



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 14, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 14, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

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 response to 15 petitions presented during the first session.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE STAFF RELATIONS BOARD

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 32(2) and to section 114 of the Public Service Staff Relations Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 28th annual report of the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Joint Committee on Government Operations.

* * *

[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY EMPLOYMENT AND STAFF RELATIONS ACT

Mr. Paul DeVillers (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and in accordance with section 84 of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, I wish to table, in both official languages, the ninth annual report on the administration of the act by the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

This report should be deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations.

* * *

CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES COMMERCIALIZATION ACT

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-20, an act respecting the commercialization of civil air navigation services.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 73(1), it is the intention of the government that this bill be referred to a committee before second reading.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and referred to a committee.)

* * *

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present two petitions.

The first petition has to do with the family. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society.

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

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Sarnia, Ontario.

The petitioners would like to bring to the attention of the House that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems or impair one's ability, and specifically that fetal alcohol syndrome and other alcohol related birth defects are 100 per cent preventable by avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to enact legislation to require health warning labels to be placed on the containers of all alcoholic beverages.

Privilege

DISTINCT SOCIETY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition calls on Parliament to ensure the equality of all provinces by refusing to designate one province a distinct society, if such a designation confers special status or powers not enjoyed by all other provinces.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is one of an ongoing series of petitions that many members receive.

It concerns the lack of necessity of including the phrase sexual orientation in any amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act and asks Parliament not to amend the human rights code, the human rights act or the charter of rights and freedoms in any way which would tend to single out same sex relationships and give them some kind of special status.

I would like to table these two petitions.

• (1010)

GASOLINE TAXES

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to table a petition signed by people who are opposed to gasoline price tax increases. They were delighted by the fact that the government listened to the people and did not increase them.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

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.) Mr. Speaker, I move:

That with regard to the consideration of the motion of the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt with regard to a reference to be made to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, that the debate be not further adjourned.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 10)

YEAS

Members

Allcock	Allmand
Anderson	Arseneault
Assadourian	Augustine
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumur
Bélanger	Bertrand
Bethel	Bevilacqua
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Calder	Campbell
Cauchon	Chan
Clancy	Collenette
Comuzzi	Crawford
Culbert	DeVillers
Dingwall	Discepolo
Duhamel	Dupuy
Easter	English
Fewchuk	Finestone
Flis	Fontana
Gaffney	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West/Ouest)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harvard	Hopkins
Hubbard	Ianno
Iftody	Jackson
Jordan	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kirkby
Knutson	Lastewka
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lee
Loney	MacDonald
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Marleau
McCormick	McGuire
McKinnon	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Milliken	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Murray	Nault
O'Brien	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Proud	Reed
Regan	Richardson
Ringuette-Maltais	Robichaud
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Serré
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Telegdi	Terrana
Thalheimer	Torsney
Ur	Vanclief
Verran	Volpe
Wappel	Whelan
Wood	Young
Zed—121	

Privilege

NAYS

Members

Althouse	Asselin
Bachand	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Benoit
Bergeron	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Bhaduria
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Bridgman
Brien	Canuel
Chatters	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Crête	Dalphond-Guiral
Daviault	de Savoye
Debien	Deshaies
Dubé	Duceppe
Dumas	Duncan
Epp	Fillion
Forseth	Frazer
Gagnon (Québec)	Gilmour
Godin	Gouk
Grubel	Guimond
Hanger	Hart
Hermanson	Hill (Macleod)
Hoepfner	Jacob
Jennings	Johnston
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Mayfield	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
McLaughlin	Ménard
Mercier	Meredith
Morrison	Nunez
Paré	Picard (Drummond)
Pomerleau	Ramsay
Ringma	Rocheleau
Sauvageau	Solomon
Speaker	Strahl
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)	Tremblay (Rosemont)
Venne	White (North Vancouver) —76

PAIRED MEMBERS

nil/aucun

• (1055)

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE MEMBER FOR CHARLESBOURG

The House resumed from March 13, consideration of the motion, the amendment, and the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That notwithstanding any special or standing order, at the conclusion of the debate on the motion of the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, but not later than 11 p.m., all recorded divisions on the said motion and amendments thereto be deemed to have been put and deferred to Monday, March

18, 1996 at 6.30 p.m., and that during any debate on the said motion after 3 p.m. this day, no quorum calls or dilatory motions shall be received.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

Mr. Szabo: Mr. Speaker, at the close of business yesterday, the member from Rimouski had just finished her address to the House. I am wondering whether questions or comments can be addressed to the member.

The Speaker: The member has concluded her remarks. Because we have just passed a motion that the debate be not further adjourned, there will not be any questions or comments put.

• (1100)

So we will all know, all of the debates will now be 20 minutes. There will be no questions and comments at the end of the debate. If members are splitting their time, would they please inform the Chair when they get on your feet.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with another member from the Reform Party.

On March 12 when my colleague, the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, stood in the House to raise a point of privilege against the member for Charlesbourg the Speaker said the House was being faced with one of the most serious matters we have faced in this 35th Parliament. It was so serious that it did not matter that some months had passed since the incident under discussion took place, and so serious that the House should deal with the accusations forthwith.

Later that day following a short but heated exchange between two members of the House the Speaker rose again and stated that everyone would have an opportunity to speak to the issue: “My dear colleagues, this is one of the most serious debates we have had here in this House. We shall all have the chance to speak here in the House. We are Canadians, we are democratic, and you will have the opportunity to speak”.

There can be no doubt for any member listening to and watching our Speaker as he said those words that he did assess the situation as very serious and that he was concerned that we would have the opportunity to speak to it.

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I can honestly say I have never seen our Speaker look so disturbed by the events he was called to deliberate over, and I have never heard such emotion in his voice. The only time I have ever heard our Speaker use a stern and almost angry tone of voice has been during these debates.

In addition, the outpouring of emotion from members of all parties during the debate leaves no doubt for any observer that this is a very serious matter. Obviously a great number of members wish to be heard, although I notice the PC members have yet to show any interest at all in the debate.

Some MPs want the opportunity to represent the views of their constituents while others want as badly to represent the views of their party, as they are accustomed to doing, using their canned speeches prepared by the spin doctors upstairs.

It struck me this was probably the reason the government wanted adjournment of the debate on the first day. I noticed that when the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt introduced his motion it did seem to catch the government by surprise and it was afraid to follow through and allow its members to begin speaking to the motion right away.

We watched as the government whip rushed around between the benches checking on what his members might want to say of a spontaneous nature. He made sure none of them would say anything that would embarrass the government side or be contrary to the call of the whip.

Even so, there can be no doubt the people of Canada want this matter discussed; they want it fully and publicly discussed. They want to see every aspect of the issue explored in the House where they can observe and read, if they do not get the opportunity to watch, the deliberations.

We heard the Speaker say everyone in the House would have the opportunity to speak. I repeat that quote because it is important: "My dear colleagues, this is one of the most serious debates we have had in this House. We shall all have the chance to speak here in this House".

Now what happens? The government effectively takes away our right to have everybody speak. It has invoked a form of closure by not adjourning the debate. I will explain for members who may not understand what that means. It means we must continue putting up speakers without interruption. If there is no one available to stand immediately when someone else sits down, the debate will cease.

Is that reasonable? It is like passing a law that people can mow their lawns any time, one at a time, starting now, but when the last mower is finished if there is no one to take his place the right to mow lawns ceases immediately.

• (1105)

Obviously people will not stay up all night starting their lawn mowers one after the other to mow the lawns. Sooner or later someone will say: "It is too late. It is not reasonable. We will all go to bed and we will start mowing our lawns again in the morning".

That is exactly the situation we are faced with now by this motion. I have been lucky enough to be one of the people who can rise to speak to it. However, there will come a point at which it will become unreasonable to expect any of us to be here until the small hours of the morning so that we can continuously have our opportunity to speak. It is unfair and it is impractical.

In the end, I guess the outcome of this entire debate was known even before it began, just as the outcome of debates on legislation in this place is predetermined. The government will always get its way.

This place costs something in excess of \$125,000 an hour to run, but it is not a place which enacts the will of the people. It is simply a place which enacts the will of the parties, particularly the party in power. All of the debates, questions, statements and committees associated with this motion or any piece of legislation rarely change anything. In this case I am certain that will also be the case.

In the case of this motion, the most serious ever to come before the 35th Parliament, the Liberals will get their way. In the end they will get their way. They will rework the motion so that they gut it completely, so that it has not the meaning with which it started, so that they can force it through to committee where they can control the end result. The first step in that process was to amend the motion of the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. The next step was to effectively cut off debate. The third step will probably be to make the motion disappear somewhere into committee.

They insulted the people of Canada by taking the member's motion and removing all of the words preceding the word "that" and all of the words after the word "that".

An hon. member: And that is that.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): As the hon. member says, that is that. They left only the word "that". It is ridiculous. It is an absolute insult to the people of Canada. They took all of the words before the word "that" and all of the words after the word "that" and substituted their own Liberal Party spin, which made the motion virtually meaningless. They suggested the actions of the hon. member for Charlesbourg might be offensive to Parliament and that we should take it in that vein rather than using the word "sedition".

The people of Canada could not care less if the actions of the hon. member for Charlesbourg are offensive to Parliament. The actions were offensive to them. They want this matter discussed.

They want it debated where they can see what we have to say. They would like every member to have the opportunity to stand and say what he or she thinks of the motion.

The hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt placed the motion before the House because the people of Canada are offended. They have been telling us that they want this matter to be dealt with. They want us to treat it seriously. As our Speaker has indicated, it is serious. He considers it serious. However, the government obviously does not consider it serious. It has placed us almost in a position of defiance of the Speaker's words by causing us to wind down the debate within a very restricted timeframe.

For those of us on the Reform side of the House who have been standing to speak, we have been doing so because it is called representing our constituents. It is a concept which may be intellectually unattainable for some members opposite because they are lap dogs to the whip. It is totally foreign to them. I think they are far enough away from us sometimes to be foreign.

Times are changing. We are in the information age and taxpayers, the people who pay the bills to run this place, will not put up with this sort of thing much longer. They feel it is about time we started to properly represent them. They will not be pleased the debate is being shut down on this motion.

• (1110)

I like to quote a famous politician of the past when talking about things like these attacks on democracy. I like to quote him not because I admire him but because he represents the politics of the past, the old line parties and the old line ways so detested by the people of Canada.

That parliamentarian is Edmund Burke. I am sure everyone has heard of him. In 1774 he said: "Your representative owes you not his industry only but his judgment. And he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion". Mr. Burke made this statement more than 220 years ago, nowhere even close to the information age. The level of education was pretty low and it probably would have been true that an MP would not have been doing his constituents a favour if he sacrificed his judgment to the opinion of the voters.

Today we have the information age and people get well informed on things like the motion before the House right now. They have had the opportunity to read the communiqué put out by the member for Charlesbourg because it was faxed to every corner of the country using the tools of the information age.

In response, MPs around the country received communications about the communiqué using fax machines, Internet, E-mail and regular mail, by telephone, by all of the modern means available to constituents these days. It is a vastly different place from what it was in 1774 when Mr. Burke spoke.

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Constituents today are truly interested in what happens in this place and they are able to follow what happens in this place either by reading a hard copy of *Hansard* or taking it off the electronic system of the Internet or by actually watching the procedures on television. They have a right to be properly represented here and to see what happens.

In the 1990s when people are well educated and well informed, I think a modification of Mr. Burke's quote is in order. I would like to hear modern politicians saying: "Your representative owes you not his industry only but his commitment to alert you to the affairs of government that affect you so that you may become informed and so that you may instruct him on how to represent you".

In case members are curious, Edmund Burke was thrown out of office by the election that followed his famous statement. Even 220 years ago it did not pay to insult your constituents, just as it does not pay today.

The problem is that even if every member of the House agreed today that they would represent their constituents on this discussion of the motion before the House and decided they would support the motion of the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt in its entirety, intact, without taking away all the words in front of the word "that" and all the words after the word "that", but to actually look at it, listen to their constituents sending faxes and letters and making calls, and say yes, it is true and we should support it, the whip for the Liberal party runs around telling them they must toe the party line.

Let us imagine they decided they would support it. The problem is in order to get to that point we really have to overcome the power of this old line whip controlled system. As people learn more about the procedures that happen here they take great interest in the debate, because this debate is also a serious matter for them, as it is for our Speaker and everyone here.

This debate has come to the attention of the whole country. It is a serious debate. As they watch, listen and understand what we are saying, they begin to realize when they watch the votes what is happening here. The pressure will increase for change in the system, change that is well overdue, change that needs to be made in the information age we have entered today.

I recommend to members a television comedy on the women's network which aired each Sunday night last year. It is called "No Job for a Lady" and is based on the experiences of a rookie woman MP in England.

• (1115)

While the program is funny, it is also a fairly accurate portrayal of what happens in the U.K. Parliament and in this place too. The writers obviously have a good knowledge of the workings of the

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House of Commons and they have no difficulty showing viewers that committee meetings and travel junkets have very little use other than to keep MPs busy between votes. Busy between engineered votes, the result of which we already know, before we even enter the House.

My colleague for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia said it very well last year in one of his speeches and I will quote from *Hansard*: “My colleagues and I on both sides of the House know, and the public knows, that what we say about a bill is of little consequence”. This could just as easily apply to a motion. “A dozen or so people make the decisions and all the debate in the world will not change those decisions. Even if government backbenchers and members of the opposition were here in great numbers, the ministers, the people we might hope to influence are almost never here except for question period”.

It is a shame that we have a situation here where what we say about this motion will be of little consequence in the end because a few people or perhaps just one person on the other side has already decided what will happen to the motion. It has already been decided. As we continue with this debate for the rest of the day, maybe through the night, who knows, the decision has already been made. In the end when the vote comes on Monday or if it is deferred until Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, eventually the will of that one person or few people who are running everything will be seen to be the will of the House.

There is a growing awareness among the public that the deliberations here have very little relevance to the overall scheme of things. The taxpayers, the people who pay our salaries, are getting very very interested in what is happening here. They are going to be applying pressure to change the system so that we really and truly begin to reflect the will of the people here.

The evidence is out there. Parliamentary democracies around the world are finding ways to adapt to the information age. The 30 years of experience under the old system that the Prime Minister has are not going to be worth anything in the next few years of dramatic change that we are facing.

In the country I came from, New Zealand, the Citizens Initiated Referenda Act was passed in 1993. We were always told that initiative and referendum was incompatible with a parliamentary style of democracy. It was not. It all came down to political will.

We are masters of ourselves in this place. We can do what we wish. If we had the political will to support the motion of the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, if we had the political will to be independent and if those members opposite particularly had the political will to be independent on this motion, the most important motion to come before the 35th Parliament, we would see a totally different outcome to the one we all know will be the result on Monday.

In New Zealand where initiative and referendum legislation was introduced, the people now have the power to direct the operations of Parliament. Several initiative petitions have been successful in getting the number of signatures necessary to force a referendum.

Instead of having to have a referendum at perhaps great cost to taxpayers, in each case where that happened the Government of New Zealand moved to enact legislation consistent with the will of the people. What a powerful tool. It did not even have to go to a referendum. The very fact that the people had the power to gather the signatures to force a referendum was enough to make the government enact the people's will. We badly need that here. Boy do we need that in this place.

For the moment the Prime Minister still has power over his MPs forcing them to toe the party line in defiance of the wishes of the voters of Canada. Lots of them will get letters after they vote on Monday or Tuesday. People will be watching what they do. People will know that they took out every word before the word “that” and every word after the word “that”. They will know. They will read it in the newspapers. They will have heard it on television. They have seen it in this debate. They can read it in *Hansard*. They will know and they will send letters and faxes and will make phone calls. The message will get through.

• (1120)

Times are changing. In the next election true democratic representation is going to be a bigger issue than any one of us realizes at this time. It will be the issue of the 1990s. The information age will change this House in ways members cannot even imagine today. For those members who have been here for 20 or 30 years they are going to be shocked at the changes that will take place in five, six or seven years. They will be embarrassed.

Little by little the demand for real democracy is gaining ground. Hopefully soon all members of the House will be free to build a Canada consistent with the wishes of the people who pay the bills through taxes.

No wonder MPs are held in such low regard by the taxpayers. They see very little being done in this House that reflects their wishes. No wonder they consider us to be porkers slurping at the trough. It is a well deserved label.

In the next election the political elites are going to suffer damage they cannot even comprehend at this time. In the future when a motion like the one of the member from Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt comes before this House there will be an opportunity to see the truth, to see the opposite side of the House stand one by one and truly represent their constituents. They will truly represent the feelings of those constituents instead of worrying that the government whip will look at the papers and tell them that they cannot say this but they can say that. What sort of democracy is

that? It is changing and I condemn the government for its failure to keep its red book promise to make government more open, to permit MPs to be accountable to their constituents and to start having some free votes in this House.

It is ridiculous to watch what has happened over the last couple of days. In the votes associated with this motion, 100 per cent of them stand up and vote the same way. It is ridiculous. Anyone with a brain in their head can see it is engineered. That is not a reflection of the will of the voters. It is about time some of them had the gumption to stand up and do what should be done.

I urge members of this House, on such an important motion, to stand and represent their constituents when the House votes on the motion.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding we have a very proud heritage of Canadian military and reserves. I have received many communiqués from my constituents on this matter. I felt it was important that I rise in the House to comment on behalf of the people of Mississauga South.

For the information of my constituents and for others, this issue has to do with a motion moved by the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt which stated:

Whereas the Member for Charlesbourg, acting as the defence critic for the Bloc Québécois and supported by the then Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, released a communiqué on the letterhead of the Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition on October 26, 1995, before the referendum in Quebec inviting all francophone members of the Canadian Armed Forces to join the Quebec military in the event of a "yes" vote supporting separation from Canada;

That, in the opinion of this House, this action by the Honourable Member for Charlesbourg, and the then Leader of the Official Opposition should be viewed as seditious and offensive to this House and constitutes a contempt of Parliament; and consequently, the House refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination.

• (1125)

Subsequently a motion to amend was proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. The motion to amend basically said that the motion should be changed so that the matter of the communiqué of the member for Charlesbourg released on October 26, 1995 with reference to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Ostensibly the original motion and the amendment proposed by the government require and request the same thing. They request that a particular matter relating to the event of issuing a communiqué relating to the Canadian military and all of its ramifications be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The difference between the Reform motion and the motion

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proposed by the government is very simple and reflects a principle of law which is so very basic that no one could misunderstand: the principle of innocence until proven guilty.

Everyone in this place, everyone who is familiar with the issue has an opinion. However, the Reform motion with regard to this matter assumes guilt until proven innocent. The government motion assumes innocence until proven guilty. That is why this matter should be referred to the committee.

This same issue was raised by the member for Rimouski—Témiscouata yesterday when again, she accused the government of being complicitous with the Reform Party in the matter. In fact, that is not the case. It is simply for the principle of law of innocent until proven guilty. That is the only difference between the motions. Both motions require and request that the matter go to the standing committee where it can be dealt with properly.

The member for Vancouver Quadra is a very eminent scholar on these matters and has advised many governments, international as well as in Canada and the provinces. Yesterday he lamented about the ramblings that were going on about details in which there were allegations, speculation and other accusations, none of which in debate require to be proved. He lamented that this was not the place to analyse nor to do the job a committee or other jurisdictional body could do. It was like a kangaroo court, which was the term that was used. Indeed the member for Vancouver Quadra indicated that we did not have focus in the debate, we did not have focus in the dialogue, we did not have the resources to do it here. It was a stage.

The best thing to do, and I believe all members agree, is to have this matter go forward to the committee for debate. In that way the facts will be brought forward and the right things and the right recommendations based on facts rather than on rhetoric will come back to this House.

The Bloc member for Mercier also spoke on this yesterday. One point which caught my attention had to do with the timing of the communiqué. The insinuation from the member as I understood it was that it was not a problem that the communiqué went out.

• (1130)

As everyone knows, the communiqué was issued on October 26. It was a very sensitive time in the days leading up to the October 30 referendum. It was strategically positioned. It stated that almost immediately, if the yes vote won, that the francophone members of the Canadian military would be invited to join a separate Quebec. That is contradictory to even the question which was posed during the referendum.

Basically the question stated that Quebec would, after an offer was made to the Government of Canada, seek an independent or

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sovereign state. The offer had not been made and has still to be addressed and presented to the Canadian government.

There have been allegations in the House that the communiqué had been voted on and agreed to by the entire caucus of the Bloc Québécois. I do not know if those are the facts, but that will come out when the committee deals with it.

The issue is that the member for Mercier did not acknowledge that there was a critical period between October 26 and the 30 which would have had an influence. As far as I am concerned, it represents an arrogance on behalf of the Bloc with regard to that referendum.

The member for North Vancouver went on and on for some time. I wondered why he was so upset. I believe I do understand his frustration with democracy. I do understand his frustration with being a backbencher. However, I do not understand or accept for a moment that what happens in this place is not influenced by all members of Parliament.

The member for North Vancouver said: "The Liberals will get their way. They have gutted the motion". As I indicated, the motion raised by the Reform Party basically stated: "This member is guilty". We have to determine whether he is innocent. The Liberal motion states: "This is a matter of allegation. This is a matter of facts and figures that must be presented. We will decide with all of the resources and facts and not base the decision on the rhetoric of members who are just grandstanding in order to cover up some of the facts that may come up".

Mr. Grubel: Is it deliberate?

Mr. Hart: No one will ever be charged.

Mr. Szabo: It was interesting to read today's press on how the Reform Party has been lamenting everything that has happened lately. It is slowly starting to fall apart for them. They have had members crying in caucus. They do not know what to do to correct the record.

However, the issue that the member for North Vancouver raised was with regard to the automatic nature of decisions made here. I would refute that totally. I can give specific examples. The member knows that the House raised Bill C-7 on controlled drugs and substances. That bill was in the purview of the House for almost 18 months. Seventy substantive amendments were received in committee which changed the intent of the bill.

Another example would be with regard to private members' business. Reform members know that 11 private members' bills had passed second reading at the time of prorogation. They voted against the motion, but the government voted to allow private members' bills which had passed second reading to be reinstated

and put back in the same place in the legislative process. Even my Bill C-204 which proposes health warning labels on alcoholic beverages is reinstated. It is an important bill to me and many members of the House. I was the one who had the opportunity to bring it forward, not the government. I know many members have had the same opportunity. Eleven bills are alive today because private members were given an opportunity to bring them forward.

• (1135)

Although the member for North Vancouver has a problem and is frustrated with democracy, he should consider carefully that in this place it is not the government which is taking action at the whim of a handful of people. The people of Canada responded to a program outlined by each political party in the last election. Those parties made undertakings to the people to do certain things and were elected in majority numbers to this place to carry out that job.

Reform Party members are telling us that we are wrong for doing what we promised to do. I refute that totally. The Reform Party unfortunately is frustrated with democracy. I believe the right thing to do is make sure that democracy is protected in this place and that the principles of justice, particularly the principle of innocent until proved guilty be protected in this place.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are living extremely serious times. I believe this week is probably the most important so far in Canadian parliamentary history. Not so much because of what a Bloc member said in a communiqué, or what was said about the Canadian armed forces outside the Commons, but because of the comments and speeches made here in this House.

We should not kid ourselves, what is at stake in the motion moved by the Reform Party, and amended by the government, is freedom of speech, the right for a duly elected member to speak, in short, democracy.

As far as I know, this is the first time a parliamentary committee is going to review a statement made by a member outside the House. I know that, in the past, parliamentary committees were called to study certain members' behaviour, or certain statements made by members in this House, within this chamber. But what we are dealing with here is a communiqué issued by the member for Charlesbourg, outside the House. And do not tell me that the communiqué was on the Leader of the Opposition's letterhead; this is common practice; the government does it all the time; it announces all kinds of programs on its letterhead, using taxpayers' money. It plays politics with taxpayers' money. It is part and parcel of a member's job to make his views known.

In this case, because we are dealing with a Quebecer who was explaining a few things in connection with the debate on Quebec sovereignty, it is a different matter, and members find it appalling.

● (1140)

I think Parliament has crossed a very dangerous line, infringing some acknowledged rights. Through the Reform and government speeches, Parliament is politicizing the Criminal Code, to serve some partisan and undemocratic purposes.

Maybe some members feel the description of the word “sedition” as found in sections 59 and 62 of the Criminal Code is not precise and clear enough, that the Code does not cover all elements, but I doubt it, I really think that the Criminal Code answers all questions that people might have in relation to actions from outsiders wanting to incite a member of the armed forces to rebel against authorities.

I think the Criminal Code is clear, but if the Reform members or the Liberals do not agree, it is not with a motion like this one that the government or the Reform Party should say it; they should introduce a private member’s bill or a government order to add to the definitions of the Code and cover some elements not now included in the Criminal Code.

They should not be impugning motives or making a case against someone because of his political opinions, as the Liberals and the Reform members are doing to a duly elected member.

I had been given the following warning: “In politics, you will hear and see all sorts of things”. But I never would have thought that they would stoop so low as to interpret the Criminal Code for purely partisan and political purposes. The Criminal Code is an extremely important piece of legislation in this country, and I think they are now using it for political purposes.

Why? Why has this communiqué, published on October 26, 1995, been raised as a question of privilege in this House, in March 1996? I will not surprise anyone by saying there will be some byelections soon and that the Reform Party, unable to rely on its performance in the House or elsewhere, reasoned that, to score points, it would have to play politics at the expense of Quebecers, that it would work for the byelection in Ontario, that in Quebec their chances are nil, but in Ontario and Newfoundland, there will be byelections and the tactic would work. So they decided to play politics at the expense of Quebecers.

Reform is playing politics at the expense of the hon. member for Charlesbourg, whom they picked out randomly, since all Bloc members made similar statements, released similar communiqués. They used the hon. member for Charlesbourg to put Bloc members and the whole sovereignist movement on trial. That is quite serious.

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I know that Reform members realized they were missing the boat, because of their slightly different approach to the question of privilege they had raised at the very beginning and because of their subsequent comments. They are no longer making accusations. They have stopped making unwarranted accusations.

On March 12, 1996, the Reform member for Nanaimo—Cowichan said this, and I quote: “—my comments call attention to the fact that in my time of 35 plus years in the military—so this is someone who knows the rules—the most serious offences were sedition or mutiny from within the ranks of the military. For it to come from an outside authority such as a parliamentarian makes it an even more serious offence”.

Although they are now trying to wriggle out of this, to say that was not what they meant, it is clear that they are accusing Bloc members, a specific Bloc member, the whole sovereignist movement, of sedition. This is extremely serious.

Why are they accusing him, accusing us sovereignists, of this?

● (1145)

I will now quote the relevant passage of the communiqué, and you can draw your own conclusions. This communiqué is similar to those released by all members’ offices, an unexceptional, even harmless communiqué drafted for information purposes, because people wanted to know what would occur in this or that area—in this case, the Canadian Forces.

“The day after a yes win”, he says—

Not today, not right now, no matter what happens—

“The day after a yes win”, he says, “Quebec should immediately create a Department of Defence, the embryo of a major state, and offer all Quebecers serving in the Canadian Forces the chance to integrate into the Quebec Forces while keeping their rank, seniority and retirement funds as a means to ensure a better transition”.

Is this akin to fomenting sedition among soldiers, to urging them to revolt against authority? No. Finally, since we are talking about loyalty, is this what is bothering Reform and Liberal members today? The communiqué ends in this way:

—All of this expertise will not disappear with Quebec’s accession to sovereignty and, personally, I think that soldiers of Quebec origin will respect the people’s decision and will transfer their loyalty to the new country whose security they will ensure.

Does this amount to sedition? Is this urging members of the military to revolt? No. Sovereignists, Quebec men and women are simply telling soldiers: “The day after a yes vote, we will welcome you with open arms. If you want to come and work for the country of Quebec, if you want to ensure the security of Quebecers, we are ready to welcome you, to enlist you in a sovereign Quebec”.

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Those soldiers wishing to remain in Canada have the choice of staying in the Canadian Forces. We are not exerting undue pressure on them. What is the logic behind this? Why is it that, all of a sudden, it sounds like this communiqué says such terrible things when in fact, as everyone knows already, this is what we have been discussing in Quebec for years now?

Books, programs, all sorts of things have been written in Quebec about sovereignty, about our vision, about what we planned to accomplish in a sovereign Quebec, including about Canada's commitments to foreign countries. We were saying before the referendum campaign, we said during the referendum campaign and we continue to say and explain today—government intimidation has no hold on us—what we, Quebecers, intend to do for the military as for all other citizens.

During the referendum campaign and even before, Bloc members handed out various information packages to almost every household in their ridings. They sent out the Parti Québécois agenda, as well as the Bloc Québécois agenda outlined in our working paper on ideas for winning, released in April 1995. As for the PQ agenda, it dates back to 1993. It was stated in very clear terms that Quebec would have an army. Quebec, as a responsible country, would honour commitments made to international organizations such as NATO. None of this is new but, all of a sudden, the Reformers woke up and raised the issue because, apparently, it pays to play politics at the expense of Quebecers.

Reformers are telling themselves: "We have a Prime Minister who has scored political points at the expense of Quebecers all his life, and he was elected in 1993. Why not do the same? We will try to score political points at the expense of Quebecers and see if we do well out of it". I can assure you that no one will, neither the Reformers, nor the Liberals, let alone democracy.

• (1150)

The reason it will not pay off is because, contrary to the situation that existed in the good old days, Quebec is represented in this House. The people of Quebec democratically elected representatives to look after their interests. And we will stand up for ourselves. There is no way that we will leave Reform and government members a clear field to make all kinds of false representations. No way. We will set the record straight, as we did throughout the referendum campaign, and we will keep at it.

I think that I just hit a nerve. The fact that, in October 1993, the people of Quebec entrusted a group of members from Quebec with the job of looking after their interests is significant, in my opinion. I take this opportunity to thank the people of my riding of Berthier—Montcalm for the mandate they have given me.

We can see clearly today how important it is to have representatives capable of standing up for Quebec in this House because

these people would have us believe all sorts of things. The time has come to stand up and say: "This is wrong. That is not how democracy works. This is not the kind of democracy that our forefathers have built over the years". The time has come to show the right way.

Finally, regarding the motion put forward by the Reform Party, which was longer than the government's amendment, much was said and the hon. member for Charlesbourg was clearly accused of having made statements viewed as seditious and offensive by the Reformers. At least, they had the merit of making themselves clear. Reform members must at least be credited for saying what they think. I cannot say as much about the Liberals, unfortunately. This motion has been amended by the Liberal Party; I feel this amendment is hypocritical. They took the original motion, and removed whatever did not suit them. There is no mention of anything being seditious or offensive; the communiqué is simply referred to a House committee for consideration. What should be studied other than the communiqué itself, other than the member's statement?

In my opinion, the proposed amendment is obscure, it hides something, because the hon. members are not saying the truth. They could have acted openly and publicly by saying: "We think what the member for Charlesbourg and his Bloc colleagues have done is unacceptable, and we want the issue to be examined by a House committee." Would that have been politically wise? I doubt it.

I doubt that voters, particularly in Quebec, would go for such a statement. Liberal members, being really able to express their opinion on an issue raised by Reform members, have simply decided to hide this opinion behind a small amendment.

At this point, several questions come to mind. Why should we refer the communiqué to the House committee? While we are at it, why not ask the committee to examine the Bloc's program as well? Why not start referring to that House committee all Bloc members' past and future communiqués? Why not have all that examined as well? Why not—since things are going so well—ask the House to censor the statements that we are about to make here? Why not strike a parliamentary committee on censorship? This would provide us with a committee that, given its great wisdom, would decide what could or could not be said, what Quebec members could do or not do.

• (1155)

That is the objective of this whole show put on by the Reformers and the Liberals. They are true Siamese twins as regards this issue: two bodies but only one head. But I will not tell you about the level of intelligence in that head.

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I sincerely think that it is dangerous to refer to a communiqué released by a member of Parliament to have that member judged by his peers.

We are talking about using a communiqué released by a politician expressing his political ideas to have that person judged by a parliamentary committee. What will be the outcome of that exercise, given that the individuals who will review the issue are for the most part Liberal and Reform members?

We already know the outcome: the accusers will be the judges, at least most of them. In what country do we live? Where are we headed? One wonders.

Those who condemn the member for Charlesbourg really want to put on trial the whole sovereigntist movement—and it is indeed the case, given some of the comments made in this House. Two justices of the peace, one in Quebec and one in Ontario, have ruled that the statement contained in the communiqué is nothing more than a job offer. In spite of that, parliamentarians in this House decided to go against these decisions and engage in this political procedure. And that is dangerous.

I have a confession to make: I too made the same statement as the hon. member for Charlesbourg in my own riding. All the other Bloc Quebecois members did, whether it was to federal public servants, Canada Post employees, workers at the Canada Employment Centre, or to RCMP officers at the Joliette detachment. I told them: “It will be nice; the day after a yes vote, you will be working in a sovereign Quebec”. There is nothing wrong with such statements. People were wondering: “What will happen to our jobs? What will happen to us the day after a yes vote?”

It is perfectly normal to provide details, as the federalists did when they told our seniors: “If you vote yes, you will lose your pensions”. Consequently, we had to use similar arguments and say: “Come on, the federalists are trying to give you a good scare about your pensions. The day after a yes vote, your cheque will come from Quebec instead of Ottawa. It is with our taxes that they pay you that pension”.

It is the same with members of the military; they had to be reassured because they were wondering. When I am told that, with a communiqué, we exerted influence on members of the military or incited them to disloyalty, I think this shows a lack of confidence in the people serving in the Forces. I even feel it is an insult to them because a closer look at the referendum results would show that the vote of Quebecers in the Canadian Forces, whether male or female, francophone or anglophone, followed about the same pattern as that shown by the national results in Quebec.

Therefore, about 50 per cent of Canadian Forces members voted in favour of sovereignty and about as many voted against.

• (1200)

If it is a crime to advise people about what would happen after a yes win on sovereignty, then I plead guilty. If it is a crime to reassure people faced with the nonsense put forward by the federalists, I am guilty of that too. If it is a crime to stand for the interests of my constituents, for the interests of Quebec and for sovereignty, I am guilty of that too.

If inviting people in general—and I will close with that—to respect a democratic decision and, after a yes win, to transfer their loyalty and their love to the new country, the country that would be called Quebec, is a crime, then I plead guilty. I am guilty of being a democrat.

[English]

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Madam Speaker, like most of the members who have participated in this debate, I feel this is a very serious matter. That issue has not escaped anyone in the House. We all feel that way.

What we have been debating over the last few days is also a very emotional issue. It is an emotional issue to me. It is an emotional issue to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces; indeed it is an emotional issue to every single Canadian.

I applaud the Speaker for the leadership he has given us by immediately recognizing the seriousness of this matter.

This debate is much more than about the hon. member for Charlesbourg. It is much more than a debate about the former leader of the official opposition. It is much more than a debate about the separatist caucus in the House. This debate is about Canada.

I am a federalist. I love this country. It is not just one part of this thing we call Canada that makes us Canada; it is the sum of the parts. It is all the provinces. It is all the people. It is every citizen. It is every man, woman and child from coast to coast to coast that makes this country Canada. If I might use the term, Canada is truly a distinct society.

Five times in my life I have had the privilege of swearing my oath of allegiance to the sovereign of Canada. The first time I was 17 years old. It was in Calgary, Alberta when I was joining the Canadian Armed Forces. I was going through some things last night, thinking about the debate we are having in this, the highest court of the land. I pulled out some old papers to see if I could find my oath of allegiance from when I joined the Canadian Armed Forces. It states:

I, James A. Hart, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to the law, so help me God.

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It was signed on April 12, 1973 by me and the attesting officer at the Canadian Armed Forces recruiting centre in Calgary, Alberta.

That was an important time in my life. Every member of the Canadian Armed Forces, regardless of whether they are anglophone or francophone, swears the same allegiance today. That is significant. It says they will abide by the laws of Canada.

• (1205)

During the time in the navy I served on three Canadian destroyers on the west coast of Canada, I worked with francophone people. I worked shoulder to shoulder with people from Quebec. Every one of those young people who worked on those ships with me had a very important job to do for Canadian sovereignty. They did not speak of themselves as being francophone or from Quebec or from Alberta. They talked about being proud Canadians.

An hon. member: All in English.

Mr. Hart: The hon. member is wrong in his assertion. Those people spoke French on board ships and they worked alongside anglophones as a unit, a team for Canada.

I have asked myself many times over the last couple of days and months since the referendum in Quebec what those young Canadians would say about this communiqué. I know those young Canadians would find this communiqué offensive to them.

Over the last five months I have heard from Canadians from coast to coast telling me Canadians found this communiqué offensive. It crossed the line. It brought those men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces into a debate of secession of a province. They should not be brought into this. They have sworn allegiance to the whole of Canada, not to one part.

Over the last couple of days some questions have been raised in the House about my motion. The motion represents the views of Canadians who have consulted with me for some five months now on the subject.

I am not a lawyer. I stand here and say I am an ordinary Canadian. I do not practice law and I never have practised law. I am an ordinary Canadian. With the resources at my disposal I put together the feelings Canadians expressed to me through letters, telephone calls, faxes. I put those feelings into a motion I presented in the House which the Speaker found to be in order and also to be a *prima facie* case.

If there is anything wrong with my motion, it is not in the drafting or in the spirit of the motion. It is in the way it is being interpreted by some people in the House who would have been against any motion that draws the line in the sand for Canadians which says clearly: "If you cross this line, it is wrong". That is what I was trying to accomplish. I believe I did in the intent of the motion.

The Liberals are trying to ignore the original charge of seditious and offensive behaviour. Let us talk about that for a moment. There have been accusations in the House that I have prejudged, convicted the hon. member for Charlesbourg. There is nothing further from the truth. In my remarks when I introduced the motion I said this was to be an opportunity for the member to have his day in court, for due process to take place.

If we go outside these hallowed halls and talk to the police, the first thing that must happen when a crime is committed and there is a suspect is that a charge must be laid. That is what I did in the House. I laid a charge.

• (1210)

How can we be certain the Liberals will investigate the specific spirit of what my motion intends to do? We cannot. Once again the Liberals are worried about the politics of this thing. They are so afraid of offending someone from Quebec that they are willing to abandon the possible criminal aspects of this matter and put politics first. They are seeking to once again pursue the mandate of the status quo. They are concerned only with what is politically correct.

As Canadians how do we make our laws? How do we choose what is right and wrong in society? The answer is clear. The answer lies in what is morally acceptable to Canadians. That is what it is all about. It is about what is morally acceptable to Canadians, whether it be in the Criminal Code, whether it is a murder charge or stealing. That is where we draw the line in the sand. That is when we say if you step over this line you will be charged. That is what we are doing here. If that is not what the House is for, this place where we have come to represent our constituents, what are we doing here?

My motion's intent is clear. It is aimed at the House to decide if what the hon. member for Charlesbourg did was over that line. That is what I was asking. The charge had to be laid because there is no way to proceed unless a charge is laid, as there is no way to proceed in a case outside these walls if a policeman comes across a crime and a suspect. Otherwise he would have no vehicle to make his charge.

That is what I have done. I have used the vehicles and the resources available to a member of Parliament to bring this matter forward and debate it in the place it should be debated, the most open forum in Canada represented by every corner of the country, the Parliament of Canada, the highest court in the land. We should all be concerned with the integrity of the House. We should be trying to decide if what has been done is appropriate.

Yesterday I offered to co-operate with all sides of the House to get to the bottom of this situation. I discovered the Liberals had the intent to gut my motion, to rip it apart, to pull the life out of it. At the hands of the Liberal whip my motion has been torn to shreds,

which is a shame for the House, a shame for the men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces and a shame for all Canadians.

Canadians are not getting what they wanted here. Canadians wanted to draw that line to ensure that when there is a threat of secession again members of the Canadian Armed Forces do not get drawn into that debate.

It is not the same as the post office, it is not the same as a crown corporation. Those people are not the same as that. Why? Because of the oath of allegiance they have sworn to their country and to lay down their lives if they have to for their country.

I will shift to what the Liberal government has done with this matter. As a private member of Parliament on the opposition in the third party I took it upon myself to do something that should have been done right over there by the Liberal Government of Canada, which ignored the issue and did nothing. It says it did something.

• (1215)

The Minister of National Defence in many newspaper articles and many media interviews called this act outrageous, that Canadians should be outraged at this communiqué. He said it was inappropriate. He went so far as to say the hon. member for Charlesbourg should be removed as the official opposition defence critic. He also said that he would consult with the Minister of Justice. He said that he would consult with the judge advocate general of the Canadian Armed Forces. He did that and we heard no more.

What did we hear from the Minister of National Defence? We heard nothing. We heard not a word. Now the government says that the judge advocate general has issued a report. Canadians are waiting to hear what this report has to say and we are told: "We are not going to tell you. We are simply not going to tell you what is in the report".

The judge advocate general wears two hats in this country. First and foremost his job is to administer the military justice system in Canada to make sure it operates properly. The second hat he wears is as legal adviser to the executive management team at the Department of National Defence and he is the legal adviser to the Minister of National Defence.

That is why the judge advocate general cannot release the report he was asked to write. He is the lawyer for the Minister of National Defence. He would be betraying a confidence if he did. The Canadian people are out of luck because of this situation with the judge advocate general.

It is a sad situation. Canadians would naturally expect that if the judge advocate general felt there was no basis for a charge in this regard, then what is the problem with releasing the report? One would think there would be no problem at all and it would be

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natural to release the report saying that nothing has been found. I guess that will not be done unless considerable pressure is put on.

I will go back for a moment to the issue of laying a charge. If for instance a police officer came upon a murder scene and he had a suspect, would he charge the suspect with murder or would he charge him with the misuse of a blunt instrument or the improper use of a pillow or a rock, or probably under this administration poor storage of a handgun? I would say that the charge would have to be murder. There may be other charges but the main charge would not be ignored. Only in this place is that done.

I ask that each member of the House consider if the action of the member for Charlesbourg was offensive to himself or herself. People watching at home, Canadians, ask yourselves the same question. Then each member of this House should do the right thing and vote against the amendment the government has put forward and endorse my motion as originally placed before the House.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday I stood in this House and chastised the Leader of the Opposition for what he said in his response to the issue before the House. His approach was unreasonable. What he said was factually incorrect and I indicated that. Today I am unfortunately forced to do the same thing, except that what the member just did if anything is worse than what we heard yesterday.

• (1220)

The member has the gall to stand before us today and tell us that his motion is correct even though he knows there are factual inaccuracies in it. For instance, he states in the motion: "inviting all francophone members of the Canadian Armed Forces" and so on. I have read the press release and those words are not even in it and the member has privately indicated he knows those words are not in it. Yet today he is urging the House to adopt a motion which he knows is wrong. He is just as bad as the other guys, if not worse, because he knows what he is doing is wrong.

Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): What was in the press release?

Mr. Boudria: The press release has been read in the House.

Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Read it.

Mr. Boudria: Hon. members know I do not like the press release. It should never have been done. The press release should never have been released by the hon. member. We know that. The Speaker has already ruled that there is a prima facie case of privilege and the issue could be sent to the parliamentary committee with the appropriate motion, but what happened? Instead of moving the appropriate motion, the member chose to move the diatribe we have before us. Why did he move that diatribe instead of the usual motion?

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Mr. Hart: Because the government would not act.

Mr. Boudria: Countless other issues have been sent to the committee on privilege. Never have I seen one with a motion like this. Only Reformers could take an issue that should otherwise work and manage to spoil it themselves.

In the speeches of the hon. member and his leader yesterday, they indicated that they were prepared to sacrifice justice on the altar of Reform Party propaganda. I do not like what the Bloc Quebecois did in the press release but what the Reform Party is doing now is just as bad, if not worse.

Mr. Hart: Where were you? You did nothing.

Mr. Boudria: The hon. member can heckle, as we would say in Glengarry, until the cows come home, but that will not change the facts. He began his speech earlier today claiming that he was an ordinary Canadian representing his constituents in this House. Well so am I.

Mr. Strahl: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not believe there is a quorum. I would ask you to check if there is a quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): There is a quorum in the House.

Mr. Boudria: I was just going to do a quick check procedurally of what would have happened to the hon. member's motion had we lost quorum.

An hon. member: Where is he now? He is gone.

Mr. Boudria: It could very well have been that the issue would have disappeared. I notice that the hon. member does not seem to be in a position at this point to move a motion for quorum. In any case, while he is being lambasted by his whip, I will continue my remarks.

Let us get back to the motion before the House. What is before us is that a member of Parliament issued a certain press release. Some of the words in it are not to my liking and certainly not to the liking of the member who proposed that it was a prima facie case of privilege. Furthermore, there is a ruling by Mr. Speaker that there was a prima facie case of privilege. All of those things have been established.

What is before us now is not to determine whether or not a prima facie case of privilege exists, that has been done. Mr. Speaker invited the hon. member to propose the usual motion to refer the matter to committee. Perhaps I should not use the word invited. He indicated that he was prepared to receive the usual motion. Technically I believe that is the appropriate term. The appropriate motion was never drafted. Instead a motion which has factual inaccuracies which the hon. member himself has recognized is before us.

• (1225)

That motion also has in the recital, not in the preamble, a determination of guilt and that is wrong. Yesterday an amendment was proposed by my colleague to refer the issue to the committee in the usual manner, removing from the motion the declaration of guilt simply because it is inappropriate. Even if it were appropriate which it is not, this Chamber certainly is not a substitute for a court of law to handle criminal cases. That is an issue to be dealt with by a court of law.

I see the hon. member is now in a position to call for quorum, if I can put it without referring to the presence or absence of hon. members, which I cannot refer to but if I could I would.

The hon. member across the way is now indicating his procedural expertise by comparing the private members' ballot item under my name in reference to the hon. member for Lethbridge to this issue. I will explain that to him briefly so that he can understand.

Mr. O'Brien: Go slowly, Don.

Mr. Boudria: I will try to do that too.

The issue in question, were it brought forward as a motion, which it is not under privilege and which I certainly could do and I still may, would then of course be the subject of debate in the House. The motion to refer the issue to the parliamentary committee happens later once the Speaker indicates he is prepared to receive the usual motion. The usual motion is a different thing. The hon. member can listen very attentively and we will explain all of this to him later.

Let us get back to the issue before the House today. The issue is whether or not it is appropriate to make in the motion the affirmation with regard to guilt as stated by the honourable member.

Mr. Strahl: You do not want to deal with the separatists but you want to deal with the hon. member for Lethbridge for doing his job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Could we have a little order in this House please.

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, I guess this is all part of the new way of doing politics.

As I was indicating before I was so rudely interrupted by the member from across the way, the issue before the House is whether or not a motion as presently worded is acceptable. It is not. I have indicated the factual inaccuracies in the preamble and in terms of the recital there is also this affirmation of guilt on the part of someone. Now that is wrong procedurally. Procedurally it is not out of order, but it is still wrong to have it worded that way.

Also, there is a reference to a criminal charge. This House will not, should not and I would argue will never handle issues involving criminal offences. That is for a court of proper competence to decide. My opinion in this case were there such a charge, a

person would have to lay an information before a court of law, probably under provincial law in the province where the release in question was released, or if the press release was circulated in more than one province, in another province as well. Who knows. In any case, that is not before us today.

What is before us today is not whether this House should transform itself into a criminal court. What we are dealing with is whether or not we should refer the matter in question to the parliamentary committee on procedure, privilege and election.

• (1230)

Madam Speaker will recall that on the first day we discussed the question of privilege I indicated that the task of the committee, on which I happen to have the honour to sit, is to deal with issues involving procedure and House affairs but also to deal with such things as privilege. It is used for that purpose occasionally but not very often.

The last case I remember was in approximately 1992 when an issue was brought before that committee. To refresh the memory of the Speaker, it was a case where an individual had testified before a parliamentary committee and had used in her presentation a video which had been produced by the CBC.

The CBC producer saw fit to phone the person and threaten her with a lawsuit because she had used the material without permission, as if that were necessary when appearing before a parliamentary committee. The Speaker ruled that it was a case of *prima facie* privilege and it was brought before the committee. That is the most recent case that I can remember.

Although that case is quite different, this case would be brought before the parliamentary committee and things would be heard. What would the committee hear? It would hear a variety of things.

I understand that the French and the English texts of the release are not even the same. There are differences in the way in which some words are expressed. As someone who knows something about both languages, I have read them both and I think they are different. The release is stronger in one language than in the other. I happen to think it is stronger in the English text than in the French one.

The committee could deal with all of these things. It could hear witnesses, not as to whether or not a criminal offence has taken place, because that is not its job, but to determine whether or not the *prima facie* case of privilege referred to it is an offence to the House. That is the issue. I hate to put it so bluntly, but even Reformers can understand that. Let us send the issue to committee.

It says in the motion that this issue should be referred to the committee, yet we have been debating that for two days. There

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seems to be little interest in sending it to committee, even though that is what is sought.

We, and I am speaking for my colleague the parliamentary secretary and I, have proposed an amendment which would remove the offensive words and restore the traditional form of such a motion. Guess what the Reform Party did? It introduced a new amendment, again alleging a criminal offence in the motion, even though it now knows that the committee will not hear such issue.

How serious is this? Parliament is bigger than all of us. It was here long before I came, even though I have been in this building for a very long time. It will be here long after I go, long after the Reformers go and long after the Bloquistes go. What we owe to this place, to this institution and to this country is justice and not the kind of opportunism which we have been witnessing over the last two days.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, this debate is very sad for Canadians, and it is very sad for Quebecers because it casts a glaring light on the lack of understanding of a major event that, ultimately, is the source of this conflict.

That fact is that a different and distinct people held a referendum on October 30. The level of participation was 94 per cent, and the yes side lost by a very narrow margin.

• (1235)

This referendum was held on the sovereignty of that people, but with an economic and political partnership with Canada.

Quebecers are looking for a way out of the impasse, because it is impossible to settle the constitutional issue which has gone unresolved, despite its urgency, for more than 30 years. Almost 50 per cent of Quebecers—and probably more than that today—know that no solution will come through minireforms inside Canada. I think a majority of Canadians also think this country needs courageous leadership to face the real facts.

To shed a little light on the issue, let me tell the House that preparations by a sovereign Quebec to provide for its own defence, whatever form it may take, is included in the partnership proposal. It deals with Quebec's participation in NATO and NORAD as a full-fledged country. Debate on this issue has been going on for a long time.

When I was a program adviser for the Parti Québécois, I took part in seminars organized by academics and attended by federalist and even royalist professors from the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean, on the theme of sovereignty and defence. The issue has been discussed. We had to deal with it in a responsible way then,

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and we still have to do so now. That is why we have seminars and discussions, and that is why questions are being asked too.

During the referendum, Quebec soldiers and officers looked at what was happening and at survey results, and they wondered: "What will become of us?" And some had reasons to worry. Learned scholars wrote newspaper articles where they said that as a sovereign state Quebec would need this or that kind of armed forces, this or that kind of a defence system, to meet its international obligations.

The Parti Québécois, in its platform and in the information it released on sovereignty and the referendum itself, included details on this issue. The hon. member for Charlesbourg, critic for national defence, was asked what would happen to Quebecers the Canadian Armed Forces, what would happen to these Quebec soldiers and officers, would they still have a job, where, when and why.

It was the natural, normal and responsible thing to do for him to say what he thought would happen and what he knew would happen. It never was our intention, our goal or our will, at least in any discussion I took part in, to ask these Quebec soldiers to switch allegiance before the results of the referendum were known, before we had the support of the majority of the population in Quebec.

We were simply getting ready, and we acted in a very responsible way. We did it openly and publicly. We did not try to hide anything. We made it clear in all the documents that were made available. If this act seemed seditious, why was the issue not raised before?

• (1240)

It is totally incomprehensible and inconsistent, unless the goal here is not to reassure the population nor to tell the truth. It is totally inconsistent and illogical. It is absolutely dangerous, because it arouses strong feelings. It is absolutely dangerous, unless the goal is not to respect the people of Quebec and the democratic choices they make.

The lesson to be learned, the bottom line here is that, even though we were elected on a platform that was widely known, this House does not accept that the people of Quebec is preparing openly and publicly for its own sovereignty.

I deeply regret what I will not call Reform's motion but its call to intolerance, and a refusal to understand where things are now in Canada, as I have said before and will say again. And this may be more an expression of their indignation because they do not form the official opposition. But what kind of official opposition would they be? And what would they have to offer to Canadians? Understanding the situation in Quebec? Helping the country out of a situation that has significant social, economic and political implications—and a situation we want to get out of, for our part? No.

Maybe the sole purpose of this motion is to prepare for the next elections, which will surely be an excuse to go about badmouthing Quebecers and Quebec.

This does not surprise me on the part of the Reform Party. I am disappointed but not surprised. What surprised me though and disappointed me even more was to see the Liberal Party, which is in power and is responsible for Canada's future, also give in to the temptation to badmouth Quebec.

There is not even the shadow of a doubt that if the Liberal Party is voting today on this proposition, this means that, according to them, charges could be brought, since otherwise there would not be any investigation. Therefore, this means that the Liberal Party thinks that charges could be brought. They do not want charges to be pressed but by referring the matter to the committee, they are implying that some charges could be brought.

It would seem that the government party also wants to badmouth Quebec, and to deny what is going on.

• (1245)

I deeply regret that it did not close the matter. If there had been the slightest doubt right after the referendum, would this great party have waited four months before raising such an important question which monopolizes the proceedings of the House at the present time?

Would this great party then be unworthy of the public's trust? I believe that the Liberals, the party in power made a mistake. But when one has made a mistake, it is never too late to retract.

I wish to inform you that we are all guilty of the member for Charlebourg's felony, his potential felony, according to the party in power. If, whatever means are used, you want us out of here, others will be elected with stronger majorities, other felons, because our only felony consisted in preparing democratically to have our own country, while thinking, of course, that Canadians would be sad. We understand that, but would they also democratically accept that Quebec become the master of its own destiny? Would they accept to negotiate a partnership, and to discuss, as Canada now does with the United States, the organization of the continent's defence?

Yes, we need an army to organize our defence and take part in peace missions. We only acted in a responsible and normal manner in preparing Quebecers for that. If doing something responsible, normal and based on democracy, on the express condition of democracy, is a felony, if it is potentially seditious, then sovereignty itself is potentially seditious, democratic though it may be.

This debate should at least allow us to show very clearly that we are the representatives of the Quebecers, Quebecers who seek to be

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sovereign, who asked for arrangements but to no avail, who wish to maintain ties.

The people of Quebec will never forego its identity. And if the members opposite cannot accept the fact that, as sovereignists members, we respect Canada—because we do—we respect this country because we want a country of our own and we want it to be respected. But, if they cannot accept the fact that we form a people, then the least one can say is that a vague, difficult and confused period is awaiting Canada.

• (1250)

We understand that the October 30 vote was a shock. It was for us too. And bear in mind that if it had been up to us, we would not be here today. We would rather be busy negotiating with Canada, finally getting ready to give our serious attention to the economic, social, political and cultural framework, to stability and the future, to problems important to everyone.

I make an appeal. I know that I am speaking on behalf of all Quebecers. This Parliament must be able to accept the course of history. We are a people and we still seek our sovereignty. We will attain it; we will organize ourselves. We respect Canada, but we expect to be respected as a people. And any attempt to crush us, to stop us, to silence us, to broaden—as the Reform proposal does—just for us the meaning of sedition will take us well away from the primary responsibility of this Parliament, which has the weighty task of preparing the future, of understanding the situations, of understanding that this people will not disappear into thin air, of co-existing with them and of respecting them.

It is my deep hope that this debate, instead of further adding to the misunderstanding, the anger and the intolerance, will at least give us an opportunity to say: “There is no use wishing that we would disappear. You may get rid of us, but there will be others to take our place”.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in my remarks today I will make two basic points. I will look at the purpose of the motion before us and I will look at the implications of the motion in terms of the future.

The hon. member for Mercier said very clearly it is the intent of the Bloc Quebecois to do everything in its power to move toward separating Quebec from the rest of Canada. It wants to do it under what it calls the democratic process and open discussion. That sounds fine as it is.

However, we must look at the motion before us in that context, what we are doing specifically here today. We are leading as the Reform Party a debate on a question put clearly before the House by my hon. colleague, the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. In his remarks he said: “The question to be answered is whether the member is guilty of offending Parliament and in the opinion of the House is the hon. member for Charlesbourg guilty of sedition”.

• (1255)

We ask that question and place it before this assembly so that bridge can be crossed. We all know another referendum in Quebec is in the waiting. It is there being considered and planned. We are in the period of calm before the storm. When will the storm occur? Maybe in June, maybe in September or possibly in early 1997.

We also know that mixed in with that will most likely be a provincial election in Quebec. There will most likely be a federal election in Canada in the mix of that scenario.

I believe before we move into the storm of elections, of pronouncements, of adversaries and partisanship we have a period of calm when we can consider some questions that will be raised at that time. We are raising one very important basic point here, the question of whether a member of the House put himself in a situation which took away from the privilege of other members or was offensive in his actions. We in the Reform Party believe those actions were offensive.

The question of whether it is seditious should be considered by the committee on procedure and House affairs. If it is and the House rules and the law of the country do not deal with it appropriate, the committee of procedure and House affairs can make a recommendation on how to handle that specific situation in the future. Maybe related things will happen during a major discussion that will occur 6 to 12 months from now about the future of the boundaries of Canada.

There are other question which have already been raised. They were raised in discussions during and prior to October 23, 1995. The deputy premier, Bernard Landry, contacted foreign diplomats in a bid to win support for immediate recognition of Quebec's sovereignty in the case of a yes vote.

Premier Parizeau said the Quebec treasury and its pension fund would set aside billions of dollars in preparation to defend the currency of Quebec. The question is do they have a right to make those statements? Do they have a right to make those commitments within Canada? Are they acts of sedition? Other situations will occur in the same way with regard to boundaries, the use of currency, pensions and the debt of the country. There are many other situations that will be put on the table as we enter into this potential debate that lies ahead. We must consider those now.

What happened in the situation before us today? The hon. member for Charlesbourg, with the approval of the Bloc Quebecois caucus, directed a communiqué to the armed forces. It was not a knee-jerk reaction or something thought up in a few moments. The letter was well planned. It was part of the campaign and it was approved by a body recognized in Canada as the official opposition, a major part of this democratically elected Parliament of Canada. A major decision was made that they would send a communiqué to the armed forces urging them that if they wished to leave the Canadian army and defect to what would become a Quebec army, they could do so and they would be protected in doing that.

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What right did the member have to do that? We do not believe the member had the right. We believe the act was seemingly seditious. It was an act to break up Canada saying that our Canadian army could be eroded by what in a sense could be an enemy of our nation as a whole.

● (1300)

What if some other country tried to do the very same thing? What if some country offshore of the North American continent said to our army personnel that they could leave and support another side of the argument. In case we were in a conflict, how would we view that kind of a situation? That would be totally unacceptable.

It is important that we cross the bridge and that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and dealt with in haste. It should not be left on the table for a long period of time. I hope that early in this session, by the end of April or early May, we can deal with the matter in Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Then the matter should come back to the House with a recommendation to clearly deal with this specific instance. Also I think that we should look at the broader questions that are implied by this specific matter. We will have to cross other roads and bridges as well in June of this year or September or possibly early into 1997.

The committee to which we are referring this matter has a heavy and major responsibility in determining the future of this country and how we deal with some of these matters.

The Reform Party of Canada has placed a discussion paper before Canadians. We talk of 20 terms and conditions that must be met. Then we are asking Canadians to add others that they think should be added to it.

It is time to look at this question. A part of our country is going to leave. In this instance Quebec says it wants to leave Canada. If that happens, if a democratic vote takes place, what are the terms and conditions by which that separation should occur?

The hon. member for Mercier said that Reform Party members are slowing up the process and are doing this for our own political gain with the discussion and setting out the 20 terms and conditions.

Nothing could be further from the truth. That is absolutely not true. We believe that the matter in dispute must be dealt with, and hopefully settled by very democratic means. The terms and conditions by which those negotiations take place should be set out. It is incumbent on the Liberal government to do that. At the present

time little has been said about terms and conditions. That says this problem is going to go away.

The hon. member for Mercier in her comments a few moments ago said: "It will not go away. If the current Bloc Quebecois members disappear and are not elected again to this body, there will be a new group somewhere that will fight for the cause of the separation of Quebec". I am sure that is true. Some 30 per cent of the people in Quebec are very committed to separation no matter what the consequences are, economically, socially or politically. They want to push ahead to have their own boundaries and their protection for a culture that they feel will survive under those insulated conditions.

From my own perspective I am not sure that can happen in this new world of technology and communication, this new world of openness both economically and socially. That is one of the reasons I cannot agree with the concept of separation even beyond the great argument of keeping Canada together because of the great future it holds.

● (1305)

The other argument that has been placed before us with regard to the hon. member who signed the communiqué on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, now the premier of Quebec, Mr. Bouchard, is whether in the motion we placed before the House asking whether sedition has occurred is imposing on his right to freedom of speech. What are the limits to freedom of speech within Parliament or within a country? Have we the right to speak of breaking our country apart without penalty or consequence?

We elect people democratically. We argue issues. We agree on issues. I am sure this House would not agree if a vote were taken here for Quebec to leave. In that context, was the motivation of the hon. member proper? Could it be included in the definition of freedom of speech?

He has said to the armed forces: "If you want to leave, come with the Quebec army". Is that not eroding the integrity of our country? Is there no penalty for that kind of thing? That is the key question which has to be answered.

Every country must have rules to maintain its integrity. There are limits to what can be said and what actions can be taken. This was not only the spoken word of the hon. member; it was a request for action on the part of members of the armed forces to leave their employment to go to the Quebec army. It was a deliberate undermining of the integrity of our nation.

Can we accept that? I do not think so. If we want to have tolerance and understanding of one another with regard to culture, ethnic identity, religious attitudes, social beliefs and a variety of ideologies where we work together and let all prevail as forces within our society, that is fine. However, when it comes to the point

where a group of people or a single individual takes away from the integrity or to intentionally erode it, can we accept that? What would our country be if we allowed its most extreme enemies to do that?

Let us say, for example, that we were still in the cold war with Russia. Would we allow the Russians to come in and take over part of our army? Would we allow them to come over and take over part of our natural resources? Would we say: "Fine. Go ahead and do it. It is no problem?" What then would be the integrity of our country?

There must be some kind of rules to protect what we are doing. That is why we are referencing this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It can look at the issues and rule clearly on them. There must be rules for this kind of behaviour. If the current rules were violated by the hon. member, then the member, on behalf of his caucus, must pay the consequences. That is the responsibility that the hon. member for Charlesbourg will have to take. I believe it is incumbent upon him to accept it in those terms.

Where do we go from here? Parliament has the power to deal with the matter. It is clearly within the terms that are provided for us in Beauséjour. It is also provided in our House rules and orders.

We should look at all aspects of the issue, not just the narrow aspect of the communiqué itself and whether it was a good document or a bad document or whether the member should not have sent it out. We can examine this matter, not only in the narrow context of the communiqué itself. We can examine whether the hon. member's actions constituted sedition. We can look at whether the rules of Parliament and the laws of our country are adequate enough to deal with these kinds of situations. We can look at other acts by members of this assembly which are not only a contempt for Parliament but an act of sedition.

• (1310)

We can look at a broad range of those things in committee and come back with a comprehensive report that will do our country proud and maintain the integrity of this nation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are looking at a case submitted to the House through a motion of the Reform Party. We are entitled to ask what is going on in this House.

We are into our second day of debate on this issue and, meanwhile, important things are going on in Canada that should be dealt with, and the deficit continues to grow. In fact, during these

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two days, the deficit will have grown by \$280 million. I think that we in this House would have many other things to consider rather than discuss a document that I would characterize as a job offer to Quebecers who now serve in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The motion brought forward by the Reform Party talks about francophone members of the armed forces. However, it is clear in the document that it is addressed to Quebecers. Last Monday night, in Montreal, the premier of Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, met with representatives of the anglophone community and opened his arms to them. This document is in the same spirit. It is addressed to Quebecers, all Quebecers who are interested.

I will take the document and review it with you because there are important things in it that have to be looked at.

The document was translated in Canada's both official languages and members will remember that it was released on October 26 of last year, that is about four months ago. It has already been four months since the document was released, and thank God Canada is not governed by the Reformers because it took them four months to react on a document that, to me, is nothing more than a job offer.

I would like to look at certain parts of the document with you and make some comments. On page 2, it says:

Mr. Jacob believes that Quebec needs a defence force, especially to watch over and intervene on its territory—

This refers to the territory of Quebec which, on October 26, was a would-be country. For those who do not remember, the referendum was held on October 30. The member said in his document that we would have to develop certain policies. There is nothing in it that says that members of the armed forces should vote yes in the referendum. In his document, the member never incited Quebecers who serve in the armed forces to anything. The document was released in Quebec. Nowhere in it does the member ask members of the armed forces to vote yes in the referendum.

• (1315)

You know, we can imagine that people were talking about politics on the military bases around October 25 and 26, because soldiers do have the vote. They have the right to vote and they have the right to be informed about what is going on. There was a referendum going on. I think that the Reform Party does not know what a referendum is and did not know what the last one meant for the future.

Had the referendum been won, Quebec would be on its way to becoming a sovereign country. During the referendum campaign, we proposed a partnership with the rest of Canada and, of course, it was clearly stated that after one year of discussions with the rest of

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Canada, Quebec would have been entitled to declare itself a sovereign country.

What would have done Canada with its extra soldiers? I sit on the national defence committee and right now, we are studying ways to downsize. We are reducing the number of soldiers in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Quebec contributes about 24 per cent of the national defence budget. However, we do not get that share in defence spending, we receive a lot less. At that time, I think it was normal for the Bloc Quebecois' critic—the hon. member for Charlesbourg was and still is the Bloc's critic—to set out the facts and to inform Quebecers who are members of the Canadian Armed Forces of what would happen if, and only if, the yes side were to win. He did not say in his communiqué that the yes side was going to win, he did not ask them to vote yes, he only told them that should the yes side win, Quebec would create its own army and that it would only be normal for trained soldiers who wanted to to join the Quebec army.

If some soldiers want to stay in the Canadian forces after a yes win, they can do so. I can hardly believe that we are discussing this motion today. When interviewed on the subject, the Reform Party defence critic at the time, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, in British Columbia, said:

[*English*]

“But Reform MP Jack Frazer said: ‘Jacob’s press release has been misinterpreted. I don’t think this can be considered inciting mutiny’, said Frazer. ‘We have to accept that in the Canadian forces right now are some people who were in favour of separation. From a Canadian point of view they’d have to relinquish their commitment to us and swear allegiance to Quebec. Had there been a separation this would have happened’”.

[*Translation*]

The member who said that was in the air force for several years. He is a colleague for whom I have great respect. He said that on November 4, in other words after the referendum and after this statement, and I think that the member was quite right to say what he said.

You see, the Reformers perhaps think that when Quebecers hold a referendum on Quebec’s sovereignty, it is just so we can try to negotiate a little bit more for ourselves.

• (1320)

But that is no longer it at all. Take my own case and that of most of my colleagues. We were born in Canada, I was a Canadian and still am, I was Canadian to the core, I grew up in this country. Even at a concert, as one of the *Petits Chanteurs de Granby*, I sang *O Canada*. That was meaningful for me at the time. Now I am older and wiser.

In the first referendum held in Quebec I voted yes. At the time I wanted to give my premier, René Lévesque, negotiating power. At the time, I believed that it was perhaps still possible for Quebec to survive as a people, as an entity, within this country. I continued to reflect on the question. I came to the realization, and I still believe, that this is no longer possible.

There are two countries within this country. That is what must be understood. When he made his statement, the member for Charlesbourg was perfectly within his rights. We were in a referendum period. It was important at that time for us to inform people, to explain things.

If I may be permitted, I have here a document that summarizes the various positions, militarily speaking, of a sovereign Quebec. You will understand that these documents were prepared before the referendum. It is normal, in preparing for an important event, to have documents.

One part of this document, which is a document drafted by the Bloc Quebecois, says: “Without necessarily creating large armed forces, Quebec could nevertheless adopt a coherent defence policy suited to its needs”.

I am a member of the Canadian national defence committee. It is the same thing there. We try to have a defence policy suited to our needs and aspirations. If one takes a closer look, the vote of our young soldiers on and around bases, because those in Quebec did vote in the last referendum, is comparable to the vote in other areas. Actually, there are people in the armed forces who are inclined to vote yes to a referendum. Not all of them are sovereignists, but there are some among them. I would say there are as many there as in other groups in society.

This does not mean they are traitors, far from it. They have sworn an oath and they stand by it as we speak. They carry out the duties assigned to them, and they do it well.

They do their job well and very often they have to fight to preserve their language and their culture. Francophones who are in the Canadian Forces have to fight on a daily basis to speak their language.

The hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Meritt, the author of this motion, seemed to believe and appeared to say that there is total and perfect bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces. I have here a quote from this member. In 1994, there was a reform, and suggestions were made to the government. A joint committee of the House and Senate travelled all around Canada to see what had to be done and then made recommendations to the government.

Now, the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt was very frustrated during his visit to Quebec. I have a document here saying “French only briefing angers MP”, a press clipping of the time, dated May 8, 1994. The hon. member for Okanagan was frustrated because the briefing at a Quebec base was in French. This frustrated the poor man since he does not understand French—

there was interpretation into English—he felt frustrated. So the hon. member says:

• (1325)

[*English*]

“The English speaking committee members were provided with translators who translated while the briefing was going on, but for Hart that was small consolation. You can bet that if the situation were reversed there would have been screams of outrage”.

[*Translation*]

I toured the country and, as you know, in several places we accepted briefings by members of the Armed Forces who did not speak French, yet that did not frustrate us in the least. On the contrary, it was no surprise at all.

I do not mean to say that efforts are not being made, for they are, but one needs to be consistent when making statements in this House. At that time, the hon. member was surprised to hear French being used in the Armed Forces, and surprised that it was used to address guests on a francophone base in Quebec. That surprised him. Probably he was not familiar with the Official Languages Act at that time, since he was a new member.

I think it is important to tell it like it is. Quebec, if it becomes sovereign, has set itself some objectives, which I shall read because they are so close to what we are hearing here: “To ensure that Quebec’s commitment to the installation of a lasting peace and the recognition of international law as the basis of relationships between the nations will be translated into concrete actions subscribed to by all the people of Quebec”.

It was also stated that “a sovereign Quebec will make concrete commitments in this regard, and these will be given priority once the post-independence transition period is over—and will oppose any use of force as a solution to disputes between nations”—I believe that is to be expected, here in Canada—“will seek active membership in the United Nations Organization; will seek to become an active member of the Organization of American States, the OAS, and work with it in building; will seek to be part of the UN peacekeeping forces”—according to our means, Madam Speaker—“and to maintain its commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, NORAD”. And so on.

There is therefore absolutely no doubt that the document which is the subject of the Reform Party’s motion was what I would call a job offer. Its aim was to provide some security to people in the Canadian armed forces—young Quebecers who are in the Canadian forces—and let them know that, if Quebec became sovereign, they would have a place in the forces, a career in the Quebec armed forces.

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This is why I ask you to consider this document for what it is, a job offer and an update.

[*English*]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to this motion. Unfortunately because of the government’s actions on limiting debate not all members of the House will be permitted to speak to what the Chair has ruled to be the most serious issue ever brought before the 35th Parliament. That is a shame and the Liberal government which brought forward the closure motion should rightly be ashamed. The people who are watching the debate can see the Liberal actions for what they are, which is an attempt to squelch honest debate on the topic.

• (1330)

I believe I am allowed to say that in the debate Liberal and Bloc members have been very economical with the truth. They have not been willing to deal with the crux of the original motion. The chair has ruled that it is a prima facie case of privilege which should be brought before Parliament and that every member should have a chance to debate it. They have not been willing to deal with the motion.

Just so that people will know, the Liberals have eliminated every word before the word “that” in the original motion, and every word after the word “that” from the motion of the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. In other words they have completely emasculated the motion and left it meaningless at this stage. As I argued in my address, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs can do almost nothing with what is left.

Canada’s Parliament is really Canada’s heart. It is one of its most vital organs and the life and direction of the entire country is or should be represented here in the House. I know we are dealing with the amendment but the original motion after the preamble read:

That, in the opinion of this House, this action by the Honourable Member for Charlesbourg, and the then Leader of the Official Opposition should be viewed as seditious and offensive to this House and constitutes a contempt of Parliament; and consequently, the House refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination.

Parliament is like a living organism that can tolerate all kinds of trials and body blows and many kinds of disease. However when something strikes at the very heart with an intention to undercut its authority, then Parliament must react like any other organism. It must move to defend itself.

There may be disagreements, even strong disagreements in the House among members of different parties. We all accept that as part of a healthy debate. They are the growing pains of a healthy, vital society. However, when it becomes the purpose of one

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member inside the House to strike right to the heart of this institution and then to abuse the privileges of the House in order to do it, then the House must react to that. It must deal with that member just as a person would fight back against somebody who is striking at their heart. This charge is different from other more political charges. This is far more serious.

It was agreed by the Chair that our original motion was designed to make the matter clear and to bring the issue to a head, to say that this is not just a discussion of political expediency or desire for one member to put forward a political agenda. It was designed to bring forward the case that this could be seditious and that the House may wish to view it as seditious when we had a chance to review it and send it off to committee.

I will go through a few of the logical questions which spring from the original motion about what the member for Charlesbourg said and what was done. Allow me to quote from his controversial news release. "A sovereign Quebec will have need of all Quebecers now serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Quebec needs a defence force to watch over and intervene on its territory, to participate on foreign peace missions and to respond to local needs. Quebec will have need of all Quebecers presently enlisted in the armed forces. The day after a yes win, Quebec should immediately create a department of defence, the embryo of a major state, and offer all Quebecers serving in the Canadian forces the chance to integrate into the Quebec forces while keeping their rank, seniority and retirement funds".

The intent of the document is clear, but what things in it and in the actions could one consider as to whether it is seditious or not? I will put forward a few ideas.

First, the timing of the release of the document would be all important. In other words, it would show that the document was not a joke and not idle chatter, that it was not simply arrogant boasting. Its release would have to be timed to have maximum impact. This timing would show the true motive of the writer. This document would be released to maximize its impact against the state and to maximize the probability of the military actually deserting the Canadian Armed Forces and supporting a new regime.

• (1335)

In this regard the hon. member for Charlesbourg sent his document to the armed forces bases on October 26, just a few days before the critical October 30 referendum. It was a time when excitement among separatists was nearing a fever pitch and it was an explosive week in the history of Canada and Quebec. There could be no better time to appeal to the sentiment of separatists within the armed forces than just a few days before a potential victory result at the polls in Quebec.

The second consideration should be that of authority. If the hon. member was not from a recognized party, if he had been an independent member and did not have a widely recognized influence, it would have had perhaps less authority and power within the House of Commons. In that case a press release urging sedition would be taken less seriously in one sense because of where it came from.

However, the hon. member is a member of the official opposition. He stood arm in arm with 52 other members at the time, having as their sole purpose the removal of Quebec from Confederation. This is already a formidable challenge to the House and the member's intention was in line with the intent of all the other members of that party.

I remind the House that the hon. member is the defence critic for the Bloc Quebecois. As such he has a special stature in the House and a special obligation in question period and standing committees. He has a research budget to back him up and he has all the privileges accorded to an opposition critic.

I remind hon. members that the hon. member for Charlesbourg is a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence. As a matter of fact he was the vice-chairman of the standing committee on defence, the voice for the Bloc Quebecois to the Canadian Armed Forces. He is the voice of the Bloc to all Canadians on the military policy of the separatist movement.

Membership means he has access to privileged information, inside knowledge, an inside chance to tour facilities which acquaints him with the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's military establishment. Membership on the defence committee also allows him the opportunity to meet the most important people within the Canadian Armed Forces, and potentially to get to know, and even if he wished, to plant the seeds of separatism within Canada's own defence establishment.

It is a special affront to this House and to every Canadian that a member might have used his position of privilege and perhaps even privileged military information given to him by this House in an attempt to turn the military establishment against the very heart of our country.

It is interesting that the hon. member said that the day after a yes vote Quebec would have its own department of defence. Who would staff the headquarters of this Quebec national defence establishment? Who would be the one to direct the armed forces? How would it be set up? The only people who have that expertise in Canada are now working for the Canadian Armed Forces. Was there another communiqué that went out that was actually addressed to the senior management that said: "Let us get this rolling and get the armed forces organized tomorrow"?

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Another important indication of the writer's motive was the letterhead he used. It was the letterhead of the Leader of the Opposition, not even the member's own letterhead. The leader at that time was Mr. Lucien Bouchard, a name very well known and respected in Quebec. He has gone on to become the premier of Quebec.

The use of the leader's letterhead added legitimacy and political weight. It added the tremendous asset of public recognition of the person sending the communiqué. It was much more likely to have an effect on the French speaking armed forces personnel than if the release had been written on the member's own letterhead.

Where the appeal was directed is also relevant. It was not sent willy-nilly to all armed forces personnel in Canada. It was targeted toward certain people for maximum impact. It was sent to franco-phone forces in Bosnia and to the military school in Kingston where a large number of people from Quebec are in training.

This was not just a useless appeal to sentiment. It was a strong appeal, complete with salaries, seniority and benefit arrangements carefully crafted to appeal strongly and to encourage nationalist sentiment. It was written to succeed in its purpose and had the federalist cause failed in the referendum, it may have worked indeed. Who knows what disastrous consequences could have befallen the Canadian Armed Forces and the people of Canada because of it?

• (1340)

I note the member's release urged potential recruits to the Quebec army to be prepared to intervene on its territory. I do not know what that means but intervening on the territory when it is not even its own country yet is a very scary proposition.

This release was carefully timed, authoritatively drafted and sent to the people most likely to defect. The former leader of the Bloc Québécois did everything short of actually signing the document himself. Why did he not sign that document? It was on his letterhead. It was being sent in order to recruit an army for his own purposes. I would say he did not sign it because he knew what was likely to happen. He was likely to be called on the carpet for sedition. He let his flunkey from Charlesbourg sign it for him.

That is exactly what happened. It was on his letterhead and he would not even sign it. He should have signed it himself. If he had the guts to bring it forward, he could have at least put his signature to it. He did not do it because he knew we would be debating it in the House and he would have to face the Reform Party even if he did not have to face the weak-kneed Liberals across the way.

We have moved to have this matter referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination. We have made a charge and we want the committee to examine it. This

is a legal process that should be used in the House of Commons. Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 28 refers to a Speaker's ruling from 1959. It tells us about the process. It states in part:

Members of the House of Commons, like all other citizens, have the right to be regarded as innocent until they are found guilty, and like other citizens they must be charged before they are obliged to stand trial in the courts. Parliament is a court with respect to its own privileges and dignity and the privileges of its Members.

Parliament is a court. First the charge comes. Next is the consideration of the charge. That brings me to the amendment moved by the Liberal government, one that would totally emasculate the Reform Party motion.

Suppose somebody robs a bank. The person is caught and they would like to bring charges. What do they do? Do they come forward and say they would like to charge that money is missing and they would like to get together and talk about it? Of course not. They would bring forward the evidence, determine it is a prima facie case, and then charge the individual with bank robbery.

In this case we would charge the member with sedition. We have to charge him with something. We cannot suggest that we get together to shoot the breeze. We have to charge him with something and we had. We had charged him until the Liberals completely neutered the motion by taking out all the words before "that" and all the words after "that". They will just say that is that and talk about it in committee.

Mark my words, this matter will go to committee and it will be lost and gone forever. The way to eliminate it is to bring it forward, send it to never never land where the committee can use every procedural gong show effort in order to make sure it never sees the light of day again.

This matter should have been discussed in the House of Commons. Closure should not have been invoked. We should have been here as long as it took to discuss the issue to its conclusion.

It is not without precedence in this House that the Liberals are afraid to tackle these difficult issues. We just went through the motions of electing vice-chairmen for committees. In talking to Liberal members afterward they would say: "I am sorry. I hated to do it but I had to vote for the Bloc Québécois as chairman. Why? Because the whip told me to".

My mother used to say: "If they told you to run and jump off a cliff would you do it?" I sometimes wonder if we would have a lemming stampede on that side of the House if the whip ever said the wrong words. They would all go charging off into the Ottawa River or would drown in the canal. We are facing the attitude all the time where they do not want to deal with the difficult issues.

• (1345)

Year after year, this being the third year running, we are faced with a separatist vice-chairman on the Canadian citizenship

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committee. The vice-chairman of the Canadian heritage committee will be a separatist. That makes sense. It does not make sense when we get out of this town. I hope the members opposite realize when they talk to their constituents back home that this kind of stuff is not selling people. They should be dealing with these issues rather than sweeping them under the carpet.

When the Prime Minister was in Vancouver he said: "The Bloc makes my blood boil. I would like to see it out of there. I would like to see the Reform leader sitting in the official opposition seat". What does he say when he is in Ottawa or, worse yet, when he goes back home to where he was elected? He says: "You know, I did not really mean it. I am just musing and I do not want to talk about it". In one end of the country he says one thing and in the other end of the country he says another. It has been in the papers and people in B.C. have heard it time and again. They are sick of it.

The Liberals will not deal with the issue. I should give them my annual truth is stranger than fiction award. It could be a daily award in this place because the people on the government side will not deal with any of the substantive issues that should be dealt with both on procedure and on issues of national unity. Their idea of a national unity campaign is a concerted effort to give out flags. I like the Canadian flag, but to think that is their total national unity plan is enough to make me gag.

What about the seriousness of the charge we brought forward on the sedition issue? What kind of a military would Quebec people have access to on their own soil? There is no shortage of assets in Quebec. The Royal 22nd Regiment is based at Valcartier. There are two CF-18 squadrons which fly 37 planes. There are another 22 CF-18s mothballed in the Montreal area. About half of the most useful part of our air force is in Montreal. There are certainly makings of a very significant military force within Quebec.

Many of our naval units are manned by our very capable francophone crews. Four of the twelve new coastal defence ships being built by the navy will be stationed at Quebec City. There is a \$100 million supply depot full of military hardware, the biggest in Canada, located in Quebec. There is certainly a significant military presence there. In other words, it is not an idle threat. The separatists could build an army if they could get the people and the assets of the Canadian Armed Forces quickly.

General MacKenzie said about this issue: "Only in Canada could you get away with something like this. In some countries people would be executed or waiting in jail. In Canada the attitude is ignored and maybe it will go away. I am absolutely amazed that it died with a whimper rather than a bang. If I was commanding the army when that communiqué came out I would not do anything with it other than get a hard copy, get in a plane, parade myself into the minister's office and say this is well beyond the military's capability to deal with. This is a serious national issue".

This is a serious issue which deserves serious national debate. Unfortunately it is typical of the government to want to sweep it aside and not talk about it because it might ruffle some feathers.

If the Liberal government does not let this charge go to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs it will prove that it is not standing in defence of the country. It will say to loyal Canadians working in the Canadian Armed Forces: "We are satisfied to just hope this thing does not happen again. We will not set any rules to make sure it does not happen again. We will not instruct our military personnel on how to deal with this in the future. We will not tell the House of Commons how we will deal with members who choose to use the privileges of the House to put forward their own seditious ideas. We will continue to ignore it and hope it goes away". It is this same policy that brought us this close to losing the last referendum vote in Quebec.

We cannot ignore this thing and hope it goes away. It must be dealt with in whatever method the House decides is necessary and then move on.

I call on all members of the House to defeat the amendment put forward by the government and bring back the amendment brought forward by my hon. colleague from Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt.

• (1350)

The communiqué we are discussing today is a challenge to the heart of the country. It is a challenge to this position in Parliament and it is a challenge to every member here to do the right thing and vote in favour of the original motion and defeat the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): You know, Madam Speaker, I do not think I will ever get used to the incredibly large number of senseless and implausible comments uttered by Reform members every day. But I will admit that, in the last three days, they have really outdone themselves.

They hijacked a procedure outlined in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons to make a mockery of Parliament. This is unfortunate, since the serious accusations against my colleague from Charlesbourg called for a more serious debate on this. But, for the last three days, our friends in the Reform Party have turned this into a circus. They are using this excuse to put the hon. member for Charlesbourg, the former leader of the Bloc Québécois, and the Bloc Québécois itself on trial, going as far as questioning the legitimacy of our presence in this House. I would remind my colleagues from the Reform Party that we were duly elected by the voters in each of our ridings.

As I was saying, they hijacked a procedure of the House that has been used only three times so far. It was used once against Louis Riel and this, I think, speaks volumes. Louis Riel was suspended from this House; his right to sit in this House was suspended. Years later, under the last Conservative government, Louis Riel was recognized as one of Canada's founders. This shows a lack of consistency on the part of this House. Louis Riel, as you may recall, was charged with treason and hanged.

However, in the case of my colleague from Charlesbourg, two criminal complaints against him have been dismissed. They were thrown out by the courts. Yesterday, the leader of the Reform Party himself came right out and said that there were no legal grounds for charging my colleague from Charlesbourg with sedition.

Of what are they accusing him, if he is not guilty of sedition? As my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie pointed out, are they simply accusing him for his views on certain things? Is having conflicting views a new offence in Canada? Has it become illegal to voice opinions that differ from those of the government majority or, hopefully, from those of our hon. friends seated to our left, whose ideas are nonetheless way off to the right?

We have heard our friends from the Reform Party complain. For three days now, we have heard them whine because they are not the official opposition and because their members were not elected as vice-chairpersons of committees. They have been whining for three days. But if they want to take over as the official opposition, all they have to do is to defeat Bloc Quebecois candidates and Liberal candidates in the six byelections scheduled for March 25. They should come to Quebec and talk about sedition to Quebecers. They should come to Quebec and talk about partitioning. They should come to Quebec and talk about becoming the official opposition instead of trying to hide their game under the cover of an economic debate. They should come to Quebec and talk to us about all that; then we will see whether they can gain official opposition status.

There are major issues being discussed in this Parliament, or at least that should be discussed in this Parliament, issues like the UI reform, for instance. There are people who need us to look at and discuss this reform in this House. Instead, the Reformers have led the House to neglect its proper business with this absolutely ridiculous motion.

We should be debating the budget. They claim to be very concerned about financial matters. Yet, they do not want to talk about the budget; they would rather talk about sedition, although their leader actually admitted, as I said earlier, that there was no legal basis for charges of sedition.

• (1355)

It is rather strange that they should choose this time, some four months after the facts and precisely during the debate on unemployment insurance reform and the debate on the budget, to bring

up the question of the so-called sedition of my colleague for Charlesbourg. What is unfortunate in all of this, is to find that our Liberal colleagues are going along with this disgraceful manoeuvre on the part of Reform members.

The government whip told us: "When something is poorly done, you replace it, you start all over again". Thus, he recognizes that there was some basis to the motion; when something is poorly done you start all over again, of course, but when something is ridiculous, you simply ignore it. Yet, the government chose not to ignore it. It associated with the Reform members and is therefore guilty by association.

Let us look at the communiqué from my colleague for Charlesbourg. He never called on military personnel to desert. He never called for rebellion or revolt. He simply stated that, should Quebec become sovereign, Quebecers presently serving in the Canadian armed forces would be offered the opportunity to join the Quebec armed forces. Is that a call to sedition, to rebellion or to desertion? Not at all, not in any way.

In his communiqué, my colleague for Charlesbourg was talking about Quebec participating in peace missions, participating in NATO, recognizing therefore that Quebec would abide by its international commitments. He was talking about respect for democracy, respect for civil and human rights. Is that unacceptable? No. This is a very responsible behaviour on the part of the hon. member for Charlesbourg.

Mr. Speaker, you are motioning to me that my time is up—

The Speaker: Not at all, my dear colleague. You have 12 minutes left. It being 2.00 p.m., however, we shall proceed to statements by members, and you will be the first speaker after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we saw last week, the numerous reactions to the budget tabled by our Minister of Finance were, for the most part, enthusiastic. Among the positive reactions our government's third budget raised, allow me to quote from one by the Quebec minister responsible for industry, commerce, science and technology.

In a press release issued this past Friday, Rita Dionne—Marso-lais spoke of her positive reaction to the creation of Technology

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Partnerships Canada, to replace DIPP, which the federal government has been gradually phasing out in the past few years.

We are glad to learn that, at last, the PQ government's ministers are setting aside the constitutional disputes and giving the Liberal government's actions in the area of research and development their proper due.

* * *

TRAGEDY AT DUNBLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday a man named Thomas Hamilton entered a primary school in Dunblane in central Scotland armed with four guns, and killed 16 children aged 5 and 6 as well as a teacher, before killing himself. This gun enthusiast burst into a gymnasium where there were 29 children and fired off rounds in all directions for two or three minutes.

This massacre of innocent victims leaves us stunned and appalled. How can anyone cut 17 people down in cold blood? It is hard for us to come to grips with something so horrible. We are overcome with indignation.

On behalf of myself, and all of the hon. members of this House, I wish to express sincere condolences to the families of the victims, the staff of the Dunblane Primary School and the entire population of this Scottish town.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I too echo the words of my colleague.

Over the break I lent my support to two Calgary families attending the parole hearing of a man who had sexually assaulted their children over a four-year period.

The National Parole Board gave this predator of babies two hours of their time while the victims' parents could not utter a peep. Nonetheless, parole was denied. Until our laws are changed our children will not be safe.

I believe in compassion, but that compassion must be tempered with responsibility. We have a responsibility to those who are victims, to those who cannot defend themselves. We have a responsibility to protect our children and to ensure they are free from threat.

Making Canada safe for our children should be a priority of the government. Two years ago I asked the Solicitor General of Canada to develop a registry of sex offenders and pedophiles. For two years we have had no action. When will the solicitor general join in our

fight to keep our children safe? When will he throw his support behind these innocent babies, these tiny victims?

Let us develop that promised registry.

* * *

PARLIAMENT HILL

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of Public Works and Government Services has inherited a real mess on the Hill.

The architects who estimated the current Peace Tower repair project said it would cost \$2.5 million. The companies that bid on it bid about half of that in order to win the job. Then job in hand, months later, they obtained a change order for an additional \$1.2 million, thus doubling the original bid and bringing the cost close to the original estimate.

In the meantime, staff at the bidding companies harassed a female engineer, Anne Rainey, off the site. Ray Wolf and fellow masons walked off in protest. Yet in spite of a very clear, non-discriminatory clause in the contract from public works, the former minister took no action.

The harassment appeared to have been condoned with the issuing of a subsequent further contract to the same offending companies to do further work on the tower and the House of Commons itself.

Canadians were quite ticked off at the previous minister. Hopefully, the new minister will correct the injustice done.

* * *

THE IRISH IN CANADA

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada's most Irish city, we are celebrating our Irish heritage.

Last year we started three years of commemorative activities for the official observance of the 150th anniversary of the great Irish famine. More than 150,000 Irish immigrants arrived in Saint John between 1815 and 1880. Many of these immigrants were quarantined at Partridge Island, which is now a national historic site.

Today I want to pay tribute to the Irish community in Saint John and all of Canada.

I also invite everyone here to mark their calendars for June 27 to July 3, 1997, for the major public commemoration of the great Irish famine in Saint John, New Brunswick.

When Irish hearts are laughing, all the world is bright and gay, and when Irish eyes are smiling they will steal your heart away.

After listening to the debate in this House I wish we were all Irish.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, good news. The Etobicoke community world wide web line is now in operation.

The community web site will serve as a free storage resource for youth, community groups, small business or anyone facing barriers to access to the web.

The Etobicoke Board of Education, in partnership with the Etobicoke Joint Adjustment Committee, have created the world wide web site to enable individuals to gain an understanding of how to operate within the Internet system and to provide the potential for new opportunities in the highly competitive business world.

With access to the world wide web becoming a necessity in today's rapidly changing technological world, the Etobicoke community world wide web site will promote economic development within the global multimedia market.

By surfing the Internet in Etobicoke—Lakeshore we are creating jobs and building a smarter community.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DUNBLANE SCHOOL TRAGEDY

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world was shocked and horrified upon hearing about the terrible tragedy that occurred in Dunblane, Scotland. A gunman opened fire on a group of youngsters in a school, killing 16 children and their teacher, and injuring 16 others.

This unspeakable act affects all of us at a very deep level. We feel powerless when such a display of violence occurs. Beyond the pain that we feel, we must, as parliamentarians, work even harder to build a peaceful and non violent society. We must step up our efforts to ensure the protection of our children and to provide for their education.

• (1405)

Today, all Canadians are joining the residents of Brome—Missisquoi to offer our Scottish friends their sincere support in these difficult moments.

* * *

LEARNING DISABILITIES

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March is learning disabilities month. This year is a special one, since the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Today, I am wearing the commemorative pin in honour of all Canadians suffering from learning disabilities and all the individuals and organizations supporting them.

[*English*]

As an educator I wear this pin proudly and with honour. I believe that every individual must be given the right and have the privilege to experience the one thing that keeps our society vibrant and growing, the need to learn.

[*Translation*]

I commend this organization for its excellent work and for its dedication.

[*English*]

I commend them today for the commitment to education and to equal opportunities for employment and fulfilment among all Canadians.

* * *

CANADIAN MINING HALL OF FAME

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform my colleagues that Elliot Lake, Ontario in my riding of Algoma is now the home of the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame.

Recently eight more Canadians were inducted into the Hall of Fame: Edmund Horne, Noah Timmins, William Wright, Donald Hogarth, Lloyd Pigeon, Joseph Hirshhorn, Paul Penna and Robert Haullbauer. They were selected for their accomplishments in exploration, mine development, technology or management and for their contributions to mining and to Canada.

They span the history of the mining industry in our country which started in Bruce Mines, also in my riding, and which continued throughout Canada, including in Elliot Lake, once known as the world's uranium capital.

We can all take pride in the accomplishments of these eight people and other pioneers that paved the way for the development and economic success of many Canadian mining communities. They remind us that mining is important to our past and deserves our support in the future.

A special thanks to the Mining Association of Canada, to Fred Mann and to the city of Elliot Lake for their efforts in bringing the Hall of Fame to northern Ontario.

* * *

[*Translation*]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the public hearings of the parliamentary committee that will review the UI reform project, renamed Bill C-12, are underway.

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The federal government has not contributed one penny to the UI fund since 1990 and should give the money of that program back to the provinces, which are in a better position to meet the needs of their population.

Why would Ottawa not let provinces that are interested manage the program?

Workers and employers pay over \$18 billion annually for insurance, in case of a period of unemployment. In the current austerity context, it is unacceptable for the federal government to directly take money from that fund to make its books look good, while systematically dismantling the program.

The Bloc Quebecois is opposed to that.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the following comes from a letter which appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*:

Dear Mr. Finance Minister,

I was delighted to learn that you are seeking input from Canadians on CPP reforms. Here are my suggestions.

CPP should start at age 55, not 67 as you have suggested, and for citizens who have worked more than 6 years prior to 1994, CPP should start immediately the citizen quits, or is fired from a job.

CPP should be fully indexed, and I would be willing to pay higher premiums for this benefit.

However, I would also like someone else to contribute \$4 for every dollar I contribute to CPP.

And Mr. Minister, please be sure to arrange for my pension to accrue at twice the maximum rate legally permitted for everyone else in the country.

I realize that these requests will sound greedy and unjustified, but if they are good enough for you and your parliamentary colleagues, they're good enough for me.

Your truly,

Dr. Philip Alderman

West Vancouver

* * *

CHILD LABOUR

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, child labour is not restricted to southeast Asia. Notwithstanding our peacekeeping efforts, such practices exist in Haiti.

Recently the *Toronto Star* published an article on Haiti's slave children in which it recounted the physical, emotional and sexual abuse that upward of 300,000 children must face each and every day.

The problem appears at first glance insurmountable, yet groups in my constituency such as Fergus' St. Andrew's HEARTS are helping to support a school, orphanage and feed program in Cap Haitian which is diverting a small number of children from a life of misery.

• (1410)

I was delighted to hear that Canada is supporting a global effort by the International Labour Organization to eliminate child labour and that about \$1 million a day from CIDA's budget is devoted to the programs to adjust to children's needs. I encourage the Canadian government to look to the needs of the children of Haiti.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the end of a conference on interprovincial trade, ministers representing federal and provincial governments seemed to agree to open government procurement to Canadian businesses in general.

The Quebec minister responsible for industry and commerce, Rita Dionne-Marsolais, puts a value of \$100 billion a year on government procurement. According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 1.9 million jobs, 470,000 of them in Quebec, are directly related to this major market. The minister, who was obviously satisfied when she returned from the conference, thinks that, unless there are unexpected circumstances, the agreement will come into force in 1997.

We are pleased to see that the Quebec government decided to take part in this conference and is ready to sign this agreement on the easing of interprovincial trade. That proves that Quebec has everything to gain from being a part of Canada.

* * *

[English]

NISGA'A LAND CLAIM

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Nisga'a agreement in principle takes Canada on a journey down two separate paths to a country where equality of natives and non-natives no longer applies.

Bureaucrats and politicians have designed a compensation package for natives that is far too generous. Compensation should deal with loss of aboriginal interests as has already been determined by the courts and is limited to aboriginal rights to hunt, trap, fish and gather sustenance. It does not include interest in land or resources, or priority rights to engage in commercial activity.

This was all done behind closed doors. The bureaucrats have had their say, the government politicians have had theirs. Now it is time for the people of B.C. Their voices must be heard through a provincial referendum and the Nisga'a agreement should not be signed until after the provincial government receives its mandate through the upcoming provincial election.

* * *

CUBA

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. legislation to punish Cuba and those who do business with Cuba is just another example of the inequity and inconsistency of the United States in such matters.

The U.S. continues to carry out a policy to isolate and punish Cuba despite the fact that the cold war is over, the Soviet Union has ceased to exist and Cuba is in no way a military threat to the United States.

How does the U.S. justify such a policy when at the same time it is cosyng up to China and Vietnam, which are both communist countries and have much worse human rights records.

The shooting down of the two U.S. planes was indeed a deplorable incident. Both sides claim to be right. Consequently, that is a matter for the International Court and not one for unilateral reprisals.

The current U.S. legislation punishes those who do not deserve it and further exacerbates the situation.

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[*Translation*]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 3, 1995, I questioned the minister of Indian affairs on negotiations with the Kanasatake band council regarding the casino project. I wanted him to inform the band council that this project falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec. The minister's opinion was, and I quote: "Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that this does not fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec".

On February 26, 1996, the Supreme Court of Canada clearly indicated that Indian bands cannot operate gambling places without obtaining a permit from the province or signing an agreement with it. This time, it is not the version of a Bloc Québécois member, it is the Supreme Court of Canada that contradicts the Indian affairs minister's statement by confirming the jurisdiction and competence of the province regarding gambling.

The minister's arrogance and lack of judgment are a true reflection of the weakness of this federalist system.

• (1415)

[*English*]

CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

Mrs. Jean Payne (St. John's West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region was held in Reykjavik. At the conference it was agreed to form a standing committee. Canada was invited to become a member which was accepted.

Today Canada is the host of the second Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Mr. Clifford Lincoln is the chair of the conference and Karen Kraft Sloan is leading the Canadian delegation. Over 100 delegates—

The Speaker: I remind my hon. colleague not to use our names but use our ridings or our titles. The hon. member.

Mrs. Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 100 delegates and observers are participating in this week's conference. They came from the circumpolar nations of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and include representation from their aboriginal peoples.

The conference provides a forum for the Arctic governments to share information, exchange ideas and gain valuable insight into the problems and opportunities in the Arctic. It will serve as preparation for a minister's conference being held next week in Inuvik.

I would like to wish the members of this conference much luck in their pursuit of a cleaner, healthier world.

* * *

DUNBLANE, SCOTLAND

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there are simply no words to describe what happened yesterday in the quiet town of Dunblane, Scotland.

News of the killing of 16 young children and a teacher innocently going about their school activities is almost unbelievable. It tears at our hearts, makes us ask why over and over again and then leaves us with a feeling of immense horror, sadness and utter emptiness. It also gives us a great urge to reach out to that community in the hope that somehow, in some small way, we can support them in their inconsolable grief and irreplaceable loss.

To the people of Dunblane, from all Canadians, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[Translation]***SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has finally announced the creation of the technological fund promised over two years ago. It is about time. The government announced in the budget that \$150 million will be available in 1996-97 to fund projects approved in the technology partnerships Canada program. There are some things the Minister of Industry did not say.

Will the minister acknowledge that the amount actually available to fund new projects in 1996-97 is \$85 million and not \$150 million, since \$65 million have already been committed to another program, the DIPP, focusing on defence industry?

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.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the hon. member saw this allegation in the *Globe and Mail* or whether he read a translation in another paper, but it is incorrect.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could explain what is “incorrect”. It would be interesting to hear what he says was “incorrect” in what I have just said. We are prepared to listen.

Will he ensure that the \$150 million will go totally to funding new projects, and not to swelling figures by promising money that has already been committed by his government?

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.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, a portion of the funds announced had already been allocated for business under the old DIPP program. It amounts to very little.

I think he will understand clearly that, under technology partnerships Canada and the projects we will support, the money committed to the business sector will not be spent for a long time. That is why businesses, particularly in Montreal, with experience in the aerospace and defence sectors, which have made use of the old DIPP program, firms such as Pratt & Whitney, Bombardier, Spar and CAE gave the new program a warm welcome.

• (1420)

I think both he and his colleague, who frequently asked questions on defence conversion, will be very happy with the creation of this partnership program—which is not funding, but a partnership—not only in the aerospace and defence sectors, but in the environmental technology sectors as well.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, the minister said that it was incorrect. Then he acknowledges it. He has again just said it is true and that it amounts to very little. Sixty-five million dollars of a total of \$150 million is about 40 per cent, which means very little to them. Interesting. In addition, the auditor general recommended in his report greater transparency in the government’s science and technology activities.

Will the minister acknowledge that this recommendation was swept under the carpet, since the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology, which published public reports, was abolished and replaced by a single advisory board of 12 individuals appointed by the Prime Minister and reporting to the Prime Minister alone?

[English]

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.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. The issue of the advice the government receives on science issues has been controversial.

The former government cancelled the Science Council of Canada, which produced advice and wrote reports on science. The council the honourable member refers to, NABST, also was very good at writing reports. Some would say one of the things that science policy in Canada was very good at is writing reports.

What we have proposed to do instead of focusing on writing reports is to create a very small council of the very best science minds in Canada who, instead of devoting their effort to writing reports, will be devoting their efforts to meeting with ministers on the economic development policy committee as well as providing advice directly to the Prime Minister so that those who make decisions are closely informed by the people who have the greatest stake in the outcome and can form therefore the best possible policy.

This is an approach that is not oriented to writing reports. It is oriented instead to changing behaviour and changing the practice of government. I think the test will be in whether that proves to be the case. I invite the honourable member with the rest of the science community, which I am sure will continue to make sure we

hear its opinions through all the media available, to make sure we actually do see a change in behaviour as we shape the new science policy for Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. For two years now, the defence industry has been lobbying the government to create a fund aimed at defence conversion, in order to save the 10,000 jobs in that industry which are in jeopardy in Quebec. The people in charge of that new fund, which bears the name of Technology Partnerships Canada, inform us that this new program has no specific component dedicated solely to conversion.

Can the Minister tell us whether his new program, Technology Partnerships Canada, will provide the necessary support to the 30 Quebec firms in urgent need of government assistance to convert their industry?

[English]

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.): Mr. Speaker, this is an area the member has worked very hard and constructively on for the last two years.

The way we have structured this fund will certainly not enable me to say today that any funds are dedicated to any particular companies, nor that a certain proportion of the funds is dedicated to a certain industrial sector. We are doing some very different things in structuring this fund.

For example, we will be creating a private sector advisory committee which will essentially play a role of enabling us to exercise some technology foresight in areas in which the government ought to be putting its resources. It will also provide us with a review mechanism on how the fund is being allocated among sectors; where is the greatest technology advantage for Canada.

I am sure the honourable member would agree that if we could have more money for this fund we could find some very good ways to spend it.

• (1425)

However, resources are tight and it is necessary to be very focused and strategic in the way resources are allocated. We will endeavour to do that. In doing so I can assure him there are two key red book commitments being fulfilled with this fund: to see to it that we do have a program for defence conversion and that we meet our requirements in order to fund environmental technology.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if there is a program for defence conversion, let him state

Oral Questions

it clearly, for what it looks like from here is abandonment of the industries needing government assistance. I would ask him to recall that, in 1994, a financial report involving Industry Canada, the CSN, the FTQ, the City of Montreal, the Quebec department of industry and commerce, and the Montreal Urban Community assessed the figure for defence conversion at \$55 million.

Can the minister commit, in keeping with what he was demanding when in Opposition, to making these sums available for defence conversion, as recommended in a study funded by his very own department? Is that what consistency is?

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.): Mr. Speaker, it is also needed for the strategy. What we need is to find better ways of spending funds that are very hard to come by in the present financial climate.

I must also point out to this hon. member that in the defence sector, as he is well aware, since this government was elected virtually all funding under the DIPP fund has been earmarked for civilian applications. Second, I would remind him that it is essential for companies to make the changes necessary for access to new markets. Most companies, even in Quebec, have already done so. Even in Quebec, even in Montreal, where I spoke this morning to the Chamber of Commerce, they are prepared to find other business, in sectors outside defence, in order to receive assistance from Technology Partnerships Canada.

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[English]

KREVER COMMISSION

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it took \$14 million but Justice Krever believes he knows why Canada's blood system failed, why innocent Canadians died and who is responsible.

However, instead of celebrating Krever's success with the families, we are now involved with a government that wants to hold up this inquiry.

What exactly is the reason behind this ham-handed political whitewash? What is the health minister afraid of? Why will he not simply put an end to the legal action, stop the political interference and let Krever speak?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are adjectives to describe the question from the hon. member opposite.

Some hon. members: Name some.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, if I have the unanimous consent of the House I would like to proceed.

Oral Questions

The premise of the hon. member's questions is false, as it has been on several occasions in the House. The hon. member is fully aware of the reasons the Government of Canada is in court. It is not attempting to block his eminent justice in terms of his findings. What it is attempting, based on what the Attorney General of Canada has said, because he has an obligation, is procedural fairness and the rules of natural justice.

Furthermore, I do not think the hon. member opposite does himself, his party or indeed people across the country well by making such false allegations.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's attempt to change the focus of the Krever inquiry by his own tainted blood forum he says is comprehensive. The hepatitis C group was not invited. The Janet Connors group was not invited. The Canadian AIDS Society was not invited. Who is invited? His buddies, his friends. What a farce. It is a blatant attempt to divert public attention away from the fact that the government is trying to silence the inquiry.

• (1430)

My question is very simple. Krever knows. Why not let Krever talk?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, slippery language will not help the hon. member opposite in terms of trying to define his particular case.

The hon. member is fully aware and has known for quite some time that the Krever commission has made an interim report. Forty-three recommendations have been made, seven of which applied to Health Canada. We have acted on the substance as well as the spirit of those recommendations.

We announced earlier this week that we would attempt to commence a consultation process with the provinces and all of the stakeholders.

I am saddened to hear the hon. member opposite not only outside the House but on the floor of the House argue that we ought to be taking action. Now we are taking action but the hon. member is standing in his place trying to politicize a very serious issue.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let us compare what happened in other jurisdictions.

In Japan there is a brand new health minister. Immediately there was a public apology to those people in Japan affected by its tainted blood scandal. In France those responsible are in jail.

What happens in Canada? We have legal wrangles. The government is not interested in the truth. The government is not holding those responsible accountable. The government is looking after its friends and subverting justice.

Japan and France have put the Liberal government to shame. Will the health minister advise his justice colleague to stop the legal wrangling and let Justice Krever speak?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three strikes and you are out. Once again the hon. member has falsified, has given misinformation as it relates to what is taking place. The hon. member knows fully what is taking place.

The Attorney General of Canada has stated repeatedly that he has an obligation to ensure that inquiry has procedural fairness and that the rules of natural justice be adhered to.

At no time has any member of this government, particularly the attorney general, the previous minister of health or I, ever indicated one iota that we are attempting to preclude or to prohibit Justice Krever from making his findings.

The hon. member knows the truth. I wish he would speak it once in a while.

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[Translation]

CANADA-US TAX TREATY

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions acknowledged that the new Canada-US tax treaty penalized Canadians and Quebecers receiving American pensions and that the Minister of Finance would discuss the matter with his American counterpart, Mr. Rubin.

With low income pensioners having seen their pensions shrink by 25 per cent, with no possibility of recovery, what sort of proposals, exactly, will the minister make to his American counterpart?

[English]

Mr. Barry Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

The minister will be taking up the matter with his American counterpart. We are aware of the matter, the issue of concern and the number of Canadians affected by it. We will be discussing with our American counterparts appropriate solutions in the interests of those Canadians affected.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the secretary of state gave us that answer yesterday. What we want to know is what the Minister of Finance will propose to resolve the problem.

Oral Questions

Will the minister—or whoever can answer—agree to take the appropriate tax measures to compensate the tens of thousands of Quebecers and Canadians, should the Americans not respond favourably to his request?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Mr. Barry Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a matter we will negotiate with the Americans rather than with the member opposite.

I assure him on behalf of all Canadians that we will find solutions. The tax treaty was designed to prevent double taxation. We will address this problem. We will do it soon with our American counterparts.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the date of the three-party signing of the Nisga'a agreement now planned for March 22 was leaked while the province of B.C. was in the early stages of so-called public hearings.

Obviously the minister of Indian affairs knew of the date and yet said nothing, allowing the charade to carry on in British Columbia. These negotiations have been characterized by orchestrated, secretive manipulation of the public.

Why did the minister allow this charade to be perpetrated on the people of British Columbia while behind their backs he has kicked this exercise into overdrive?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

There is of course no secret in any of that. For the past 20 years, the Government of Canada has been negotiating with the Nisga'a people. If there are any secrets, I do not know where they are being kept.

[*English*]

There was in principle an agreement with the governments of Canada and the Nisga'a in British Columbia which they are ready to sign and which we hope will go through.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, people in British Columbia who were paid to know what was happening in those negotiations did not recognize one sentence or one paragraph in that agreement.

In response to my previous questions to the minister he has continued to perpetuate myths that there will be no constitutionally protected Nisga'a commercial fishery and that this deal would terminate taxation exemption for the Nisga'a. Also, the minister ignored my question on providing a role for the auditor general in this deal.

Will the minister care to come clean with the House on my questions and also tell us why there is hesitancy to allow the auditor general to monitor the spending of Canadian taxpayer funds on this deal?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as to his supplementary, I will tell the hon. member that the public was consulted on 200 occasions—amply, I think—and now we must get on with things.

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GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works.

Tomorrow a tenders call will be issued to house the offices of Revenue Canada which are presently in Hull, on Sacré-Coeur street. Besides the building located in Quebec, four buildings on the Ontario side could meet the terms of the call for tender.

Could the minister explain why a tender call is being issued with regard to offices located in Hull, when it is usually not the case for offices located in Ottawa, as illustrated by the following examples: 191 Laurier street, where Revenue Canada is housed; 234 Laurier street, where National Defence is housed; and 340 Laurier street, where the office of the solicitor general is housed?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are trying to have an open and fair process. This is the way we will proceed and it is the way our government has been proceeding since it came into power. It is the only way to go.

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again the government is applying double standards. It grants Ontario a contract for armoured personnel carriers, without asking for bids, whereas Quebec firms have to bid on the helicopter contract.

At a time when the government is asking its poorest citizens to make additional sacrifices to help reduce the deficit, how can the minister afford the expensive luxury of moving 800 civil servants, if it were not only because she intends to relocate them in Ontario?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether or not members opposite want to agree with us, the reality is that we are trying at every opportunity to get the best value for our dollars.

We have put in place a very open and transparent process allowing every region of the country equal access, allowing every business across the country equal access. The tenders go out and thereafter they are judged on the quality of the bid. That is the way it should be and that is the way it will continue to be.

* * *

CHINA

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

With the world holding its breath while China flexes its muscles off the coast of Taiwan, it appears that China is buying some military technology from Canada. Would the minister mind telling us just how far he is willing to see Canada or Canadian companies go in their efforts to sell technology to China, including military technology?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1993 the policy has been that ministerial approval would be on a case by case basis on any transfers or exports which were of a non-lethal, non-offensive kind.

Just to show how careful our examination has been, I can report to the hon. member that in 1994 the total sum of sales of any kind of military equipment, which I believe were suits to allow people to fight fires, was all of \$10,000.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is no such thing as non-offensive military technology. The submarine detection equipment that has been purchased by the Chinese from a Canadian company hardly qualifies as clothing.

There is a document marked “Canadian eyes only” which contains guidelines established by foreign affairs for expanding bilateral military relations with China. When were the most recent meetings between DND officials and representatives of the People’s Liberation Army? Can the minister inform the House if the government is still interested in expanding its military relations with China at this time, given the current situation in the Middle East?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we might want to start with a little geography lesson first. The last I heard, China was in Asia. It may have moved in the last 24 hours while I was on an aeroplane, but I hope not.

Mr. Morrison: Just answer the question.

Mr. Grubel: There are no briefing notes on this.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): If the Reform Party would like an answer, I would be more than happy to give a serious response. I will leave discussions of caucus politics up to members of the Reform Party. They are good at it these days.

If the hon. member had looked at the document which was released, it said that the purpose of the engagement was to develop relationships with the people’s army in China and to begin discussing things like peacekeeping and regional security to provide a deterrent against the kinds of actions we are seeing today.

I can tell the hon. member that policy is constantly being reviewed. If we felt that those actions were leading to any kind of serious offensive threat, then we would certainly be reviewing our policy.

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[Translation]

TRAN TRIEU QUAN

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last February 4, a member of the press asked the minister designate, Mr. Pierre Pettigrew, if he planned to request the release of Tran Trieu Quan and he replied that he could not intercede with the Vietnamese government because he was not familiar with the case.

• (1445)

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us why, on February 9, exactly five days later, Mr. Pettigrew refused to meet the representatives of Mr. Tran’s family and support group, who wanted to inform him of the situation?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason is quite simple. I met with the family of Mrs. Tran and the ambassadors of Vietnam and, at that time, I presented a letter stating Canada’s interest in protecting Mr. Tran’s rights.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that Mr. Pettigrew was not invited to that meeting; maybe he would have seemed less foolish.

To bring Vietnam back to reason, is the government ready to adopt the same attitude as that of Belgium and threaten Vietnam with sanctions if that Canadian citizen is not released very shortly?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know what the hon. member is trying to do. There is a little event taking place in two weeks and the hon. member is trying to make a contribution. Of course we would not think the Bloc would ever revert to tactics like that; it is way above and beyond that.

Oral Questions

I want to be clear that when it comes to the responsibility for representing Canadians abroad, the consular service comes under the Minister of Foreign Affairs. That is why I was holding the meetings with the Tran family. That is why I directly made representations to the Vietnamese ambassador. That is why we specifically presented a series of démarches to the Vietnamese government, as had my predecessors.

We will take all measures necessary to ensure that Mr. Tran has full access to consular services. We will ensure that when the appeal process is finished we will make all representations to seek his release, as we said in that letter. We will do exactly what is required. I can assure the hon. member we will continue to work strongly and effectively on the file.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very concerned about the Helms-Burton legislation in the United States. Given our government's strong resolve to ensure that the international rule of law will prevail and our unwavering resolve to protect Canadians' fundamental right to freely travel and trade around the world, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs bring the House up to date on the latest actions he has taken to fight the implementation of this U.S. law?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to emphasize in opposing the Helms-Burton bill is that this is a full court press by a wide variety of members in this government. It is not just one minister. The Minister for International Trade is actively involved with the file; certainly the Prime Minister is actively involved with the file.

To give one indication, when the Prime Minister was at the meetings in Egypt yesterday, he met with the President of the European Union to specifically enlist its continued support and co-operation in fighting against that major legislation. We will also be meeting with the commissioner for trade, Sir Leon Brittan, when he is in town on Monday. The Minister for International Trade has written a letter to his counterpart, Mr. Kantor, indicating that we have initiated the process under NAFTA and we will be taking action under NAFTA.

We will be doing everything possible to indicate that we do not accept the premise or the action in the Helms-Burton bill.

* * *

TERRORISM

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see the Prime Minister working so hard while he is in Egypt. I find it ironic that he has to go to Egypt

to learn that some Canadian charitable organizations were providing support to terrorism when the Reform Party brought this issue before the House almost a year ago. Back then his government treated the issue as a joke. Only now does it seem to realize the seriousness of it.

My question is for the revenue minister. Can the minister assure the House that members of her ministry have already been in contact with the RCMP and with CSIS to determine which terrorist organizations in Canada have charitable status, or is this another example of tough talk but no action?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that members of my department have been in touch with members of the solicitor general's department and members of the foreign affairs department.

We take this extremely seriously. We want to find the right strategies to ensure that the charitable organizations we fund are not in any way connected to terrorist organizations.

• (1450)

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the minister talks about the departmental people. I am talking about the people who are in the know, the RCMP and CSIS.

Since its creation in 1984, CSIS has had a legislative definition that terrorism is any activity in support of serious violence against persons or property for the purpose of achieving a political objective. Since the House has already defined terrorism, I ask the solicitor general if this government is prepared to use this definition in its terrorist fundraising legislation, regardless of whether or not these same organizations may supposedly raise money for humanitarian purposes.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the definition my hon. friend has pointed to is in a statute passed by Parliament. It has stood the test of various court interpretations. I am sure it will be very useful as we complete our work of updating our laws in order to deal with this serious terrorist problem.

I also want to add that all relevant departments are working together to deal with this problem. My hon. friend should have no doubt at all about that.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Oral Questions

After underfunding social housing in Quebec for the last seven years, the federal government now intends to withdraw from this area.

Since 1987, Quebec has never received more than 19 per cent of CMHC funding. For Quebec, the annual shortfall averages out to \$122 million, for a total in excess of \$854 million.

Can the minister tell us if she intends to compensate for this withdrawal by transferring tax points, at least in the case of Quebec, which already assumes its responsibilities with respect to social housing?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I would like is for Quebecers or for the hon. member to make up our minds. They are always asking us to transfer more responsibilities. Well, we say in the budget that we will transfer both the funds and the responsibilities to them. What more do you want?

Mrs. Maud Debieu (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister where the money is.

Now that the federal government is withdrawing from social housing, we can conclude that the injustice done to Quebec, which was condemned at the time by the Quebec Liberals—as the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount certainly remembers—will never be redressed.

Since federal programs were never adapted to Quebec's specific needs and since Quebec has assumed its responsibilities in this area for a very long time, does the minister intend to continue imposing federal standards in social housing?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I talked with the Quebec minister in charge, who told me that he was very interested in our proposal. We are proposing to transfer the amounts we now spend on social housing. As for the standards, we want to ensure that this money will indeed be spent on housing and directed to low income households.

We are currently spending some \$350 million in Quebec. It is there if they want it.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the department of public works recently awarded a \$35 million contract to maintain 12 maritime vessels to Fenco MacLaren, a Quebec company that does not even own a shipyard. Halifax Shipyard submitted the lowest bid and the best technical bid. It was the shipyard recommended by the Department of National Defence yet

it did not get the contract. Obviously this government has put regional patronage above the interests of taxpaying Canadians.

• (1455)

Could the minister of public works explain to this House why a company that does not even own a shipyard and whose bid was over \$1 million higher than that of Halifax Shipyard received the contract against the wishes of the Department of National Defence?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I explained earlier in this country's other official language, public works awards contracts in a very open process.

The contract was awarded to Fenco MacLaren. The headquarters for Fenco MacLaren Inc. are in Nepean and the last I heard, there is no shipyard in Nepean. The work will be carried out in Halifax and Vancouver as it should be.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Fenco MacLaren Inc. is a 100 per cent owned subsidiary of SNC-Lavalin which is in Quebec.

We all remember the CF-18 contract. Then there was the Canadian Space Agency. Now we have this. Not surprisingly there are many unanswered questions regarding the awarding of this contract and this has brought the department's selection process under a great deal of scrutiny.

The standing committee on government affairs is currently reviewing the contracting processes and procedures of the government. Does the minister support a review by the standing committee on government affairs of the awarding of this contract?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the standing committees are masters of their own affairs. They are free to decide what they will and will not do. It is certainly not up to me or my department to interfere in that matter, only to co-operate.

Speaking of Fenco MacLaren Inc. being partially owned by someone from Quebec, that just goes to show how well this country can really work. One company is in Quebec, one is in Ontario and the work is being done on the east coast and the west coast.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Konrads Kalejs is alleged to have participated in the deaths of 27,800 Jews. He was deported by the United States in 1988 and since 1994 has entered Canada twice and has been here most of the time. Finally last September his deportation trial was set for February but has now been put off until May.

Willowdale residents led by Rhonda Greenberg, the Canadian Jewish Congress led by Bernie Farber and many others have condemned our handling of this matter.

I ask the minister of immigration: Why the unconscionable delay in dealing with the continuing presence in Canada of this alleged Nazi war criminal? Surely we could do better.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that Canada is not and never will be a safe haven for war criminals. That is quite clear. We have made a commitment to Canadians and to the international community to take action against war crimes.

The hon. member for Willowdale is understandably concerned about the delays in processing our case load, so am I. And I can assure him that we will be closely monitoring the situation as regards delays and that we will try to do better. That said, it must be understood that these cases are extremely complex from a legal point of view and that they require a huge amount of documentation. Department officials need to be very well prepared before they start their investigations.

Again, I can assure the hon. member for Willowdale that we will act promptly on this matter.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

To avoid creating any problems with China, the Thai government arrested and detained two members of Amnesty International, one of whom is a Canadian woman, who were trying to hold a press conference to draw attention to a report on major human rights violations in China.

• (1500)

In light of the fact that, according to the report that these members of Amnesty International were trying to release, China's economic reforms did not lead to human rights reforms, does the minister not view this as concrete proof of the failure of his government's policy on human rights and democracy? Does this not prove that Team Canada was never really concerned with human rights?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker. That is the wrong conclusion to draw.

We have expressed our very deepest concern about the record of human rights violations, but we are actively doing something about

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it. The most important initiative we took was just before Christmas. A major dialogue took place between Canadian officials, including the commissioner of human rights for Canada, and counterparts in China. A number of these issues were put on the table where we could actually get some direct results.

We are not going to change overnight practices that have been going on for a long time but we can engage in active dialogue. At the same time, we are investing, through CIDA, in very major programs to help develop better judicial systems and to help in the protection for women where we can make a very positive contribution to the enhancement of the rights of individuals in that country.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

A Deloitte Touche report shows the scandalous lack of planning and budgeting at the Canadian Wheat Board. It has now been leaked to the public.

Will the agriculture minister finally give farmers accurate information on the wheat board's marketing problems or will farmers have to wait for more leaks to get the truth?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report to which the hon. gentleman is referring is, I presume, the same report to which his colleague in the Reform Party referred yesterday. That report is one which apparently was conducted in 1992.

The fact that the wheat board undertook to have that study done indicates the wheat board's own concern about issues and the importance which the wheat board places on dealing with those issues. I am advised by the Canadian Wheat Board that since the report has been completed, the board has acted on the recommendations.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats and Canadian farmers are concerned that the federal government has not responded strongly enough to recent actions by the American congress.

The minister knows that the collapse of the American farm bill means that the subsidy levels for corn can revert to \$7. The price guarantees for wheat are at \$9. The U.S. government has reduced grazing fees on government lands by 20 per cent, creating another subsidy for beef producers.

Privilege

Can the minister of agriculture assure Canadian producers with all sincerity that he is vigorously challenging these U.S. violations of our trade agreements?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the actions taken by the United States with respect to farm policy are always a subject of very active interest on the part of the Canadian government in discharging its responsibilities to make sure that policies internationally do not impinge on Canadian rights and interests in the arena of trade.

The United States has undertaken certain commitments to the new World Trade Organization with respect to other bilateral and regional trading agreements. The Government of Canada will be extraordinarily vigilant in ensuring that the United States and all of our other trading partners live up to the spirit and the letter of their obligations under those international agreements.

The Speaker: This brings question period to a close.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a difficult question for the government House leader: What is the legislative agenda for the next few days?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to provide details on the business of the House for the next few days. The hon. member's question undoubtedly has a very political ring to it today.

[*English*]

Tomorrow shall be an opposition day. On Monday we intend to call the budget debate. Last week I indicated we would call the budget debate on Tuesday but if, as it now appears, we fail to reach Government Orders today, we will then have an opposition day on Tuesday. Wednesday shall also be an opposition day.

• (1505)

On Thursday we intend to deal with legislation. I will consult my colleagues opposite on this early next week. However, I can tell the House now that the highest priorities are Bill C-3, the bill on collective bargaining in the nuclear power plant industry, Bill C-10, the borrowing authority bill and Bill C-14, the transportation bill.

POINTS OF ORDER

VISITORS IN GALLERY

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several members have been asking about the presence in the gallery of a group of 45 officer cadets—

[*Translation*]

—from the Royal Military College, in Kingston, who are here with their professor, Yvon Gagnon. Their class is studying Canadian government.

[*English*]

They are not to be confused with 24 members of 792 Wing Squadron Air Cadets who are here from Iroquois Falls sitting in the same gallery.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: I am glad that the hon. member brought this to the attention of the House. We were all wondering about that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE MEMBER FOR CHARLESBOURG

The House resumed consideration of the motion, the amendment and the sub-amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Verchères has the floor. You have 12 minutes left.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before oral question period, I was saying that the communiqué released by the hon. member for Charlesbourg was very appropriate, since it points out a number of values that we share with our fellow Canadians, such as the will to take part in peacekeeping missions, to continue to be a member of NATO, to comply with the requirement of democracy, and to respect civil liberties and human rights.

There is nothing wrong with that. The communiqué released by the hon. member for Charlesbourg simply says:

The day after a yes win—

We have to be careful here. “The day after a yes win” does not mean the very next morning; what it really means is “following a yes win”, Quebec would offer:

all Quebecers serving in the Canadian Forces the chance to integrate into the Quebec forces—

As I said, this can certainly not be interpreted as a call for desertion, rebellion or revolt. On the contrary, this communiqué merely sets the record straight regarding the defence policy of a sovereign Quebec.

Privilege

The military do not live on another planet. They, like the rest of Quebecers, were around during the referendum campaign. Just like a number of federal public servants, they wondered about their future, if Quebec became a sovereign state.

The purpose of the communiqué released by the hon. member for Charlesbourg was simply to ease the legitimate concerns and fears of Quebecers serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I also want to point out that the communiqué reads: “—offer all Quebecers serving in the Canadian Forces”. It does not refer to “French speaking Quebecers serving in the Canadian Forces”, as claimed in the insidious Reform Party motion. The communiqué alludes to all Quebecers serving in the Canadian Forces.

What brings Quebecers to join the Canadian Armed Forces? Some do it for adventure and travel. Others do it out of a deep sense of duty, because they are convinced that, some day, they may have to defend and protect our freedom, our democratic values, but also their property, their close friends, their families.

• (1510)

Where do you think is home for these Quebecers who decide to join the Canadian Armed Forces? Where do their close friends and family live? In Quebec, Mr. Speaker.

But in our current constitutional system, how can we defend our assets, our close friends and our families who live in Quebec? How can we defend Quebec, if not by joining the Canadian Armed Forces?

Those who join the Canadian Armed Forces in order to be able to indirectly defend Quebec are not being disloyal towards Canada for all that. For them, being for Quebec does not necessarily mean being against Canada.

I for one was an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and I can tell you that I was honourably released from my commission as lieutenant in the navy when I was elected. I did not quit the armed forces on principle or because I believed that I had to quit since I had been elected to the House of Commons as a member of the Bloc Québécois. I quit because I felt I would no longer have the time to carry out my duties within the Canadian Armed Forces.

However, I was able to see that, within the Canadian Armed Forces, we have a sort of microcosm, a scaled-down version of Quebec society. There are as many sovereignists in the Canadian Armed Forces as there are federalists. And that is no reason to think that members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are sovereignists are therefore disloyal, or opposed to Canada, or that, as our Reform Party colleagues would have us believe, they might want to take up the arms provided to them by the Canadian Armed Forces and turn against Canada. That is utterly ridiculous.

It is no secret to anyone that francophones in the Canadian Armed Forces have too often been downtrodden and discriminated against. Even today, we still hear older Canadians claiming that francophones did not want to fight in the second world war. Despite the betrayal in 1942 by the federal government, which, having promised not to do so, imposed conscription through a referendum, again leaving Quebec isolated from the rest of Canada, despite this betrayal, many Quebecers joined the Canadian forces of the time, the army, the navy and the air force, and fought in all theatres of operation.

There were Quebecers in Hong Kong at the time of the terrible assault by the Japanese and some of them spent the rest of the war in internment camps.

Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal were on the beaches at Dieppe. They were mowed down during the terrible assault in which the British, it was said, were ready to fight to the last drop of Canadian blood. Le Régiment de Maisonneuve was on the beaches of Normandy at the time of the landing. The 22nd regiment fought in the bloody battle of Monte Cassino, in Italy.

Quebecers proved their loyalty to Canada as part of the Canadian forces. They have proven their loyalty all these years. This does not prevent some, many many in fact, from believing that Quebec should become sovereign some day. And, with Quebec's sovereignty, it should come as no surprise that these Quebecers would take the opportunity afforded them to join the Quebec armed forces, without any resentment, disdain or negative feelings toward Canada. There is nothing surprising in that.

• (1515)

Our friends in the Reform Party wanted to create a tempest in a teapot with this debate, which is totally unnecessary and inappropriate. As I pointed out at the start of the debate, they used, they appropriated the rules of the House of Commons to successfully divert the regular debates of this House in an effort to put the Bloc Québécois and my colleague for Charlesbourg on trial.

Once the members of the government have become the accomplices of the Reformers, when the vote comes up, the matter will probably be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. There, God knows the treatment that will be given this ordinary communiqué by my colleague for Charlesbourg, which was simply to explain to our fellow Quebecers in the Canadian armed forces what the sovereignists had in mind on the subject of national defence and the possibility of their joining the ranks of the Canadian forces, in the event of sovereignty.

What treatment awaits this communiqué? No rule has been established in this debate on its treatment. Will our colleague for Charlesbourg be hauled before this committee for some sort of trial? Will this be a remake of the unfortunate Louis Riel episode? Except, of course, for the fact that my colleague from Charlesbourg

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cannot be found guilty by the Canadian courts, since—as our colleague, the leader of the Reform Party, admitted—there are no legal grounds for criminal proceedings.

But this committee will become a kind of kangaroo court, before which my colleague from Charlesbourg will probably have to appear to explain his actions and say that he simply wanted, as part of a democratic process, to inform our fellow citizens in the Canadian Forces of what the sovereignists had in mind for them.

This is totally unacceptable in a so-called democratic country like ours. However, when the leader of the Reform Party says that we in this House are defining a new form of sedition, I wonder if our colleague is not being tried for his opinions. In a democratic country like Canada, it is normal for us—in a debate, in a referendum—to tell all Quebecers, including those in the Canadian Forces, about the consequences of a yes win in the referendum.

Our fellow citizens in Quebec needed to know about the possible consequences and benefits of a yes win in the referendum. Our vision is still alive. The very close vote recorded on October 30 makes it very clear that the issue has not been settled yet and that we will eventually have to consult the people of Quebec once again. Mr. Speaker, you can be sure that, once again, we will show all our cards, as the government party is demanding, and that we will explain to all Quebecers, including those in the military, what we have in mind for them.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address an issue of extreme importance, the motion which addresses contempt of Parliament.

As an elected member of Parliament I take my job and this institution very seriously. An elected representative is just that, a person elected to represent their constituents. The government has forsaken this fundamental democratic principle for political expediency.

• (1520)

It has been established that the hon. member for Charlesbourg, a member of the defence committee, released a communiqué on the letterhead of the office of the Leader of the Opposition on October 26, 1995. It invited Quebec members of the Canadian Armed Forces to join the Quebec military in the event of a yes vote in the referendum.

The original Reform motion called for a recognition that in the opinion of the House this action should be viewed as seditious, offensive and in contempt of Parliament.

The issue is not only whether an action by the hon. member was offensive to the public. However, judging by the number of letters and phone calls I have received it certainly has been deemed to be offensive to the public. The issue is not even whether the action of the hon. member was seditious in the sense of sections 53, 59 or 62 of the Criminal Code. Rather, the issue is whether in the opinion of the House the actions of the member should be viewed as being offensive and seditious in nature.

By allowing the motion to proceed in its original form the House will not simply be determining whether a member should be disciplined for actions offensive to the House and to all Canadians, it will permit the House to consider through an examination by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs guidelines for all members in terms of what their constituents deem acceptable and unacceptable conduct with respect to urging members of the Canadian Armed Forces to break ranks and to join, in this case, the Quebec army.

These guidelines will clarify for the record what is acceptable and unacceptable conduct. This will protect Bloc members, their constituents and their province as much as it will protect all other Canadians.

Without such guidelines the door is wide open for future mistakes to occur. It is important to all of us to ensure the guidelines are as clearly as possible laid out in law.

This is a difficult issue to deal with. The Liberal policy for making difficult decisions is not to make them. Its mantra of ignore and it will go away has not only shut out Canadians, it nearly cost us our country. Canadians expect their government to listen to their concerns and to take appropriate action. The government has proven time and again that it is not interested in the wishes of its electorate. It has followed its own mandate, many times in direct opposition to its constituents and the majority of Canadians.

On this issue the actions of the hon. member for Charlesbourg, on Mr. Bouchard's letterhead, have been ignored. The hon. member for Charlesbourg sent a communiqué inviting Quebec born soldiers of the Canadian Armed Forces to break ranks and join the Quebec national militia. This act has been viewed as a contempt of Parliament.

The issue of sedition has been raised. The courts have decided according to the Criminal Code of Canada that these actions are not seditious. The definition is quite clear that violence against a state must be involved.

What we are asking of the House is that the seditious nature of this action be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and that a decision be rendered. We are not seeking to restrict free speech. We are not out on a witch hunt to rid

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the House of Bloc members. We are seeking clear parameters regarding the conduct of parliamentarians.

Members opposite were in full favour of the same committee creating rules of conduct and penalties for members of Parliament. Now, because this issue is contentious and of great concern to all Canadians, they refuse to take a stand and allow it to be dealt with. We were elected to this place to make difficult decisions, so let us make them.

My grandfather was born in Nicolet, Quebec near Trois-Rivières in 1867, the same year Canada became a country. He believed in democracy and valued the freedom and opportunity Canada has offered.

• (1525)

In his 105 years on this earth my grandfather would not have tolerated the actions of the member for Charlesbourg, nor do the constituents of Vegreville tolerate it. They have asked me again and again why this issue has not been dealt with in the House of Commons by the Liberal government. How can I answer? The government refuses to deal with the issue. Once again the job of government has been left up to Reform.

The government illustrates all that is wrong with politics today. It has attained the same enviable level of arrogance, greed and non-democratic practices as its predecessors. Canadians shouted loud and clear in the last election that the political practices of the past would no longer be tolerated. Yet this government continues the same old style of politics. It is obvious the government's memory is as short as its actions.

Canadians are regarded around the world for their patience, tolerance and understanding. There is, however, a limit to these virtues. There comes a time when enough is enough and the line must be drawn. That time is now.

The Canadian people cried out in shock when the Bloc Québécois became Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The idea of a political party whose mandate is to break up the country holding seats in the House of Commons was bad enough, but adding official opposition status to the mix had Canadians crying treason.

A responsible government would have listened to these fears and responded by clearly defining the role of the official opposition; a role intended to protect the interests of Canadians from irresponsible government, a role as government in waiting. Not this government. It was happy to have a separatist official opposition rather than one that would hold it accountable to Canadians.

The Bloc took the oath of office and promised to uphold, not abuse, the office of loyal opposition. A few months later the then leader of the official opposition began taking official visits to foreign countries. While on these visits, funded by Canadian taxpayers, he sought foreign recognition for a sovereign Quebec.

This was clearly an abuse of the position of leader of the opposition and not in the best interest of Canadians.

A responsible government would have sought an inquiry to investigate this use of Canadian tax dollars and parliamentary influence. Not this government. It has no respect for the hard earned tax dollars of Canadians. It partook in some name calling and refused to take action. The leader of the opposition used the influence of his office to wage a war of words against Canada in order to facilitate his goal of separation. A responsible government would have clearly defined the consequences, terms and conditions of separation and addressed other issues that are important to all Canadians across the country. Not this government. It fed right into the separatist agenda. Its inaction almost proved fatal for the country we cherish so much.

Now the actions of the member for Charlesbourg have left unchallenged and unpunished by the government an event which took place during the referendum campaign. A member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, also a member of the Standing Committee on Defence, abused his elected position by encouraging members of the Canadian Armed Forces to break ranks and form a Quebec national militia.

A responsible government would have brought forth a motion referring this issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs so that a definition of sedition, which reflects the wishes of Canadians, could be determined. Instead the government watered down the motion the Reform Party presented.

The government was quoted as saying the communiqué was shocking and outrageous. It was. In fact the chief government whip who spoke earlier on this matter used the word "mutiny" to describe this incident. The chief government whip in this House described it as mutiny. One would think that such words would be followed by punitive measures. They were not.

• (1530)

The same government whip threatened to take the Reform House leader to the bar of the House of Commons over allegedly trying to pressure the Speaker of the House into appointing the Reform Party as official opposition. It is obvious the government whip considers a loyal opposition to be a greater threat than a disloyal opposition. It would seem apparent that the Reform Party, whose mandate is focused on fixing the country, is considered an enemy of this government and worthy of disciplinary measures. This is indeed a sad reality.

This government prefers a separatist party as loyal opposition. Why? Because it fears Reform. We are a threat. Why are we a threat? We are a threat because we believe in empowering Canadians. We believe in being directly accountable to our electorate. These are fundamental principles of democracy and responsible government.

Privilege

The Prime Minister and other Liberals on occasion have outlined their version of democracy. Again today the member for Mississauga South talked about practising democracy and said that my colleague, the member for Vancouver North, was frustrated by democracy. This of course is the furthest thing from the truth.

What frustrates me and my colleague is that we do not have democracy in this House. We do not have a functioning democracy pure and simple and Canadians know this. We have an elected dictatorship. It is because we do not have a real democracy that important issues like the issue we are dealing with today can be ignored by government.

I will take some time now to examine the different and opposing views of MPs in this House as to what democracy is and really the opposing and different views that Canadians have when compared to Liberal members of Parliament. There are 295 chairs in this House of Commons. To whom do these chairs belong?

Let us take a chair on the government side as an example. To whom does that chair belong? We have had some members of Parliament in the House, including the Prime Minister, who on occasion have said that the chair belongs to the member of Parliament who sits in it. On other occasions the Prime Minister has said that the government chairs in the House all belong to him, the Prime Minister. There are MPs, Reform members included, who believe that these chairs in the House of Commons belong to the constituents who are represented by the member of Parliament who sits in the chair.

I will talk for a minute or two about the idea that the chair in the House of Commons belongs to the member of Parliament. Recently on a major radio talk show out of Toronto a Liberal member of Parliament was being interviewed. This Liberal member of Parliament is considered to be one of the more democratic members. At times he has gone against the hardline position of his government.

A Reform volunteer decided she would phone the talk show and congratulate him for doing that. While she was waiting to get on, a question was asked of the member of Parliament: If your constituents wanted you to vote in favour of capital punishment, would you? The member hemmed and hawed and never really answered the question.

By the time the Reform volunteer got on the line she was angry and her attitude had changed a little toward the member. She asked him, not once, not twice, but four times whether he would vote the wishes of a majority of his constituents if there were a vote in the House of Commons on capital punishment.

• (1535)

The fourth time she put the question this way: If 100 per cent of your constituents showed in a poll or a survey that they were in favour of capital punishment, if a vote were held in the House of

Commons on the issue, would you vote the wishes of your constituents? The member of Parliament said no, he would not, he would vote his conscience. Clearly in that case that member of Parliament believes the chair belongs to him.

Since I have been in this House our Prime Minister has said that he was proud he had the guts to vote against his constituents on the issues of abortion and capital punishment. Is it something to be proud of, that he voted against the wishes of a majority of constituents on the issues of abortion and capital punishment? I think not. In that case the Prime Minister believed that the chair he sits in in the House of Commons belongs to him.

The other view, the predominant view in the Liberal Party, is that the chairs in the House of Commons belong to the Prime Minister. To illustrate this let us look at Bill C-68, the gun control bill. On second reading some Liberal MPs did what their constituents wanted; they had done their homework and they voted against the bill. How were they rewarded for doing the job they are supposed to do here in the House? They were rewarded by being punished by the Prime Minister and thrown off committees.

Then the Prime Minister said publicly that any member of Parliament in his party that voted against a government bill again would be punished by his refusing to sign their nomination papers. That means their political career would be over. That was the public threat. Is that democracy? In that case clearly the Prime Minister is saying: "All the chairs on the governing side in this House belong to me, the Prime Minister, and if you do not do what I say, you are out of here". Does that sound like a democracy? It is not democracy. Pure and simple, it is an elected dictatorship.

There are those of us who have a much different view. There are those of us who believe that the chairs in this House of Commons belong to the people of Canada. Each chair belongs to the people who elected the member of Parliament to represent them. To make the change from the chairs in this House belonging to the Prime Minister or to the individual MPs, Reform put forth several pieces of legislation. These pieces of legislation, had they passed, would have given these chairs to the people and would have taken them from the members and from the Prime Minister.

For example, the hon. member for Beaver River presented Bill C-210 that would have put in place recall of members of Parliament. This would have given the people in the constituency the ability to fire their member of Parliament between elections. On the one hand the Prime Minister would say: "If you do not toe the party line, if you do not vote the way I tell you, I am not going to sign your nomination papers and your career is over". On the other hand the people in the constituency would say: "If you do not do what a majority of us want, we are going to kick you out before the next election". Then that chair would belong to the people in the constituency.

Privilege

The hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam put forward Motion No. 89 calling for freer votes in the House of Commons. Had this motion passed, this country would have had law putting in place freer votes in the House of Commons. The change is very simple and was made in Britain decades ago. If a government bill was defeated it would not automatically mean the defeat of the government. That frees up members of the governing party to vote the wishes of their constituents. Now should the bill fail, it would require a separate non-confidence motion to pass to defeat the government. That gives the power to the people instead of the individual MPs, in particular the Prime Minister, the party leader.

The hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam put forward Motion No. 459. It would have put in place an elected Senate to replace the patronage appointment Senate we have across the way. The member for Kootenay East put forward Bill C-365 which would have put in place an elected Senate.

• (1540)

Numerous motions that Reformers put forth would have allowed the use of referendums on important issues like capital punishment, abortion and physician assisted suicide. They would have been held in conjunction with federal elections so they would not be expensive. That would have given these seats in the House of Commons directly to the constituents.

In every case this government voted against these bills. It shot down the changes that would have moved control of these seats from the individual MPs and especially from the Prime Minister. It would have given control to the people in the constituencies.

It is so sad that these changes, although promised by the Liberals, have not materialized. In fact they voted against them. The mess we are in now, the issue we are debating today would never have happened had these democratic changes been made. I encourage the government to make these changes although I know it will not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the motion put forward by the Reform Party.

To begin with, I would like to quote from a book that is very well known in Quebec, and probably in English Canada as well. My hon. colleague must be familiar with it, unlike the Reform Party; I am talking about the dictionary. This dictionary contains the following definition, which I will be pleased to read my hon. colleague. Dictionaries are organized like telephone books; it is all

very simple: under sedition, one finds: “The stirring up of rebellion against the government in power”.

The motion before us is a motion on sedition. Could you tell me, hon. colleagues, through you, Mr. Speaker, when any “stirring up of rebellion against the government in power” took place? As our leader indicated, perhaps sharing one’s plans with the national media by fax is not the best thing to do if one is contemplating treason. It is not the best way of keeping a state secret.

Another very important word is defined in this dictionary: democracy. We have been asked to provide a definition of democracy. According to the Reformers, the big, bad separatists were democratically elected by the people, but what does the word “democracy” mean? Are we expected, in this House, to make up a definition for the word “democracy”? I have news for them, a definition already exists, and it reads as follows: “A political doctrine whereby sovereignty is exercised by the people as a whole; a system of government (often a republic) in which people exercise such sovereignty. And they exercise it by choosing their representatives”.

The fact that people of Quebec chose to elect 54 sovereignist members back then, members whose primary task was to defend sovereignty for Quebec, was no secret either. It could be, as my colleagues told me quite frankly yesterday, during question period, that all of the 53 current Bloc members should be accused of sedition, of treason, because that is what they really think.

The tabling of this motion was a gimmick to waste the time of the House and to make a point. What point is that? The point that, as far as the Reformers are concerned, the 53 Bloc members are not democratically elected members. To prove their point, they thought it was simple, that all they had to do was redefine the words “sedition” and “democracy”, redefine the rules governing the official opposition, redefine the business of the House. They want to redefine all that. Is that democratic in your books, my hon. friends from the Reform Party? I submit that there might be a slight breach of democracy there.

How did all this begin? Upon our arrival, some very odd people took a fancy to bring a \$500 million suit against us. I must admit that, faced with this, I checked in my bank book how much money I had. I was in trouble. So, I set it aside. Fortunately, this silly suit was abandoned.

• (1545)

The Reform Party then asked that the Prime Minister be dismissed by the Governor General, thumbing their noses at democracy. As has been the case since 1867, the leader of the party that had sent the most elected members to Parliament became the

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Prime Minister; but that was not right either. So then the Reform said "OK, we will just change the definition, change democracy".

Then they said "Maybe that is not diabolical enough. Let us ask the Speaker to make us the Official Opposition; surely the principle of numbers which has been in effect since the beginning is no good, since it does not make us the Official Opposition. So, let us change the Standing Orders." Nothing is too good. Nothing is too good for the working class. So, turning up their noses at democracy, they ask for the Standing Orders to be changed. Luckily, Mr. Speaker, you stuck to the rules as you always do, and everything stayed as it was.

Then the Reform Party, great democratic party that it is, releases a 20-point document stating how and why, in 20 clear points, they are antidemocratic. It is always good to demonstrate things clearly, instead of just letting actions speak for themselves.

They start off by saying that they are for partition, and this is an antidemocratic act. As well, they say "Aboriginal territories within Quebec, within Canada, will be able to remain Canadian", once again turning their backs on democracy. And then what do they say? Such a ridiculous motion would never have occurred to us. They say "Well, if that does not work, we will send in the army." We are not the ones saying all this, they are. What is this about an apprehended revolt? Who mentions the army in a public document? It could have been kept a little more secret, but no, they called a press conference. That's the Reformers for you.

Then, another change. They say "Sedition, that word does not work for us." There is indeed a dictionary with an explanation of what sedition is, but it is not right. So Reform proposes a change—perhaps a good motion for next week—in which sedition will be defined as a crime of opinion. You are sovereignists, you express that as your opinion. We have changed the definition by changing the dictionaries, so now we can accuse everybody. That will be way easier. And what fun too.

Will the Reform Party take over where Barnum and Bailey left off? That is a question one could well ask, because they seem to be in training to become circus clowns. When will they stop their buffoonery and respect the decorum of the House? We are even thinking that, next week, they will present a motion in this House to abolish winter next year. At that time, we will keep to the level of responsibility they have set.

A Reform member tabled a motion last week. I am quoting here an article by Joël-Denis Bellavance in *Le Soleil* on March 13. He said: "Last Friday, a Reform member tabled a motion stipulating that: "—before consulting Canadians, MPs and senators in Ottawa should first determine, following a free vote—a free vote, nothing is too much—whether the question put to voters by the separating province—that must be ours—was simple and direct. A majority vote by parliamentarians would then force the federal government to organize a national referendum—" So, forget about democracy,

which is part of the rules of the game over there, and hold a national referendum. Only the best. The article goes on as follows: "—to define the mandate to negotiate the terms of separation. If a majority of Canadians were to give such a mandate to the federal government,—no need to consult Jojo Savard on this, it will happen—it would undertake negotiations only with those Quebec electoral districts that endorsed the sovereignty proposal. The others would remain part of Canada." Fine respect for democracy.

And then it goes on to say that it would have to provide that Quebec would become an independent state, to be respected. The province would no longer be part of Canada. If you want to move us, send us somewhere warm. And it goes on: "Quebecers would no longer be represented in the Senate and the House of Commons. They would lose their Canadian citizenship and passport. They would lose their right to enter and travel freely within the country—"

I would point out that the United States is a sovereign country and that you can go there without any problem.

Everyday we see more and more examples of how an irresponsible party can cause people to lose faith in its members. They were elected democratically, and we respect that. We were elected democratically, and they should respect that.

• (1550)

They may have a political program—we cannot tell—but they were elected to carry it out, and that is what we are doing with ours. Why not tackle real problems instead of paralysing the business of this House, deliberately bringing the business of this House to a stall with points of information? We informed the military of a course of action. In a 20-point document, we were told that the army would be sent out in the event of a yes vote. Do we not also have the right to inform our people? I would think that we do; after all, it is common now, in our society, to inform the people through the media.

The Reformers said they were disappointed not to have been recognized as the official opposition. People watching the debate on television must be able to see through their little game. I personally feel this is a waste of time, as I said earlier, and this is how the Reformers hope to keep the people of Quebec from making themselves heard through their democratically elected representatives. The word "democratically" is in there are well.

I would therefore like to tell the leader of the Reform Party that we realize that in trying to muzzle the Bloc Québécois, they are in fact trying to silence all Quebecers, because we are their representatives. I can assure you that the Bloc Québécois will not shut up and that the people of Quebec will not be intimidated by the motion put forward by the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, which is incidentally an insidious motion. He referred to francophone Quebecers; I asked him to show me where

in the press release the words “francophone Quebecers” were used. “Nowhere”, he said.

So I had a word with him—I cannot repeat it in this House because the term “lying” is unparliamentary—because of what he had done, and he said: “Yes, I know. It does not matter; we are still going ahead”.

So they are consciously taking actions that violate democratic principles. Reform members should be ashamed of their lack of seriousness, of professionalism with respect to all proceedings of the House of Commons.

Again, asking the Governor General to dismiss the Prime Minister from his post has, I think, never been done; at least I hope so. They might as well ask the Speaker to ignore the Standing Orders and to make them the official opposition, or perhaps ask that next winter be abolished.

This rather whimsical strategy also seems to reflect a lack of preparation on the part of the Reform Party, an obvious lack of substance on matters that are much more important to people, and probably to their own constituents.

I see in the Reform Party’s attitude a conscious attempt to delay the 35th Parliament. The Riel, Rose and McGreevy precedents in this House clearly show that such a serious accusation can only be made in a court of law. Yet, in the case of my colleague, the hon. member for Charlesbourg, two courts, one in Quebec and one in Ontario, have already ruled that this matter could not be taken to court.

In his communiqué, the hon. member for Charlesbourg was only trying to give legitimate reassurances to members of the Canadian Forces, as had been done for federal public servants. Armed Forces personnel were also entitled to be informed of the consequences of a yes vote in the referendum. The hon. member for Charlesbourg fulfilled an obligation, namely providing a segment of the population with information on their legitimate concerns. I believe that was the purpose of the communiqué of October 26, 1995.

If the Reform Party thinks to make use of this motion to beef up its credibility in the rest of Canada, or with its clientele, it is mistaken. All it is doing is beefing up its reputation as a party of clowns.

Again I repeat, all that the hon. member for Charlesbourg has done is to inform Armed Forces personnel, Quebec men and women who are in the Canadian Armed Forces, of the Quebec government’s position in the event of a yes vote. Its orientations with respect to defence were clearly set out in its bill on the future of Quebec. The hon. member for Charlesbourg felt it advisable,

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relevant and legitimate, to submit those orientations to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I shall quote, if I may, from section 17 of the draft bill on the future of Quebec, drafted well before October 25. A motion could well have been introduced accusing every single person in Quebec of sedition and high treason, because it said the following clearly—and could there be anything more dreadful?—

The government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that Quebec continues to participate in those defence alliances of which Canada is a member. Such participation must, however, be compatible with Quebec’s desire to give priority to peace keeping throughout the world under the auspices of the United Nations.

• (1555)

This can be painless. We will take men and women who are already in the armed forces, we will integrate them into the new Quebec armed forces, and they will be called upon to carry out such missions. This is written in clause 17. We will send you the information. You will see what the sovereignist project is all about.

The communiqué issued by the member for Charlesbourg did nothing more than interpret this statement.

I find this debate is dangerous, and I would ask Reform members to stop turning this House into a circus. For their part, they could be suspected of deliberately trying to diminish the credibility of this House. This could be the subject of a motion.

Several Quebec soldiers are sovereignists; it is not a mortal sin. Several Quebec soldiers would be very happy, in a sovereign Quebec, to be members of the Quebec armed forces. Around 50 per cent voted yes, and 50 per cent voted no.

I should mention that if Reform members want to accuse us of all kinds of ills, first they should look closely at the situation of francophone soldiers and their families outside Quebec. A case in point is the story of Maryse Villeneuve, the wife of a soldier stationed in Moose-Jaw, Saskatchewan, who became so frustrated that she lodged five complaints with the Commissioner of Official Languages regarding abuses under the Official Languages Act.

The Commissioner of Official Languages Act deemed the complaints valid enough to conduct an inquiry. There was an investigation on the five complaints and, later on, another study compared services offered to francophones in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, to those offered to anglophones at CFB Bagotville.

I could make 52 copies of this and distribute them because the results of the investigation on the five complaints clearly show there are almost no services offered to French-speaking armed forces personnel in Moose Jaw, compared to services in general

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and to the respect they have for the Official Languages Act in Quebec and at CFB Bagotville.

English-speaking personnel who practice—

An hon. member: Bill 101.

Mr. Sauvageau: Bill 101 has nothing to do with it. Come to Quebec and you will see that we respect our minorities. I can guarantee that, in front of everybody in this House.

Bill 101? To all those people who have never been to Quebec, to those who present motions accusing us of sedition, to those who are investigated because they did not abide by the rules on official languages, to those who do not even bother to have a French newspaper in their province, I will say that this is much more outrageous than Bill 101. That is another thing that should be said in this House.

The Quebec government said, in a document published on April 7, 1995, and I quote: “April 7, 1995”—it would have been more clever if you had presented your motion a year ago.—“It is not necessary to form a very large army, but Quebec could at least adopt a coherent defence policy, suited to its needs”. It is clear that the question is not new. It was in our draft bill on Quebec sovereignty, it was in a working paper published in April 1995, and if you want to accuse people of sedition I will give you another name.

He was professor of strategic studies at the former military college in Saint-Jean and he tabled a report before the Montreal commission on Quebec's future. We are talking here about a professor who was working for the Canadian Armed Forces and was paid by the Canadian government. I can tell you that he was being quite seditious.

The title of his report was: “The future for a defence policy in a sovereign Quebec”. He works for the Canadian Armed Forces. Is he also going to be hanged at Pied-du-Courant on June 24?

“Should sovereignty occur, it would be necessary for Quebec to consider defining and implementing a defence policy”. What would such a policy be like? “The mandate of a Quebec armed force, whether independent or associated with the rest of Canada, could be geared to two secondary responsibilities: first, territorial surveillance and public order; second, peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

• (1600)

A professor of strategic studies at the Collège militaire de Saint-Jean dares to write a document alluding to the possibility of a sovereign Quebec. Wow! That guy was going rather far, was he not? Anything is possible, right? Yet, that gentleman was not accused of treason, sedition, lese-majesty or anything else.

He was referring to a distinct possibility in Quebec. Quebecers did not suddenly wake up on October 28; they were aware long before of the real possibility that Quebec might become a sovereign state. Are people told about that reality? Are they simply told, as Reformers said: “If you respect democracy, we will send in the army”? No. We are civilized and we say: “Listen, should Quebec become sovereign, here is what will happen”. Just like we told federal public servants: “We will sign an agreement to have you integrated into the new Quebec public service”.

We also told old age pensioners: “We will continue to pay you those pensions”. We said the same thing to retired federal public servants. Not because we are richer, but because the money is in funds which exist and which belong to those who made contributions. This is not a mortal sin. I am warning you now: there will be another referendum, so you had better prepare yourself psychologically.

I will conclude by saying that if Reformers are interested in working for the Cirque du Soleil, I will be happy to get them job application forms and then take the forms to the circus.

[English]

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate and to express the concerns of my constituents on the issue raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt.

We are debating today whether the comments made by the hon. member for Charlesbourg and the actions of the then leader of the opposition should be viewed as seditious and offensive to the House, whether they constitute a contempt of Parliament and, therefore, should be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to determine what action might be appropriate.

These are very serious allegations. As the Speaker said, it is probably one of the most serious issues with which the House has had to deal in the 35th Parliament. It should not be viewed lightly.

Yesterday, when my colleague was presenting his motion, some Bloc members were laughing and heckling. They found great merriment in the presentation of the motion. My constituents believe, as do I, that these comments were in fact seditious and offensive and, therefore, constitute a contempt of Parliament, as well as a breach of the Criminal Code.

The issue of whether the courts have ruled on this matter has come up a number of times in the House. I suggest the statement that the courts have found that it does not constitute a breach of the Criminal Code is not right. The Ontario court has yet to rule on the matter and there is an appeal before the Quebec court because the verdict on the original charge was not accepted by the crown, so further litigation will proceed on the matter.

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I have also been very upset by the Bloc comments that I heard yesterday and today on the matter. Bloc members have tried to make light of the issue. They have said that the communiqué, the press release, was simply a communication for information to the Canadian Armed Forces and that it was information for Quebec soldiers. There is no such thing as a Quebec soldier. They are Canadian soldiers, each and every one of them.

• (1605)

I heard it said it was no different than going to athletes from Quebec and saying to them “after we reach independence in Quebec you will be invited to participate in athletics and to represent Quebec”. It is no different than going to the artists from Quebec and saying “when we become independent you will be invited to represent Quebec instead of Canada”. That simply is not acceptable.

It is entirely different from those circumstances. Each and every one of the people in the Canadian Armed Forces has taken a serious and solemn oath to protect and to be loyal to Canada. That is the difference. I do not know of athletes anywhere who have had to take such a solemn and serious oath to represent their country or their province in athletic competition.

I believe most Canadians find it very offensive to have the separatist Bloc Quebecois representing Her Majesty’s loyal opposition in this House. That is not to say it does not have a democratic right to be here. I would support the democratic right for that party to be here. The people of Quebec have the right to choose anyone they wish to represent them in this House.

However, it does not follow that the Bloc has a right, or should be sitting as Her Majesty’s loyal opposition. I find that quite ludicrous. I am most disappointed that the government would hide behind legalities, precedents and regulations to allow that to continue. Canadians everywhere find it outrageous and a good part of the world is laughing at Canada for allowing such a ludicrous situation to continue.

Did the member for Charlesbourg really think Canadian military officers, the men and women, who have pledged allegiance to defend Canada, would take up arms against Canada to enforce a yes victory after a referendum? Did he really think that his actions would not upset Canadians, both English and French, both inside and outside Quebec? I can hardly believe he would be so naive as to believe that.

This act by the member for Charlesbourg and the then leader of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition shows how ludicrous the pretence is that the Bloc Quebecois represents the official opposition and the interests of all Canadians, not just the interests of the separatists from Quebec. One would have to be an idiot to believe the Bloc represents anybody’s interests but the separatists from Quebec.

As retired General Lewis MacKenzie points out, only in Canada would one get away with something like what has happened here. I believe, and everyone might agree, that in some countries people who had done such things would be either executed or would be waiting in jail. In Canada the attitude is simply to ignore it and perhaps it will go away. That is what the government had hoped.

Canadians had hoped for the last four months that the government would do something to address this matter and take some action. We waited and waited while the demand for something to be done got louder and louder. Since the government did not act we were forced to act as the third party in the House of Commons.

The attitude of the leaders of the government, in particular the leader of the Canadian military in this government, is simply outrageous. For the life of me I cannot understand why the police, the military, the courts and government ministers have wimped out on this issue of what appears to be an open and shut case of sedition or at least an open and shut case of inciting to mutiny, both of which carry a possible 14-year prison sentence.

One can quote all the dictionaries one wants, that is quite irrelevant to this issue. The definition of sedition or inciting a mutiny is quite clear in the Criminal Code. It is quite clear that the actions of this member constituted a breach of the Criminal Code. I understand the defence minister consulted the justice department on the issue at the time and was told by a lawyer that there was no case. Therefore, no action was taken.

• (1610)

This incident casts a serious shadow over the loyalty of members of the Canadian military which is responsible for the defence of Canadian sovereignty. On that issue, I quote an article that appeared in the November 25 edition of the *Financial Post*, written by Diane Francis: “The rumours are that secessionists had obtained oaths of allegiance from sympathetic officers eager to set up a rival army”.

The Bloc member who spoke before me said that we were fools to think that there were no separatists and disloyal members of the Canadian Armed Forces who were prepared to take up arms against Canada. It is reprehensible that this shadow would be cast over the Canadian Armed Forces that I respect so greatly and which has such a tremendous reputation around the world for the work they have done on behalf of all Canadians.

Reports in the media also state that there was a problem with junior officers. Again, Diane Francis pointed out in her March 2 article in the *Financial Post*, that half of the cadets at the Kingston Military College were packed and ready to return to Quebec to join the new Quebec army if a yes vote had succeeded.

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What was the minister's response to this? The minister stated in an interview with Diane Francis that he cannot get directly involved because it would cause problems within the military, already demoralized by the Somalia scandal. That is ludicrous. It is his responsibility to get involved, to deal quickly and decisively with what might be disloyalty in the Canadian Armed Forces.

It is quite unbelievable that this has happened. Had it happened in the U.S.A., I can assure the House that the U.S. military and the U.S. minister of defence certainly would not be sitting around on their duffs doing nothing. This is a serious matter. We have an obligation to Canadians to cite this member's statement as seditious and then have it examined by the parliamentary committee on House affairs to determine what action should be taken.

We also have to weed out the separatists in the Canadian Armed Forces because loyalty is everything in a country's army. If the army is not loyal to Canada, then we have a very serious problem.

It is a sad that the government has taken no leadership role in this matter. It took a private Canadian, Brent Tyler from Montreal, to have the courage to take this matter before the courts with an unfortunate, unsuccessful result to this point. The story is not over. We are hoping with all our hearts that the courts will deal seriously with the issue and rule on it in a fair and reasonable manner.

Again, Diane Francis, the journalist I quoted earlier, went to the RCMP over the issue because she felt so strongly. She asked the RCMP to do something about it. They in turn told her that it had been turned over to the legal branch of the RCMP which would be discussing the matter with the Department of Justice. Furthermore, they said that the matter will take some time to investigate. We waited and waited. It appears that the whole matter has been dropped. We all know why. It is because appeasement of the separatists is the Liberal answer to separatism in Canada.

Appeasement has never worked anywhere in the world and it will not work with the separatists. We have been appeasing the separatists in Quebec for 30 years and on October 30 we came within a hair's breadth of losing this country. The strategy is not successful. It does not work and I will not support it.

I have received numerous letters, phone calls and personal interventions from my constituents on this issue. It is important that we have the opportunity to express the views of ordinary Canadians and put those views on the record. Canadians should be able to read in *Hansard* how the House dealt with this serious issue.

• (1615)

This is not only my constituents. There was a poll done yesterday by Broadcast News, a national news network. A question was floated to Canadians: should a Bloc Quebecois member of

Parliament be censured by Parliament because he invited soldiers to switch their loyalty to a post-referendum independent Quebec army? Of the number of calls received, 1,112 people said yes, he should be. Only 66 callers said no, he should not be. Ninety-four per cent of the respondents supported the idea that this member of Parliament should be censured and held responsible for the action he took. It certainly was not simply a job offer to members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Constituents in my riding, Mrs. Maureen Bizon and Mr. Robert Johnson, contacted my office in the last day or two to express outrage with this issue. They demanded that since the government would not raise this issue we should do something. Mrs. Bizon said I should push the Minister of Justice to press charges against these members who made this statement in their press release. She continued by saying these members should be at least charged with sedition or inciting mutiny. At the very least, she wanted a serious and thorough investigation of all the allegations. That is typical of the many constituents who called, phoned and stopped me on the street to talk to me about this issue.

The list is endless. Canadians everywhere feel this is very serious. However, I wanted to quote that one person because I felt it was fairly representative of how all Canadians feel.

The comments made by the member for Charlesbourg and by the then leader of the opposition were reviewed by ordinary Canadians everywhere as seditious and offensive. The inaction by the police, the military and the government are viewed as deplorable by Canadians.

The question now is what to do about it. These Canadians have called on the government first to do something about it. They have called on the courts to do something about it. Failing that, they have now called on our party to do something about it. Will we now simply sweep it under the rug or whitewash it as the government is now still trying to do? Those nasty Reformers are inflaming the separatist movement.

Are we to ignore it and sweep it away again like we have so many other things, as we have for other racial groups that are openly and flagrantly breaking the Criminal Code of Canada? We must not hold them accountable because we will inflame the separatists or other racial groups simply for the appearance of being politically correct.

Did we ever really have to wonder about the military members in Alberta? Do we have to worry about them being recruited to an Alberta army? I do not think that is very likely.

The one thing that concerns me most is that the majority of Canadians living in the constituencies of these members across the floor probably feel the same. However, we heard an ongoing debate

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about how democratic this place is and what opportunities all members have to express the concerns of their constituents.

It certainly appears that members opposite do not have the courage to stand up and speak for their constituents on this issue. Instead they hide behind the procedures and the precedents of the House. They let us raise this issue which is unmentionable for them simply because their party will not allow them to do that. It is truly unfortunate that they are not able to speak on behalf of their constituents and that the government takes such a casual and a laissez faire attitude toward the separatists inciting a mutiny in the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1620)

I remember distinctly last year when this issue was first raised and was front page material in the press across the country these same members were all excited and up in arms over the comments, saying how terrible it was and that something must be done, we have to deal with this and we have to stop this open challenge by separatists to the Canadian Armed Forces.

What happened? Nothing was done. Why did the frontbenchers in the government opposite not take some action? Why did they not answer to what was happening. Why again on this issue, as we have seen in so many others, is the government simply supporting the separatists in the actions they are taking in committees and in Parliament?.

The government, until we raised this issue, had every intention of using its majority in the justice committee to elect the member we are charging here as the vice-chairman of the standing committee on national defence. If that is not aiding and abetting the separatists in their cause to take Quebec out of Canada, I have no idea what would be. The same procedure went on recently in every standing committee of the House.

I believe the only way to satisfactorily deal with the situation is to lay the charges we have and then refer the charge and the motion we have put forward to the standing committee for examination and for recommendations on action to be taken.

I view this as much more than, as the whip for the government said, an impetuous act by a member of Parliament, that we should send it to committee, he should be slapped on the wrist, he should be censured and told he should not do that and then let the whole matter fall aside and take no further action.

We have to take very serious action. We have to consider the expulsion of this member from the House of Commons. We have to consider pursuing laying charges under the Criminal Code of Canada for the action he has taken.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before getting to the substance of my speech, I would like to comment on a number of statements made by the Reform member. After listening to him for 20 minutes, I feel that he almost deserves a prize for saying so many things that are inaccurate and indicative of a lack of sensitivity and vision. All this from people who claim to form a national party that wants to settle the constitutional crisis in which we find ourselves.

One thing that really stunned me was the reference to loyalty. The member talked about Quebec soldiers currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. He said there are no Quebec soldiers. However, there are Quebecers serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. In my opinion, these people are Quebecers first and then soldiers. The member said that these people's loyalty must be to the Canadian Armed Forces.

This would mean that even democracy would only come second. As everyone knows, if, some day, Quebec achieves sovereignty—and I am convinced that it will—it will have done so through a very democratic and open process, with the support of a majority of the population.

It will be after a democratic yes vote by Quebecers that people will be asked to respect the choice of the majority, and that we will set up the structures that every country has, including a military force that will take part in peacekeeping missions throughout the world.

• (1625)

We need to face up to reality. The Canadian army does not necessarily defend Canada's territorial integrity. It takes part in peacekeeping missions. If there was a problem and Canada's territorial integrity was challenged, I seriously doubt that our army would be up to the challenge, and everybody knows that. Again, the main task of our army is to keep or, as the case may be, make peace in the world.

Let us return to the Reformer member said. He said that these people were soldiers who should be loyal to the Canadian Armed Forces before being democratic. This comment is rather surprising, coming from people who were elected to a Parliament which has been democratic since Confederation. Democracy is one of most cherished values in this country and, to a certain extent, makes us all proud.

By his remarks he calls into question the very principle of democracy. It is very disturbing to see a member who sits in the Parliament of Canada, question, indirectly, the foundations of democracy.

Of course he extensively quoted Dane Francis, his intellectual guru, who prompts him on substance, on political thought. I believe

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she alerted the Reform Party to this issue. It should be pointed out, in case Reformers had forgotten, that we are now in mid-March. The communiqué was released in October, a few days before the referendum. All of a sudden, this week, or toward the end of last week, they wake up after reading some articles by Mrs. Francis, who found the whole situation outrageous. They decided to make a big fuss about it.

I find it deplorable that this is going on at a time when we are faced with major problems in terms of employment, when all Canadians ask themselves how we should manage our public finances, which choices we should make, how we should go about it, how to guarantee that everybody, especially the most disadvantaged can pull through this financial crisis. People wonder a lot, and they are very concerned.

My constituents, but maybe not those of my Reform or Liberal colleagues, are more concerned by these issues. I do not know how I will be able to explain to them on the weekend that Parliament spent the whole week debating a motion first from the Reform Party then from the government, discussing charges of sedition against a member from the Bloc Québécois, when our ridings are faced with a lot of problems that we must deal with.

We have already talked about this matter for two days. That is rather outrageous, not to mention all the energy that all the parties have devoted to this issue. And the government should blame itself because it could have stopped this by defeating the motion from the Reform Party, and that would have been the end of it. But no, the government, perhaps because of a lack of imagination or bills to introduce, decided to move an amendment to refer this matter to a committee, but I will come back to that later.

I want to tell you that I find it totally ridiculous that we have spent so much time on such a trivial matter, because it is just that, even though it has been blown out of proportions. We will get back to the heart of the matter in a few minutes.

I would like to remind people that it might also be an attempt by the Reformers to hide the disarray within their caucus at the present time. We know that some of them are questioning the fact that their colleagues people are taking positions that are far too radical. We have not seen them much in the last few days.

At a time when the Reformers' political positions could be examined in the House, they are trying to draw attention away, toward something else. This is typical, it is nothing new, they did not invent anything. I think this is one reason for their actions, but the other one, which is probably much more important, is that, since October 1993, these people have never accepted, and this brings us back to the issue of democracy, that we have formed the official opposition, that a greater number of us were chosen to sit in this Parliament. According to the rules and traditions of our parliamentary system, it is our privilege to be the official opposition, because voters have made that choice.

• (1630)

So, at every opportunity, by roundabout ways, by direct and indirect means, they try each time to challenge that. That is the objective because, of course, we current have an equal number of members, even though that will change in a few days. If they could get one of our members thrown out, that would certainly be the ideal thing. Perhaps that is the only way for them to become the official opposition, because I am convinced that the byelection results will demonstrate once again that Reformers are part of a way of thinking that does not, certainly not in Quebec, nor I believe in the rest of Canada, represent the views of a majority of Canadians, as people are far more moderate than that.

Yet, their comments are reported by some people in the media, like Ms. Francis, who abuse their power in these cases to provide a forum for this kind of action, which does nothing to improve the current political situation.

Let us go back to the facts themselves. What happened? We must go back to a few days before the referendum, that is to say, during an intense campaign, a vigorous democratic debate, a very tight race, a few days before the results were known. I remember that, during the campaign and even before, people were asking us what we would do after a yes vote. Commissions were also set up to consult the people of Quebec. We took part in these meetings, and the hon. members opposite would have been well-advised to do the same as it would probably have done them some good.

People were asking us about the outcome of a yes vote. So, throughout the campaign, we met with various groups of people to explain to them our vision of Quebec after a yes vote.

A few days before the referendum, my colleague, the hon. member for Charlesbourg, released a communiqué, according to which "the MP for Charlesbourg believes that—Quebec will have need of all Quebecers presently enlisted in the armed forces". In the first paragraph, he talks about the size of the armed forces and argues that Quebec will not need such a large military. He then talks about international peace missions, how much they cost, how they work, how many soldiers are needed. He goes back to the international missions and calls on Quebec soldiers to respect the democratic decision made by Quebecers, inviting them to join Quebec's future armed forces should Quebecers opt for sovereignty. He adds that they would enjoy the same working conditions and so on.

I think that telling people who had the right to vote in this democratic process to decide the future of the people of Quebec—because this communiqué was released in Quebec—what they could expect the day after a yes vote was a responsible thing to do. That is essentially what my colleague did.

Yet, a few months later, the motive behind this action is being questioned on the grounds that it is an incitement to sedition. Let me give you the exact definition of the term “sedition” according to the French dictionary. The dictionary defines this term as a concerted revolt against public authority. A concerted revolt.

This afternoon, I read the communiqué over twice, to try to see how it could be interpreted as stirring up a rebellion against the government in power, when all we are doing is urging people to respect the democratic decision that will be made and telling them what to expect the day after a yes victory, in the event that this had been the course democratically chosen by the people.

There is absolutely no mention of any potential uprising. If you were planning a rebellion, Mr. Speaker, is the first thing you would do be to inform every media in the country that you are staging an uprising by making a public announcement? This makes no sense. I think this is elementary.

Perhaps the Reformers would chose an approach the same way they develop their political strategy. However, that is certainly not how most people would go about it.

After sitting in this place for two years and a half, one gets used to Reformers struggling with policy analysis, having a hard time maintaining a high standard of responsibility and not always understanding how a democratic system works.

• (1635)

Things get more complicated when, this week, in a fit of panic, the government gives in to their arguments to some extent and, instead of putting an end to this whole thing once and for all, it goes along with this approach—because we must bear in mind the initial motion put forward by the Reformers, who accused my hon. colleague of sedition and so on and wanted to make him pay for it, which was eventually amended by the government to have the matter referred to a committee of the House for consideration.

But there is nothing to consider, absolutely nothing. What is the point? What good would this do? What goal would this serve? It would just support the Reformers’ approach, and that is very surprising.

As I recall, during the first two sessions of Parliament, and during the first one in particular, the Prime Minister and his ministers stood up in this House one after the other to praise Canadian democracy, saying that this Parliament was the greatest example of democracy, since sovereignists were allowed to sit in it and that it was a great example of Canadian pride and democratic values.

Today, by their actions, they finally accept us but our presence may not be tolerated if we do not promote ideas or political goals that do not suit them.

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In a democracy, there is freedom of speech and the right of dissent. Of course, and we have always made this clear, we stand for a political goal which is for Quebec to become a sovereign country, a partner. We want to be partners, because there are many areas of mutual interest, and we will certainly succeed because good sense will finally prevail. On the other hand, we do not even have a choice. But all this stopped making sense for Liberal members in the past few days, given their major turnaround. If ever there was a turnaround, this is it. They, who used to say they were true democrats, are re-opening the whole issue because they wish to allow this investigation of a sovereignist member’s presence in the House.

As a member of the same party and a colleague of the hon. member for Charlesbourg, I feel I am also attacked by this procedure. Indeed, what guarantee do we have that, having expressed an opinion in our own riding, we could not also be accused of sedition?

In fact, we are being accused of being sovereignists, and therefore seditious. That is what it amounts to, because the hon. member for Charlesbourg certainly did not organize an uprising or recruit people who were armed to the teeth and ready to come to Ottawa and topple the government. He provided an analysis of the situation the day after a yes vote. He was expressing himself democratically, with the means provided to us as parliamentarians. This issue is worrying.

I also read the definition of “sedition” in the English dictionary, and I understood why the Reform members exaggerated. In English, it is defined as:

[*English*]

“Conduct or speech inciting to a rebellion or a breach of public order”.

[*Translation*]

Of course, the beginning of the definition says “conduct or speech”—but you have to read the whole sentence—“inciting to a rebellion”. Our friends in the Reform Party should have made an extra effort to read as far as the word “rebellion”, which can be synonymous with revolt or something else. As far as I know, this is not at all what the hon. member for Charlesbourg was doing. There is a problem, either because Reformers find it hard to do their job properly, or because they have difficulty understanding words. I would say it is a combination of both.

I will get back to it. This really should not come as such a surprise, given how hard it is for them to grasp current reality. However, it is surprising to see Liberal members, including the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, who is listening assiduously, condone that action. That is surprising. This goes for all Liberal members, because we expect them to be much more serious than that.

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• (1640)

I also want to say that we were elected with close to 50 per cent of the votes in Quebec. The Reformer who spoke before me made a very serious statement. First, he alluded to a poll conducted by CTV and said he was convinced that people in every riding in Canada did not accept such an outrageous action. This is not the exact word he used, but it was something to that effect. He said that, in every riding, people did not accept that.

I have to say that, in his speech, the hon. member has already excluded Quebec from Canada.

I invite him to come to my riding this weekend or next weekend and see if the majority of my constituents share his opinion. I invite him to debate that issue in my riding of Témiscamingue. I will send him a map, with the appropriate directions, so that we can have a good discussion and see what the majority of my constituents think about it.

He mentioned that twice in his remarks -I hear him muttering something to the effect that I misunderstood his remarks. He said that twice, using the expression "all Canadians". To say that every Canadian would support him in what he said is going a bit too far. Until proven otherwise, I am still one, and I do not support him. In that sense, my colleague here does not either, nor do my other colleagues, I am sure. Even our constituents and many federalists in Quebec do not accept that interpretation.

To conclude, because I only have a couple of minutes left, I would simply like to say that I am very disappointed with the Liberal Party and the government. They made sure that we would avoid debates on major issues this week, the week following the tabling of the federal budget where the government announced its intentions, where it confirmed its cuts in social transfers to the provinces and its cuts in the unemployment insurance program, two issues of great concern to people in Quebec and in Canada.

We would have had the opportunity to debate those issues more thoroughly in order to improve the reforms the government intends to make, even though, in some cases, we would like it to withdraw them or, at least, pay heed to our arguments so that, while moving forward, they might at least take one fact into account, namely that some people will be hard hit by their reforms.

Instead, the Parliament has wasted two full sitting days, the energy of almost a week, to discuss an issue that should have been dealt with in a matter of minutes. I will have a hard time explaining that to my constituents who are already very cynical about politics and tell us frequently, and I am sure the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands will agree, that our institutions are a bit obsolete.

We got a good example of that this week. Of course, I will give my opinion and I will use up my 20 minutes in this debate, because

we can very well spend a whole day on this. That is why I take the floor, but the whole situation is disappointing, and it can only convince us even more that the only way we can make significant changes in our institutions is for Quebecers to take control of their own destiny and put in place institutions that would be much more modern. That way, Canadians too will have to adjust their institutions to their liking.

In the meantime, I hope everybody will calm down. The debate is not making waves in Quebec. But outside Quebec, and I will conclude with this, there are people who are trying to stir up strong negative reactions. They are trying to score political points at the expense of Quebec, and that is not a healthy attitude. Let me say to all these people that they should be very careful about what they do, because the consequences can be staggering. I am thinking right now of the government, because nothing much can be expected from the Reform Party.

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to listen to the debate today. I am reminded of when I was in the ministry and being confronted with what was called situational ethics. It was a means by switching words around and by looking at things a little differently to rationally justify such things as premeditated murder.

• (1645)

The debate today concerns me because words are used so casually and definitions are used so loosely. We are talking about how we may preserve our democracy. The foundation of our democracy is the rule of law.

I am not particularly interested in a view of the law like that of Inspector Javert in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. However unless we take seriously what the law means, our rights and privileges, and how we conduct ourselves, we are fraying the fabric of democracy. If we in the House who are responsible for the passing of laws do not take it seriously, how can we expect young people who are struggling and looking for a way to get by on the streets to take seriously laws that are given scant heed here?

The matter before us should be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to determine if the member is in contempt of Parliament and to determine if what he did was offensive to Parliament.

It would be a mistake not to look at the charge which was brought squarely to deal with it. If it is not a correct charge, if the person did nothing improper, then it should be set aside. The protection the law offers is the protection of all of us.

There are two important reasons the matter needs to be investigated. Before I explain them we need to clearly understand the historical circumstances behind why the subject is before us today in the House.

On October 26, 1995 the member for Charlesbourg sent a fax to all Canadian forces bases in Quebec. He issued the release under the letterhead of the then leader of the Bloc Québécois, Lucien Bouchard. In part it read that the day after a yes vote Quebec must create immediately a defence department, the embryo of a defence staff, and offer all Quebecers serving in the Canadian forces the chance to integrate into the Quebec forces.

The release concluded:

—I think that soldiers of Quebec origin will respect the people's decision and will transfer their loyalty to the new country whose security they will ensure.

The nub of the question is that they will transfer their loyalty. This was done in the name of the leader of the official opposition in the House of Commons. That is offensive in my mind and that is the charge I would like to have examined.

The federal government's response to the release of the member's communiqué came six days after the referendum vote. The defence minister, as quoted in a November 7, 1995 Toronto *Star* article, said the following: "To appeal to members of the Canadian armed forces to become part of a hypothetical, foreign army, I found this matter perplexing. I found it a bit shocking".

The article also stated that the defence minister asked the military's judge advocate general to give a legal opinion about the propriety of the communiqué released by the member for Charlesbourg.

Since these comments were made Canadians have not heard any other official word from the government. The government has not taken any action against the member; it has not even asked for an apology.

• (1650)

This brings us to the first major reason I believe my colleague had a valid point when he asked that the action taken by the member for Charlesbourg on October 26, 1995, including the charge of sedition, be investigated by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Since the referendum I have travelled extensively in my riding and throughout the country. I have listened to many Canadians who are extremely perturbed and upset at the member's behaviour, that he should do something like this and that there should be no response. They sincerely believe he did something wrong.

The informal broadcast news poll quoted by my colleague indicates that I am not one small voice in the wilderness since 94 per cent of respondents said that something should be done. While

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this is not a scientific poll with 1,178 respondents it is a larger number than many polls with results upon which major decisions are based.

These are very serious accusations. We have heard many definitions of sedition; many dictionaries have been quoted. I quote from the Criminal Code, section 62(1)(b) which describes sedition and its penalties:

Everyone who wilfully (a) interferes with, impairs or influences the loyalty or discipline of a member of a force,

This is not talking about a revolt. This is talking about influence and this is exactly what was done, in my estimation. The section continues:

(b) publishes, edits, issues, circulates or distributes a writing that advises, counsels or urges insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of a duty by a member of a force, or in any manner causes insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty by a member of a force is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Section two defines a force:

(2) In this section, "member of a force" means "a member of

a) the Canadian Forces; or

b) the naval, army or air forces of a state other than Canada that are lawfully present in Canada.

This description of the law is amazingly clear.

I mention these Criminal Code provisions to reveal how seriously Canadians feel about the situation and to point them out to Bloc members who would quote any variety of dictionaries to put their own slant on the matter. The definition we are interested in is the definition of the law, the definition of our Criminal Code.

Just as Canadians are upset about the situation, the member's actions infuriate them even more because of the lack of action by Parliament. Parliament's inaction in the situation is inexcusable. People are outraged there has not been any government investigation. They cannot understand why the federal government does not see it as an important issue.

Is the member's behaviour acceptable for a parliamentarian? Canadians deserve an answer to that question. This is what we are asking for. They fear the government is simply papering over the matter. One newspaper article I read in December 1995 stated: "Sources in Ottawa say the government, fearful of turning Bouchard and Jacob into martyrs, quietly has decided—"

• (1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I hesitate to interrupt any member on a debate of such importance, but it is important that we clearly respect our parliamentary regulations, our own regulations, and not mention or identify any member by name but only by riding or by portfolio. Even in the context of a quote from a publication or otherwise in the House, we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

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Instead of referring to the member by name we must recognize him or her by riding. I ask for the member's co-operation. It was probably not his intent, but by the same token and because of the importance of the debate we should be very respectful of one another and observe all the rules and procedures of the House.

Mr. Mayfield: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your intervention. There was no intention of disrespect. If there is I apologize. I will repeat the quote: "Sources in Ottawa say the government, fearful of turning Bouchard and" the member for Charlesbourg "into martyrs, quietly has decided to drop the matter". This quotation is taken from the Toronto *Star* of December 18, 1995.

Is this true? Is this what the government has done? Is this the motivation for lack of action? Where exactly does the government stand on the issue? We have not heard a position. We have not seen any action taken. Canadians want to know. Canadians do not deserve to have their voices smothered by a closure of this debate.

The Speaker said only two days ago:

The House today is being faced with one of the more serious matters we have been faced with in this 35th Parliament—I am of the opinion that nothing will be gained by delaying consideration of this issue to a later date.

I believe the charges are so grave against one of our own members that the House should deal with this accusation forthwith.

The Speaker assured all members that they would have an opportunity to speak to this grave matter. I believe I can speak for members of my caucus when I say I am offended by this motion of closure.

If the matter is so serious, why do the Liberals want to bring closure to this debate? Do they not want the interest of Canadians represented? Their actions are preposterous. This is an elitist attitude and it is undemocratic. It stifles the debate of the elected representatives of the people who are deeply concerned by the matter.

Canadians want it debated. They want answers to the questions raised by the communiqué. Let us not try to cover up the matter and choke the voices of the Canadian people. Canadians deserve to know and have a right to know whether the member's behaviour is in contempt or whether his participation in it was an offence to Parliament. For once let us allow Canadian people to be heard and continue this historic debate until the issue is completely aired, but that will not be.

The defence minister said that there were certain things we do and do not do in public life. I completely agree with that statement. That is why we must send the matter to the committee, investigate it, and learn if such behaviour by the member is acceptable for a public official. Above all, let us represent the interest of Canadians. Let us take seriously what our constituents are saying to us.

Let the matter be clarified in Parliament for us and for all Canadians.

Before I close I need to mention the most crucial reason the actions of the member must be investigated. That reason is principle. From the argument I have just given the House can see that my colleague's question of privilege is not a personal attack. He has not taken these steps in an attempt to discredit the members of his family or his party.

● (1700)

The main point here is that the people of Canada have seen a member of this House make a mistake, if we wish to use that term. We all make mistakes, in this House and everywhere. Life is a series of mistakes. We say things we should not. We do things we should not do and sometimes we do things we do not even know are wrong. But in the end Mr. Speaker, there are consequences for our actions which you as the Speaker of this House must fairly allot.

Canadians perceive that the member for Charlesbourg has made a mistake, but to rectify the situation Parliament has done nothing. It has not even investigated the accuracy of the accusation. I would be incensed if these accusations were flying around and I was being accused with no recourse, no redress, no way to clear my name.

If we deal with this matter and send this issue to committee as a matter of contempt to be considered by the committee, we at least tell Canadians that their leaders are treated the same as every other Canadian before the law. It tells them that politicians do suffer the consequences of improper and illegal actions, that equality matters all the time, even when it does not benefit the politicians or the elite. Let us do the right and honourable thing and send this matter to the committee for investigation. Let the committee receive the whole issue without the masks and the deletions.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. It has raised some very serious issues that the House will want to consider before the motion is voted on. When I speak to the motion I speak not just of the motion as originally proposed but to all the amendments. We are now debating a subamendment to the main motion.

It is instructive to look at the terms of the original motion and the terms of the amendment the government proposed, which in my view makes the most sense and which will clarify the situation for everyone if it is adopted. I know the Reform members will disagree with what I have to say but they are going to have to listen to this because it is important.

The main motion wants the House to decide the issue in advance, decide that sedition has occurred in this instance and that the matter of the seditious acts of the hon. member for Charlesbourg

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ought to be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for study.

If the issue is whether or not sedition occurred, and I submit that is what the committee should be studying, why would the House express its view on the actions of the hon. member for Charlesbourg before the committee undertakes its study? If it were adopted here in the House as the view of the House, that would be the end of the matter and there would be no point in having the committee study it.

The whole purpose of the referral to committee is to give the hon. member for Charlesbourg an opportunity to present his side of the case. There is a hearing in committee. The committee hears witnesses and evidence. The committee acts as a tribunal or court. When it makes a determination of the issue it brings a report to the House which the House can accept or reject. The matter could also be referred back to the committee for further study or with directions that the committee do certain things or present a certain kind of report. The fact is the House is master of this procedure. The House refers the matter to committee and the committee is the one that does the investigating. The committee acts as a kind of judge, although the House retains the right to vary the judgment of the committee. It is like a right of appeal.

Hon. members opposite seem to have missed the point. Certainly the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt who proposed the motion spent three or four months studying the issue in great detail before he came to the House. The hon. member missed that famous reference to a case in the time of James I that my colleague from Vancouver Quadra came up with the other day. I would have thought that after four or five months the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt would have had every precedent that could be found, but he did not. Nevertheless, in spite of all that research, he came up with a motion that in effect condemned the hon. member for Charlesbourg before the hon. member had any opportunity to explain his position before some of his colleagues. This is taking away the hon. member's elementary rights.

• (1705)

I know the Reform Party has trouble with law and order issues. I am glad to see the hon. member for Calgary Southeast. I know she is still ashen from the treatment she got in her caucus meeting yesterday. I read all about it in the media this morning. Perhaps later tonight we will hear her make a speech on the subject and she will tell us about law and order.

I know the hon. member for Calgary Centre has flown the coop because of the treatment he received at the hands of his colleagues in caucus yesterday. I suspect the member for Calgary West

skipped the caucus. If he had any sense he would have stayed away. If he had a lot of sense he would join the Liberal Party.

These members are being treated like that because they have views on law and order that are at variance with their colleagues. One wonders if the hon. members were not whipped at their caucus meeting because that is certainly a practice some of their colleagues seem to favour. They want to introduce whipping in the Criminal Code again. When we deal with sedition, we are not necessarily talking about whipping. I hope that is clear to members of the Reform Party. I know they love that kind of punishment and feel it should be meted out to teach people lessons.

In this case we have to give people the right to be heard. That is an elementary principle of our criminal law system which I hope I do not have to repeat too often for hon. members opposite. It is one we have to follow in this House when we look at the facts of this case. I submit that the proper procedure is to refer this matter to the committee and allow the committee to hear evidence and come up with a determination as to whether or not sedition has occurred.

The subamendment that has been proposed to the government's motion wants some words put back in. They have changed it a little bit. They have weakened slightly but they want "seditious nature of the" put in. I cannot tell this House how much I oppose this amendment.

In my view, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is the proper place for a determination of the issues that are before the House in this motion. The whole matter should be referred to the committee for study without the House expressing its opinion on the merits or otherwise of the matter. That is the point which seems to have gone clear over the heads of hon. members opposite.

I have tried to clarify this. Some of my colleagues on this side of the House have also tried to clarify it. I hope the point is now clear. We will vote against the subamendment. We will support the amendment. Once the motion is amended, I will be happy to support it.

I know members of the Bloc Quebecois are nervous nellys over this issue. They have realized that one of their colleagues could be in trouble if the committee makes a finding that is contrary to their hon. colleague's best interests. That is a matter for the committee to decide.

I am not going to argue the merits or demerits of this case one bit in the House. I am quite prepared, since I am a member of that committee, to wait and hear the evidence before the committee and make up my mind after I have heard the evidence. I will give the hon. member for Charlesbourg the benefit of the doubt, as any trier of law or fact in this country should do, as I am sure you would also do, Mr. Speaker, if you were sitting on that committee. It is what

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any member of this House should do in the event the committee comes up with a report on the issue.

The fact is that is the question which has to be decided. It will be decided in the committee, not here. I am not going to argue the merits of the case or even discuss the law relating to sedition in the course of my remarks. I want to stick with the procedure that is being followed in the House to ensure that we are treating one of our colleagues fairly by giving him the benefit of the doubt in terms of what may or may not have transpired in relation to these events. That is something we have to do. He is entitled to the benefit of a reasonable doubt, as is every person who is accused of an offence in Canada.

I want to turn to some of the remarks made by hon. members opposite this afternoon in the course of their speeches on a subject that is dear to their hearts, including the hon. member for Calgary Southeast. That is the issue of closure on this debate. They have suggested that by limiting debate today we are restricting the right of Canadians to hear about this very important subject.

Normally I have opposed closure in the past and I usually do now. Our government has used it sparingly and only in cases where it is an obvious necessity. In this case there is no need for the debate to be a long one. This is a question of referring a matter to a committee for study. There will be a further opportunity to debate this matter when the committee reports to the House.

• (1710)

Hon. members opposite can rant and rave all they want about restrictions today. However, the fact is that some day, at some future time, assuming the motion carries, the procedure and House affairs committee will table a report in the House and somebody will move concurrence in that report triggering another debate in the House.

There is a lot of opportunity for debate. There will be ample opportunity for committee hearings. If hon. members want to go to the committee to make their views known, I have no doubt the chairman and other members of the procedure and House affairs committee will entertain those applications to be heard. If members have such strong views on this and feel they can contribute evidence to the committee, I am sure they will be heard and I am sure they will want to be heard.

This is not a motion on which closure is inappropriate, particularly given the amount of time we have already spent on the matter. I want to point out that when closure is applied under Standing Order 57 the House continues to sit until 11 o'clock at night. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that just a couple of weeks ago we heard hon. members opposite talk about the evils of closure.

On Monday, March 4 the government imposed closure on a motion which allowed for the reinstatement of bills. I notice that

hon. members opposite have reinstated some of their own bills under the aegis of this great motion.

Mr. Duhamel: Even though they criticized it.

Mr. Milliken: They thought it was the worst thing since I cannot recall what event. They were just appalled that the government would do this; yet, when they got the chance to reintroduce their private members' bills, up they got, chucked them in and said: "We want this back to where it was at the beginning". If they were principled they would have said: "No, we will only take first reading of this bill and put it through all of the stages. We will go to the committee and try to have it made votable and we will take our chances on the draw and getting it on the order of precedence". But that was not the way they proceeded. Once they saw the opening which was provided for them by a generous and beneficent Liberal government, they jumped into the loop.

Let us go back to the debate of Monday, March 4. I recall some of the speeches because I was quoted extensively. I enjoyed the debate. I will not quote from my speech, but I will quote some of my colleagues opposite.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre made a wonderful speech. He said as recorded at page 214 of *Hansard*:

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.

What happened on March 4? What time did the House adjourn when there were no more speakers to stand up and speak on the motion? I have *Hansard* here for that day and my goodness, it tells us that the House adjourned at 7.25 p.m., and that was after some votes.

Mr. Duhamel: Surely not.

Mr. Milliken: Yes. We had a 30 minute bell and then we had two votes. In other words, the debate collapsed essentially at 6.40 p.m. Of course we had not debated the motion all day. In the course of the afternoon we debated another matter. We debated concurrence in a committee report until about 6.15 p.m. or 6.20 p.m. Then there was a brief debate. Two members opposite spoke. Then there was a 30 minute bell and then there were two votes.

We could have debated until 11 o'clock at night, but we stopped at 7.30 p.m. Why did we stop? Because the Reformers apparently were not opposed to this. Their right to speak was apparently being cut off, according to the hon. member for Calgary Centre, who used to be the Reform whip, but when it came time for them to continue speaking, they strangely ran out of speakers. Is it because it was so late? Do they not like speaking at night? What do they do at night? Why were they not here? I was here. I was ready to sit until 11 o'clock but hon. members opposite were not. Where were they?

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Had they not come to Ottawa? Maybe they were still at home in Calgary. I do not know where the hon. members were.

Let me read another quote into the record. This was said just before the bells started at 6.40 p.m. I know the hon. member for Capilano—Howe Sound was one of those who spoke that day. I could quote him too. I would like to, I just have to find the place.

• (1715)

Let me read from the other speech of the hon. member for Kootenay East, that most pious of speakers from the Reform Party. He has that very deep voice and he is able to make it sound so convincing. I know some hon. members get carried away when they hear the hon. member for Kootenay East. Had I stayed in the House throughout his speech I am sure I would have been transported myself.

He said: “This is a very sad way to start the second session of the 35th Parliament of Canada”. In fact, as I recall he almost wept as he said those words. He said: “We can only hope that the people of Canada will not pay attention but will talk to each other and say it is really Liberal, Tory, same old story”. He is quite a poet.

I could also go back in the same speech on page 270 of *Hansard* where he said:

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 this Parliament.

Yesterday that same member was pontificating in his grandest style when the deputy House leader came in and gave notice of closure on the debate we are discussing right now, in fact, the notice of the closure motion that we adopted earlier today.

The hon. member for Kootenay East was interrupted in the course of his remarks. As was recorded on page 666 of *Hansard* he was in the middle of his speech. The government House leader interrupted him with notice of closure and the poor hon. member for Kootenay East almost had a fit. He said: “Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely outrageous”. I heard him on television. He was simply beside himself that this was happening and yet let us watch the clock today.

Mr. Speaker, I know you are prepared to stay here until 11 p.m. and so am I. I am really looking forward to hearing speeches from members of the Reform Party until late into the night. If they say their rights are being trampled on and that their right to express their opinion on this matter is being cut off, I want to make sure that they take full advantage of the time that is available until 11 p.m. to permit them to express their views.

If they are not prepared to use it on this motion on which they claimed such outrage on March 4, I hate to think how little there will be today. In fact, I would be willing to wager that by about 6.40 p.m. today they will stop. Do you know why? Because at 6.30 p.m. we cannot revert to the Government Orders that are called for today. As soon as we get past 6.30 p.m. they know they have used up the full government day and overtime after that is extra for a closure motion.

I do not think they have enough members here to carry the debate anyway because guess what, their members do not think this is important and they have all gone home. That is what I think has happened. I am not saying they are not here in the House, I just think they have gone home. I do not blame them but some of us are going to stay and do our duty tomorrow.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Milliken: Hon. members opposite laugh but they do not realize that I will be here tomorrow for the day. It is a duty day for the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and he will be here, Mr. Speaker, as I suspect you will.

Mr. Bryden: I too.

Mr. Milliken: My colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton—Wentworth will be spending the day here too. I expect there will be some members of the Reform Party here but the bulk of them do not give two hoots about this debate and they have gone home.

I know western Canada is an attractive place to go but still if they thought this motion was so evil, why are they not here tonight staying until 11 p.m. debating this motion? Why are they not expressing their outrage and concern? I know why. They are not outraged or concerned. What we have here is a lot of crocodile tears.

On Monday, March 4 let us look at the list of members from the Reform Party who expressed their great outrage at the fact that the government was using closure on that particular motion. We had the hon. member for Calgary Centre whom I have had the pleasure of quoting. The hon. member for Capilano—Howe Sound made a wonderful speech. His speech consisted largely of quotes, I may say from me, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the hon. member for Halifax. He had a wonderful string of quotes. Indeed, we essentially wrote his speech for him.

The hon. member for Edmonton Southwest was here and made a wonderful speech. The hon. member for Lisgar—Marquette spoke. The hon. member for Lethbridge charmed us with his utterances. The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley went on at length, and then as I mentioned, the hon. member for Kootenay East closed the debate down four and a half hours before it was due to finish.

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• (1720)

There was a lot of time for them to speak. They had seven speakers. Each had a maximum of 20 minutes—

Mr. Duhamel: Seven out of 52. Not even 14 per cent.

Mr. Milliken: They all expressed their outrage. The hon. member for St. Boniface knows that when closure was used by the previous government and we found our time restricted, in almost every case we used up all the time available because we had so many members who were concerned and wanted to speak. But that does not seem to be the problem. They scream and howl that the government is doing something it should not but when it comes time to express their views at length, they seem to lose interest and the debate peters out.

Mr. Duhamel: Fewer than 15 per cent.

Mr. Milliken: As my hon. colleague says, fewer than 15 per cent spoke. Hon. members opposite like to rant and fume and put on pious airs that somehow the government is doing something it should not. In fact, the government is doing this to help hon. members opposite out of a difficulty.

If we did not use closure, Reform members would look as though they were not carrying the debate long enough if they let it go after four or five speeches, which is what they prefer to do. We used closure to give them a chance to say: "The government is awful for doing this to us. Now we will just sit down and let things go and let the government have its way". That is what they are really doing. We have seen it before and we see it today.

We look forward to the events at 6.35 or 6.40 p.m., when I expect that members of the Reform Party will suddenly have had enough to say on this subject, the question will be put and the House will adjourn until tomorrow.

I am sorry that hon. members opposite take such a cavalier view. I hope members of the Canadian public who will no doubt be watching their clocks at 6.30 p.m. will observe this behaviour on the part of the Reform Party and realize that all the drivel we have been listening to yesterday and today is so much crocodile tears and is completely phoney.

Mr. Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House, if it would be agreeable to the previous speaker, to have questions or comments of that particular member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the Reform Party who spoke just before me asked: "What are the motivations of the government?" I would like to address this issue. Given the current

political situation, there is something quite strange about both the motion put forward by the Reform Party and the amendment proposed by the Liberal Party. You will remember that, after the referendum, Mr. Bouchard promised to stop, for a while, to focus on the referendum in order to put Quebec's fiscal house in order.

But strangely enough, ever since Mr. Bouchard made that commitment, federalists have made a whole series of statements which all seem aimed at bringing the referendum issue back again for debate and at putting Quebec in its place. For two days now, we have been discussing a motion we did not put forward and which brings us back to the referendum issue. In fact, the motion before the House today is only the latest element in this long series of statements.

Why do we see so many strange things in the strategy our colleagues have been developing in the last few months? Maybe—and this might enlighten the Reform Party—it is because they have a hard time swallowing the close outcome of the last referendum.

The House will recall that, immediately after the referendum, the Prime Minister, in what was probably a last-minute strategy, tabled here at the end of the session a motion to recognize Quebec's distinct society and a bill on the veto power. The motion, of course, does not bind the current or future governments or the courts, and the veto power, as any bill, can be revoked any time. Both were obviously in line with the Prime Minister's thinking, which is, as he said himself in the House: "Everybody knows that I am French when I speak English; I do not have to write that down in the Constitution."

Quebecers saw both of those things for what they really are, that is, smoke screens and meaningless attempts.

• (1725)

This is why, in spite of strategies, the sovereignist option is still on the rise in the polls, and more and more people, in Quebec as well as in Canada, are now convinced that Quebec's sovereignty is inevitable.

Why do sovereignists think that? Because they know Mr. Bourassa was right when he said that the status quo would be the worst answer for Quebec, and the status quo is what is offered to Quebec. Also because they remember Mr. Trudeau promising to put his government's seats at stake if there were no change, and they are fully aware that they cannot rely on that kind of promises.

If the Prime Minister did not learn a lesson from the referendum, the Canadian people did, forcing the Liberal Party to hurriedly review its strategy.

[English]

The Canadian people understood what was going on. Everybody now knows that the Prime Minister of Canada and the chief of the Conservative Party do not speak for Quebec any more. They both lost the referendum in their ridings. How can a man promise

anything for Quebec when he is not able to give any guarantee at all concerning his own riding?

Before the referendum, the Prime Minister was asking for support from his troops, his allies in Quebec, which is understandable, from his opponents in the House, the Conservative Party, and even from the Reform Party which he had made fun of for about two years. However, everyone knows that a man who needs to be supported is a man who is falling down.

The weakness of the Prime Minister had to be concealed as much as possible. A scapegoat had to be found to explain the unexpected result of the referendum. Mr. Ouellet, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, pointed his finger at Mr. Daniel Johnson in Quebec and said: "We almost lost the referendum because this man was not passionate enough about Canada". I just want to remind the people and especially my friends from the Reform Party that Mr. Ouellet never came to Quebec during the referendum and did not even vote. That is how passionate he was about Canada.

[*Translation*]

Realizing that this strategy did not work, the Prime Minister announced a cabinet shuffle. To solve the problem, so it seems, because it is all part of a strategy, he appointed Stéphane Dion, the present Liberal candidate in Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, as the new Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Who is this man? A hard liner who always talks about plan B. He is the one who tells us, and I quote: "I am coming to change the reality"—nothing less—"I will be the architect of the great national reconstruction".

He is the one who said, before the referendum, as we remember, that no promises should be made to Quebec because, according to an infallible mathematical model, it was impossible that sovereignists would get more than 42 per cent of the vote. This man will be the government's strategist. It is easy to understand why their strategy is slightly flawed.

He is the one who said, in Toronto, before the referendum debate, and Quebecers will not forget: "The more we hurt Quebecers, the more support for sovereignty will drop".

If he is elected in Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, it will be the first time a member from Quebec, paid by Quebecers to defend their interests, will come to Ottawa to hurt Quebec.

The fact that the Prime Minister has chosen such a man to be responsible for the great national reconciliation, a man who displays so much contempt for the people he would represent, shows just how much the Prime Minister was dreaming and how

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far reconciliation is out of the picture, despite the fine words of the speech from the throne.

Things like that can happen only in Quebec. We would never see an hon. member from British Columbia elected on the promise that he will have Western Canada suffer, but we see it in Quebec. We see it because members of Parliament who are elected to the House of Commons as members of the major political parties, when they have to choose between Ottawa's interests and Quebec's interests, will always choose Ottawa. We had the best example of that recently in the House, when our colleague from Sherbrooke tried to work out an alliance with the Reform Party. He is a member from Quebec, paid to defend Quebec's interests, but nonetheless, he tried to form an alliance with our friends from the Reform Party to deprive the Bloc Québécois, the only party in this House that really defends Quebec's interests, of its status as official opposition. But there are many more examples of decisions and stands that go against Quebec. I would like to enumerate a few.

● (1730)

Before the motion we are debating today, we heard a series of utterly absurd statements from followers of our Prime Minister. Of course, there were the infamous text by Mr. Trudeau, which begins "I accuse", and I remind you that people who have responded to it are not sovereignists, but federalists from Quebec. Mr. Bourassa responded to Mr. Trudeau by saying: "If Mr. Trudeau was so vehemently opposed to Meech, it may be because he did not want to admit he was wrong in 1981 and in 1982". Mr. Johnson also responded to Mr. Trudeau by saying: "Mr. Trudeau has no doubt forgotten his opposition to Meech and to Charlottetown, and considering what he did in 1982, we should forget Mr. Trudeau".

The Indian affairs minister made some fairly inflammatory statements, which I will not repeat in this House. Who responded to him? The response did not come from sovereignists, but from the leader of the Assembly of First Nations himself, Mr. Mercredi, and I quote: "The Indian affairs minister is not speaking on behalf of the aboriginal people, so when he raises the possibility of violence", because that was the issue, "and of retaliation, I disapprove of him. He should mind his own business, which means fulfilling his obligations to the aboriginal people. He should not consider himself as an aboriginal leader because he is not".

We also had statements by the Minister of Transport regarding Mirabel, because it is a hot issue these days. He said this, and I will simply quote these few words: "The phasing out of Mirabel by the Montreal airports authority is a consequence of separatism, which has caused the economic downfall of the city". In this case, it is our friend Mordecai Richler who responded to that statement in a

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passage from his book *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!* Here is what Mordecai Richler said:

[*English*]

“Once the St. Lawrence seaway was in place, Montreal’s slippage was inevitable”.

[*Translation*]

That is when Montreal’s slippage started. Finally, we had some bizarre statements by Mr. Dion, who said that “Quebec sovereignty could lead to a conflagration in Africa, a conflagration in Asia and could hurt Europe”. In this case, nobody responded. Such statement was not worth responding to.

Finally, we get to the motion we have been debating for two and a half days and the amendment proposed by the Liberal Party. Of course, all my colleagues have examined this issue very carefully, they have looked at it from all sides. They have taken out their dictionaries, because of the seriousness of the words, they have considered all the facts, and I think now that they will be able to vote on this issue.

I would just like to say in closing that before voting for or against this motion and this amendment, members should keep things in perspective. First, what we have in this text, this communiqué, is a sovereigntist vision. We are, after all, a sovereigntist party. Second, this is not a statement that was made just like that, without thinking. We gave it thought before issuing it and all of us in the Bloc Québécois are behind our colleague from Charlesbourg.

Third, our electoral platform was and is still very clear: it is first of all to defend the interests of Quebec, and second, just as clearly, to promote sovereignty. We firmly believe, even if this is not the opinion of everyone here in this House, that after 40 years of debate, sovereignty for Quebec is definitely the only solution for Quebec and for Canada.

Fourth, I would like my colleagues to remember that we have been elected to this House, that we have been through an election, on this platform and that we have been elected to do what we said we would. I would also like my colleagues to remember that we have always respected all the rules of this House and all the rules imposed on us as citizens. I do not think that anyone in this House can deny this fact.

● (1735)

Finally, I would like people to be aware that the letter from my colleague from Charlesbourg tells Quebecers currently in the Canadian Armed Forces what they would be offered in a sovereign Quebec. Contrary to what certain members of the Reform Party think—not all, perhaps, but I have heard at least two references to a

call to arms when there is no call to violence involved at all—this is well thought out information being transmitted to people who will be voting on our political agenda. On the strength of that alone, there is nothing to generate discussion.

I would like people to reflect upon the fact that dragging our colleague before a committee to examine the circumstances involved means putting his motives on trial, for there is nothing in this document to justify taking it to committee. If that decision is made, there will be a political price to pay. Quebecers, whether federalists or sovereigntists, know full well that the decision to shape their own future, their own destiny, is theirs and theirs alone, and that a Commons committee has no say in the matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start this evening by reflecting on a letter I received from my old office nurse. When I was a young physician in practice this nurse guided me in my early years. She was experienced. She was a good friend. She is a very moderate woman, a woman whose advice and ideas I admire. I quote from a portion of her letter:

Grant, I am so fed up with allowing men and women free reign in Parliament to use any means to promote sovereignty. When they do wrong they should be charged with treason.

This from a woman who is so moderate, so kind, so gentle, so typically Canadian. Reformers have placed on the table that charge.

I also quote a recent editorial by Peter Stockland of the *Calgary Sun*:

Whatever internal squabbling might be racking the Reform Party, we’re comforted its MPs still know the real enemy when they see it.

That was demonstrated yesterday when Reformers fought furiously to keep Bloc Québécois MP Jean-Marc Jacob from taking a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): This is the second occasion in the last hour on which we have had quotes read regarding the important subject matter with which the House is presently seized. With the greatest respect to all members participating in this important debate, I ask for your indulgence and your co-operation.

The most brief and concise explanation I can give is that in the House we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. I think we all understand, as we are all knowledgeable in the 35th Parliament, that we cannot name another member. We must always refer to his or her seat by the riding, or in the government’s case possibly by portfolio if a ministry is involved.

I seek the co-operation of all members in this debate so that we can maintain it in very respectful parliamentary fashion, which has been the case since we arrived here in this 35th Parliament.

Mr. Hill (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, thank you for that reminder. My apologies.

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That was demonstrated yesterday when Reformers fought furiously to keep—

—the hon. member for Charlesbourg—

—from taking a key post on the Commons defence committee. This member, of course, is the separatist jack-a-nape who sent out a letter out during last year's referendum urging francophone Canadian soldiers to switch to a Quebec army in the event of independence.

Outrageously, the Bloc put him forward for the committee vice-chairmanship.

Even worse, Liberals on the committee were prepared to go along with this gross insult to everyone who's ever served in this country's military.

• (1740)

Next is a rather unparliamentary comment and so I will change it: "Only some very vigorous defence by Reformers forced the member to withdraw his name". Indeed he did withdraw his name. "Even so, the post was eventually filled by another Bloc member, again with Liberal collaboration.

"Having won at least half the battle, though, the B.C. Reformer for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt has shown he is determined to press on in the political war against such separatist infamies. That Reform member put forward a motion in the Commons to have the member for Charlesbourg investigated for behaviour that is seditious, offensive and contemptuous of Parliament.

"More Liberal skulduggery kept that from being full debated, but Reformers would not let it drop. Good for him", says the editorial, "and good for the party that is supporting his initiative."

"It is difficult these days to sort out everything Reformers have to say on both economic and social issues, given the long simmering divisions that finally emerged this week between its right wing and centrist factions."

"But as even those most involved in that dispute acknowledge, resolution of their differences is a matter of the party's full blown policy convention in June. For the moment it is enough to know they are united where it counts, against the enemies of Canada".

That editorial sums up why we are here today and why I am speaking on the issue. I reflect on the way the sovereignty debate has gone on. The Bloc and its PQ cousins have said to their credit that this debate should be entirely democratic, that they would be forthright in their approach on sovereignty and would tell and express the facts exactly as they were.

I draw the attention of the Canadian people to two huge flaws in those statements. The sovereignty referendum was designed to be and followed by a period of attempted reconciliation between sovereignists and the rest of Canada. The timeframe, approximate-

ly a year. If there was no new relationship with Canada to be established, sovereignty would follow.

I read and watched the sovereignty debate. That position was repeated over and over. I asked my Bloc colleagues specifically and directly to explain to me how then could diplomats in Canada be asked to immediately accept a sovereign Quebec if there had been a positive result in the referendum. What does that have to do with negotiation? What does that have to do with honesty in a question? There was no concept of such negotiation. There was no such concept of an honest question.

On the issue of a call to Quebec armed forces members to change their allegiance, that was what the member for Charlesbourg said. I do not care who talks around the issue, that is what the letter said plainly, straightforward and specific. Au lendemain, the day after. What does that have to do with negotiation? What does that have to do with a year's process to see if Canada and Quebec could come up with a new relationship? Nothing, zero, zip.

• (1745)

Canada is a tolerant country. Canada virtually tolerates everything. I will go to another specific incident from the sovereignist camp that I consider to be dishonest.

[Translation]

I have here a chart that appeared in *L'Actualité* on May 15, 1991 showing the winners and the losers in Confederation, the provinces that won and the ones that did not. According to it, and the Bloc members can have a look, we can see that three provinces paid: British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. The other provinces received money in Confederation. Quebec received \$304 per capita. The chart is very very clear. It appeared in *L'Actualité*

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I hesitate to interrupt the member once again. I realize he is quoting from an article. That is well and fine but I do not believe we would want to encourage the practice of presenting it in such a way that it becomes a prop. I ask the member to simply refer to the text in the normal fashion of quoting from it as we would any other source.

[Translation]

Mr. Hill (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, that is fine. The three provinces paying money are clearly red, the others are a different colour. The amount they paid is in brackets. It is very clear. I have a Quebec school book, it contains the same chart found in the May 15, 1991 edition of *L'Actualité*.

A different text with this chart indicates simply the amount of the per capita equalization payment in 1990. The three provinces in the earlier chart which paid in Confederation are no longer colour

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coded. The chart has been changed. Why? So that young people in Quebec believe that their province is the least favoured in Confederation. It is not true. Debate is not possible if the information is inaccurate.

An honest debate is required with each Bloc member, but there is no honesty if the information is inaccurate. I called the Quebec minister of education to say the information was wrong—it can happen. The answer? Zip. I got the same answer from the editors of the school book. The young people are short circuited. It is not true.

• (1750)

[English]

If we are to have a debate on sovereignty, the information we debate must be accurate and honest. I cannot allow a debate to be dishonest in the House.

Where do the Liberals stand on the issue of sedition? Why was there not rapid action on the issue? Could it be the Liberals would rather not have the issue debated plainly? I certainly hope not. Have there been examples of colleagues from the government favouring the Bloc over Reform? Let me cite a few.

We asked to sing the national anthem in these halls. Too hot. We asked for the opportunity to have committee vice-chairs, as it states in the rules that an opposition member and not an official opposition member should have that opportunity. Too hot.

Turning to truth on social programs, the other day in the House the finance minister said that Reform would cut \$11 billion from medicare. That statement was wrong and inaccurate. I challenge any Canadian to look at our taxpayers' budget to see a specific reduction in the highest priority Reform program of \$800 million. How could the finance minister manufacture \$11 billion from that?

My Liberal colleagues will take \$4.3 billion from the Canada health and social transfer payments to the provinces. If the Reform were to take all the same transfers it would take \$1.5 billion, and we are criticized as being the slash and burn party. It is sad but the Canadian public will eventually learn these facts.

The Bloc Quebecois are in the House democratically. The democratic processes in Canada placed them here. I am able to say I like the individual members of the Bloc. I have conversations with them. They are fine men and women. I believe their ideas are completely wrong and I will debate this vigorously with them. However individually I have no problem with any of them.

The same democratic processes that brought them to the House will also take them from the House. I challenge them to be honest in their debates, to say exactly what they mean, and when the Canadian people vote they will be taken from these halls as separatists. I hope some of them will stay in these halls as committed Canadians.

I close by asking the Liberals not to soften the motion. I ask back bench Liberal MPs to stand up for Canada. If inciting soldiers to change their allegiance is not sedition, what is?

Mr. Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask unanimous consent of the House to delete Standing Orders 78 and 57.

• (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the request of the hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I was elected to the House of Commons, I never thought I would have to speak to a motion like this one. They taught me in school what sedition means and the seriousness of that word.

The Reform Party presented a motion which is unfounded and not supported by facts, but which has dangerous negative effects because it challenges the right to democratic debate.

One could say that the motion may have been presented because the Reform Party does not know Quebec well enough, because in the end it is a very bad political move for a party to attack the democratic value of decisions made in Quebec. This is certainly not the right way to obtain support in Quebec. All Quebecers know that the referendum debate, held in the fall of 1995, was democratic and quite proper. The opponents may have been serious, they may have been rough, but the debate was clear.

I believe Quebecers made a choice with full knowledge of all the different issues at stake. There were questions on the future of federal public servants. What would their future be? The yes committee answered the questions and indicated what guarantees it could give them, what their situation would be like in the future. Members of the armed forces asked similar questions. The committee for the yes answered their questions. The committee for the no answered their questions. This is no sedition material.

As a matter of fact, in Quebec, nobody was offended by this statement. It did not stir up any passionate debate. Nobody said the Canadian government was being overthrown. A clear choice was made in Quebec many years ago with the emergence of the sovereignist movement, which has been in existence for at least 25, 30 or 35 years. Democracy would prevail.

In 1980, we accepted and lived with the results. Forty per cent of the people had voted yes. Mr. Lévesque, who was the sovereignist leader, said only: "À la prochaine". We took note of the results.

We tried to make changes in the federal system. We supported the Conservative Party in Quebec and took “le beau risque” in the hope of amending the Constitution, but it did not work. Quebecers sent sovereignists to Ottawa as the official opposition, and they elected a sovereignist government in Quebec City.

Our traditions are democratic, which makes us trust the position of people, and we will continue to trust people in the future.

I have nothing against the Reformers. In a sense, we see there is a blatant lack of knowledge of Quebec in this motion. I could just tell them that this should be a lesson to them, because if they repeat this once or twice, well—we wonder what their objectives are. Do they need a bigger following? Why have they moved this motion when there is no substance to the issue itself?

What I do have a problem with, however, is this government, the Liberal Party of Canada, supporting the merits of the question, the merits of the motion before us, by proposing a purely cosmetic change, an amendment that will in no way prevent the member in question—who, as far as I am concerned, cannot be accused of sedition in any way, shape or form—from being hauled up in front of the committee. Nowhere does the Liberal Party say that it does not want the matter to be referred to committee. The only thing this amendment does is to delete the part of the motion that has no real impact.

In that sense, in light of Liberal tradition and given the fact that it has ruled the country for many years since Confederation, the Liberal Party of Canada is acting very reprehensibly in making such a decision.

• (1800)

It should have clearly rejected right off the bat this hare-brained, unacceptable proposal with no basis in reality. I am sure that the Liberal Party of Canada will have to pay the political price for this in the future.

There is also what I would call perhaps the subliminal or somewhat perverse impact of this proposal. We as Bloc members might think that this is a way to influence the future. They are going to give a hard time to anyone making statements, however appropriate, so that, during the next debate on the national issue, they will all be afraid to speak out for fear of being accused of fomenting sedition.

You can be sure that this will not fly in Quebec. No Bloc member will leave this House with a guilt complex or feel that he or she should not say certain things regarding Quebec’s future. For 25, 30 or 35 years—5 or 10 years in the case of younger members—we have fought to make sure that we will always be free to decide our future with full knowledge of the facts. We have turned Quebec

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voters into intelligent voters, voters with an extensive knowledge of politics who make choices accordingly. And you can rest assured that we will continue to do so. When over 90 per cent of the population votes in a referendum, one cannot say that unacceptable threats were made.

Given what Reformers are implying, and what Liberals are supporting, could it be that, in six months, if a Bloc member says something about submarines it might be viewed as a seditious statement? Will that statement be viewed as an attempt to have the army or the navy turn against Canada? This makes no sense at all. If we try to recover tax points, is that going to be interpreted as a measure to break up the country? Tax points have existed for 30 or 35 years. Mr. Duplessis got them through the democratic process.

As regards the Canada Health Act, if Quebec makes choices that differ from the national standards that the federal government wants to impose, would that be seditious, since it would not comply with the will of Ottawa? There is no end to that. It is imperative that this motion be soundly defeated. Otherwise, parties supporting it will have contributed to a lowering of the quality of democratic debate in Canada. This is unacceptable, and it is not what Quebecers and Canadians want. The resilience of a political system depends on the quality of its democracy. When democracy is respected, the decisions and the outcome of the political process are accepted.

In the 1995 referendum, the yes side got 49.4 per cent of the vote. Had our democratic system not been very strong, there could have been a temptation, like what happened when other countries became independent, to say that the results were not credible and that all voters were not informed. It did not happen in Quebec. We all accepted the outcome, and I think Quebecers have demonstrated the quality of their democracy and their determination to have an interesting democratic life.

Speaking from my personal experience, I cannot help but notice a striking difference between this motion and the contacts I have had with Canadians.

Last year, for example, I spoke to the Rotary Club in Edmonton. We had a discussion with federalists who are Canadians with strong convictions and who believe in the future of this country. We had a very straightforward discussion on our vision and theirs. We probably even talked about the army. But none of the Canadians who were there said I was being seditious for saying that, once independent, Quebec would respect international agreements, would have a small army and ensure that people with some military expertise could continue to work in that field within the Quebec military if they wanted to do so. We never asked that the army rise up against the Canadian government. That is pure fabrication.

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• (1805)

A word of caution is in order here. This must happen again. Basically, blowing situations like these out of all proportion amounts to manipulating information. Indeed, there is an old saying that goes something like this: people will believe that an untruth, if repeated often enough, is the truth. Parliament, and all the members of this House who are looking at this situation and have actually read the communiqué, should send a clear message.

We can speak in legal terms. Under the law, to be blamed with something, that something must have had an impact somewhere. Have you seen even one French speaking soldier from Quebec stand up and decide that he would support the Government of Quebec? I do not know why he would have done something like that, because the government accepted the outcome of the referendum. So, the motion before us is unwarranted. This is quite amazing.

In a court, as we have seen in civil court already, I do not think a judge would have found that there were grounds for prosecution. I think the House should come to the same conclusion. We are like a grand jury here. We will be accused of not doing our job properly, if we go through with this. This is why I say the Liberal amendment seems quite bland. We do need to use parliamentary expressions, but this makes for a wishy-washy position.

An hon. member: Did you say banned?

Mr. Crête: I said bland.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I can understand that everybody wants to take part at a certain point in the debate, but I hope that this will be done in accordance with parliamentary rules.

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, I am quite aware that your comment does not necessarily apply to me, and I will continue to speak in the most appropriate way possible.

Moreover, we are setting a precedent here, a highly inappropriate one. Once you cry wolf, the next time you cry wolf, the rule may no longer apply, even if the situation warrants it. In view of the significance of the Standing Order referred to, we recognize that the charge is serious, but that the crown's case is terribly weak. Besides, Reform's argument did not deal with that, or only very little. They discussed all kinds of other things connected with how they perceive Quebec, but they do not have a real case here.

Therefore, it is important, I think, that we get out of this debate, that is once all speakers have been heard, that we come back to issues of real concern to Quebecers and Canadians, so that people feel that we are really doing our jobs as politicians. Moreover, this will give us a chance to increase the level of trust in politicians. You can be sure that it is not a proposition like the Reform Party's

motion that will increase Canadians' level of trust in their politicians, which now stands at 4 per cent. We have to demonstrate how responsible we are.

As you know, Tuesday was supposed to be an allotted day on unemployment insurance reform. I was looking forward to it. No matter what we decide on this subject, at least we were talking about something everybody was aware of, about which everybody is talking to us on the street in our towns. It is a constant concern for them.

Is anyone in Canada, apart from the Reform Party, concerned about attempted sedition by a member of Parliament? I have not heard of anybody who has. Nobody had that impression. Nobody warned of a possible uprising. It existed only in the minds of certain people, and I believe it is high time we called an end to this debate.

It is also important to realize that we are dealing with age-old behaviours, also described in a book called *Portrait du colonisé*, whereby the colonizer often attempts to make the colonized peoples feel guilty, to penalize them.

• (1810)

This is what happened in Africa during colonial times; Africans were told it was their fault if development was not working, it was up to them to find out why it was not working. That was how people behaved then.

A Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, once said that he was not sure whether Quebecers would be able to take on their responsibilities as a democracy because they needed a big brother, another government, another Parliament to guarantee their future well-being. Those are old tricks and one of them is being used here. The motion comes from an opposition party, but is also supported by the government when it says that it only wants to amend it and wishes it to be referred to a committee.

We must not forget that in the end what is in question is the reputation of a member of Parliament, someone who did his job in full cognizance, in good faith, and with the intent to inform his fellow citizens of the facts. Each member must realize that. Let us try to see if there is something in what he said to inform the people, to convince them of an idea, that could have been maliciously twisted around and presented as an illegal and unacceptable act.

If the House adopts this motion in its present form, if it adopts the amendment of the Liberals and the motion of the Reform Party, it will not have shown sufficient respect for the member concerned, because the seriousness of the situation is such that no one should be submitted to this type of accusation unless it is clearly the case, unless the facts warrant it. For now, no one has convinced us in any way that there is a case.

To conclude, I would say that this whole situation resulted from a certain feeling of uneasiness, because many people in Canada realize that Quebec is on its way, and they are trying to find a way to stop it. It is somewhat comparable to the case of a teenager who becomes an adult. He wants to leave home and be independent but his parents are a little worried. At first they try to control his or her behaviour with arguments, then with threats such as “we will no longer help you”, etc.

Now, Canada realizes that Quebec is determined to achieve its sovereignty and that it is going to do so over the next few years. Therefore, we now have the aggressive reaction which aims at penalizing. We always come back to the old notion of the colonized and the colonizer: to penalize is another trick, but it will not work, because the people of Quebec have reached a level of political maturity which is beyond that. We are above such things.

At the present time, Quebec is working hard on a reconciliation between anglophones, francophones and allophones, to make sure that the plan that could not be brought to fruition the last time will get a sufficient majority the next time. It will take two, three or four years more, but we will have the bases to do so. We will have convinced people with real arguments, which is what we really want.

In my opinion, if hon. members really want to do their part as supporters of Canadian federalism, they should avoid measures like this one, which will have an opposite result in Quebec. Let them show us that Canada can develop. Let them show us that there could be another way to proceed in Canada. Let them show us that Quebecers could control their development and be recognized as a people, and then the hon. members who support Canadian federalism will really have made their point, and might convince Quebecers that they have the best answer. That would be so much more convincing than negative measures like this motion.

So, even if this motion will not determine Quebec's future, it will still be another argument Quebecers will be able to invoke. Let us not forget conscription.

• (1815)

Let us remember the night of the long knives in 1982. We can add this to the list. If the House condemns one of its members who acted in good faith, we will add that to Canada's liabilities. It will be one more reason for Quebecers to choose to be sovereign, to come to terms with themselves as a nation. They will choose to have a democratic state where actions such as the tabling of this motion, as we have seen in this House, will not exist.

[English]

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish there were questions and comments. Instead of

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making a speech I would love to respond to some of the comments made by the various people who have spoken today.

The previous speaker mentioned that we are trying to prevent Quebec's future; that the people of Quebec have reached a level of maturity where they almost did the right thing. In other words, he is saying that the separatists keep asking the people of Quebec if they are ready for separation and they keep giving the wrong answer. But the separatists are going to keep asking the question until they finally get it right.

He talks about the people of Quebec almost reaching a level of maturity where they can make the right decision. That is the first time I have heard somebody who claims to represent Quebec stand up to call the people of Quebec—the voters of Quebec who, whatever their wisdom, sent the Bloc Québécois here—immature. Basically the hon. member is putting them on notice to get it right the next time. That is really interesting.

What is at question here is not whether the Bloc Québécois dealt with some vague question about the future of public servants in an independent Quebec, should such a thing ever come into existence. Bloc members were not saying: “If after a yes vote in the referendum and if after we negotiate with Canada, as we said we would do for a period of a year, we cannot come to terms and if ultimately we go through the necessary steps toward independence and achieve it, at that time this is what we anticipate doing in terms of the military. These are the opportunities that we expect to offer to the people of Quebec who have a military background and who wish to be part of the military in the new Quebec. This is the way we will deal with it”.

That is not what the letter stated. That was stated very clearly by my hon. colleague from Macleod earlier today. This is not about after separation. This is not about after negotiation. This is about the next day, the day after the vote.

The separatists have gone to the people of Quebec and have said: “We want your permission to negotiate with Canada for a year on new terms for Quebec. If we cannot resolve anything with Canada, then we will ultimately look at sovereignty”. That is not what that letter indicated.

We have not heard from the author of that letter. He has not said: “You have mistaken my intention” or “I have not properly written this letter. This is what I really meant”. The letter was clear and unequivocal. It said: “The next day we want you to renounce your relationship with Canada and swear allegiance to Quebec”. The implication was scary.

Many times Bloc Québécois members have said: “We are going to unilaterally make certain decisions. If you do not do what we want you to do, we are not going to pick up our share of the debt”.

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That was one of the many real threats which was issued by the members of that party.

I hope the people of Quebec will reconsider who they have sent to Ottawa to represent them. Bloc Quebecois members say they are here to represent the people who sent them here; the majority of people in Quebec. They state that their sole purpose is to represent Quebec's dreams of separation and sovereignty. If that is the case and its members have two-thirds of the seats in Quebec, when only 49 per cent of the people in Quebec support them, maybe we have to question that we have too many people from the Bloc here. I hope the people of Quebec will take notice of this debate and I hope those in the ridings where there is a byelection will take notice and maybe reconsider who should be representing their real interests in Quebec; the people who want to take them from Canada with a lot of false promises and how they will still have all the benefits of being Canadian while being an independent country, versus the people who come here and refer to those who did not get it right in the referendum yet as being immature. I guess they are referring to those immature people who sent them here to Ottawa.

• (1820)

Members talk about how this is an overblown motion, how it has been taken way out of proportion and that there has been nothing done that would call for the censure of a member. Has this happened before or even recently? Has there been any question of contempt of Parliament brought before the House?

It happened in February of this new session. The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the chief government whip, thought there were things in this Parliament that called for contempt of Parliament charges. The hon. member from the Bloc Quebecois wrote to members of the military and stated that the day after the referendum they wanted them to swear allegiance to Quebec, to support Quebec, to protect Quebec.

Let us compare that to what the government claims it thinks are reasonable grounds for contempt of the House. The Liberals said the Reform member for Lethbridge had the audacity to ask the voters of Canada to express their opinion with regard to a decision being made in the House and to convey those opinions to the Speaker of the House. How dare they ask anybody to be democratically open in voicing their opinions in the House. What a contemptible thing. That is the Liberal's point of view. They say it is absolutely disgusting that the Reform party would ask Canadians for their opinions. How bad did they think this was? They thought it was pretty bad.

In our motion we have asked that this be presented to committee for study. We have asked specifically that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for examination to see if the committee would agree there is a problem and some action should be taken. Someone is suggesting members of the Canadian military should swear allegiance to a new group even before they have separated from Canada.

The hon. member from the Liberal Party suggested what the Reform Party did was so reprehensible it should not even go to committee, that the member should be called before the bar of the House. With no hearings whatsoever call him before the bar and admonish him from the Chair. I can see the Liberals have very strange priorities.

A colleague mentioned at length today some things the Liberals have done to show how they have sided with the Bloc Quebecois. Why should we be surprised they feel it is worse that we ask Canadians for their opinion than the Bloc Quebecois asking some members of the Canadian military to swear allegiance to someone other than the Canadian government?

We heard an interesting little Mutt and Jeff routine a little earlier today when the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands did his little routine with one of his colleagues. He spoke about closure and about why we railed so much because they had brought in closure.

I remind the hon. member that his party did the exact same thing when the Conservatives did it while on that side of the House. They have already done it three times more than the Conservatives and we are only half way through this questionable Liberal mandate. I will not even get into why I say questionable. They know what promises they made and they know what the realities are.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gouk: I see Jeff is back already. I do not know where Mutt is but Jeff is back carrying on with his routine without his partner.

A short time ago I asked for unanimous consent to delete Standing Orders 78 and 57. There was a great scurrying of little furry feet and other types too, I suppose. They came scurrying out from points beyond shouting: "No, no, no. We cannot have that".

• (1825)

For those Canadians watching the debate what I was asking for in the request for unanimous consent to delete Standing Orders 78 and 57 should have pleased the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. I was asking for them to cancel the motion to invoke closure. The Liberals say the Reform Party is getting wound up about nothing, that we are not even prepared to raise enough speakers to carry this on anyway. Then why did they object to our asking for them to withdraw closure? Because they know that part of what we were talking about was the democracy of this House.

It seems kind of silly for us to stand up and be railed on by these people about the fact that we are concerned about the democratic process in this House. The democratic process in this House suggested the hon. member can take time along with everyone else.

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Of course now the Liberals have put their feet in it. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has stated that the debate will collapse, that we will not keep it going. Of course now he has backed himself into a corner. He cannot stand up and talk because he himself would be carrying the debate beyond the point which the Liberals predicted it would fall.

There is no point in carrying on debate when the Liberals do not listen, when they try to turn our words. We feel we are making our point and our point is very clear. The Liberals turn each piece of information that comes to this House. They twist it and try to present it to the public in a very questionable manner. That was done when they started suggesting it is a worse offence to ask Canadians for their opinion than it is to ask our soldiers to swear allegiance to someone other than the government they serve.

Why did we table this motion? We tabled this motion because Canadians all across the country asked for this type of action. Long before this issue came up I found myself in the unenviable position of responding to constituents who asked: "Why has the Bloc not been charged with treason? How can we possibly have a Parliament where we use our tax dollars to bring people into this Canadian house of democracy to preach and rail against the country that is paying their way? Their former leader has taken his Canadian pension and gone back to promote separation from within". How can I explain to these people that because we are democratic we allow people—

Mr. Duhamel: Talk about pensions.

Mr. Gouk: Oh, the hon. member wants to talk about pensions. I know he is going to sally up to the trough. Fifty-one or 52 of us over here will not, but he certainly will. If he wants to talk about pensions, I would love to go on for a long time on that one.

I found myself saying to my constituents that as long as this is a democratic House, we will allow them to bring forward their points of view. We have never tried to bring forward any motion even remotely like this concerning the Bloc for simply stating their opinion in this House. This particular action went way beyond the stating of opinion.

As I said at the beginning, if the Bloc had simply said that in an independent Quebec these are the opportunities that will be available in the military, we would not be bringing this motion forward. But what the Bloc has done is it has essentially advocated desertion from the Canadian military swearing allegiance to someone other than the crown to whom they originally swore their allegiance. The facts of this are very clear. We have the letter. It is not some comment someone said a member of the Bloc made. It was a letter sent out from this House.

It does need an investigation. Unlike the Liberal Party we are not saying to bypass the investigation, hang him from the yard arm

before anybody reviews this and call him before the bar, like they wanted to do because we asked Canadians for their opinion. We simply want this investigated. We want it investigated openly. We believe there are a great deal of problems with what the member for Charlesbourg has done.

• (1830)

We think it should be viewed as seditious but nowhere did we say it is an act of sedition. We said we believe it should be viewed as sedition and we certainly believe it is an offence to the House.

As such we believe it constitutes a contempt of Parliament. Consequently we ask for it to be examined by a standing committee of the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gouk: We hear all kinds of people going on on the other side. It will be interesting to see if they rise to deal with this question themselves or if they simply, as I have said before, want to continue to use other members' times. Again that is a queer notion of Liberal democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Maybe it is because of the distance of the Chair but I see more than one member standing, more than one member speaking. So there is no confusion I recognize the hon. member for Kootenay West—Revelstoke.

Mr. Gouk: Mr. Speaker, I thought the Mutt and Jeff act was going into a trio or a quartet. They had not given me my lines. They seem to know theirs so well.

I do not feel I need to go on further with this. I am sure the hon. members will now stand and start expressing their opinions when the Canadian public can actually listen to them, instead of small shots coming from the other side. I am sure if they have a real opinion they will share it with us. Otherwise I guess they will continue to talk when other members are up.

This is an important motion because it represents what we are hearing from the Canadian public right across the country. When I talked to these people defending the right of Bloc members to express opinions in the House, I said they had the right. However, with this letter that was sent out they have crossed the line.

There are some people who thought it should have happened long ago. It was a grey area at best. We gave them the benefit of the doubt. However, with this letter to the military they have crossed the line. Action needs to be taken. The Canadian public demands this and the Liberals should support examining this and following through.

Do not take it into committee and simply put it to sleep, as many of the members across do when debate is going on in the House. Deal with it in committee. Bring it back to the House and follow through with it. Do not simply shove it into committee and leave it

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there forevermore, never dealing with the question. It needs to be dealt with, it needs to be dealt with properly.

If the hon. members across the way who are being quiet for a moment—I do not know how that ever happened—have a point to make I wish they would rise and make it. If they have something sensible to say I would hate to miss it the one time that might happen.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, based on the remarks made in this House by many of the members of the third party, I have the honour of informing you that you have before you an enemy of Canada. Except, there is something I would like to know, and perhaps you are asking yourself the same thing. Who are the real enemies of Canada? Would they by chance be those who dare to believe in Quebec's sovereignty and who abide by the rules of democracy or would they be those who have no qualms about trampling on democracy? Because it is indeed democracy we are talking about.

The motion introduced by the Reform Party with respect to the communiqué by my colleague for Charlesbourg is, in fact, a denial of freedom of expression, the first step to trashing democracy.

This motion goes far beyond the words in the communiqué at issue. The debate on the alleged seditious intent of this communiqué cannot reasonably be based on the articles of law defining sedition and even less so on the principles of democracy known to all of us and respected by most of us, I hope.

• (1835)

Section 59 of the Criminal Code defines seditious intention as follows: “—every one shall be presumed to have a seditious intention who teaches or advocates, or publishes or circulates any writing that advocates, the use, without the authority of law, of force as a means of accomplishing a governmental change within Canada.” Quite an undertaking, that.

In addition, section 62 of that same Criminal Code discusses sedition in relation to military forces, indicating that anyone encouraging members of a force to insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty is guilty of an act of sedition.

The communiqué as such, you will agree, contains nothing of the sort. No passage in this communiqué can justify this matter's becoming a topic of debate, and still less it's being referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The communiqué from the hon. member for Charlesbourg had only one purpose: to inform Armed Forces personnel of what would happen in the aftermath of the referendum if there were a yes

victory, just as several other communiqués were issued during the referendum campaign concerning federal public servants.

In addition, the creation of a Quebec army after Quebec attained sovereignty was part of the program of the Bloc Québécois and of the Parti Québécois, and has even been addressed by specialists in military affairs in major dailies, Charles-Philippe David in *La Presse* in particular.

Moreover, the attempts by a Montreal lawyer, Mr. Tyler, to go before the courts of Quebec and Ontario with the matter lead to failure. According to the courts, there is nothing in this communiqué to give rise to a charge of sedition.

We are therefore entitled to wonder what the Reform Party's true intentions are in tabling this motion. Is it really motivated by respect for the law? I doubt it.

In light of what we have heard from the various Reformers in recent days on this question, it is increasingly clear that, in the eyes of sensible Quebecers and sensible Canadians, this court room farce is aimed at the Bloc Québécois and their plans for sovereignty. Proof of this lies in what the hon. member for Kootenay East said yesterday: “This seditious activity of the member of the Bloc Québécois cannot stand. This is the line in the sand. We go no further. There are people in Canada who see those who would take Quebec out of Canada as being the enemies of Canada.” There are many such people, Mr. Speaker, if we are to judge by this speech. The member went on to say: “I will tell you that I am one of them and I am speaking for those people”.

At the very heart of this debate is freedom of expression. To the members of the Reform Party, the very words of Quebec sovereignists are seditious, and I would go so far as to say that the very existence of sovereignists is seditious, hence the present motion. Rather than participate democratically in Quebec sovereignty, they prefer to take issue with the basic right of freedom of speech.

The referendum debate in October 1995 took place in an unparalleled climate of democracy. At no time did either the yes or the no side in Quebec attempt to deny the other's right to debate its option, and each side informed people of its position.

Thus, in introducing this motion, the Reformers want to punish the member for Charlesbourg for speaking on the option he defends. His only crime was that of not sharing the vision of the Liberals and the Reformers on Canada's future. The motion therefore denies the right to freedom of speech of Bloc members and thus of Quebecers who support sovereignty in Quebec.

It is therefore of some concern that, in this House, which is a part of the highly democratic institution of the Parliament of Canada, freedom of speech and the right to defend one's position in a democratic context recognized by all citizens are being called into question.

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With their amendment, the Liberals are choosing to hide their heads in the sand and refer the question to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, rather than defend the democratic principles guiding debate in society.

Would this strategy be part of plan D, E or F? Otherwise, why threaten to bring those who exercise their freedom of speech to promote sovereignty before a committee in order to judge them on the legality of their remarks? Despite the threats of partitioning and other inflammatory remarks made by Stéphane Dion, which were, moreover, never condemned by the federal Liberal Party, and even less so by the Reform Party, we hope that this Parliament will refuse to approve a motion which is such an incredible breach of democracy.

It seems to me that this unprecedented attack against freedom of speech would have justified Liberals putting aside party politics and their alphabetical plans and vigorously defending—as we do—the very foundations of our democratic rules.

The attitude of the Liberal government is disquieting in a society that boasts it advocates respect for human rights. As a matter of fact, according to the Reform Party's logic, everybody who, during the referendum campaign, discussed the creation of an army in a sovereign Quebec deserves to be accused of sedition. This would

include not only all the members of the Bloc, but also all the reporters who discussed the topic or wrote about it—and why not also those who dared to read them or watch them on television?

The interpretation made by the Reform Party of the notion of freedom of speech threatens the rights not only of the sovereignists but also of all the Canadians who oppose in one way or another some public policies or some of the Reform Party's positions.

The Reform Party's motion is in fact a throw back to some of history's dark moments when democracy was trashed—Chile under Pinochet, Greece under the colonels or Spain under Franco.

That is why I will vote against the Reform Party's motion, against the Liberals' amendment and against the amendment to the amendment presented by the Reform Party.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Pursuant to order made earlier today, the question on the amendment to the amendment is deemed to have been put and a recorded division requested and deferred to Monday, March 18 at 6.30 p.m.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

(The House adjourned at 6.43 p.m.)

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