. The Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois have the same number of seats. We have never had that.

We may have negotiated away one or two vice-chairs in October 1993, and I do acknowledge that did happen, but the Bloc members then had 54 members and we only had 52 members.

The House has been prorogued, now it is back and all new members and new chairs have been assigned. Some parliamentary secretaries were fired, chairmen of standing committees were fired so new ones were needed. That has been done and all new members were assigned.

In those standing committees now vice-chairs are supposed to be picked. There is a procedure to follow. The same procedure was followed as the first time around. They did not have any kind of duly conducted election that allowed members of both opposition parties because when it gets to committee we are not talking now about official opposition and third party, we are talking about opposition parties. It just so happened that all the vice-chairs went to the Bloc Quebecois again.

In defence of this the chief government whip, and boy does he ever change his mind when he is in government from when he was in opposition. Witness his defence of Motion No. M-1 that is also being debated today and how he flip-flopped on that issue. Now all of a sudden it is democratic to do that.

He is arguing that what the government is doing in naming all of the Bloc members as vice-chairs is democratic and is based on tradition. Tradition says opposition. That does not mean official opposition. If tradition says whoever is official opposition gets all the vice-chairs, fine, but we are now tied.

The Bloc has been named by the Speaker as the official opposition but in standing committees we have 52 members, they have 52 members. Why would the chief government whip not concede or consent, in the spirit of fairness, in the application of common sense, that maybe one or two Reform Party members be vice-chairs. There is precedence for this.

I do not know if my colleague, the current whip, has mentioned this but a member of the third party was a vice-chair in a standing committee of human rights and status of disabled persons on May 29, 1991. There are lots of examples where members other than the official opposition were vice-chairs. The chief government whip's assertion that they are just following tradition is faulty at best.

In the history of this country it has never been so crucial that we have some people representing the interests of all of Canada. If the Reform Party cannot be the official opposition, that is fine because of numbers and incumbency, but at least in standing committees perhaps Reformers could have a couple of vice-chairs. That would make sure the interests of all Canadians are being looked after, not just those interests that the separatist party of Quebec now represents. They would be only dealing with those issues, only trying to get those witnesses, only asking those questions which help to tear this country apart, not to hold it together. They are only interested

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in showing that it is in their best interests to break away from Canada and to break up this country. Because it is not traditional to have this kind of a quirk in parliamentary history, we have a party sent to Ottawa from a region that is unhappy with the intrusion into their lives by the federal government, and justly so. In fact they are so unhappy that they sent a lot of them here to send this government a message. The message is: Do something about our problem. Do something to protect our interests.

• (1610)

That is no different from the Reform Party where the majority, with the exception of one lone Reformer from Ontario, my colleague who sits beside me, are all from the west. We were sent here to send a strong message to the federal government that it has intruded into our lives and that we want changes.

This is all about change. It is also all about change in the standing committees. It is about time that some of the government members grew up and applied a little common sense and fairness to this whole business. They cannot continue to believe in one thing and say another. I do not believe they can be in opposition and say that they believe in one thing—for instance, about reintroducing government bills after prorogation and the hue and cry that they set out here when they were in opposition—and then go over to the other side and say it is okay. At which point were they right? Are they right now and wrong when they were in opposition or are they wrong now and right when they were in opposition?

I state unequivocally that it is wrong when two opposition parties are tied, each having 52 members, that one party gets all the vice-chairs and the other party gets none. There has to be something wrong with that. Somebody coming from the outside who knows very little about it would say: “What are the rules? How come the Reform Party has none?”

The Prime Minister has even said that he would like to see more balance in the House of Commons. As a matter of fact when I first looked into what the Liberal members said when they were in opposition they also held the view, Mr. Speaker, that in the position that you are in right now that the Speaker should come from the government, duly elected, unlike what the House leader for the Bloc said. It should be by secret ballot, which is very democratic. The Deputy Speaker should be from the government side and perhaps an assistant deputy speaker should be from the government side. However they also maintain, and there is a paper to this effect that some cabinet ministers and Liberal members have written and believe in, that the other two speakers, deputy or assistant deputy speakers should be, guess what, from the opposition parties. That is what they said in opposition.

It is now two and a half years later in the second session of the 35th Parliament. The House has prorogued and come back. The

Liberals had their second opportunity, their second chance to get it right. This is their second chance to keep the promises they made, the systemic changes they put in their red book. It is in the red book where they talk about giving more recognition to the opposition parties in Parliament. Do you know why they said that, Mr. Speaker? Because they sat on this side of the House for eight years. They were frustrated by closure. They were frustrated by time allocation. They were frustrated by how they were assigned vice-chairs and how they did things. They were frustrated by who got to sit in that chair to monitor proceedings and to make sure the rules were followed.

They made all these promises to the Canadian public and they have not kept one. On democratic reform they have not kept one of their promises.

Perhaps I should write the Prime Minister a letter on the red book and ask him where he stands on these promises. Where does the Prime Minister stand on these promises he made of changes in the House and in the deputy chairs?

What I feel as a member of Parliament is very unfortunate. There is no way that we can hold the government accountable for the promises it made until the next election. It seems to me that the Prime Minister is proud of that. It seems to me that the Prime Minister is happy that he has all this time to not keep those promises, to renege on those promises.

He will not get another chance now to fulfil the promise he made on how we should be operating the Speakers in the chair and how two of them should be from the opposition parties. He will not get another chance to keep those promises that he would protect the civil service, yet 45,000 of them were let go.

• (1615)

When people make promises, when they say that this is what they plan to do, will do, given the opportunity to do it should they not do it? Should people not follow through on their promises?

Here we are with two opposition parties equal in the number of seats yet in standing committees, each and every one of them belongs to one party. Had the ruling been the other way, had the Speaker ruled that the Reform Party was now the official opposition, does anyone think for a minute that we would have asked for every vice-chair in the committees? The Bloc would have had some vice-chairs.

The irony is that here we have an important standing committee like public accounts where there are audits and reviews of the government expenditures. The auditor general submits a lot of work to that committee. I must admit right now that the member who represents the Bloc was the chair of that standing committee

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and he did a fine job. He was an excellent chair of that committee. I am not picking on him as an individual. I want to make that very clear.

Having said that, I do not believe that in the public accounts committee the chair should go to a member of a party that has the equal number of seats as another party but which only represents a small regional, specific interest which is to take a part of the country out of this democracy, out of the union. I object to that. That is one area where the Reform could have been chair. Once again, the chair of that committee has done an excellent job. He was a good chair. That is not my point. I want to make that perfectly clear, because I do not want to hurt anybody's feelings.

The feelings I want to hurt are the Prime Minister's and those of the chief government whip because of the promises they made. They are the ones who are breaking their promises. They are the ones who are operating this House in a dictatorial fashion. Even the backbenchers cannot say anything. Government backbenchers cannot criticize the government. We see what happens to those members. They are left out; they are shoved out; they are put out.

That is not the way democracy should work. How can it ever hurt to have a few people who want to have a flat tax, to have a few people who want to get rid of the GST, to have a few people who want to protect the civil service? How can it possibly hurt when the government has the majority of members? It cannot.

To summarize, the tradition of the committee election process needs review. This whole issue should be reviewed by the procedure and House affairs committee. We have had filibusters in the past two years. In the year that I was the whip for this party I had to attend some fiascos in some of the standing committees.

Autocracy and heavy handedness was used by some of the chairmen from the government side, probably through ignorance because they did not know the rules. Nevertheless, they treated all members with disdain, just appointing and going through the election process without a concern. I was there. The chief government whip walked into the meeting and would say that this person would be the vice-chair: Bloc, vice-chair; Bloc, vice-chair; Bloc, vice-chair; Bloc, vice-chair; 23 times.

That is not a process whereby members of the standing committee are empowered to elect their chair and vice-chair. We know who should be chair; that is not a problem. But we could have had a couple of elections for vice-chair. We never had a serious one to put a member of the Reform Party there and we are now tied. It did not happen. It was all a sham and a scam.

No matter what the chief government whip tries to say to defend this, he knows what he told his people. The chairman of each and every standing committee, with the exception of public accounts, knows what he was told to do. What happened is a distortion of the

democratic process. It is unfair now because we do have 52 members, the same as the Bloc.

• (1620)

Yes, the Bloc is the official opposition and it is welcome to the job, but in standing committees we should have a few vice-chairs. That is all we felt we should have. The signal and the sign we wanted to see from the government was that perhaps it was willing to accept the fact that some standing committees could use a vice-chair from the Reform Party. However, Liberal members were told what to do from on high and on high said no. They were not allowed to make vice-chairs of any of the Reform Party members who wanted and who sought to attain that position.

As it turns out, this government is behaving in the worst fashion. It is even worse than the previous government of the eight years before the Liberals took power. With all the things this government when it was in opposition said about the Conservative government and what it attacked the Conservative government about, prime ministerial travel, time allocation, closure, the Tory GST, nothing has changed. Only the faces have changed. We have not changed the system and until that happens, this country will pay a heavy price for it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what I have been hearing here for a little while now is both surprising and disappointing to me. I have heard two of our friends from the Reform Party claim that, because we advocate the sovereignty of Quebec, we Bloc members do not have the interests of Canada at heart, that we want to break or destroy Canada and that we are, therefore, not making a full contribution in committee but defending only very narrow interests instead.

I take issue with such statements because every Bloc member who sits on a committee carries out competently and honestly, not only as an individual but also as a representative of our party, the Bloc Quebecois, the duties that we have been assigned as the official opposition.

In committee, members take turns examining the various witnesses who come and share their views with us. Each opposition party usually has about ten minutes to examine a witness, with the official opposition party leading off, followed by the second opposition party; then, the government party, the Liberal Party, gets to examine the witness.

Sometimes our questions complement one another, they are along the same lines. Other times, one party or another asks questions which, while going in a different direction, benefit the debate and broaden our outlook on the issues raised by the people who appear before us. But in any case, we are committed to identifying the informative parts of the evidence presented to us. Of course, we are also committed to identifying those aspects

which have an impact on our region in particular. This is true not only of Bloc members, but also of members of all parties. I have seen—and there was nothing wrong with that—members from the Toronto area represent views and argue matters that were of more particular concern to the people of their ridings. That is their duty, and it is my duty to raise issues of more pressing concern to my constituents.

• (1625)

When I hear Reformers claim that it is not right for me to do so, I tell myself that they have an extremely narrow view of what true democracy is all about. This concerns me; it makes me sad. I cannot accept it in this House. This is the reason why I rose today: I want to set the record straight.

Let me also say that a Bloc Quebecois member has as much right to fill the position of vice-chair as a Reformer. I have nothing against a Reform member being a vice-chair, but do not tell me that Bloc members cannot do a good job as vice-chairs because they happen to be sovereignists. I strongly object to that. This is not only totally inaccurate, it is also an insult to our integrity and to democracy itself.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that in the days of the iron curtain, people strongly condemned those communist countries that prevented individuals from expressing themselves on the grounds that they held dissenting opinions. Some people were imprisoned. Thank goodness this is not the case here, but I refuse to be muzzled.

Mr. Speaker, you and I know—and so do many members here—that civilization and society thrive on the exchange of ideas. If everyone held the same views, this would still be the cave age. It is because someone, somewhere, said “We must get out of the cave” that civilization started to make progress. The Bloc’s role in this House, and within the Confederation right now, is to promote an idea and put it up against other ones, in a democratic, respectful and constructive fashion.

This is why I refuse to be muzzled by Reformers, simply because we do not share the same views. I respect the fact that they do not share our views, but they should do likewise.

[English]

We have been accused of wanting to break up Canada. Nothing is further from the truth. What we have been offering and reoffering—I am bidding it once again—is a new partnership, politically and economically with the rest of Canada.

The actual political situation we live in through Confederation is outmoded and obsolete. It is very expensive and unsatisfactory from sea to sea to sea. We are offering a new vision of what the economical Canadian space could be. We want to confront it

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verbally and democratically with those who have other ways of seeing things. This should construct a better solution. It is not as Reform members would suggest in saying to all Canadians that we want to break up the country that they are helping the solution to be found. On the contrary, it is through constructive debate that a solution will occur.

I cannot accept the attitude of the Reform Party toward the Bloc Quebecois. The electors, the voters, the people from my riding have the same democratic values as the people from the riding of any Reform Party member. The fact that half the Quebec population thinks sovereignty is an avenue to be pursued just stresses how important this vision is and it should be respected by all members here, including my friends from the Reform Party.

• (1630)

[Translation]

From a democratic standpoint, people in my riding have the same value as those from the riding of a Reform Party member. Again, I have nothing against a Reform member being vice-chair of a committee, but I ask that we respect the integrity and honesty of Bloc members; I ask that we respect democracy.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the member for Portneuf whom I have enjoyed getting into debate with outside the Chamber. I consider him to be a reasonable person, although obviously I do not appreciate the direction he would take Canada.

I bring him back to the question at hand. He has said, and this was by translation: “We do not accept that we be muzzled”. It is not the intention of the Reform Party to muzzle the Bloc Quebecois. Unlike the Liberals who have chosen to muzzle the Reform Party in committee, it is not the idea of the Reform Party to muzzle the Bloc Quebecois.

Is it not rational, reasonable and responsible, as put forward by the member for Calgary Centre, that if his party and my party have 52 seats each, the Reform Party should not be muzzled as is presently happening because of the collusion of the Liberals?

**Mr. de Savoye:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question of my colleague. However, as he well knows, the Reform Party is not muzzled within a committee. The fact that we are a vice-chair just gives us the right to ask the first question in the first 10 minutes. After that they are second. They are not really muzzled. That is the answer to item *a*.

On item *b*, I have never believed that the Reform Party should not be a vice-chair in any committee. As far as I can see, it is up to Bloc members to decide whether they can or cannot be vice-chairs. We have one member in most committees whereas the Liberals

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have many members. When the vote is taken we are not the ones who decide.

Why have they favoured us? That is the right question to ask. You should find the right answer; you might be in for a surprise. Why are we preferred as a vice-chair rather than you? What have you not done right to impress them? That is the right question. It is up to you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** My hon. colleague has spoken such good English that I hate to suggest he should not use the word you. He should refer to them.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member for Portneuf. We have worked together on committees before and on a number of other parliamentary affairs.

He said something today which I think is very important and took be aback. He said in his intervention that the Bloc Quebecois was not here to break up Canada. I believe that is very important.

There are people who purport to speak on behalf of the Bloc. This past weekend, on a political commentary panel which discusses these issues week after week, Josée Legault of *la Presse* said that the Bloc had been fighting. She tried to find words. It was not distinct society. It was not veto. It was not special partnership, as the member would suggest. Josée Legault said very clearly that in her view Quebec wants nationhood. That statement flies directly against what the member has said.

Would the member address the position of Ms. Legault regarding nationhood and what he said today to the House, that the Bloc is not here to split up Canada?

• (1635)

**Mr. de Savoye:** Mr. Speaker, we are just on the edge of the motion but it is an interesting debate. I will try to answer the problematic question my hon. colleague has put forward.

Whatever Ms. Legault thinks or writes are her own beliefs. I cannot read her thoughts so I will not try to do that. However, I know the specific agenda of the Quebec government and the one we are proposing. It is a partnership with Canada.

When the member talked about nationhood, the Quebec people as a whole are a people. As such they have a culture of their own, a way of seeing things of their own which does not preclude alliances with other people in Canada. I am not only talking about English Canada but also about the aboriginals.

We have to open our minds and find a way to build something that will answer the needs and the expectations of all people on this portion of the continent, not only for ourselves but for our children and the children of our children.

If I were to go any further I would certainly go beyond the nature of the motion in front of us, so I will stop now.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important for Canadians to understand the significance of these vice-chair positions and the chair position with respect to public accounts which the Reform Party is talking about in the House.

We are talking about the group, the chair and the two vice-chairs who form the core of the steering committee for the committee as a whole. These are not just window dressing positions, or certainly should not be just window dressing positions.

Therefore the fact that the government whip and the Liberals have chosen to freeze the Reform Party out of vice-chair positions on committees is to freeze the Reform Party out of the ability to be able to act as an effective opposition in the absence or in the vacuum of an official opposition because of the specific regional interests of the Bloc Quebecois. The significance is that the Liberals have chosen to freeze the Reform Party out of the ability to be an effective opposition.

It has been said that a government is only as good as its opposition. It is for that reason the Liberals do not want the Reform Party to have any ability to come forward, to take charge and to be involved in any area of control within their jurisdiction. It is doing everything it can at the expense of our nation to freeze us out of that ability.

Lest there be any question about this point, I have in my hand the report of the public accounts committee on September 27, 1995. It is particularly instructive. I went to that committee as a member of that committee and took the floor at the start of the meeting which was convened to vote for and appoint the person who was to be the chair of the public accounts committee.

To expand on the comments of the member for Calgary Centre, the purpose of the public accounts committee is to take a look at well over \$1 billion of current public spending that happens annually in Canada. The public accounts committee works very closely with the auditor general so that the people of Canada and their affairs are being looked after from a fiscal point of view.

It seemed grossly illogical to myself and to my colleagues in the Reform Party that the Liberals would be forcing a situation where we would have a separatist who would be the chair of that committee, because of the very confined and defined interests of the Bloc Quebecois as they have come to Ottawa.

We went to the meeting. We immediately put forward the name of my colleague, the hon. member for St. Albert, for the position of chair. It was really quite instructive because neither the government whip nor the Bloc Quebecois were in the room at the time I made that motion. Immediately following that there were people scurrying around, running around all over the place: "Oh, my, what are we going to do? What is going to happen now?" Whereupon the

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government whip appeared in doorway and all was saved. Very shortly behind him came the Bloc Quebecois whip.

• (1640)

We then entered into a process of debate on the issue. My colleague, the hon. member for Fraser Valley East, had the floor. For simplicity and so that we do not run afoul of the rules of the House, I will refer to the whip and I will refer to the Reform member. The whip said:

I was wondering if our colleague would entertain a brief question. If this is an attempt to filibuster the committee, and he can indicate so right now, quorum will immediately cease.

Before I quote him further, the absolute arrogance of the government whip should be noted when he came walking into the room and said: "If this is not going the way I want then I am going to cease quorum". He went on:

There was an agreement between whips duly approved, ordered, and signed that we were meeting today to elect chairs. If this is a breach of that agreement, which it is on the verge of becoming, I'd like to know now. My colleagues and I will leave the room and quorum will cease. This meeting will not exist. Yes or no.

The absolute arrogance of this man is quite astounding. My colleague said:

I don't think you can ask me questions anyway—I don't think that's your place.

The whip said: "Thank you". My colleague said:

You can do what you like. I'm trying to address the concerns of the people—

The whip said:

You don't need a *Hansard* any more, clerk.

Now he is telling the clerk who is in charge of this committee: "You don't need *Hansard* any more. I am here; I have taken over". Terrific.

Then my colleague said:

—about the election of the vice-chairs. So it's certainly within my prerogative to do that.

An hon. member said:

You can talk all day long. You're alone.

Then the government whip got his members in line and they dutifully followed him out of the room. The hon. member for Fraser Valley East was continuing to talk in the meeting when the whip from the Bloc Quebecois said:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order, I would like to see if we have a quorum. If we don't, we should end this meeting.

The clerk said: "We only have three members here. I guess everybody has left".

We should note the absolute arrogance of the government whip representing the Liberals, coming into that meeting, taking over that meeting and saying: "It is not going the way the Liberals wanted so therefore we are down". For the Liberals to turn around and try to convince Canadians that they are not completely in bed with or in total collusion with the separatists is bit beyond description.

Let us talk about the Canadian heritage committee; I think that is the title of the committee. The decision was made there by the Liberals to anoint a Bloc Quebecois member as a vice-chair of that committee. Let us see what happened in that committee if only from the point of view of the record of attendance. I have in my hand the record of attendance which shows that the chair of that committee was there 13 times. Presumably there were 13 meetings.

We then have the record of myself, the hon. member for Medicine Hat and the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, totalling 11 of the 13 meetings. We have zero for the Bloc Quebecois member from Quebec. The person who was anointed to be the vice-chair of that committee by the Liberals, the hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata, was there five times.

It has been reported to me by the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona that the Canadian heritage committee could not even have had a meeting and that there would not have been a member of the opposition had the Reform Party not turned up. Yet the Liberals have the audacity to keep on putting the Bloc Quebecois into these positions with the specific idea of freezing the Reform Party out of the ability to be able to do the job of an effective opposition. There can be absolutely no other reason I can think of that the Liberals might have.

• (1645)

I believe that the Liberals want to keep Canada together every bit as much as the Reform Party wants to keep Canada together. They may not have any idea how to do it. They may keep on flying trial balloons. They may keep coming up with all sorts of wonderful ideas, flying flags and all sorts of things because they do not have anything of any substance, but I do not question their fundamental intent to keep Canada together.

What I do question is the wisdom of the government whip. I do question the wisdom of the so-called brain trust of the Liberal Party in continuing to freeze the federalist Reform Party out of the ability to be an effective opposition.

I speak in the most forceful terms. I consider the actions of the Liberal government whip to have been out of control and over the top. I would hope, because the Reform Party has brought this matter so forcibly to the floor at this time, that as we get down to appointing committee chair and vice-chair positions that they would rethink their very foolish and ill thought position.

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**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it strange that the previous speaker, who obviously is a new member of the heritage committee, probably appointed in September 1995, would choose to use the attendance record as reasoning behind his quest to have a member of the Reform Party as the vice-chair of that committee.

As a person who sat on that committee for the 18 months previous to his arrival, I would like to point out that should he have regarded the attendance records of the first 18 months, he would have found that the Bloc Quebecois members were most regular in their attendance and surprisingly it was the members of the Reform Party whose attendance was highly questionable.

May I also point out that the Bloc Quebecois members in the first 18 months not only attended the public hearing sessions of that committee, not only attended the briefings by department officials, but they also attended the in camera sessions when for weeks we were seriously working on a written report about the future of the CBC. It seemed rather strange to me that the Reformers came to the meetings when the press was in attendance but not one meeting when the press was not in attendance.

As far as I am concerned, I think the vice-chairs of committees must be committed not just to those sessions of the committee meetings when the press is in attendance but also when the solid, quiet work of the committee is done in camera.

**Mr. Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps that says something about the content of the meetings that took place last fall when only five out of thirteen meetings were attended by the vice-chair of the heritage committee, the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata. Furthermore, the member for Quebec did not turn up at all. I can only guess that in the judgment of the Bloc Quebecois, the heritage committee meetings in the first 18 months actually had some substance whereas in the second half, according to the way the member is thinking, only five out of the thirteen meetings had any significance.

**Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a slightly different attack on this problem.

In my mind, the issue of who should become the vice-chairman of a committee is one that rests with the committee. With respect to the election of a chairman and vice-chairman the standing orders state: "Each standing or special committee shall elect a chairman and two vice-chairmen, of whom two shall be members of the government party and the third a member in opposition to the government".

• (1650)

This can become a very partisan debate, trying to weigh one opposition party against another. Frankly I do not think it should be just that. My suggestion for the government is very straightforward,

that the election of the vice-chairmen be just that, an election and not a coronation. How many Bloc members would likely be vice-chairmen in that instance? Maybe all of them.

Surely there should be an opportunity in Parliament for a proper election, an election with hands raised so that the individuals making the choice would be known. My real question is: Why not an election? Why not an opportunity to at least say that these two parties, which are very close in numbers—after the byelections we hope to be ahead—would have that opportunity? Is that not fair? Why not be fair?

To the Canadian public, why would this choice even be in doubt? Why would we not have this election? Could there be a reason that is better for the Liberal Party? Could there be a reason that is better for the country?

I drew a little graph. Down one side of my graph, I put some of the reasons: balance, a powerful federalist opposition. Would it be better for a Bloc member to be a vice-chairman? Would it actually be better for the Liberals to have the Bloc in those vice-chairs? How could it possibly be better in every case to have that party as the vice-chair? Is there no room for an alternate?

I have come to the House with a fresh view of Parliament, a view that I hope is balanced. I have asked myself what the committee structure is really designed to do. Before I came here I had heard that the committees were the spot where the real work of Parliament was done. I have stood back from that and asked whether that is true. Are committees where the work of Parliament is really done? My answer is: Not true. They are not where the work of Parliament is really done.

I am going to give an example of an experience in committee. Our committee was faced with a challenge. We had order in council appointments placed before us which were to be voted upon. These were for individuals holding positions on very important boards. I asked when there had been a review of an order in council how often the appointee had been turned down. The answer I received surprised me: never in Canadian history had that occurred. There had never been a single appointee turned down.

The obvious question I asked then was why we did the review. What was the purpose of a review if there has never been an individual turned down? The response was that this system was not like the committee review system in the U.S. I then asked, should we not be reviewing order in council appointments at the nomination stage rather than at the appointee stage? A committee was struck to review that very issue but I said it was surely something the committee could decide that day.

• (1655)

It makes sense that if we are going to committee to review this issue that we bring the appointees to the committee. The committee

would look at them all and say which individuals were acceptable to the committee. The committee would go back to the PMO which would from those names pick the number of individuals needed. If the committee found that there were one or two people who were not acceptable for whatever reason, the residual names could be sent back. The power would still rest with the PMO. No power would be taken away.

However, a committee had to be struck. It sat through the summer and reviewed the issue with all the previous order in council appointments. It came to the very same conclusion in five minutes: that the review of orders in council should take place at the appointee stage rather than at the nomination stage.

I did a little review with a high school class at home. I asked them: How long would it take you to figure out at what stage to do a review of a group of people who were coming to sit on a committee of Parliament? Would you review it at the appointee stage or at the nomination stage? It took these grade 11 students about 15 seconds to decide the issue. And how long does it take the Parliament of Canada to come up with a decision? It has been six months in review.

I have watched very carefully. What has happened to the decision of the health committee on that issue since? We are now another 18 months down the road and the decision has fallen into the black abyss, the black hole of parliamentary gobbledegook. Who knows where it has gone? It was to go to the committee on procedure and House affairs. It was to be reviewed, but it is gone. And for what? So that the PMO can say that nobody can review any of the names, that the review is not real? This a problem with the committee structure. I tell that story so that no one can say I think the committee structure is perfect.

Since I am talking about committee structure problems, I watched to see how witnesses came to the committees. I sat on the HRD review committee which was looking at social program renewal in Canada. I tried to figure out who called and how the witnesses reached the committee.

I was disappointed to find that most of the individuals who had access to the committee were non-governmental agencies that had a lot of connection with government. Many received funding from the government. Many received payment from the government to come to the committee. I believe that their testimony may have been skewed. It is difficult for the average citizen who knows nothing about these issues to have a fair hearing. I do not think they have the lobby groups that would allow them to get a fair hearing.

The committee structure would be very easy to improve. It would be very easy to look at it from the standpoint of what should happen in Canada. Let me now go to what I think in a positive sense we should do to improve the committee structure.

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The government is going to control the committee. The government will have a chairman and the first vice-chairman. Accept it. That is what the numbers allow. Why would we not have an election for the position of second vice-chairman which would usually go to the official opposition but might go to a meritorious individual in another party, the fourth party, another party completely? A meritorious election for vice-chairman.

• (1700)

I would hope order in council appointments could be made at the appointee stage rather than the nomination stage. I am convinced we could seek witnesses at these committees who are not so biased or narrow and who are not tied into the government agenda.

Is this a partisan issue? For me it is not. This is an issue of balance and fairness, for if every single vice-chair came from the official opposition and nowhere else, on merit, I would nod my head to those members and say bien.

[*Translation*]

However, if a committee vice-chair absolutely must be a Bloc member, that is certainly not equality. In my opinion, it is very clear that we ought to have the opportunity to vote in order to elect another member to the position of committee vice-chair.

[*English*]

The Canadian people are not willing to stand idly by and watch Parliament function in a way that is not fair. That is all this issue is about.

I ask, directly to the government, to allow for, conduct, and appropriately oversee a proper election for each vice-chair. That would satisfy me. It would satisfy my party. More important, it would satisfy the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, allow me to be the first member to make reference to your presence as the new Deputy Speaker of this House.

In response to the representative of the Reform Party, I must state that I am somewhat astonished to see in this House today that the Reform Party is concerned about will form the official Opposition and who will be vice-chairs, when we will be engaged this week in a debate of the highest importance on the budget speech. I must say that I would have expected instead that the members of this House would have focussed their energies, or husbanded their energies, for addressing the real problems Canada is facing, that is the attitude the Liberals across the way have taken toward managing the debt. In this connection, I believe that the two parties on this side can combine their actions to force the government to move, or

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at least to reflect. But I have trouble understanding how there can be a drawn out debate on the choice of vice-chairs.

I thought Canada operated according to a certain tradition, with this or that responsibility for the official Opposition. That this was normal and that was how we operated.

As far as I am concerned, I can tell you that being from Quebec, yes, and I have nothing to hide in this regard, being a representative of the Bloc Québécois, I defend a certain ideology, whether certain people like it or not, and it is important for the rest of Canada to know that. If we have become the Official Opposition and have certain related responsibilities to assume, that is not our choice but how democracy works. So I have difficulty understanding why there is this protracted debate. It seems to me to be superfluous.

Once again, as Mr. Bouchard himself has said in this House, perhaps the Reform Party is short on ambition. Rather than focussing on becoming the official Opposition, rather than seeking what goes along with that position, they ought instead to be seeking to combat the true scourge here, in other words attacking the Liberals, the Government. But no. It might be said that they have set their sights too low.

I would like to again express my astonishment on this, but this time about both sides.

• (1705)

While the third party in the House tries to diminish the importance of the work of the official opposition by saying that you do not have to be a member of the official opposition to be vice-chairman in this House, the new Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—I think I am allowed to mention his name since he has not been elected yet, Stéphane Dion—says: “The distinct society status is not really a special status and will not bring any special powers”.

The third party in the House says that the official opposition does not really have the attributes of the official opposition. At the same time, a government spokesperson says that what was voted on before Christmas does not really mean what it means.

So allow me to express my surprise as a member of the Bloc Québécois and to ask: How is it that the bills that were voted on do not mean what they mean? How is it that the attributes of the official opposition, such as the office of vice-chairman, do not necessarily apply because we are the official opposition? Maybe the time has come to tackle the real issue, to call a spade a spade, to go back to the basics, to look at who built Canada, that is the notion of two founding peoples, to try to understand and to respect the rules.

There are a lot of things I do not agree with in the way Canada is run, but I respect the rules. I hope that the third party in the House will respect the rules also and that we will close this debate which,

I must say, I find totally useless. I hope we can get on with what is important, that is to prepare our response to the budget speech.

**Mr. Hill:** Madam Speaker, there is no question in this speech, but if possible I would like to read the following paragraph from our Standing Orders:

Each standing or special committee shall elect a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, of whom two shall be Members of the government party and the third a Member in opposition to the government—

It does not say a member of the official opposition, but simply a member in opposition.

—in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 116, at the commencement of every session and, if necessary, during the course of a session.

Why is it always a member of the official opposition? It is not in the Standing Orders. I simply want a vote in private on the subject. Is it not possible? I personally think it is necessary.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Madam Speaker, to start with, I would like to congratulate you on being elected to this position you are occupying this afternoon for the first time. We are doubly fortunate in that it is an Acadian and a woman who was selected to preside, at least in part, over the proceedings of this assembly.

This being said, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question. I assume that when he mentions that he would like the vote to take place in private, he is referring to a secret vote. However, members of Parliament are accountable to their voters. People in my riding have the right to be aware of the decisions in which I took part and to know how I voted. As soon as a vote is secret, people in my riding will no longer be able to find out how I voted and, consequently, whether I represent their interests appropriately. The whole democratic process must be transparent. Transparency requires open votes where each and every one clearly expresses his or her opinion.

If the kind of private vote my colleague is referring to was to deprive my voters, the citizens of my riding, of the ability to know how I voted, then I would say that it violates democratic principles. I would like him to clarify his position.

• (1710)

[English]

**Mr. Hill (MacLeod):** Madam Speaker, the issue for me on this vote is so that each member might be able to vote for somebody with merit. I am trying to get away from the idea that this must be a specific party member.

Surely merit is better than party membership. The rules have said very clearly the second vice-president should come from a member of the opposition. We in Reform are members of the opposition.

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The Canadian public would accept very well for every single vice-chair to be a member of the Bloc if there were an opportunity for that election to be based on merit, for surely there are members from the Bloc of great merit; but equally the chance that there might be a member in the Reform Party with some merit.

**Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, welcome to the chair. We wish you the best in your new responsibilities.

The debate before us focuses on two very basic things. One is the question of parliamentary reform with respect to committees. The question must arise of whether the committees have the authority and the independence to choose their chairs, their vice-chairs and other such formats of the committees independently of external authority either from the Prime Minister's office or through the Liberal government whip.

The other question is what we observe as this unfortunate support the government gives to the separatist party for the positions in those committees, the vice-chair positions, chair positions with regard to the public accounts committee.

The member for Mississauga South earlier said that by tradition the vice-chairs went to members of the official opposition. I can understand why he said that. The Liberal whip continually gives the impression that is the way it is, that other opposition members, representatives of the Reform Party or from the NDP or the Conservative Party, are not part of the official opposition and cannot be one of the vice-chairs. That is the presentation the Liberal whip made to his own caucus and it is believed that is the way it is.

It is not that way. Some of my hon. colleagues have pointed out very clearly in the House that it is not tradition that the official opposition gets the chair or the vice-chair positions. I make that very clear. It is just one of the ways the Liberal whip is able to again have this love-in, as I call it, with the separatist party and provide it support in having a position of authority or power in the Parliament of Canada. I do not accept that in any way.

Speaking to these two points, parliamentary reform and more independence for the committees to choose who should be their chairs and vice-chairs, that is where the authority should lie. My hon. colleague from Macleod pointed that out very clearly.

In the 33rd Parliament the McGrath report was presented. Through that report a number of parliamentary reforms were brought into the House of Commons. I commend that report. I commend the 33rd Parliament for accepting a number of those recommendations.

• (1715)

One of those recommendations related to the independence of the committee. It also said the committee could establish its own agenda without interference by the government. Prior to the 33rd Parliament the government set the agenda for the committees. Any subject or matter referred from the House of Commons by the government to the committees was discussed. The committee had no latitude beyond that to make decisions, which was wrong.

In the 33rd Parliament the McGrath report changed that so that committees could set their own agenda, call the witnesses they wanted and at the same time elect their chairs and vice-chairs in an independent way. It was set up with that mind, but did it happen? It did not happen.

My time spent on the finance committee was a good experience. The chair was a good leader and allowed for flexibility within the committee work. We carried out a number of the recommendations of the McGrath report in a responsible way. Beyond that, what was happening?

I say to the people at home watching, they should be aware of how committee chairs are chosen by standing committees. The rules allow for an election, which is the way it should be. A member is nominated and then there is an open vote. If that motion is defeated another name is put forward until someone is elected chair.

Although our committee system has evolved with respect to what a committee can do, the Prime Minister in the instances here and during the current 35th Parliament, through his whip, still controls who shall become the chair. That person is told by the Prime Minister's office. The other Liberal members on the committee have to vote for the Prime Minister's choice. We in the committee do not operate independently or have the right to choose who that person is.

The backbenchers on the Liberal side do not have the opportunity to stand for chair if the Prime Minister has not chosen them. That is it. They have no choice. There is a vote but it is just going through the exercise. Certainly that is unacceptable.

We must well recognize that the Prime Minister has a lot of authority in appointing his cabinet, in appointing parliamentary secretaries, in appointing senators and in appointing a whole range of other political appointees. That is a lot of appointees.

Why does the Prime Minister interfere with the choice of chairs for House of Commons committees? That should be the responsibility of the committees, not the Prime Minister. The format is certainly there. Some of hon. members say that it is. However, we well know that before we sit down as a committee the Prime Minister's choice will be nominated by the Liberal whip, and if anybody gets out of line the Liberal whip will deal with them later.

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All Liberal members are required by edict through the Prime Minister's office to vote for his choice. The Liberal whip sees to that in a very undemocratic way. That is the way it is and that is the concern we have here as members of the House of Commons.

In what sense can a committee be really impartial when we have such an external influence on our actions? There must be a change in attitude with regard to that matter. It is time to free up the backbenches of the Liberal Party so those members can choose who they want for chair, who they want as vice-chair. It does not happen.

If we really want parliamentary reform, if we want to again implement or reimplement the McGrath report, there must be a change in attitude and we must look at things differently in the House. The Prime Minister, the Liberal government, the Liberal backbenchers must look at this in a more open, democratic manner so that parliamentary reform can be meaningful at the committee level.

• (1720)

I talked about the appointment of chairs. It is the very same type of thinking for vice-chair positions. How much credibility does a committee chair or a vice-chair have if two people, the government whip and the whip for the Bloc Québécois, get together and decide on who the vice-chair positions will be and what the committee positions will be?

Even a government backbencher should be offended by that kind of action. If I were a government backbencher and thought I would make a vice-chair, I would hope I would need only to seek the support of committee members and not have to rely on this sort of kowtowing to the government whip.

With a truly democratic process through which members would be free to vote for whomever they wanted, all choices would be acceptable because it would be done democratically. Even if a member did not support the one who got elected, it would be accepted because it was done properly.

Not all members of the House voted for the current Speaker, but all members give him the respect he deserves because it was done in a very democratic way. It was a secret ballot and not even the Prime Minister could influence members in that process when we first selected a Speaker for the 35th Parliament.

The other reform to our rules occurred in the last Parliament where for the first time there was a requirement to have one member from the opposition in either the vice-chair or the chair position. In the beginning of this new procedure and the only other time there was a set of elections outside this Liberal dominated Parliament, a vice-chair went to third party standing. In that Parliament, the third party had half the seats of the official opposition compared with the equality of seats in this Parliament.

For some reason the precedent of that Parliament is not in this Parliament. The Liberal whip and the Liberal members are convinced that the only person who can fill the vice-chair is a member of the separatist party.

There is precedent for something different. How can we continue to say in this Parliament that it should not be that way again? Since then, this Parliament has been operating on the notion brought forward by the chief government whip that electing official opposition members to all vice-chair positions was the tradition.

How is it a tradition when the only other time it was done it was not done that way? There is a tradition here, the support of this chief government whip on the other side of the House for the separatist Bloc Québécois. That is the tradition that is really being set at this point.

We see it every day in committee and in the House. In any procedural argument the government runs to the defence of the Bloc. Even when Bloc members have little stomach for debate the government whip and his former sidekick, the member from Kingston and the Islands, come running to their aid. We saw that in an earlier debate.

They have the experience and the procedural know-how. They are absolutely happy to support Bloc members in their many efforts. Parliamentary reform was moving ahead, albeit slowly. Since the Liberals have taken over government, parliamentary reform has gone backward in time to the days of Mr. Trudeau who ruled his caucus with an iron fist.

That fist was beginning to loosen starting in the 33rd Parliament with the McGrath report and a little more in the 34th Parliament with other studies of the procedure and House affairs committee.

The Liberals do not know any means of governing except by way of past experience. No wonder this has happened. They dismissed and ignored not only all the parliamentary reform that was discussed on the floor of the House and in committee for years but also their own parliamentary reform ideas.

Let us not forget the recent reminder when the Prime Minister refused to appoint opposition members to junior chair positions as promised in the Liberal red book. This happened only a week ago.

• (1725)

It is time government backbenchers had a look at what is happening. There should be some consideration for back to parliamentary reform. We should also look at freedom in committees whereby committee members are free to choose chairs and vice-chairs. It is also time in the House to stop, and Canadians want it stopped, the bias between the government and the Bloc Québécois in all that happens on the floor of the House and in committees.

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**Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, every member of Parliament knows the Bloc is being favoured as official opposition. Any objective analysis would also demonstrate and come to the very same conclusion. This is a growing, daunting realization by the Canadian public. Whenever we have that kind of circumstance there is a reaction somewhere down the road. The government should think about that very seriously.

The government has its own agenda and I am not exactly sure what it is. However, with the majority the government holds it has a unique time in our history to really create a circumstance for democratic freedom and for improving the way this place works, but it is blowing it.

We have heard some very weak arguments from the Bloc, especially in my critic area of aboriginal affairs, as to how effective they are in the rest of the country. The Bloc has been happy to run around Canada encouraging spending and the inherent right to self-government among aboriginals as long as they are not in Quebec.

At the same time, I and other members in my party have as a matter of course worked in Indian country in Quebec where the Bloc has totally dropped the ball. Do we trumpet this from the trees? Do we run around making speeches about what a great job we have done in the province of Quebec? No. This is a much more heartfelt item than that. This is beyond politics. The whole area of aboriginal affairs should in many respects be beyond politics.

There is hardly a single thing done by the Bloc where the motivation is not to further the separatist vision of Quebec.

Why should I have to go into committee knowing full well that as an opposition member the government wants to favour that other party member over me? I have sought to remedy the electoral unfairness or favouritism which I observed in committee last September. This was very difficult. Committees are supposed to be masters of their own house and, for very good reason, the Speaker is reluctant to interfere.

The problem starts with the numbers. Government members on a committee outnumber the combined opposition members. The whip can orchestrate what happens in committee.

We obviously need a secret ballot in committee. How the House of Commons, where our federal democracy is supposed to be expressed, does not adopt this bit of progress to prevent the possibility of government backbench coercion is beyond me, other than the government likes everything that happens around here to be in its full control. To elucidate some of my concerns, I would like to read a bit from my submission of September 20 last fall to

demonstrate my observations on trying to even nominate a Reform chair or vice-chair to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

This committee has a history of past irregularities, including the case to which I have drawn your attention. The irregularities from yesterday are as follows.

First, as soon as the clerk's gavel fell I submitted a motion to elect a chairman. As Your Honour knows, under the standing orders the first item of business for an organizational meeting is the election of a chair for the committee. However, the clerk acknowledge my speaking and asked me to wait until he had read his first item of business. I asked that he recognize that I had given notice of a motion. After the clerk read the item of business he proceeded to recognize someone else first.

● (1730)

**Mr. Solberg:** Typical. Very typical.

**Mr. Duncan:**

Second, once the chair was elected my colleagues repeatedly attempted to move a motion to elect a vice-chair, but the chair appeared to be intent on stalling so that a motion to elect a member of the Bloc could be put forward by the Bloc or by the government for the so-called opposition vice-chair.

The chair stalled by insisting that we were going to consider motions for government vice-chair. This is a false distinction. The standing orders do not recognize a government vice-chair per se. The standing orders only require that two of the three positions go to the government side.

As soon as a motion to elect a vice-chair is put forward, whether to elect a government or opposition member, that motion is surely in order. The chair made it clear that he was accepting no motions from the Reform.

Third, once a member of the government moved to elect the Bloc to the vice-chair, my colleagues and I asked for debate on the motion. We were not only cut off; we were not allowed to debate at all. As Your Honour knows, Standing Order 116 makes clear that there is no limit on debate on a regular motion in committee.

Fourth, when we put forward a motion to overturn the election of the Bloc member as vice-chair, the chairman refused to entertain the motion, which was surely in order. The chairman then summarily adjourned the meeting.

We appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to uphold the standing orders and our rights. This kind of conduct by committee chairs is surely less than acceptable.

This is just one more time when we ran into this but it is one that is documented. That is why I thought I would re-enter it into the record.

Why does the government want to regulate and control every aspect of activity in Parliament? Canadians are not being served. There is no long term vision being displayed of how non-regional representation can lead to the irrelevancy of this place. In the minds of many Canadians this place is irrelevant now and by carrying on this kind of behaviour it is only contributing to that perception of irrelevancy.

*Routine Proceedings*

Why do the procedure experts in the Liberal government take such great delight in supporting the Bloc at every move and in every one of their tricks in this place to the detriment of democracy?

• (1735)

As I explained before, with the majority the government has, it has a unique opportunity, one that has not been seen for a dozen years, to implement considerable improvements in how committees work. That opportunity has not only been lost, but the committee structures, committee elections, and all that goes with it have taken a step backward. As long as this charade continues those committees are becoming more and more irrelevant.

When I go to committee I have very little influence on the agenda and subject matter to be looked into. The committee that I sit on, aboriginal affairs, has a whole classification of people who live under the Indian Act. They live under one department. There are no checks and balances beyond that department. The government is not only in control of the committee and the department, they are in control of those people's lives. If there is one place where opposition members need an opportunity to pry off the lid, to really try and get to the bottom of the serious things going on that are counterproductive to the aboriginal community and Canadian society as a whole, it is that committee.

**Mr. Solberg:** Right on.

**Mr. Duncan:** The non-partisan things that go on there are controlled and manipulated by the government. I am sorry, there is no other way for me to say it.

Our committee wasted a long time, in my opinion, looking into what was really the minister's prerogative, which was co-management in Saskatchewan. Because the minister obviously has an agenda, the opposition role becomes one of damage control rather than trying to be a productive member of the committee, particularly if we have a point of view that is obviously quite different.

This gets away from the whole system of checks and balances that are crucial to the proper operation of government on an ongoing basis. The checks and balances in the Canadian system are, assuming that the committee system worked properly, already much less than the checks and balances built into other democracies. One that comes foremost to my mind is the one due south of us.

We need to scrutinize what this place is all about and where it is going. This is a crucial time in Canada's history. We are a young country. This is the wrong time for us to be creating so-called traditions that are anti-democratic, that we have been hearing about for the last while on this debate.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I want to speak against the motion. Like my colleagues, I am very concerned about the message that this motion sends. There is a real

cynicism in the country today that is caused by many factors, not the least of which is the perception, and the fact, that MPs have become very unaccountable. Governments have become very unaccountable.

• (1740)

That perception can only be strengthened by what the government is proposing to do, continue on with same slate of vice-chairmen that we currently have in the standing committees. It is absolutely ridiculous. To illustrate why that is so wrong it is important to go back through what happened on the committee I was sitting on when we chose a vice-chair last time to show where some of the problems are.

I was sitting on the Canadian heritage committee. It is important to remember what committee I was on. When it came time to choose a new chairman and vice-chairman the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the chief government whip, showed up at the meeting. That never happens. When the whip shows up in a committee you know the fix is in. The whip is there to keep people in line and that is exactly what happened. The whip is there to crack his whip.

The whip came in, sat at the table and the Liberal members were sitting beside him. The chair was chosen first. The chair took his place and we immediately moved a motion asking that a Reform member be nominated to sit as the vice-chair. We were told no, that was not going to happen. The chairman was not ready despite what the standing orders say, despite what the rules say, and our motion was ignored.

The Bloc motion was recognized and subsequently a Bloc member was chosen to be vice-chair of the Canadian heritage committee, the one committee that is dedicated at least in part to helping keep the country together. Where is the common sense in that?

Madam Speaker, if you go to Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Bathurst, New Brunswick, Sooke, B.C. or Brooks, Alberta and you ask people if that makes any sense at all they are going to ask what is the matter with MPs? No wonder Canadians are so cynical about this place. Should we have a separatist sit as the vice-chair of the Canadian heritage committee? That is ridiculous.

Last fall the committee was to travel across the country to hear from Canadians about how to keep Canada together. Are we really going to have a separatist chair that committee going across the country to talk about how we can keep the country together? Do you think that makes sense? Do you not think it is really contrary to what most people would regard as common sense? I certainly do.

In the wake of the referendum we heard that certain hon. members from the Bloc Quebecois were talking to members of the Canadian military about starting an armed forces in Quebec after the referendum campaign. Does it really make sense in the wake of the referendum to have a vice-chair on the defence committee from

the separatist party? That is absolutely nuts. It is crazy and yet here are these members across the way defending it.

We are sitting in Parliament, an institution that should reflect the wishes of Canadians. It should be an institution where the rules and procedures allow for the scrutiny of government, allow people to have their say through their elected representatives, first with respect to the issues, but also with respect to whom they want representing them on the various committees that are an offshoot of the House of Commons. Of course we do not have that despite the commitments that the government made in their red book.

The Liberals were elected because of the red book. They appeared in ads and said: "We have the people, we have the plan" and they flashed the red book around. In the red book was a commitment to change the way committees work. They said: "We want to make them more democratic. We want to give committees more power".

• (1745)

What did they do? They said they wanted to make them more democratic and wanted to give them more power, but what they did was completely different. They brought the chief government whip in, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who seems to have a love affair with the separatists. They sat him down in the Canadian heritage committee, and he made sure the Liberal members voted for a separatist to sit as vice-chair of the Canadian heritage committee. That is absolutely ridiculous.

There we go again, another broken Liberal promise. Just like the GST, just like the NAFTA and just like all the others, it is another broken promise. How cynical of them to sit over there and assert that we should accept that again in this session of Parliament. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Often we send delegations around the world to monitor elections in other countries as though we have some special expertise on democracy. What would happen if someone sat in on one of these committee meetings and watched how things were conducted, particularly when it is time to elect chairmen and vice-chairs for the committees? This is after we have seen the Liberal red book commitment which said that the vice-chairs would come from the opposition parties. We saw that even in the event of the debate over the Speaker's chair, but we need not go into that again. They made that kind of commitment. How ironic that we should be sitting here voting to send people around the world to monitor other people's elections. It is absolutely crazy. All we have to do is go to one of these committee meetings to see how ironic that is.

Not very long ago the Deputy Prime Minister, who is now the Minister of Canadian Heritage, argued that we needed to return to the spirit of 1967. She was referring to the year that Canada

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celebrated its 100th anniversary, the year when there was a great national celebration. We all felt very patriotic about our country and very sentimental about some of the things we valued in the country. That is a very noble idea. Some of the government's approaches toward achieving that are completely out to lunch. It seems to think somehow heritage flows from the government down to the people and not the other way around.

Setting that aside for a moment, I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister rhetorically how this decision to have a member of the separatist Bloc Québécois sit as a vice-chair of the Canadian heritage committee squares with her sentiment that we should return to the spirit of 1967.

**Mr. McClelland:** Maybe a Reformer should sit on the membership of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society.

**Mr. Solberg:** There is an idea. Maybe we should have a Reformer sit on the membership of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society. I do not know. Perhaps that makes complete sense. As somebody said, maybe it makes sense to have Jack the Ripper in charge of a knife store. I do not know.

That is the argument members across the way are making. We need to have the separatists in charge of Canadian heritage. It is completely ridiculous. We should have the separatists in charge of the defence committee which, in light of what happened after the referendum or just before the referendum, is something that needs serious examination. If I were the defence minister I would be a bit concerned about that. I would be questioning my own members and saying: "Are you sure you really want to do that?" He has a responsibility to do that, in my judgment, after what happened.

Let me conclude by saying the Liberals made some promises. They made a promise to reform institutions like committees so that they were allowed to reflect the wishes of members of the committee. In other words, they wanted to give members of Parliament more power. They denied that by giving the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the chief government whip, almost absolute power to go in there and say: "If you don't support the separatists then you will be in big trouble". We have seen what has happened to members in the past, where they have been kicked off committees because they voted the wrong way.

The second point I want to make in conclusion is that we have a situation today where people are deeply cynical about the way politics work. They are deeply cynical and very pessimistic about their futures. When we have a situation where promises of all kinds made in the red book are completely forgotten two years later we can understand why they feel that way. The government has helped contribute to the great pall of pessimism that has fallen across the land.

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• (1750)

Third, this is a democratic institution. In this place of all places people should have the right to elect the people they want to elect without interference from the government. We raised a question of privilege the other day on the issue of the government interfering in the business of Parliament. In that case there was a very serious accusation, but we see it happen in all ways, shapes and manners in this place because the government keeps resisting the need to change.

The fourth point I want to make is from a common sense point of view. We have a separatist vice-chair on the Canadian heritage committee, the committee that is supposed to be in charge of helping to keep the country together. We have a Canadian unity committee that has sprung out of the Canadian heritage committee and we have a separatist vice-chair who is part of that committee, who will be helping to run that committee. It is absolutely nuts. We will have a separatist as a vice-chair on the defence committee as well. In light of what has happened that is ridiculous.

In conclusion, the attitude of the government was betrayed when Mr. Speaker very wisely ruled not long ago that based on parliamentary precedent the status quo had to be accepted in terms of leaving the Bloc—

**Mr. Hill (MacLeod):** Unfortunately.

**Mr. Solberg:** It was very unfortunate, but he very wisely ruled that according to precedent he had to maintain the Bloc as the official opposition.

However what happened after that spoke volumes. When members of the Liberal Party applauded it said more in a few seconds than all the members in the House could say in an eternity. They applauded because they favour the separatists in the official opposition chair, none more than the hon. member Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who has made it a point to make sure every vice-chairmanship has gone to the Bloc Québécois, the separatists, no matter how damaging it has been to the country.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have heard enough of this information. I have heard that separatists are unfit to vice chair the Canadian heritage and defence committees.

I pay taxes. The people of Quebec pay taxes to Canada, up to \$30 billion a year. Moreover, soldiers from my riding have given their lives in Bosnia. As long as soldiers from my riding or from Quebec are giving their time, their health and their lives for Canada, Bloc Québécois members should be and will be able to be vice-chairs of the defence committee. They have that right and no one can take it away from any Bloc Québécois member.

Furthermore, 400 years ago ancestors of many Bloc Québécois members arrived in this country. They started a relationship with the autochtones. The heritage we have from sea to sea to sea is not only the one they have in the west. It is also the one we have in the east and which our ancestors have built over centuries.

• (1755)

Who in the House has defended culture more than the Bloc Québécois, whether in the printing business, the CBC, Société Radio-Canada or any other subject. Culture is something we understand and have understood for centuries. My father and grandfather were from the west. They were French speaking and contributed to that heritage in French.

I believe we have a right to contribute to the defence and the promotion of Canadian heritage because a large part of it is Quebec heritage, the heritage of our ancestors.

For Quebec taxpayers, our ancestors who donated all they had to build what we have today and the soldiers from Quebec who gave their health and their lives, the member's apology should be in order.

**Mr. Solberg:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member will be waiting a long time. The one who should be making apologies in the House is the one who is trying to rip the country apart.

The hon. member is arguing on the one hand that they should be allowed to sit as vice-chairs on these committees because of the great Canadian heritage they have helped to uphold. On the other hand he is saying that he would take his province out of Canada.

Let us not look backward for a moment; let us look forward. Are we saying that we want to put someone in charge of the Canadian heritage committee when we are sending a Canadian unity committee of that committee across the country to talk about ways to hold the country together? That is absolutely nuts. That is ridiculous.

We would be irresponsible if we did not note that leading up to the last referendum the defence critic for the Bloc Québécois wrote a letter on his leader's letterhead to the Canadian military in Quebec and asked them to consider coming over to them in the wake of a referendum. If we did not take some steps to protect ourselves from what could happen as a result of that, we would be completely irresponsible.

The member is talking about talking Quebec out of Confederation, but let him not think that we should accept that. In his words, because he and the members of his riding are taxpayers somehow they have the right to sit as a vice-chair on any committee to propose things that would rip the country apart. That is nuts.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** There are four minutes remaining for questions and comments. Does anyone else wish to speak? The hon. member for Charlevoix.

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I think that, this afternoon, the Reform Party has been attempting to skirt the issue. Before the House recessed for Christmas and before the prorogation of Parliament, they had put forward a motion in which they asked to be recognized as the official opposition. You will recall that they had asked the Speaker to rule on a motion claiming the status of official opposition.

Last week, the Speaker of the House of Commons came back with an excellent ruling, stating that the Bloc Québécois had achieved official opposition status in 1993, after the elections, and was the second party in the House of Commons. In the event of an equality of seats, and this is purely mathematical, and of our losing one seat or of the Reform Party gaining one, they will become the second party, or we might remain the second party.

• (1800)

I suggest that we wait for the result of the March 25 byelection, at which time the Bloc Québécois' position will be consolidated, with at least 54 seats.

I think that the masks should be taken away from the Reform Party members. I think that playing this role, this afternoon, and raising this issue about the chairmanship or vice-chairmanship of committees, is basically a back-door method of showing that the Speaker was wrong and should have designated the Reform Party as the official Opposition. They are trying to send to English Canada the message that the Speaker made a mistake.

Again, I maintain that the designation of the official opposition is purely mathematical. The advantage for us of having a Bloc member as vice-chair of a committee is, as the member for Portneuf explained, that it gives us priority for the first five minutes of questions to witnesses who appear before the committee. The vice-chair also sits on the steering committee that determines priorities on the agenda.

We have wasted a lot of time. We have been discussing this issue since oral question period ended, at 3 p.m. The Reform Party makes an issue of who should be vice-chair and who should be chair.

We are told that the interest on the national debt increases at the rate of \$1,000 per second. The Reform Party should realize that, while we are arguing about who should fill the positions of vice-chair and chair, the interest on the debt has gone up \$10,800.

We should be discussing job creation, programs and the future of our young people. Instead, the Reform Party is using roundabout means to try to show Canadians that the Speaker erred when he ruled that the Bloc Québécois will remain the official opposition.

[English]

**Mr. Solberg:** Madam Speaker, obviously I will not respond to everything because it would take too long. It is understandable that the Bloc members would like to assume all these chairmanship positions. That makes sense to me. I understand why they want that. Ultimately they want to go and become emperors in their own country. That is fine. They can pursue that.

The point I want to make and which we have been trying to make here is they should not be aided and abetted by the Liberals. They should not be turning the rules on their head for a party is committed to the separation of Quebec from this country. That party should not be using those rules to seek its own ends.

That is exactly what the Liberals have done. They have entered into this alliance, into this little intrigue with the Bloc Québécois, with the separatists. They applauded them when the Speaker ruled that they should be maintained as the official opposition.

That speaks volumes of what is happening here about the commitment of these people to have federalists sit in the opposition and help guide the agenda. I understand where these people are coming from. We will never agree with them. We will never agree with the Bloc, but the conduct of the Liberals is unbelievable.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** The question is on the amendment tabled by Mr. Ringma. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** In my opinion the nays have it.

• (1805)

**Some hon. members:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** I declare the amendment negatived on division.

(Amendment negatived.)

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**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Is the House ready for the question on the main motion?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those in favour will please say ye.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to.)

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**PETITIONS**

## TAX ON FUEL

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Saint-Jean had to leave and, on behalf of the people who gave him this petition, I would like to present it to the House.

Taxes account for some 52 per cent of what Canadians pay for a litre of gasoline while the excise tax rose by 1.5 cents a litre in the last budget. Moreover, a parliamentary committee has recommended that this tax be further increased in the next budget. In the last 10 years, the price of gasoline has gone up by a whopping 566 per cent.

The petitioners therefore urge Parliament not to raise the federal excise tax on gasoline in the next federal budget. I am pleased to table this petition, which I think makes a lot of sense.

## TAX ON FUEL

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, before tabling these petitions, since this is my first opportunity to do so, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to the position of Acting Speaker.

I would like to table a number of petitions.

[*English*]

The first petition is from the electors of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, petitioning not to have an increase in the tax on gasoline.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also present a petition signed by 7,150 people from the constituency of Hull—Aylmer.

[*Translation*]

These people from the riding of Hull—Aylmer present these petitions through their member of Parliament, who is doing such a good job of representing them in the House of Commons, and the minister has asked me to table them on his behalf.

The petitioners urge the government to ensure that the Gatineau employment centre will continue to provide people in the Outaouais, Hull—Aylmer, Buckingham, Campbell's Bay and Maniwaki with full employment, UI and income security services.

As I said earlier, these petitions were signed by 7,150 people.

[*English*]

## YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

**Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to present to the House petitions on behalf of a number of schools in my riding. Their concerns are with regard to the Young Offenders Act.

The schools are Hillside school, Bienfait school, Kennedy high school, St. Mary's school in Estivan, St. John's school, Torquay school, Langbank elementary, Glenn McGuire, Alida and Carlyle.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I also have petitions to present on behalf of a number of constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain appealing against any hikes in the fuel tax.

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my constituents are outraged at the fluctuation of gasoline prices moving up and down like a yo-yo on a regular basis. My constituents are calling on the government for action.

• (1810)

Today they have given me a petition to table on their behalf calling on the government not to introduce any federal taxes on gasoline.

**Mr. Paul Zed (Fundy—Royal, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on taking the chair. All of us from New Brunswick are very proud of you as you fulfil your new responsibilities.

I am pleased to present on behalf of motorists in and around the Windsor, Ontario area the enclosed petition with 37 names from Windsor, Amherstburg, Kingsville, Essex county, La Salle and Tecumseh, Ontario. They request that Parliament not increase the excise tax on gasoline.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I present today a petition signed by hundreds of people from my riding of Prince George—Peace River. They are completely opposed to further tax increases in the upcoming budget and specifically request that Parliament not again increase the federal excise tax on gasoline as the government did last year.

Taxes on gasoline are not luxury taxes and additional increases unfairly discriminate against northerners.

[Translation]

## TAXES ON GASOLINE

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to table a petition from people who do not want the upcoming budget to increase taxes on gasoline. There are 25 of them, and I know more are getting ready. So I table this petition before you.

\* \* \*

[English]

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The House resumed consideration of Motion No. 1.

**Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to address government Motion No. 1.

As we are well aware, Motion No. 1 would reinstate bills which died on the Order Paper at the exact same stage they were at prior to prorogation. According to *Précis of Procedure*, 4th edition, prorogation means that the pending legislation would be abolished. The government seeks to overturn that practice through motion 1.

Motion No. 1 would see bills resurrected as though prorogation had never really occurred. Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 235 states:

In recent years it has become common, by consent, to reinstate certain bills on the Order Paper of a new session at the same stage that they had reached before prorogation.

This practice was started by the previous Tory government. As we have noticed over this 35th Parliament, there does not seem to be much difference between the policies of the old Tory government, which Canadians came to hate so much and which the Liberals when in opposition railed so much against, and the practices of the Liberals now that they are in government.

Coming back to citation 235, we should pay particular attention to the phrase "by consent". As members know, particularly members of the Liberal Party, many of whom have been here for quite some time, unfortunately, anything is possible in the House by the means of unanimous consent. However, did the Liberals seek any consent from Reformers with respect to the resurrection of the bills for the second session? The answer to that is they did not. We discovered the Liberals' true intentions in an article in the *Hill Times* one day. In the article the government House leader discussed the possibility of introducing such a motion. At no time did the government contact the other parties in the House to discuss the possible reinstatement of the bills.

• (1815)

Some of the things I am going to say have been said before by some of my colleagues in this debate but they were so profound I think they bear repeating. The Liberals gave a tough time to the Tory government over this same thing in the last Parliament. When the Tories bowed to these tactics in 1991 there were howls of outrage from the Liberals when they sat in opposition. They complained of anti-democratic measures and the destruction of parliamentary traditions. Perhaps it would do them some good tonight to reflect on some of their own protestations and arguments against the use of these tactics.

I am happy to see that the member for Kingston and the Islands is present tonight. He played a huge part in this. He always gets a real charge out of hearing his words reflected once again in Parliament. We will attempt to do that again tonight.

The member for Kingston and the Islands has been known for his bombastic outrage and outpourings and his pious reflections. In May 1991 he said to the Tories: "It is still morally wicked of the government to proceed with this motion and particularly when it applies closure to the motion".

As a Reformer, I agree with that 100 per cent. I am happy that in 1991 the member for Kingston and the Islands had the integrity and the fortitude to stand up and demand that democracy be done, to talk about how morally wicked and wrong it was. I congratulate the member for saying that. He went on to say: "I suggest it is perhaps one of the worst outrages that has been perpetuated in this House in many years". Again, I congratulate him for those profound utterances.

*Government Orders*

The member for Kingston and the Islands did not stop there. He went on and it got even better. The lamentations of the member for Kingston and the Islands climbed to even higher levels. He said that the Tory motion represented a national disgrace and that the Canadian Parliament would become the laughing stock around the world because of the outrageous conduct of the government in introducing the motion. That was a wonderful oratory he gave in 1991. I am so impressed.

I would like to summarize the arguments put forward by the member for Kingston and the Islands. Motions of this nature are atrocious, unethical and unparliamentary. They make the Canadian government look disgraceful both here and at home. I wish I could claim originality to those words but unfortunately I cannot. I borrowed them from the member for Kingston and the Islands. He spoke them so eloquently here in 1991 as he railed against the outrageous, the morally wicked and the morally wrong practices of the Tory government. I could not agree with him more. I can think of no better.

Let us bring it to the present using that member's very own words when he sat in opposition to the despicable Tories who had control of the country back then. I can think of no better words to use to describe the government and its behaviour over the course of the entire 34th Parliament. But he was not alone in his criticism of the former government's actions. He had a lot of help from other Liberals when they sat here. The member for Halifax stated that the Tory government should "hang its head in shame for daring to introduce such a motion". I love that one.

• (1820)

I am sure some of the great defenders of democracy who have left this earth and gone on to the great Parliament in the sky are hanging their heads in shame right now, particularly if they happened to be Liberals when they were in this place. They must be hanging their heads in shame when they see the undemocratic policies of the government.

I am getting to the best part. I have to quote the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who is my very favourite Liberal. In 1991 when he talked about the Tory motion, he wondered out loud: "If this precedent is allowed to proceed, then what on earth is next?" What could follow? Mr. Speaker, let me tell the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell exactly what is next. Next is the Liberal government saying and doing exactly what it denounced five years ago. This is déjà vu all over again.

Considering the comments from the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Halifax and the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, I have reason to believe, and it has been confirmed, that fried crow was served for lunch in the government lobby today. Considering the behaviour of the government, one

truly must believe that the Liberals are getting accustomed to eating crow.

It is funny how when sitting on this side of the House the Liberals had a monopoly on political morality. They had a monopoly on democracy. They had a monopoly on talking about integrity, honesty and doing things right. It was so easy to talk about it when they sat over here. Once transferred to the other side of the House however their democracy became bankrupt, their integrity became bankrupt and as a government they have become morally bankrupt.

Turning back to the issue of Motion No. 1, the government will argue that it is necessary to save time since all these previous bills will not have to be reintroduced again. However the government has done nothing but waste time during its entire term in this Parliament.

Proroguing the House removed the entire month of February when we could have been dealing with government business. The fall 1995 session was filled with take note debates and inconsequential bills. In fact, the government has done nothing of any value since becoming the government. We have done nothing but house cleaning since the government took office. Canadians want more than that. Important issues have been left on the back burner and Canadians have been left with no sense of direction from the government.

I assume that prorogation provided the government with an opportunity to deliver another throne speech in order to provide some sense of direction, but Canadians will take little comfort from the contents of the throne speech we heard the other day. The government had a lot of time to prepare for this but the throne speech only differed slightly from the one delivered on January 8, 1994. The Liberals' record on delivering on the promises made in the first throne speech quite frankly does not inspire much confidence in their ability to deliver on the promises made in the second throne speech.

• (1825)

The first throne speech stated that the highest priority was job creation and economic growth. We found out in the second throne speech how the Liberals really felt about that. We found out what they intend to do. They intend to take their failed job creation program and pass it on to the backs of the private sector. That is typical for a tax and spend government. If the government cannot deliver through its own ingenuity, creativity and programs, then pass it on to those it can wrest a buck from.

Since the Liberals took office the Canadian debtload has increased about \$70 billion. During the campaign I told the electors of Prince George—Bulkley Valley that in the term of office of the Liberal government, according to the Liberals' red book and using their very own figures, the national debt would increase by \$100 billion and the interest payment on that debt would increase by \$10 billion. Many people said it could not be true because the Liberals

said they were going to get the economy in shape. I told them to get a calculator and do a little figuring.

This government has made what I say come true in spades. I can go back to the people in my riding and tell them that we are only a little under three years into this Parliament and already we are up to \$70 billion.

The Liberals have raised taxes. Here is a government that agreed with Canadians before the election that taxes were too high. They listened to Canadians. They heard the cries of the Canadian middle class worker who is paying most of the bills in this country. They heard the cries about the high taxes and they said they were going to do something about it. They did. Since the government has taken office, it has raised taxes by \$11.4 billion and unemployment hovers around 10 per cent.

The Tories brought in the much hated GST. Go back in *Hansard* and there are volumes of what the Liberals said about the GST. Many members in this House spoke most eloquently about this disgusting extra tax that the Tories were bringing in.

During the pre-election campaign the Liberals were saying: "We are going to abolish the GST. We are going to scrap it. We are going to do away with it. We are going to send it to that happy hunting tax heaven in the sky". However, when the Liberals got to writing that down, when they got to having to put it down on paper and in a red book, all of a sudden the words abolish, scrap, do away with, end, cease, desist got magically replaced by the word replaced. They were going to replace it. They used the word harmonize. They used words that meant something totally different from scrap, abolish.

The Deputy Prime Minister said in her election promises that if the government did not get rid of the GST in the first year of its term in office, she was going to resign. Reformers and many Canadians are still waiting and she is still very much here in the human form. We wonder if they do not understand the words, abolish, scrap and do away with. Obviously they cannot understand the word resign.

• (1830)

The best the Liberals have come up with is the word harmonization. They are going to take that tax and put into some other tax. But a tax is a tax is a tax. It does not matter what it is called or where it is put. As long as the Canadian people still have to pay it, it is still a tax. Replacing it or harmonizing it or changing the name really does not accomplish anything. It certainly does not give any credibility to the words the Liberals spoke: abolish, do away with or scrap.

The first throne speech also talked about the need to bring down interprovincial trade barriers, something Reformers have been talking about for years. Interprovincial trade barriers cost Canadians about \$5 billion within our country.

### *Government Orders*

The 1982 Constitution mentions having a process to do away with interprovincial trade barriers. That is 14 years ago. The Liberals wrote the Constitution and they have spent some time in government since they wrote it.

We have a party here that says one thing and does another. It is a typical Liberal government that sits on the fence and is afraid to make any firm commitments that can be counted on by Canadians.

Again I remind the House of the words of the member for Kingston and the Islands in 1991 when he said: "It is still morally wicked of the government to proceed with this motion and then to apply closure to the motion and thereby curtail debate on it". Profound words then. But this is now. When the Liberals resort to these kinds of tactics somehow it is no longer morally wicked.

In conclusion, I believe that Canadians are getting tired of this hypocrisy. They want a government that not only promises to govern with integrity but does govern with integrity. They want a government that not only makes promises but keeps them. They want a government that not only talks about democracy but also practices it.

The member for Kingston and the Islands said in 1991 of the Tory government: "I must say that I am getting rather tired of having to deal with closure and its effects and the way that this government mistreats the precedents and the practices of this House". With the government's behaviour would anyone expect Reformers to say anything less?

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting when you come to this Chamber that there are many references one can make for speech content. Probably one of the most profound orators, certainly he waxed eloquent as Captain Canada, was none other than the the Hon. Brian Tobin in this Chamber on May 29, 1991. The only thing I am changing here is the reference to the Conservative Party because Liberal-Tory, same old story. I am just going to be putting in the words Liberal Party instead of Conservative Party.

Here goes the speech. And what does this government do? Does it attempt to lay bare before the people of Canada its agenda? Does it attempt to persuade the people of Canada and the elected representatives of the people of Canada of the value of its agenda? Does it say that it has a vision for Canada such as a profound belief in our vision for Canada that we are prepared to debate it and defend it? No. It uses the tyranny of the majority. It uses the temporary trust given to this party as a consequence of an election two and a half years ago to bulldoze its legislative measures through the Parliament of Canada, to deny the people of Canada a chance to be heard, to deny the elected representatives of the people of Canada not an opportunity to speak, but their obligation to speak, their responsibility to be heard in the proper examination of bills.

*Government Orders*

• (1835)

We may as well be blunt in this Chamber. What do we have? We have in Canada today the worst possible combination of governmental systems. We have a Prime Minister who wants a presidential system, a Prime Minister who wants to rule with absolute power and assumes that the members of the Liberal Party are automatically supporters of every government measure, a Prime Minister who takes for granted that the members of the Liberal Party will support any and every government measure, a Prime Minister who sees not a government with all it entails, but sees purely a majority, a Prime Minister who has hauled off the velvet glove and exposed the brutal fist of a party with a majority in a parliamentary system who wants to behave in a presidential fashion.

How prophetic are those words. Here we are repeating them only five years later. They were spoken by that great orator of this Chamber, the Hon. Brian Tobin, about the then most hated Prime Minister of his day, Brian Mulroney. I ask the members in the House, what is the difference or indeed is there any difference between the actions of the Liberals and this Prime Minister and the actions of the Conservatives and their Prime Minister?

It is absolutely astounding to me that the member for Kingston and the Islands can laugh in the face of the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley saying: “Let us hear those words some more”, when he was railing against the government of the day. He is sitting in his chair laughing. The Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, laughs every time she is reminded that she said that she would resign if the GST was not replaced, not harmonized, but the word she used was abolished. When we bring up the word abolished she sits there and laughs.

I suggest that the government has shown absolute and total contempt for the people of Canada in the way it has conducted the affairs on this, the very first motion of the second session of Parliament. Liberal members have shown absolute contempt. When they were on this side they made speech after speech condemning the former government. Now they turn around and walk away from what they said. Is there any wonder that the people of Canada are so cynical about somebody who would call himself or herself a politician?

What about the person who carries out the will of the Prime Minister in this House? What about the whip of the Liberal Party? His words on May 28, 1991: “Finally, if this precedent is allowed to proceed then what is next? I ask the question rhetorically. If one can resuscitate five bills with this motion or four bills, what stops one from resuscitating all legislation from the past? That is a good question. Why do we not just get everything back together and the things we like we will just resuscitate it”.

He raises a very logical point. He says, carrying it to the next level: “What stops us from adopting a motion today deeming that

all bills have reached third reading? What stops us from resuscitating a bill from 1977 saying that a particular bill has now reached third reading and we are going to vote on it right now? As a matter of fact, we could actually pass a motion stating that it has completed third reading and debate.

“What we are in fact doing is amending completely the rules of the House by adopting this motion were we to do so. Or were this motion to be ruled in order, the implications of ruling this motion in order would be such that I fear we would render, if a government wanted to, and I am not saying it does, this House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant”.

What prophetic words. The whip of the Liberals when he stood in this House said that if the Speaker of that Parliament ruled the motion to be in order that it would make the House of Commons totally irrelevant and redundant. How prophetic because he in fact, as a result of the former Speaker making that ruling, has done exactly that.

• (1840)

This government whip has made the House irrelevant and redundant. We would simply deem everything and anything to have been passed, to have been at third reading or to have been at any stage if for any reason the government did not want to proceed with other stages of the bill.

It is very frustrating. It is exceptionally frustrating. It is frustrating not only because of the heavy handed approach of the Liberals, not only because of their gross arrogance. We expect that of them. What is frustrating is for them to have sat on this side of the House and to have said these words and then to move to that side of the House for us to have a stack of things they have been talking about, and what have they done? They have laughed all day long at their words being thrown back at them.

This is a very sad way to start the second session of the 35th Parliament of Canada. We can only hope the people of Canada will not only pay attention but will talk to each other and say it really is Liberal-Tory, same old story. It really is government as usual. It really is politicians taking us for granted. It really is the government running a four-year dictatorship.

When the people of Canada start to realize this is what is happening in the House of Commons, these people will feel even more heat back in their constituencies when they go home.

I guess we will find out what the legislation will be between now and June. They assume all of their trained seals will stand up and bark at the appropriate time, the legislation will go through, and there you go. It is a very sad realization that in Canada this Chamber has stooped to this level.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** The question is on the amendment standing in the name of Mr. Bellehumeur. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those in favour will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais):** Call in the members.

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 5)*

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Asselin	Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)
Bachand	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Benoit
Bernier (Gaspé)	Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Brien
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
de Jong	de Savoye
Deshaias	Duceppe
Duncan	Epp
Fillion	Frazer
Gagnon (Québec)	Gauthier
Godin	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Hanrahan	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Harris	Hart
Hoepfner	Jacob
Lalonde	Landry
Laurin	Loubier
Manning	Mayfield
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Nunez
Penson	Picard (Drummond)
Ramsay	Ringma
Rocheleau	Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)	Silye
Solberg	Solomon
Speaker	St-Laurent
Taylor	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)—62

**NAYS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Assadourian	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)
Bakopanos	Barnes
Bélanger	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Calder	Campbell
Cannis	Chan
Clancy	Cohen
Collins	Comuzzi
Cowling	Crawford
Culbert	DeVillers
Dingwall	Discepola
Dromisky	Duhamel
Dupuy	English
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harper (Churchill)	Harvard
Hopkins	Hubbard
Iftody	Irwin
Jackson	Jordan
Keyes	Kirkby
Knutson	Lastewka
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lee
Lincoln	Loney
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Massé	McCormick
McGuire	McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)
McTeague	McWhinney
Mifflin	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Murray	Nault
O'Brien	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Peric
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Ringuette-Maltais	Robichaud
Robillard	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd	Sheridan
Simmons	Skoke
Speller	St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)	Szabo
Telegdi	Thalheimer
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Walker	Whelan
Wood	Young
Zed—115	

**PAIRED MEMBERS**

Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Bergeron
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Blondin-Andrew
Caccia	Caron
Catterall	Cauchon
Copps	Crête
Debien	Dubé
Dumas	Fewchuk
Gaffney	Laurin

*Government Orders*

Lebel  
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)  
MacAulay  
Manley  
Ménard  
Milliken  
Paradis  
Pomerleau  
Stewart (Northumberland)  
Venne

Leblanc (Longueuil)  
Leroux (Shefford)  
MacDonald  
McKinnon  
Mercier  
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)  
Paré  
Sauvageau  
Tremblay (Rosemont)  
Wells

McTeague  
Mifflin  
Mitchell  
Murray  
O'Brien  
Pagtakhan  
Peterson  
Pickard (Essex—Kent)  
Proud  
Regan  
Ringuette-Maltais  
Robillard  
Shepherd  
Simmons  
Speller  
Stewart (Brant)  
Telegdi  
Torsney  
Valeri  
Walker  
Wood  
Zed—115

McWhinney  
Minna  
Murphy  
Nault  
O'Reilly  
Peric  
Phinney  
Pillitteri  
Reed  
Richardson  
Robichaud  
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)  
Sheridan  
Skoke  
St. Denis  
Szabo  
Thalheimer  
Ur  
Vanclief  
Whelan  
Young

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe there would be unanimous consent for applying the vote on the previous motion in reverse to the motion now before the House.

**Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral:** Members of the official opposition will vote against the motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ringma:** Mr. Speaker, Reform members will vote against the motion except for those who might choose to vote otherwise.

**Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats this evening will vote against the motion.

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

*(Division No. 6)*

## YEAS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Assadourian	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)
Bakopanos	Barnes
Bélanger	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Calder	Campbell
Cannis	Chan
Clancy	Cohen
Collins	Comuzzi
Cowling	Crawford
Culbert	DeVillers
Dingwall	Discepola
Dromisky	Duhamel
Dupuy	English
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Gallaway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harper (Churchill)	Harvard
Hopkins	Hubbard
Iftody	Irwin
Jackson	Jordan
Keyes	Kirkby
Knutson	Lastewka
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lee
Lincoln	Loney
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Massé	McCormick
McGuire	McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)

Abbott  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bellehumeur  
Bernier (Gaspé)  
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)  
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)  
Cummins  
de Jong  
Deshaies  
Duncan  
Fillion  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Godin  
Grubel  
Guimond  
Hanrahan  
Harris  
Hoepfner  
Lalonde  
Laurin  
Manning  
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)  
Morrison  
Penson  
Ramsay  
Rocheleau  
Scott (Skeena)  
Solberg  
Speaker  
Taylor

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy  
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)  
Bélisle  
Benoit  
Blaikie  
Brien  
Chrétien (Frontenac)  
Dalphond-Guiral  
de Savoye  
Duceppe  
Epp  
Frazer  
Gauthier  
Grey (Beaver River)  
Guay  
Hanger  
Harper (Simcoe Centre)  
Hart  
Jacob  
Landry  
Loubier  
Mayfield  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Nunez  
Picard (Drummond)  
Ringma  
Schmidt  
Silye  
Solomon  
St-Laurent  
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)—62

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Bergeron
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Blondin-Andrew
Caccia	Caron
Catterall	Cauchon
Copps	Crête
Debien	Dubé
Dumas	Fewchuk
Gaffney	Laurin
Lebel	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	Leroux (Shefford)
MacAulay	MacDonald
Manley	McKinnon
Ménard	Mercier

*Government Orders*

Milliken  
Paradis  
Plamondon  
Stewart (Northumberland)  
Venne

Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)  
Paré  
Sauvageau  
Tremblay (Rosemont)  
Wells

It being 7.30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(The House adjourned at 7.25 p.m.)

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