



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, December 10, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 10, 1996

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

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 three petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian section of the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians, as well as the financial report of the meetings of the 22nd regular session of the IAFSP and its executive, held in Antananarivo, Madagascar, July 6 through 10, 1996.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development concerning Bill C-66, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (Part I) and the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1997

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of the Environment, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-74, an act respecting pollution

prevention and the protection of the environment and human health in order to contribute to sustainable development.

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

* * *

FIRST NATIONS LAND MANAGEMENT ACT

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-75, an act providing for the ratification and the bringing into effect of the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management.

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

* * *

PEOPLE'S TAX FORM ACT

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-361, an act to allow taxpayers to inform government of their views on levels and priorities for the expenditure of tax revenues and to provide for parliamentary review of the results.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the people's tax form act. It is well known that the vast majority of Canadians oppose grants and handouts to business, special interest groups, bilingualism, multiculturalism, affirmative action, the CBC, the National Film Board, etc., but either the Liberals and the Tories do not listen or they just do not care.

If the government receives millions of people's tax forms filed with tax returns every year it will be difficult if not impossible for government to ignore the collective will of the majority of taxpayers. Direct democracy and the power of populism can work and even though the people's tax form is voluntary, I am convinced that millions of Canadians would use the form to send a real message to government about which programs they support and which ones they do not.

My bill also allows for the tabulation, analysis and review of the results by Parliament in time for the budget review process every fall. The people's tax form act would remove billions of dollars of unwanted, ineffective government programs and programs used purely for politically reasons.

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I would also like to thank all of those who seconded my bill.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today and the first comes from Hull, Quebec.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that our police and firefighters place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they serve the emergency needs of all Canadians.

They also state that in many cases the families of officers and firefighters who lose their lives in the line of duty are left without sufficient financial means to meet their obligations.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund to receive gifts and bequests for the benefit of families of police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from Edmonton, Alberta. The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society.

The petitioners therefore pray and call on Parliament to pursue initiatives to assist families that choose to provide care in the home for preschool children, the disabled, the chronically ill or the aged.

YOUTH

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present to this House some petitions signed by residents of York North.

• (1010)

The first petition calls on Parliament to ensure that government creates opportunities for youth through internship programs, information technology, improved Canada's student loans, summer student job programs and programs directed to youth at risk.

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on Parliament to ensure that Canada remains a strong and united country.

SENIORS

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls on Parliament to work toward a fair and sustainable income program for seniors, ensuring those in need receive adequate and stable support.

TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition calls on Parliament to ensure that the government continues to aggressively pursue and apply new technology with the aim of creating opportunities for Canadians.

TRADE

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition calls on Parliament to promote international trade and encourage government to conduct more trade missions to create more opportunities for Canadians.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the final petition calls on Parliament to encourage the government to enter into another infrastructure agreement with the provinces to improve our nation's productivity and well-being.

* * *

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 Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

BILL C-70—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.) moved:

That in relation to Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Income Tax Act, the Debt Servicing and Reduction Account Act and related acts, not more than one further sitting shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of this bill and fifteen minutes before the expiry of time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 199)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allmand	Anawak
Anderson	Arseneault
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bernier (Beauce)	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden	Byrne
Calder	Campbell
Cannis	Catterall
Chamberlain	Clancy
Cohen	Collenette
Collins	Comuzzi
Copps	Cowling
Crawford	Culbert
Cullen	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Discepolo
Duhamel	Dupuy
English	Finestone
Flis	Fontana
Fry	Gaffney
Gagliano	Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Galloway	Gerrard
Godfrey	Goodale
Grose	Harb
Harper (Churchill)	Harvard
Hickey	Hubbard
Iftody	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Knutson
Lastewka	Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lincoln
Loney	MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
McCormick	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McTeague
McWhinney	Mifflin
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Murray
Nault	O'Brien (London—Middlesex)
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Patry	Payne
Peric	Peters
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Pillitteri	Reed
Regan	Richardson

Rideout
Robichaud
Rock
Serré
Sheridan
Skoke
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wells
Wood

Ringuette-Maltais
Robillard
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd
Simmons
Speller
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thalheimer
Valeri
Verran
Walker
Whelan
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NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Althouse	Asselin
Bachand	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bergeron
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Bridgman
Brien	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Crête	Cummins
Dalphondu-Guiral	Davialt
de Savoye	Debien
Deshaies	Duceppe
Dumas	Epp
Fillion	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier	Gilmour
Godin	Grey (Beaver River)
Guay	Guimond
Hanrahan	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Harris
Hart	Hayes
Hermanson	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hoepfner
Jacob	Jennings
Johnston	Kerpan
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	Leroux (Shefford)
Loubier	Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Nunez
Paré	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Ramsay
Ringma	Rocheleau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
Silye	Solberg
Solomon	Speaker
St-Laurent	Stinson
Strahl	Taylor
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Venne—86

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Canuel
Caron	Graham
Kirkby	Lee
Pomerleau	Sauvageau

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• (1055)

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed from December 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Income Tax Act, the Debt Servicing and Reduction Account Act and related acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was not intending to speak but since you called my riding I certainly have a few words to say.

The question before the House is whether the Minister of Finance, who is probably one of the best finance ministers that Canada has ever seen, who has the best record of any finance minister Canada has ever seen—I had better be careful—with the exception of the gentleman who became the finance minister in the fall of 1977. The boss became finance minister at that point. There is one exception.

What we have is the rational legislation of the great Minister of Finance and the irrational logic of all the opposition parties. It is what separates Liberals from Reform and Tory and Bloc members. Imagine discussing a bill in this Chamber and having the official opposition advocate that the GST should be changed so that it includes food and prescription drugs. Just imagine that.

• (1100)

Reformers stand in this Chamber and say: “We do not like what the Liberals are doing. We would like to have the tax extended to include food and prescription drugs”, as the representative for the Reform Party stated in the House with respect to this bill.

Imagine the transport critic for the second party in opposition, who is just like the Tories, advocating a tax on fuel to improve the roads. Imagine that. An increase in the excise tax is being recommended by the opposition parties.

The finance minister has the best record in Canadian history, with the small exception of the minister of finance in the fall of 1977; the boss. The finance minister is saying to the opposition parties: “No, we cannot afford to tax people more on fuel and on gasoline, as the opposition parties are suggesting”.

Not only that, they are also advocating helping the rich out a bit more. They suggested that our first priority should be to remove the taxes on jewellery. That was their priority yesterday in this Chamber.

They want to do away with the Canada pension plan. The Reform Party is exactly like the Tory Party. At the Tory convention two months ago they said: “Let us get rid of the Canada pension plan totally”.

One other thing distinguishes the Liberals from the Tories and the Reformers. The Tories’ policy meeting passed a resolution to experiment with medicare. That is exactly the same policy as the Reform Party of Canada. The policy statement of the Reform Party, its budget, which I always keep here in my desk, but I am not allowed to show it—

Mr. Silye: Read us something. Be accurate.

Mr. Baker: The hon. member for Calgary Centre is saying: “Be accurate. Read something from it”.

Here are some of the recommendations of the Reform Party. On December 3 the hon. member for Calgary Centre said: “Make it the broadest possible tax. Let us tax everything: groceries, prescription drugs”. Tax everything.

Mr. Silye: Keep going, George. Keep going.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I can certainly do that. I will quote from the medicare section. The Reform Party says: “The original medicare model is not only intolerably expensive, it is undesirable”.

What do we have here? We have the opposition parties—and of course we cannot leave out the Bloc. The Bloc is on the record as supporting any tax forgiveness for wealthy people as long as they travel to the United States. It is on the record as being in favour of doing away with any double taxation on estate taxes. That only deals with people who make over \$600,000 a year. That is the Bloc for you.

Here we have the opposition parties saying no to the Government of Canada. They say they want more taxes on ordinary people. They want to do away with medicare. They want to do away with the Canada pension plan. They say they have a better way.

• (1105)

What is their better way? The Tories and the Reform Party say they want to get there faster. Where? They want to eliminate the deficit faster. That is their policy. Where are we today under this Minister of Finance? Which country in the industrialized, democratic world has the best record for economic growth this year and next year according to the OECD and the IMF? It is Canada.

The most recent figures are out. Which nation of the G-7 has this year the best record with the deficit and the GDP ratio? This new statement is from the IMF and the OECD made up of 28 nations, economists that hold their meetings in Paris and decide on those macro economic questions. Is it Germany, Britain, Japan, Italy, the United States?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Baker: Is it Canada?

Some hon. members: Yes.

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Mr. Baker: We now have the country with the best economic growth according to the OECD and the IMF of any of the industrialized democracies in the world. We now have, as well, Canada leading every other industrialized democracy in the world in the deficit to GDP ratio.

The IMF made an interesting statement the other day. It said that the best record for interest rates was guess which country? Canada.

These opposition parties that stand in this Chamber together with the Tories who try to hide, the Tories who have a policy to do away with medicare, do away with the Canada pension plan, to put taxes on groceries and prescription drugs, who want to put on additional taxes so they can build highways. They want to put toll gates on our roads to pay for them. Then they stand in the Chamber and say no to the great Liberal response to the problems in our economy. They stand and say no. We want to tax ordinary Canadians. We want to give tax breaks to the rich.

However, we want to reduce the deficit more, while at the same time have a government that has the best record of any industrialized, democratic economy in the world. That is why Canadians are going to say no to these opposition parties and yes to the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak at second reading of the bill about the GST.

First of all, I would like to say to the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls, who so eloquently described his affection for the Minister of Finance, that I previously found him to be more objective in his analyses than he was a few minutes ago.

When we say the best Minister of Finance, I think we should qualify that statement. He just went with the flow. Even Mickey Mouse would be a better Minister of Finance than the one we have today, considering the economic climate. This is a Minister of Finance who maintains the tax loopholes for the rich.

Is that what the best Minister of Finance is supposed to be like? The hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls usually comes down hard on giving preferential treatment to the wealthy. However, his government, for which he now seems to act as a yes-man, maintains the privileges of the wealthy. Is that what being the best Minister of Finance means? The best Minister of Finance after the one we had in 1977, who is now the Prime Minister?

• (1110)

Remember that the Minister of Finance we had in September 1977 ran up the first major federal deficit. Is that what the best Minister of Finance in 1977 was supposed to be doing? I am very

disappointed in the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls. He is usually a better analyst.

As for Canada's performance, I may remind him that the Canadian unemployment rate is around 10 per cent and that we will need more than 900,000 jobs in Canada to revert to the same labour market conditions we had before the recession. Is that Canada's best performance? We just received some statistics indicating an increase in the rate of child poverty. Is that Canada's best performance? We have one of the poorest records in the world in overcoming poverty, and all the while we maintain the privileges of the rich. It is awful to hear such things.

Is the best Minister of Finance the one who signed the political agreement with three maritime provinces that will cost us \$1 billion? Is the best Minister of Finance the one who wasted \$1 billion on an agreement that will not resolve the GST? If that is the case, it is time we woke up and it is time for the yes men on the other side to wake up as well. The arrangement is less and less justifiable before the voters, in my opinion. The farce has gone on long enough.

Canadians outside the maritimes are going to have to pay about \$1 billion for an agreement that settles nothing and that scuttles a promise the Liberals made even before the last election campaign. They told everyone they would abolish the GST, the bloody GST. They lied to the people. It is a horrible thing to do. And the people believed them and voted for them.

What do we end up with today? A monumental farce, an agreement worth \$1 billion to harmonize the GST with the taxes of three maritime provinces. It really takes the cake when they present it as an extraordinary accomplishment by the best Minister of Finance, who is second only to the 1977 Minister of Finance, who is now the Prime Minister. It is quite a show.

Canadians have not been fooled. They know very well they are going to have to pay for this agreement, which resolves nothing. It is nothing more than a local agreement with three maritime provinces. In Quebec, we will pay \$250 million for this agreement. Worst of all in this story is the fact that Quebec harmonized its provincial sales tax with the GST at no cost whatsoever to the government. It did not cost a penny.

We did it because our intentions were good, because we wanted to improve trade and because we wanted transactions to take place as smoothly as possible. We did not want small business to be stuck with two completely different systems operating in parallel. We did all that. We even administer on behalf of the federal government the infamous goods and services tax. And we did not get a penny in compensation for it, not a single penny.

Now the government is presenting us with this agreement reached with the three Atlantic provinces. They are buying off the people in the maritimes for \$961 million, that is nearly \$1 billion.

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It is a disgrace to present such a bill, and particularly to impose a gag order to limit debate on this bill.

They do not like to hear the truth, to hear that they have been deceiving the public. Their commitment was not to hide the GST nor to sign an agreement with three Atlantic provinces, hoping that it would be used as a model nation-wide. That is not what they promised in the election campaign; they ran on the promise of scrapping the GST.

We all witnessed the show the Deputy Prime Minister put on when she resigned and, half a million dollars later, made a triumphant comeback, having cleared her name. It is terrible to put on a show like that, and the people have had it. After spending \$500,000 on this show, we are now spending nearly \$1 billion on a historic agreement with the maritimes.

The worst part is the incredible lack of transparency in all this. After this historic agreement—historic mainly for its cost of nearly \$1 billion—was signed, the provinces, not only Quebec, but also Ontario and British Columbia, asked the Minister of Finance what formula was used to work out this huge amount.

The Minister of Finance obstinately refused to make it public, knowing full well that this formula, if it exists—which is doubtful because this is a political agreement and political agreements do not require formulas—was not tailored to the specific situation of the three Atlantic provinces.

• (1115)

I am convinced that the federal mandarins who were present when the harmonization agreement was struck with Quebec, in 1991, must have thought: “We must be careful, because Quebec is the only province to have completed this harmonization process and it did not ask anything from the federal government”. Quebec is so nice that it did not ask anything from the federal government. Therefore, once Quebec decided to go along with harmonization, these mandarins must have devised the formula so as to completely exclude the Quebec situation. But let them make it public. If they have the courage of their convictions, if their formula is so good, then let them make it public, so that we can see how the finance minister managed to find \$1 billion in his pockets and generously give that money to the maritime provinces. One billion dollars.

Liberal members are boasting that books are exempt from the GST. This is great, and I want to congratulate Bloc Quebecois members, because they are the ones who, from the beginning, with the eight founding members of the Bloc Quebecois in this House, and out of all the members of all the parties in this House—and I see the hon. member for Longueuil—rose to ask that the GST not be imposed on books.

In Quebec, there is no provincial sales tax on books. This tax was eliminated. The finance minister tells us: “All the books that will

be bought by educational institutions and organizations promoting literacy will be tax exempt”. We say great, but the government must do more. Culture should not be taxed. All books should be exempt from the GST, as called for by the eight founding members of the Bloc Quebecois. I see my colleague, the member for Rosemont, who is also in the House and who used to rise almost every other week, because we did not have many opportunities to speak back then, to demand that the GST be taken off books.

Members of the Bloc Quebecois were the only ones to meet with representatives of the literary community, all of them. The Liberals refused. The Conservatives refused; I understand. We were the only ones to do so.

So I congratulate the minister for this small part of the bill, but I would like to see him go further, and heed the Bloc Quebecois’s call to stop taxing culture and literacy.

The Deputy Speaker: Dear colleagues, before giving the floor to anyone else, I must tell you that we voted on the hon. member’s amendment yesterday and that debate is now on the main motion.

As you know, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot addressed the motion at length yesterday, for 50 minutes I believe. This is the fault of the Chair, which should not have given the floor to the hon. member. I ask my colleagues not to speak twice on the same motion in future.

I am certain that my colleague shares my opinion that we may not speak twice on the same motion. This is the Chair’s fault, and I take responsibility for this error.

Mr. Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I have a small question. Yesterday, the debate was on the amendment I proposed. Today, it is on the bill as such at second reading. It should be possible to speak twice in two days, because the debate is a different one. I am asking for your opinion on this.

The Deputy Speaker: It seems that we are now debating the main motion. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot spoke for almost one hour yesterday on the main motion. He proposed an amendment at the end of his speech. He perhaps thought he had spoken on the amendment yesterday, but the hon. member spoke twice on the same motion.

I am sure he will not do this again in future. I am counting on my colleague not to speak twice in future. It is an error.

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak once again to Bill C-70.

First I must decry the fact that the government has moved time allocation, a form of closure, on this piece of legislation. I need to point out that since the fall session began, the government has pushed through precisely nine bills and here we are ramming

through important pieces of legislation in the last week. That is completely unacceptable.

I have to speak to some of the accusations made by the member for Gander—Grand Falls. I would simply say that if he was not completely misleading the Canadian public, he certainly was quoting hon. members out of context and I must set the record straight.

• (1120)

The hon. member from Gander was saying that the Reform Party wanted to raise taxes. Let me make it very clear that our party will provide the average family of four in this country with a \$2,000 tax break by the year 2000, \$15 billion in tax relief for Canadians. That is part of our fresh start platform.

The hon. member also spoke about the government's record of low interest rates. I have to address that. The reason we have low interest rates is that this country's economy has been so soft. That is why we have had low interest rates.

Noticeably the member did not speak about unemployment. I would think someone from Newfoundland must address unemployment. In 1995 the G-7 said that Canada had the worst record when it came to unemployment in the G-7. Out of all seven nations Canada had the worst. Why would a member from Newfoundland not address something like unemployment? That is ridiculous. Obviously the government's record is so bad that the hon. member could not bear to raise the issue of unemployment.

By the way, the Reform plan would take 1.2 million low income Canadians completely off the tax rolls. I want to make that clear. Somehow the member for Gander—Grand Falls left people with the impression that we were going to tax low income Canadians more. We are going to take 1.2 million low income Canadians off the tax rolls. These are people whom the Liberals are currently taxing, including the member for Gander—Grand Falls who has voted in favour of every budget the government has brought in.

The member for Gander—Grand Falls apparently is no friend of the unemployed. He is no friend of working Canadians who are being taxed to the hilt. I think the member for Gander—Grand Falls has a lot of explaining to do to his constituents.

Specifically on Bill C-70, we need to remind people that this bill came about because of a broken promise, a very sorry beginning for this legislation. Going back to before the last election, members on that side of the House said: "The GST is completely unacceptable. It is terrible. We will rip it out if we become government".

The member from Gander spoke of the finance minister. The finance minister when he was in opposition said that the GST was

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terrible and that they did not want to have anything to do with it. The Prime Minister has been in this place on and off since 1963, 33 years. You do not even get that much for murder in this country but he has been here that long. He sat here knowing very well that there was a possibility the Liberals could form the government and he said: "We do not want to have anything to do with the GST".

What happened on October 18, 1993? The current Deputy Prime Minister said on national television in a CBC town hall meeting that if the GST was not gone, she would resign. She led everyone to believe that the Liberal government would get rid of the GST. We know that individual MPs campaigned on the promise to get rid of the GST.

What did the Liberals do? Did they get rid of the GST? The record is very clear. The government did not get rid of the GST. Instead because it had no takers for its harmonization proposal, and it was desperate to come up with a reason or a justification for breaking its promise, it ran out to the Atlantic premiers with \$1 billion and said: "Please come on board so we can say that we fulfilled our promise in some way, shape or form".

A billion dollars. And what was the result? Now a tax regime is being established in Atlantic Canada that is going to visit all kinds of sorrows on the people of Atlantic Canada. Beyond that, it creates all kinds of other problems. It is extremely divisive. When one area of the country is rewarded with a \$1 billion compensation package but other areas are told that they are on their own, what happens? We get division.

We get problems with national unity obviously. That is the government's whole approach to the issue of unity: divide and conquer, split people apart. The government has done it from day one and continues to do it. Lately it is talking about distinct society again. I cannot believe it, but it is part of its whole approach.

• (1125)

What does this harmonized sales tax do specifically in Atlantic Canada? The government claims it will create jobs but the facts simply do not bear that out. We know already that stores are closing in Atlantic Canada because they cannot afford to implement all the necessary changes associated with bringing the harmonized sales tax to Atlantic Canada.

Greenberg stores is based in Quebec but has stores throughout Atlantic Canada. It is closing stores because it cannot bear the start-up cost of this new harmonized sales tax. Seventy-nine jobs are already disappearing in New Brunswick. It just escapes me that we are not hearing from New Brunswick MPs. They are not standing up and saying: "We have to do something to protect these jobs". Somehow the members from New Brunswick are strangely

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silent. Where are they? Why are they not standing up for their constituents?

If something like that were happening in my riding or anywhere in Alberta where all those Reform MPs are, or in British Columbia or any Reform constituency I would like to think that those Reformers would stand up even to their own leader and government and say: "This is unacceptable. We will not put up with this. We have received clear direction from our constituents and they do not want us to vote in favour of this legislation". But the Liberals are like sheep. They are completely quiet. They have been cowed by the Prime Minister and the power of that office, which is ridiculous. It is absolutely counter to democracy.

The hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls spoke about democracy. He is a member who has spoken out in the past and has been relegated to the very end of the row, almost out the door. He can stand up and try to revive his flagging career all he wants knowing that the minister of fisheries may not be long for cabinet. However at some point he apparently wronged the Prime Minister in some way and now he has been relegated to being almost out the door and probably has no chance of getting anywhere which is unfortunate. That is how this government deals with people who do not toe the line.

Let me speak about some things that will happen in Atlantic Canada as a result of Bill C-70. We have received letters from the Retail Council of Canada, as have hon. members across the way. It has warned about the tax in pricing aspect of Bill C-70, about how it will hurt many large retailers. It has talked about the millions of dollars it will cost. In a very up front manner it said that those costs will be passed on to the consumers in Atlantic Canada.

Consumers will bear the cost of the deal that is being implemented in Atlantic Canada because the government was so desperate to come up with some kind of rationalization for not fulfilling its GST promise. Atlantic Canada has to pay for the government's broken promise. Atlantic Canadians have to pay literally out of their own pockets for this broken promise. But that is not all. Right now we are only talking about the large chains. What about the small businesses?

Greenberg stores is not a large company and it is laying off 79 people with another 71 possibly going. The other day I heard a story about a Halifax businessman who sells magazines. Approximately 8,500 journals come into his store on a weekly or monthly basis. Because of this legislation he will have to change the price on every one of those magazines. I do not care how hard a person works, that cannot possibly be done every week.

Does the government care about all these common sense objections to this deal? Again the government members are strangely silent. Where are the members from Atlantic Canada? Where is the member for Halifax who sits in this place and so often speaks up?

She is strangely silent. Not a word. Why are they not standing up for their constituents? Why are they not standing up when they know it will cost jobs, when it means higher costs for consumers? I would think that is a basic responsibility of any member of Parliament.

• (1130)

What about the defence minister? He represents a riding in which one of the Greenberg stores closed. Should he not be on his feet as a cabinet minister? Should he not be defending his own people?

I cannot believe they are allowing this to be pushed through on closure without so much as saying this is wrong, we have to at least fix some of the details. They are silent.

Other bodies have spoken of the problems this will cause in Atlantic Canada as well. The Real Estate Association of Canada talks about a \$4,000 increase in the cost of a new house in Atlantic Canada. What is the government doing?

There has been no initiative from the government coming forward and saying "we are going to deal with that, we will fix it". It is going to let the people of Atlantic Canada bear a \$4,000 increase in the cost of a new House simply because it had to rush through that deal to try to save the Deputy Prime Minister. That is unacceptable.

If you make a mistake, as the government, if you break a promise, why do you not acknowledge that you have broken a promise, throw yourself at the mercy of the electorate and take your medicine? To try to somehow cover it up and then make people in Atlantic Canada, the most vulnerable economy in the country, pay for it is cruel. I do not know how else to put it.

As we near the end of this debate, sadly the government has pushed through closure. I urge hon. members across the way to somehow screw up the courage to stand and defend their own constituents. Sixteen thousand people in New Brunswick alone have signed one petition in opposition to this legislation.

If hon. members across the way will not listen to me and my colleagues in the Reform Party, perhaps they can somehow find it in their hearts to listen to their own constituents. That is the least the people of Atlantic Canada can expect from their MPs.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a bill that has come up very suddenly. It is a bill that, as of last week, was not even on the government agenda, the so-called GST harmonization bill, really the GST hiding bill that the government is trying to now push through as quickly as possible while people in the country are busy getting ready for Christmas and have their minds on other things. It is very typical of this government.

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There are four main concerns that Reform has about this bill. One is that this new form of the GST will kill jobs. It is bad for business, it will kill jobs. This is in a part of the country that can least afford to have this kind of action taken against its economy.

Second, this new form of GST that the Liberals are ramming through the House is bad for consumers because it will substantially raise the cost of many goods.

We know our economy is driven 60 per cent by consumer spending. Now we will have even more difficulty, even more of a burden placed on the backs of consumers who are trying to provide the necessities for themselves and their families.

Third, this new form of GST that the Liberals are pushing through in Atlantic Canada is bad for taxpayers because it means that taxes will be increased.

The fourth thing is that this new form of GST being put forward by the Liberals is breaking a Liberal election promise, a strong, unequivocal, firm, clear commitment by this Liberal government to scrap, kill and abolish the GST.

These broken promises continue to disconnect Canadians from the electoral process, increasing the level of cynicism and increasing the level of distrust and disrespect for elected people and for the institutions of government. This is a very worrisome and sad situation in this country.

• (1135)

This bill was put forward and then closure was immediately voted through the House. The government is sneaking this bill through. Invoking closure yet again, as I said the last time I spoke on a closure bill, this seems to be a weekly if not almost daily occurrence by this government. It is disrespecting the democratic checks and balances of our system to simply push its agenda through with as little opposition and as little opportunity for examination as possible. This is not democracy as it was meant to be.

I will not repeat some of the concerns that I raised in my last speech in this House on this issue except to say that Canadians who are watching the proceedings of the House on a daily or occasional basis need to take note of how this government is arrogantly and undemocratically flouting the conventions and the democratic checks and balances that have been put into place. I believe we are going to be paying a heavy price for this increasing erosion of the democratic process in our country.

In 1990 a member of Parliament who is sitting on the government side and also sitting in cabinet said: "The goods and services tax is a regressive tax. It has to be scrapped and we will scrap it". The minister of defence now has a different tune to sing just five or six years later. He had the chance to keep strongly made promises,

to act on the outrage that he and many of his colleagues expressed about the Conservative government GST and now he is totally backtracking and not to be heard from in this debate. The present minister of defence did not say: "It must be harmonized and we will harmonize it". No, he said: "It has to be scrapped and we will scrap it".

On May 2, 1994 the Prime Minister said with regard to the GST: "We hate it and we will kill it". Now he is saying "we really like it and we will bring it back in a form that will gouge even more money out of taxpayers and citizens in the Atlantic provinces".

When the government fails to carry out these clear election promises, these clear representations to Canadians who place their faith, trust and confidence in this government and in government members, Canadians feel increased cynicism with their government and their country. This is something that is very disturbing and it is going to be a very difficult situation to deal with as time goes on.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about an aspect of this new replacement GST of the Liberals called a notional input tax credit. At present when a good or service is introduced into economy the GST is paid on those goods. When the goods go through the economy again in the form of used goods, the GST does not have to be paid on that good because it was already paid the first time it came into the economy. That was in the past.

The Liberals have seen a golden opportunity to vacuum even more money out of the economy to fund its waste and its spending and its inefficient, bloated government. Now when a consumer buys a used product he will end up paying the GST yet again even though the GST has already been paid. In fact, that GST will be paid over and over every time there is a transaction involving those goods. This is something called tax cascading, which is kind of a nice term. Canadians would probably call it stacking the taxes, a tax on tax on tax. In fact, the taxpayer will have to pay tax twice, three times, four times and maybe more on the same goods.

• (1140)

This is nothing more than another Liberal tax grab. It is also sneaky because the Liberals have not introduced this increased tax take. The honest way is to put the tax bill before the House and have it properly debated. It simply changed the definition of what the GST will apply to. The GST will be paid over and over.

This will have a very negative effect on any business dealing with used goods. It will kill jobs, raise consumer prices and suck more tax dollars from the pockets of Canadians. There is very little profit in many of these businesses already.

We know and the Liberals have acknowledged time and time again that taxes kill jobs. For example, the Liberals said that taxes on employment income, taxes such as UI premiums, make it more difficult for businesses to operate at a profit, to expand their

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economic activities and for the economy to grow and to create business and employment opportunities for Canadians.

Yet we see that taxes are something that the Liberals simply cannot do without. There have been over 35 tax increases in one way or another from this government in its years in office. Its total tax take has grown by \$28 billion over its term in office; \$28 billion that the government is taking out of the pockets of Canadians, out of the hands of business people, job creators and entrepreneurs and investors, workers and consumers, and putting it into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. It is no wonder we continue to have an abysmally high rate of unemployment in the country. It is no wonder that Canadians have to work harder and harder and find less and less discretionary disposable income and find it more difficult to make ends meet.

The standard of living of all Canadians is being lowered. The Liberal government is making a big show, a big production out of caring about the rate of poverty and the children in our country who are living in poverty. At the same time, it is pushing through measures such as this which contribute to the increasing poverty of members of our society, taking more taxes from the most vulnerable members of our society by this type of tax increase and doing it in a very hurried way to make sure that people do not see what is going on.

There is a lot of misinformation, a lot of distortion by members opposite when they get up to speak, trying to cover up what is really happening. However, we need to get the message out to Canadians that this is not the way to attack child poverty in this country. It is not a way to give the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society a leg up. It is only a way to get more money into the pockets of the government.

The harmonization is a red herring, a feeble attempt to convince taxpayers that the Liberals have kept their GST promise. Other provinces have been clever enough to see through this and have rejected this scheme. I urge the House to reject this scheme and to protect the people in the Atlantic provinces from this kind of tax grab on the backs of Atlantic Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to tell Quebecers and Canadians that there are three good reasons why Bill C-70 ought not to be passed by the House of Commons.

• (1145)

The first, and perhaps the most serious, is that it sends a very ambiguous message to Canadians and Quebecers about what this government's word is worth. During the last campaign, they were saying that they were going to scrap the GST, that it would no longer exist, that they would make it disappear. Once in power,

they began to hum and haw and to mark time, but in the end they did not respect their contract with the voters.

Running for office is like signing a contract with each voter, stating what one commits to doing, what one commits to defending, and, if elected, one will respect that contract. There is a very ambiguous, and very negative, message being sent to all those who might think of getting into politics: this government says one thing while campaigning to get elected, and does another once in power. It did the same thing with job creation and unemployment insurance. This is totally unacceptable, and very bad for democracy.

In the next election campaign, when the Liberal candidates come knocking on the doors of Quebecers, voters will be entitled to ask whether what is set out in their platform is true, if their actions will match their words, if all their commitments are merely a smoke screen to win votes so they can do as they please as soon as the election is over. The Liberals will have a real problem relating to this question of a systematic lack of respect for the promises they have made on major issues.

The second element, and this is particularly true for Quebecers, is the frustration that is felt when we see one billion dollars in compensation—no one on the other side of the House has questioned the accuracy of this figure—given to three Maritime provinces for harmonizing the GST.

Harmonization is all very well, but I think we should realize that this is a repeat of an age-old practice of Canadian federalism, which is to try and cure the ills of one region in Canada at the expense of the other regions, in an attempt to buy political peace. After introducing employment insurance reform that penalizes the maritimes and eastern Quebec to a considerable degree, a form of compensation has been found, a kind of pacifier for the people of the maritimes. They are offered compensation for harmonizing the GST.

However, Quebec, which proceeded with this harmonization several years ago, did not receive any compensation at all. Quebec did its job and made the system work. All public servants who administer the GST are with the Department of Revenue in Quebec City, and they remit the amounts to Ottawa. It all works without any compensation. Here again, we see the double standard we have seen so often in the history of Canadian federalism.

This has some major economic impacts. We use this, for instance, in the new riding of Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, where the Témiscouata area borders on New Brunswick. This is one of many measures we are evaluating to find out how federal monies get to New Brunswick and how they get to Quebec, and whether these two parts of Canada are being treated equally. The study we are doing now focuses on all grants and assistance programs currently available.

We have here a clear example of a situation that may lead to unfair competition between two regions. One government will receive funding to harmonize the tax, while the other did not. There will necessarily be additional costs for the Quebec government. Products from New Brunswick will be more attractive because of the federal government's compensation, which was not given to the Government of Quebec. There is an injustice here that warrants our criticism.

In its concern for tarring up the transformation of the GST, the federal government was prepared to pay any price for peace. The people of the maritimes won the jackpot. The people of Quebec, however, did not come begging, saw no need for compensation and harmonized the taxes at no cost to the government. Western Canada did not harmonize.

• (1150)

The situation has therefore created several Canadas. It does not work. It proves that, when the federal system is allowed to run on its own, this is the sort of monster we end up with. There will be two different types of taxation in two bordering provinces: in the maritimes, the taxation system is subsidized by the federal government; in Quebec, the federal government did not subsidize harmonization. Double standards are still unacceptable.

I would like to take the few minutes I have left to point out that this bill represents what I would call a partial win for the Bloc Quebecois. Those members who represented the Bloc Quebecois before the 1993 election had systematically made representations to ensure that the GST would not apply to books.

After all the representations that have been made, the bill before us today provides that books bought by groups involved in literacy programs, libraries and similar organizations will be tax free. Because of the major cultural impact books have on our society, the Bloc Quebecois feels that all books should be free of tax.

I think we should keep up the fight because, as we can see, this would benefit not only Quebec but all of Canada. English Canadian culture certainly needs help in holding its own against American culture. Because markets are permeable and the fact that the same language is used in English Canada and in the U.S., books are among the main tools used to spread culture. This would have been an opportunity to give books published in Canada an edge, by not subjecting them to tax. Any way you look at it, the propagation of knowledge benefits society as a whole. But this is not reflected in the bill.

I think the government could show its good will by making all books tax-free. I think all Quebecers and Canadians would gain from it. This is a measure that will probably be discussed in the next election campaign. At that time, we will have to make sure that each party will honour its commitments.

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This Liberal government will certainly have a major credibility problem during the election campaign, primarily because of issues such as the GST, employment insurance and the promise to create jobs. The current unemployment rate, which remains above 10 per cent, is the highest in a number of years. This figure includes people who are actually looking for work, but not those who have given up because they were unable to find jobs.

There is a shameless waste of human resources in our society. Changing this situation must be our governments' top priority. We have no idea what kind of commitments this government will make the next time. What is more important though is whether or not it will fulfil these commitments.

If the past is any indication of the future, it is not encouraging for Canadian voters, because each time they will have to decide whether or not to believe in a Liberal government commitment, they will remember that the Liberals did not do what they had pledged to do with the GST, and with employment insurance, as they simply implemented the reform prepared by the Conservatives.

As for employment itself, again the commitments made were not fulfilled. The morning after the election, the Liberal government set out to tackle the deficit. This was fine, but in the process it overlooked another obligation, which is to ensure that our society's human potential is being used. In this sense, the bill before us is disappointing. It perpetuates an inequity in the Canadian federal system, which is the fact that different parts of the country are treated differently.

In western Canada, the government is subsidizing an airline company that has trouble making profits because of a major management problem, while in Atlantic Canada it gives a compensation of \$1 billion to harmonize the GST. In the middle, there is Quebec, which made real efforts to harmonize its tax, but which is not getting the benefits that other provinces are receiving.

• (1155)

When will fairness prevail? I do not believe the solution to this problem lies in the current federal system. In any case, I am asking Quebec and Canadian voters to be very demanding, during the next election campaign, regarding the commitments that will be made by Liberal candidates.

The evidence is before us: This government had pledged to eliminate the GST, but instead it comes up with cosmetic changes. The GST is still here and the commitment made during the election campaign was not fulfilled. This is why I feel the House should reject this bill.

[English]

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-70 is the harmonization of the sales tax.

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I could not help but think about the word harmonize. It comes from the word harmony. Harmony means to create agreement, concord, to create an apt or aesthetic arrangement of parts. It is a progression of chords, to use a musical definition, to produce a pleasing effect. To harmonize then would be to make a form that is pleasing and to provide a consistent whole, to add notes to a melody to produce harmony and to bring into being or to create harmony.

I thought to myself, I have heard a lot about this sales tax and it seems that none of those definitions really apply to this particular development. I looked up the antonym of harmonize. The antonym of harmonize is discord. Discord means to have disagreement, strife, to disagree or to quarrel, to be different or to be inconsistent.

I thought to myself, which of those two words best describes the harmonized sales tax? Harmony, a consistent aesthetically pleasing whole where the parts agree with one another or discord, where there is disagreement, strife and division. I came to the conclusion that this tax has the wrong name. It should be called the discord tax or government by discord, not harmony. It is creating the opposite.

Does it provide a beautiful, harmonious sound of working together in a melody of taxation? I do not think so. I am reminded of the member for Mississauga West. What did she say? She said that the people hate, they do not just dislike the GST, they hate it. Most people that I know like harmony and hate discord. It strikes me that is probably the situation.

The other word that comes up and is a source with regard to harmony says it creates peace. There is all kinds of evidence that this has done anything but create peace. It looks like it does not even have the potential of creating accord.

This is a tax of discord. It has created conflict among provinces. It has created conflicts between provinces and Ottawa. It has created conflicts among citizens. It has created conflicts between government and business. It has created conflicts between consumers and retailers. How many more conflicts do we want? And they call that harmonization. It is the exact opposite of harmonization.

How is it possible that all these kinds of conflicts could occur? How does that happen? First of all it costs more. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that three major retailers in Atlantic Canada have stated that their net annual deficit will total \$27 million once harmonization is implemented? Are you aware that the Retail Council of Canada has said that by forcing stores to bury the new tax prices, the harmonization tax regime will cost retailers at least \$100 million a year? That is the implementation of the tax. That is not revenue for the government.

Why? Because there will be a duplication of information systems and the rewriting of software, the repricing of prepriced

goods, the duplication of advertising costs as it goes from the various catalogues and the various brochures that have gone out to the various consumers, the warehousing and distribution costs. That is no small cost.

Then a study was done by Ernst & Young. This very reputable national accounting firm said that a midsize national chain with 50 stores in the Atlantic provinces would pay up to \$3 million in one-time costs. Those 50 stores would pay \$3 million in start-up costs. After that they would pay \$1.1 million per year to comply with the regional tax in price sales system, which we know means that the total price includes the tax. The amount of tax paid is hidden in the price on an article when it is taken to the cashier.

• (1200)

The Canadian Real Estate Association says that harmonization will increase the cost of a new house by \$4,000 in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and by \$3,374 in New Brunswick. All the nice young families will just love having to pay an extra \$4,000, will they not? The answer is no they will not.

Consumers will pay more for funeral services, for their children's clothing, for auto repairs, electricity, gasoline and home heating fuel to mention only a few of the things that will cost more.

The more severe problem is that it does not abolish the GST.

The member for York South—Weston said it best. He said it quickly and concisely as he is able to do. He said: "Scrapping and harmonization are not synonyms. Harmonization is a red herring". How accurate he was and how clearly he described exactly what is going on.

It also makes a lie out of statements such as when in 1990 the current Minister of Finance said: "I would abolish the GST. The manufacturers sales tax is a bad tax and there is no excuse to repeat one bad thing by bringing in another one". That was six years ago.

In 1994, four years later, after the Liberal Party formed the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister said: "We hate it and we will kill it".

In 1995, a year later, a Liberal backbencher, the hon. member for Mississauga West, said: "I think the GST is going to become a hot point. I think if we do not do something about it our credibility is gone. People in my riding hate the GST. It is not one of those mild 'we do not like it', they hate it. If the GST is merged with provincial sales taxes voters will not be satisfied unless the overall tax take is simultaneously reduced".

It is already clear that all of those statements have been proven to be false.

I want to move to the next rather significant development which took place in August 1995. Going back to the Minister of Finance

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who in 1990 said that it was a bad tax, he said in August 1995: "I think it is very clear that what small business wants and what consumers want is a harmonized tax". Was he listening to the people?

Is the minister listening to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia now? Is he listening to the people of Alberta? Is he listening to the people of Ontario? Is he listening to the people of British Columbia? If he were, there is no way he could make that statement and say that he is telling the truth. I do not know to whom he is talking. He is talking to somebody, but it is clearly somebody other than the people to whom I have just referred. It cannot be an honest statement. Either he has been listening to different people or he is deliberately misrepresenting what he heard the people to say.

We need to go beyond that. This harmonized tax violates good government. It violates good management practices like the province of Alberta has put into place. In that province there is no provincial sales tax. Why? Because Alberta was able to balance its budget without a sales tax. That is a lesson not only this government should learn, but every provincial government should learn as well. The harmonization tax does not permit and reward good government and good practice.

• (1205)

After all that, we also have to conclude that this tax is a bad deal. The Atlantic provinces were bribed with a \$1 billion infusion of borrowed money which future taxpayers will have to pay for.

Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia refuse to get involved. They are not even willing to talk about harmonization. The support is weak in Saskatchewan and in Prince Edward Island. That is harmonization? That is harmony? That is accord? That is creating peace? It is the exact opposite. It is divisive. It is conflicting. It is strife engendering. That is what it is. It is a bad deal.

The Ontario Minister of Finance said that the blended sales tax using the GST base would cost Ontarians over \$3 billion in extra taxes. He has put the kibosh on any harmonization talk and scheme in this province. That is the issue which is at stake here in this bill.

It was done to give the government the appearance that somehow it has dealt with the GST and that somehow it would make people think the GST has been abolished. How ignorant, how stupid does the government think the people of Canada are? The people of Canada are anything but stupid and neither are they unable to understand what is going on in this issue. It is very significant.

One more thing. How did the Liberals do it? They made it incomprehensible. I draw attention to Bill C-70, 335 pages of what the harmonization tax is about. It is not to say anything about the income tax act which is over 2,000 pages long.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, in the little time I have allocated to me today I would like to talk about the so-called harmonization of the GST from two different points of view. I will talk about the deal itself and the fact that it is a bad deal, that it will hurt business and kill jobs in Atlantic Canada and across the country. Also, I will talk about the lack of integrity in government. The more important part of my presentation today will be to point out that this government has completely lacked integrity on this and a lot of other issues and Canadians should find this unacceptable.

First, about the deal itself, it is clearly a bad deal for business. The premiers of the Atlantic provinces had to be bribed with a billion dollars just to accept this deal. Of course Prince Edward Island has not accepted it. The Liberal Government of Prince Edward Island was defeated recently partly because of the consideration of this deal. Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia have completely refused to talk about the issue, while Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island really have been less than positive about the deal.

To accurately call this harmonization of sales taxes, it would have to apply right across the country. What we have is a deal only for three Atlantic Canadian provinces. That hardly makes for harmonization of the GST. Let us not call it harmonization. Let us talk about it for what it really is.

The Ontario finance minister said that this deal will cost Ontarians over \$3 billion. That is a lot of money. I am sure the people of Ontario who elected many of the Liberal MPs on their promise of abolishing the GST must be very upset about what has happened here. Not only has the promise to abolish, scrap, kill the GST been broken, but in an attempt to cover up this broken promise according to the finance minister of Ontario, it will cost the people of Ontario \$3 billion just for the deal with the Atlantic provinces. The people of Ontario cannot possibly be very happy about this.

• (1210)

This policy demonstrates what has already been demonstrated by this government many times before: the lack of a broad vision, the lack of well thought out comprehensive policy on issues. Too often we have had piecemeal legislation, which is the case again here. This legislation applies to only three provinces out of the ten. It is called harmonization but clearly it is not.

What will this legislation do for businesses and jobs? This is the most important issue to consider in terms of this deal. It will be a big job killer. Several people who are involved and who will be affected by this deal have made that clear.

The three major retailers in Atlantic Canada have stated that the annual retail deficit will total \$27 million once harmonization is implemented. One private sector retailer in Atlantic Canada was

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contemplating opening two more stores in 1997 but has scrapped that plan because of this deal. That means jobs lost.

Both privately owned and publicly traded stores are reluctant to explain the problems they face as a result of harmonization so as not to jeopardize customer confidence and the value of their stock. They must be careful in even talking about the effects of this deal.

However, the Retail Council of Canada has said that in forcing stores to bury the new so-called harmonized tax, the harmonized tax regime will cost retailers \$100 million a year. Not only is this so-called harmonization which affects only three Atlantic provinces going to cost the other Canadian provinces \$1 billion over the next three years, but it will also cost Atlantic Canada retailers \$100 million. That will mean job losses. Business people will have to work even more hours which will mean more time away from their families. That is unacceptable.

An article in the December 4 *Globe and Mail* discussed the so-called harmonization and some of its impacts. It stated that the major increases will be on items such as home heating fuel and clothing which will be taxed at 15 per cent instead of the 7 per cent GST that is now applied. The tax will increase on essential items that nobody can avoid buying, such as heating fuel and clothing, and this will drive the prices up substantially.

In the *Globe and Mail* article the Retail Council of Canada said that businesses will have to spend \$28 million to get their pricing systems ready by April 7. "This is a huge blow to Atlantic retailers", said Peter Woolford, senior vice-president of the council. "Retail profits average about 2 per cent of sales", he said, and this is going to cut even further into those narrow margins.

Mr. O'Brien, Atlantic director for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said that in the case of one magazine store in Halifax, the owner will have to change the prices on as many as 8,500 journals a week. We are not talking about some megabusiness but about one small business owner who will have to change the prices on 8,500 journals a week. His comment is that he will have to work another seven hours a week when he is already working 70 hours a week. This is completely unacceptable.

It is completely unacceptable to make changes that will make for more totally non-productive work for business owners and that will extend the hours of already overworked business owners, operators and workers in this country. We need less government interference. These people need more time to spend with their families. Clearly this bill will mean just the opposite in Atlantic Canada.

• (1215)

Of course it has an impact across the country. A billion dollar increase in costs will mean more taxes for Canadians in other provinces. That means more working hours and less time to spend

with families. This will damage the already strained situation of families.

I would like to close by talking about lack of integrity in government. I want to begin with some quotes from the Prime Minister and the finance minister in 1990, when they were getting into full gear for the election campaign.

The Prime Minister said in the Toronto *Star* in 1990: "The Liberals will scrap the goods and services tax if they win the next general election, leader Jean Chrétien says. 'I am opposed to the GST, I have always been opposed to it and I will be opposed to it always'".

From the finance minister: "I would abolish the GST", April 4, 1990.

Then in 1992 as we got into the heat of the election campaign the Liberal leader was quoted in the Toronto *Star*, December 21, 1992: "With the federal election only months away Liberal leader Jean Chrétien faces two questions that are being posed with increasing urgency. Does he stand by his word to scrap the goods and services tax? The answer was given by the Prime Minister's communications director, Peter Donolo when he said that the leader is committed to doing away with the thing and to tell Canadians before the election where he would make up the money". Of course, that has not happened. It is totally unacceptable that has not happened. A promise was made and clearly the promise has been broken.

In closing I would like to quote a comment from the member for Kingston and the Islands at a meeting here in Ottawa. When the member for Kingston and the Islands was asked about the GST and the fact that a promise had been broken, his comments was: "We changed our minds". I do not think Canadians will view it with that levity.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Madam Speaker, before I get into any remarks that I would call GST specific, I would like to comment on something that is happening here today, which is the use of time allocation again by the Liberal government on this debate. That makes 26 times that this heavy handed throttling of Parliament has been practised by this government.

It is a rather curious phenomenon that is taking place. It actually started in the Trudeau years. His was the first government in Canadian history that opposed free speech in Parliament. It was the first government that began to routinely use time allocation and closure. Prior to the election of Mr. Trudeau, these two means of throttling debate had been used only 23 times in the entire history since Confederation. I think it was first used by Sir Robert Borden during the first world war.

Then Mr. Trudeau came along and what did we get? Forty-four uses of time allocation or closure in 15 years. That is a bit of an escalation. Then in the Mulroney years they were used 63 times in

eight years and nine months, a new record, a new champion on the block.

But what is happening under the current Liberal government? It has only been in office for a short time, three years and one month. Already it has used time allocation or closure 31 times. This is unprecedented. It is contemptible that any government would treat any parliament in this manner.

• (1220)

Today the Liberals are showing their contempt for Parliament in two ways. One is through time allocation. The other is contempt for their fellow members in that only one of them has even bothered to come in and listen to this debate. I refuse to blow air into an empty room. I request a quorum count.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Please ring the bells.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): We have quorum. The hon. member may continue with debate.

Mr. McTeague: Madam Speaker, a point of order. I find it rather hypocritical of the hon. member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia to call quorum when several members on this side of the House have been sitting here attentively and nothing on the Reform side, including the opposition.

Mr. Assadourian: And the Bloc Quebecois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): We are resuming debate. The hon. member for Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia.

Mr. Morrison: Madam Speaker, I suppose I should feel guilty for disturbing the free lunch of the Liberals. In case they follow the usual practice of getting a quorum and then quietly sneaking out like naughty children evading the headmaster, I am prepared to stand here and call quorum all afternoon if necessary.

With regard to the question of closure, it is unthinkable that the government of a democratic country could use this heavy-handed blunt instrument to bludgeon Parliament with the regularity that this government has done. I do not know what the final outcome will be. Perhaps at some point in the not too distant future it will simply dissolve Parliament and say: “We do not need it any more. Let us have permanent closure, permanent time allocation” because that is the Liberal idea of the democratic process.

• (1225)

Remember, 31 times it has moved time allocation or closure in the short period of three years and one month. That is one-third more times than those blunt instruments were used in the entire pre-Trudeau era in this Parliament, back in the days when people

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actually believed in democracy and when Parliament was still a place where people came together to debate the issues and arrived at conclusions.

With respect to this marvellous HST that is being brought in by this bill in the Atlantic provinces, it is pretty easy to see why the government is so desperate to hide the GST. However, it is only going to be able to hide it in three provinces because nobody else is willing to get on board.

I would like to quote a comment by the hon. member for Mississauga West with respect to the GST. She said: “I keep hearing from the finance department that Canadians are getting used to the GST and now accept it. If anyone really believes that I do not think they are in touch with reality”. Bravo to the member for Mississauga West because she sure had that right.

Then the hon. finance minister said: “We have to do something about this GST because we made a mistake. We are sorry, but it was an honest mistake”. That is not good enough. Let us face it, despite their public pronouncements, the Liberals never had any intention of killing the GST. Instead they had this cockamamie plan to run around and hide it, meld it in with provincial sales taxes and then maybe nobody would notice. Long term planning, harmonization of the dreaded GST.

The fact that it is going to cost citizens of the three non-harmonized provinces something in the order of \$900 million in subsidies does not bother this government. What does it care, it is only money and this is a Liberal government. It is going to hurt small businesses in the three Atlantic provinces. What does the government care, it is not in business. It is made up of politicians and politicians do not care what happens behind that cash register. We are going to have it because the hammer has been brought down. Democratic debate has again been forbidden in this place which was designed for the democratic debating of the issues.

I see the Speaker is signalling me, my time being up. I do thank all of those good Liberals who allowed their lunch to get very slightly cold. Members will notice that I did not fulfil my threat of continuously calling quorum.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is good to hear that Saskatchewan is being heard from in the House of Commons this afternoon. I know Saskatchewan has some pretty strong views on taxation. We know a lot about paying taxes. Like many Canadians, we feel we pay more than our fair share of taxes. We are not very excited about Bill C-70, to harmonize or blend the sales taxes.

We have talked about the Liberals a lot in the House of Commons. It sounds like a broken record but it is not. It is broken promises which are serious business. It is important for Canadians to know that Reformers are holding the Liberals accountable for their broken promises here in the House of Commons. I think this

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has been said a number of times but it needs to be repeated because these are important people who have made these statements.

• (1230)

The current finance minister on April 4, 1990 when he was sitting on this side in opposition said: "I would abolish the GST". That is pretty plain and simple. I can understand that. Canadians understood that and they elected a Liberal government because they had a pretty good hunch that the current finance minister would hold that position in a Liberal government.

The current Prime Minister on September 27, 1990, just a few days after his finance minister had made that statement, said: "I want the tax dead". I know when something is dead. Coming from the farm I have seen dead animals. We bury them and they are no more. They are gone. They are forgotten and we do not deal with them any longer.

The GST is not dead. It is alive and kicking. In fact, it is growing new hands. It is going to pick more pockets through a blended sales tax, a BST. That is a fitting name for the Liberals' approach to tax reform, call it BST. Again, coming from the farm I know what BS is and this is an accurate name for this sales tax.

I want to tell the House about what is happening in Saskatchewan. We already have a 9 per cent sales tax, one of the higher sales taxes in Canada. There is only a province or two with a higher sales tax. We take the GST of 7 per cent and add it to our provincial sales tax and we have got 16 per cent or actually a little over 16 per cent sales tax on most of the goods we purchase. If it is services, because it is not a blended sales tax, we pay only the GST. As a farmer, if I go to my accountant or if I take a piece of machinery to a mechanic for repair or, as we all do if we have to get a haircut, we pay the GST but we do not pay the PST. It is on goods only.

Liberals think that they are not getting enough revenue from taxes and they have to blend it so that the provinces and the federal government can extract more from us, particularly in the service industry which all of us rely on so much.

What did the Liberals do? They thought the provinces would just jump at this chance of having a blended sales tax. They forgot one thing. Provincial governments also have to get elected. They were concerned and said "how are we going to sell this BST, taxes going up on new items that currently are not being taxed or at least taxed at as high a level as it would be under a blended sales tax?" There is a little problem with the provinces. They did not jump on board.

The Deputy Prime Minister could not keep her promise and had to resign, albeit a rather odd resignation, having done a poll first to see whether she could get re-elected before she resigned. I guess

that is the way the Liberals think. Put honour at the bottom of the list and check out expediency and pragmatic opportunity first.

In any event, so be it. The Liberals were in trouble over the reform of the sales tax. Killing the GST was out of the question. They were trying to cloak that in some new scheme called blending or harmonizing the sales tax. They finally were able to sell it by offering three Atlantic provinces \$1 billion. Whose dollars? A billion of our dollars, taxpayer dollars, to blend this new sales tax.

The Liberal premiers of the Atlantic provinces went along with this buyout. Suddenly they found out that Atlantic Canadians were not so excited about it. They realized that the bottom line is they are going to pay higher taxes. One province did not go along with it because of course that province had to go to the electorate sooner than any other province, the province of Prince Edward Island. The Liberals found out that they were not very popular in Prince Edward Island as that government went down to defeat. I believe that the blended sales tax was a part of the reason the Liberals' ship sank in Prince Edward Island.

We have an NDP government in Saskatchewan. Believe me, NDP governments know how to tax. They like to tax about as much as Liberals do. We have a 9 per cent sales tax in Saskatchewan. We are killing jobs and sending business to Alberta where there is no provincial sales tax. We have high taxes on our phone bills; we have high taxes on our power bills and the rates are going up; we have increased our gasoline tax, meanwhile our roads are in shambles; we have a high provincial income tax; provincial crown leases have increased; municipal reassessment is being done in Saskatchewan, which is increasing the cost to the taxpayers. Of course the taxpayer, no matter what level of government it is, is the same person.

• (1235)

The NDP got a sudden shock in Saskatchewan the other day when it lost a byelection in North Battleford, a seat it had held for most of the last 40 years. People in Saskatchewan were telling the NDP that they do not like the high taxes. They do not like the NDP nickeling and diming them to death. They are not prepared to pay more and more for less and less. Surprise, surprise. In Saskatchewan the NDP lost a safe seat. A new Liberal MLA was elected in the riding of North Battleford.

The Liberals have also selected a new provincial leader. Of course they have had all kinds of problems. They have been shooting each other in the foot and stabbing one another in the back, as Liberals are prone to do once in a while. Out of the whole mess they had to choose a new leader. What did the new provincial Liberal leader in Saskatchewan pronounce almost at the beginning of his mandate? He said: "I think we should harmonize the federal and provincial sales taxes".

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I was jumping for joy. That will ensure that Liberals will not be re-elected as members of Parliament for Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan simply do not want higher taxes on services. We are opposed to it. I believe the Liberal leader is already backtracking. In later press releases and interviews he has talked about reducing the provincial sales tax more than he has about blending or harmonizing the federal and provincial sales taxes. Politicians, when they make as big a blunder as the new Liberal leader made, are pretty quick to change their ways before they totally annihilate their political future.

Harmonizing, he thought, would save Saskatchewan taxpayers money. Obviously Saskatchewan people do not think so. That is why he is changing his tune and talking about tax relief rather than a new tax.

Where did he get the idea that tax relief might be sold to Canadians? He has probably looked at Reform's fresh start, for one thing. He has probably listened to the people, the common sense of the common people, who are saying "we do not want more taxes, we do not want to see how imaginative you can be by introducing some kind of harmonized sales tax".

What Reform has offered Saskatchewan is not some new program, not a new tax scheme. It has offered tax relief. In the case of the province of Saskatchewan it would mean that \$440 million would be left in taxpayer pockets. That is money they would not have to send to Ottawa.

In Saskatchewan we send everything out of the province. We send our young people out of the province. We send our raw products out of the province. We send our opportunity and our future out of the province. We send our tax dollars out of the province. Only Reform has talked about leaving tax dollars in Saskatchewan, in the hands of the people of Saskatchewan, so that they can make the best decisions as to how that money will be spent. That idea is going over extremely well.

We are looking at how we can keep things in Saskatchewan and how we can make that province grow. Reform has put forward a fresh start proposal which would leave \$440 million in taxpayer pockets, rather than losing it through the BST, which was so aptly named by the Liberal Party.

My time has just about expired, and so I will set the record straight. The NDP tax high, Liberals tax high, Reform spells tax relief. That is what Canadians want. That is what the people of Saskatchewan want. That is what the residents of Kindersley—Lloydminster want. That is why I am speaking on their behalf in the House of Commons.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on behalf of the residents in my area of the country on the GST issue. It was a very profound issue in the last election campaign.

It is interesting and maybe not surprising that nary a Liberal will stand to try to explain, defend or otherwise obfuscate what they are doing about the blended GST, BST, HST or whatever they want to call it. Liberals today are hiding. They are laying low, hoping this will blow over. Of course it will blow over. It will blow over because the government forced closure again, for a record number of times. It is almost an admission of the incompetence of House management. They say "we just cannot manage our affairs well enough to get this stuff through the House and what we have to do is force closure so there will not be any debate on these subjects". We have seen that happen on routine bills, on very divisive bills and on very controversial bills. It does not seem to matter.

● (1240)

It seems to be that the routine now is bring in a bill. If they cannot manage their House time properly, they can cancel the debate. They do not let democracy interfere with the workings and machinations of the government. They just tell them how to vote in the backbench, cancel the debate and see if they can get away with it.

So far if I could chastise for a moment the national media on this for letting them get away with this, it is beyond me. We stand up here and repeatedly say that this is not right, it is not fair, it is not due process. It is not a chance for Canadians to debate something as significant as the GST.

Think back to when the GST was brought in. The bells rang for two weeks in this place. Things here were held up for two weeks. The Liberals were all in favour of that. Yet here today we are not allowed to debate for two days changes to the GST.

It is a shame. It is a shame on the media, too, for not reporting it. It should be on the Liberals' case saying that democracy is not of interest to these people. It should be broadcasting that from coast to coast. It probably will not. I will leave it to the readers and the media watchers of the world to figure out why that is.

I would like to talk today for just a couple of minutes about the politics of division that are being practised on that side of the House.

My colleagues have gone through what is wrong with this tax per se, about the increased costs to the consumers, about how it is driving business out of Atlantic Canada, there very place where they are trying to draw business in, how it is a half baked scheme that does not have the support of the chambers of commerce and other business groups in Atlantic Canada.

That is already in *Hansard*. That is in the record but if I could talk a little today about why this bill is symbolic of the type of politics that seems to be acceptable to the Liberals.

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What they have done here, of course, is pit one region of the country against the other. It is not a new idea for a Liberal. It is not new at all. They practice that pretty well constantly. "Let us play Atlantic Canada against the rest of the country. Then we will go back to Atlantic Canada and try to buy its votes somehow. We will try to buy it off somehow and promise it something in the next election campaign. In the meantime, play one part of the country against the other".

We stand in the House and ask the Minister of Finance to explain himself when it is going to cost so many thousand jobs. He stands up and says "the Reform Party hates Atlantic Canada". The proof is in the pudding. This harmonized sales tax is going to hurt Atlantic Canada.

In turn, the Liberals blame it somehow on the Reform Party. Who do they think brought in this tax, but the finance minister himself? Who thumbed their noses at the businesses in Atlantic Canada? The finance minister and the whole front bench.

They do not mind, play one area against the rest. What about last year in my own province of British Columbia. British Columbia was trying to control its welfare costs. It brought in a residency requirement. The federal government said "no way, if there is federal money involved, you have to have access for all Canadians through this federal program". It fined British Columbia some \$30 some million for bringing in the residency requirement.

It is interesting in Quebec now the fees for universities subsidized by the federal government are twice as high for non-Quebecers as they are for Quebecers. In other words, if someone from my province wants to go to la belle province and get their university education, their tuition fees are twice as high.

Just to rub salt in their wounds, there are 50 countries of the world that can get cheaper rates at their universities than one can if from British Columbia. An argument on both sides of that equation can be made but the issue is why is it okay to punish British Columbia for having a made in B.C. policy. Maybe they should have. It is okay to punish there but do not say a word over here.

When it comes to another province or another region, we will not say it. We will just let British Columbia take it in the ear.

• (1245)

For that matter on the distinct society question itself, again symbolic of this government it says: "We are going to push through the distinct society clause and it does not matter who protests. It does not matter whether British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, the three largest provinces outside of Quebec are dead set against it, we are going to push it through".

The Liberals pushed the veto through the House of Commons, which makes it virtually impossible to ever change the Constitution. I do not know what kind of idea that was from the Prime Minister. It was made on a napkin at the parliamentary restaurant during lunch break, I guess.

The minister brought in these proposals and said that they are going to be pushed through. The Quebec Liberal Party endorsed by the federal Liberal Party says: "We have to have distinct society and we have to push it through". What has that accomplished? The Bloc Quebecois, the Parti Quebecois and Mr. Bouchard all say it is nonsense anyway, that it is not going to solve anything, that it is not going to bring us together and that they are not going to believe in Canada more with this.

They took it out west where I live and asked: "Will you guys accept this in full?" Eighty per cent of Canadians in my area of the country said: "No way. We are not going to discuss this. We will discuss devolution of powers to all provinces, certainly. We will talk about a smaller role for the federal government, certainly. We will talk about areas of jurisdiction where there is overlap and we should get rid of that, certainly. But writing distinct society in our Constitution is just not going to happen".

The Liberals over there seem to think that by bringing in this controversial idea and by pushing it on the west and on Ontario it will somehow bring us all together, that somehow we are going to sing solidarity forever in 10 part harmony. It is not going to happen but the Liberals continue to do it.

It is the same thing with the harmonized sales tax. The Liberals bring it in and what happens? Right away the premier of Alberta asked: "What is going on? You gave a billion dollars to Atlantic Canada in order to harmonize the tax? What about Alberta which is paying the bills to harmonize this, in order to buy the favour from the Quebec premier?"

The people in British Columbia rightly said: "Wait a minute. You are saying a separate program for a separate region of the country with a separate pay off, a buy out and a Liberal handout is going to be paid for by people in our province in part?" The people of Quebec would rightly say: "Wait a minute. You have a sales tax over there and we have to pay the bills when right across the border is a province which is getting a pay out in order to blend its sales tax and enhance the reputation of the finance minister?"

This government practices the politics of division. Time and again, whether it is distinct society, whether it is different rules for different regions of the country, whether it is the harmonized sales tax, whether it is the UI system, whether it is how to get a government grant, which region of the country one lives in plays a big part. Probably the icing on the cake is that those who are

heavily connected with the Liberal Party, either a company, a government or their contacts, have a licence into the hallowed halls of power that sit in the throne room.

I hope Canadians will take the government to task over the Christmas break and tell it that special deals for special regions are off and that they should not happen. The national media should be the first to report that.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Madam Speaker, for the past three years I have been sitting here listening to debates. Of course, I have been sitting here all day listening to what has been going on. Madam Speaker, would it be out of order to make a simple request, that I stand here for 10 minutes and say nothing? Complete silence. Madam Speaker you are shaking your head. I wonder why.

If I stand here and talk for 10 minutes it makes absolutely no difference because the government does not listen. In fact the government does not listen to me as an MP and it does not listen to the people of Canada. If we had total silence and did not debate anything, if the opposition was silent, the government would continue to do what it is doing, which is to run roughshod over the desires and wishes of Canadians.

• (1250)

The government has invoked closure on approximately 30 bills. Each time it does that, one question seems obvious: Why? Why is it invoking closure? I have observed a pattern over the past three years I have been in the House. Each time the government does not want Canadians to know what is going on, when it does not want a topic properly debated, it invokes closure.

[Translation]

Mr. Loubier: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not think we have a quorum in the House. I call for a quorum count.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): We shall proceed with a count of members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): We have a quorum

[English]

Mr. Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, I sometimes wonder if when we have warm bodies in the House it makes any difference. I still do not think it helps anything. The government is not listening to what we have to say.

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We began today's debate with one of the members opposite making some blatantly false and misleading statements. It is interesting that the Liberals continue to propagate this not just within this House but outside this House as well. They continue to make completely false statements. The member also explained that this is the best finance minister, except for the one we had in the mid-seventies who is the present Prime Minister.

If the Liberals are going to set that person up as the best finance minister we have ever had, they are saying that the deficits begun by the Liberal government, the deficits that led to our tremendous present debt were good. They are saying that the past finance minister, the present Prime Minister, who started us on the road to overspending had the right idea. I cannot accept that. To set him up as the best finance minister we have ever had is totally false and misleading. That has to be the sorriest statement I have heard in this House to date.

I made the point that approximately 30 bills have been rammed through the House. Full debate was not allowed on those which indicates this is a very undemocratic institution. The people of Canada must ask what is really going on here. Fundamental to this debate on taxes and on the GST is the question of why we need it. Why does the government need to continue raising all of this money?

I discovered an interesting coincidence. This morning I introduced the people's tax form which is a voluntary tax form that all taxpayers could return with their income tax forms every April. On the forms they could indicate to the government the programs they support and the programs they oppose. It would be an indication to the government of what the people of Canada want.

In light of the debate we are having today, would it not be interesting to include on that form a question which asks people what they would like done with the GST? Do they want it to be a hidden tax as this government is proposing? Do they want it hidden in the prices of products so when the government decides to increase the tax it will not be very visible and the government will not get all the negative publicity it hates? If the government were to ask the people of Canada, I wonder what their response would be.

I believe that Reformers are speaking up on behalf of the people of Canada. The silence of the Liberals indicates that this government does not want to debate the topic.

Each time the government raises taxes, we have already indicated in many previous speeches over the past three years that these taxes kill jobs. It is very simple. As long as people are paying more money in the form of taxes into the government coffers, they cannot spend that money on other things that create real jobs. They cannot buy goods and services which really creates a better lifestyle for all of us. Every time they send millions of dollars to Ottawa it is as if that money is put in a big black hole. It is not an effective way of producing jobs, I can guarantee that. In fact, taxes kill jobs. Studies have been done. They are out there.

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• (1255)

Taxes also hurt families. The GST really hurts our average family in Canada. How do taxes hurt families? Forty-six per cent of the average taxpayer's income now goes to government. It has come to the point where both parents feel they have to work in order to maintain a decent standard of living. One parent works for the government when we have a tax level that is so high. It hurts families because those parents would like to be spending more time at home with their children. Studies have found that the high tax level has really hurt families.

The Liberals then turn around and appear to be compassionate. They are going to have a big program to target child poverty. Who has created the poverty? It has been these very people who now pretend that they are going to help people in some way. Reducing government programs so that we can reduce taxes should be our priority and fundamental to the entire discussion we are having here today.

If we ask Canadians, as I have done, what their priorities are in spending and what things they would oppose, we would get some very interesting answers. If the government actually listened to Canadians, it could scrap the GST because it could reduce taxes which is what has to be done.

I took a survey which has been tabled in the House along with the people's tax form bill that I introduced today. I believe the survey in my riding will not be substantially different from surveys taken across the country. What was the number one program, the sacred cow for the government, that people opposed? Official bilingualism. They felt that the government has been wasting money in this area for decades. The second thing Canadians opposed was funding for special interest groups. In my riding, the third thing they opposed was gun registration. Members may think that is just because I come from basically a rural riding, but I will tell a story.

I spoke at the University of Toronto and half of the audience were young females. It was a good cross-section of the entire population. At the beginning of my speech I took a little survey. I asked them how many thought that gun registration was a good thing and a wise way to spend our money. The vast majority of them raised their hands and said they thought it was a good idea. I then asked if they minded if I explained it to them. I told them how it was going to take quite a bit of tax money to implement and in the end people would have a piece of paper lying beside their gun. To make a long story short, by the time I was done explaining to them what it was all about, I took another survey and the exact opposite happened. There was virtually no support for this.

What happens is that if we properly inform Canadians as to what some of the programs are that this government is implementing, the support drops and they feel it is not a wise way to spend our tax

money. In fact, they would rather spend it on health care, family crisis centres and those kinds of things, not the sacred things this government is implementing.

I wish I could go on longer, but I will conclude. Let us look at the fundamental problem. The government is wasting money on so many things that are totally unnecessary and this could be scrapped if it did away with those things.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to finally address Bill C-70.

I find it ironic that the first thing the government does is it invokes time allocation again. When the Liberals sat here in opposition and the Conservative government did it, the Liberals cried about how it was anti-democratic, how it was restricting freedom of speech, and how it prevented people in all parts of the country from speaking out on an issue that is as important as this one.

• (1300)

This bill is going to cost taxpayers in excess of \$1 billion. The sum total of the bill's ramifications will be in excess of \$1 billion. I will get to another amendment on getting rid of exemptions on the ways and means motion in a second.

Why put this kind of pressure on members of Parliament by not allowing proper time to debate an issue? Why push this through the House of Commons real fast? Is it because the government has used an incentive of \$961 million to get these Atlantic provinces to buy into a program that is going to cost Atlantic consumers more in the long run? Is it to make three provincial premiers look good today, while in the long run they are going to lose their jobs? I predict what just happened in P.E.I. will happen to the rest of them.

People across the country have one thing in common: if it affects their pocketbooks they get upset. When they find out in Atlantic Canada that this harmonization is strictly helping business, that this tax inclusive pricing will tend to lead to higher prices in the long run without them knowing it, there is going to be a huge rebellion in those provinces in the next election.

How can the government justify invoking closure on a bill like this? It goes back to the March 6 budget of this year and here we are today in December. Does the government not know how to plan an agenda? Does the government not know how to present something in the House of Commons so members can totally debate it?

We have been here for three years and I have counted 26 time allocations and three closure motions. For those people who do not understand the three closure motions, closure allows time to talk out the issue until 11 o'clock that day. That gives more time for members of Parliament to discuss it.

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What does the government do? Twenty-six times it has used the hammer of time allocation, not closure. This means the debate ends at the end of Government Orders which is usually around 5.30 p.m. This debate will be over at 5.30 p.m. tonight and it denies us an extra five and a half hours to debate the issue.

Where are the Liberal members from western Canada? Do they agree that we should give \$1 billion of taxpayers' money outside those provinces? They are too chicken to say anything. I challenge them to stand in the House and say something. I challenge the members from B.C. to speak for 10 minutes in support of the finance minister on this issue. I challenge all of Atlantic Canada Liberal members to get up and support this and say how wonderful it is. I expect them to do that and justify it.

Twenty-three per cent of the bills that we have been debating in this House have used either time allocation or closure. Let us look at the statistics a little further. One hundred and twenty-three bills have been passed in the three years to date and half, or close to half, of those bills have been supported by the opposition. That reduces it to 62 bills. That means whenever the opposition, either the Bloc or the Reform, puts a little pressure on the government by trying to show how a bill can be better, or tries to improve it through amendments or whatever, the government has invoked time allocation and closure 29 times. That then increases the percentage to almost half.

This government does not appreciate debate. This government does not welcome debate. Its members are hypocrites when they say they listen to the public. They are duplicitous when they tell the Canadians public that members of Parliament are given lots of time to speak. We are not. Our ability to speak out on this issue has been severely restrained and it is time for us to tell the Canadian public what is happening.

A payment of \$961 million was made to three provinces in October of this year. It was charged off to last year's budget, to last year's income statement, to last year's deficit ending March 1996. This finance minister is setting a bad precedent. That is not just my opinion, that is the opinion of the Auditor General of Canada. That is in the public accounts.

Yes, the auditor general signed off on the financial statement. He did not have any reservations about them because he felt the bottom line of \$28 billion is a true number but not because it includes the \$961 million. He would not have included that. It is because there were other circumstances. I got this from the testimony of members of Treasury Board and the auditor general in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It is because there were other areas of revenue, small amounts and bigger amounts, that add up almost to the same amount. Because he saw those offsetting amounts he did not have a reservation. If those other amounts had not been understated by the government he would have had a reservation in this last year's presentation.

• (1305)

Mr. Strahl: Shifty books.

Mr. Silye: Yes. Cooking the books is what it is.

It is a fine line but a lot of people have compromised on it. If we had proper time to debate this, and if the member opposite would sit and listen for a while instead of just jabbering off and trying to interfere with my speech, he might learn and understand that this is a bad precedent. It is bad for Canada.

Politicians cannot be allowed to cook the books. The finance minister needs to stick to generally accepted accounting principles, stick to government precedents and not change the rules as he goes along just to make himself and his government look good on their promise to achieve 3 per cent of GDP and to get this out of the way so he does not have to show it in this year's statement.

That is why we are upset about time allocation. It restricts the time that members have to say what they want to say. We have to waste half our speech to get this message across to the Canadian public that our democratic rights are being infringed on when we are being denied the opportunity to speak.

Another thing that really upsets me when it comes to finances is yesterday, in answer to a member from the Bloc Quebecois, the finance minister bragged that he has not raised taxes in three years, that personal income taxes have not increased in three years.

Mr. Assadourian: Hear, hear.

Mr. Silye: Is that true, hon. member across the way?

Mr. Assadourian: Yes.

Mr. Silye: There is another member who does not understand the facts of what the Prime Minister has done. There are two ways taxes are raised. One way is to raise the rate. The other way is to reduce the exemptions or the deductions or to tinker with the tax base on which one has to pay that rate of tax. He has not raised the rate, but he has surely and often in a number of ways tinkered with the deductions.

Let me give an example. From now on if ever the Prime Minister or the finance minister says that he has not raised personal income taxes—and I dare him right now to say it after I have put this into the record—his nose will grow like Pinocchio every time he says it.

The current rule in the Income Tax Act for labour sponsored venture capital corporations is that you are allowed up to 20 per cent of the net cost not to exceed \$5,000. In layman's terms that is what the rule says basically. Now the government is reducing that for this year. There is a transition from 1996 to 1997. It has amended section 127.4 to provide that an individual's tax credit is limited to a uniform 15 per cent of the net cost. That means it has been reduced to \$3,500. It means that those people who were putting money away, working for companies that sponsored these RRSP type investments now have to pay tax on another \$1,500 that

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prior to this they did not have to pay tax on. That is a personal tax increase.

The finance minister has increased personal taxes to the degree of disposable income for families on a personal basis going down by \$3,000. I just hope that this finance minister has the courtesy to admit this and never again say in this House that he has not raised personal income taxes. That is as close to the Pinocchio syndrome that we have in this House. I would use another word, but I respect the Chair and I know that I cannot use language like that.

My final comment is that there is a member from Newfoundland who was talking about what I said about harmonization. We are against this nickel and dime, two bit effort to harmonize. If a package was presented to us that harmonized with all provinces we might consider supporting it. We would have to see it first. We have not seen it yet.

Second, if the government is going to harmonize and we do want to have the lowest rate, we have to look at the possibility of taxing everything that we can. This is what the member from Newfoundland will not put in his speech. To help the poorest and the neediest of the needy you have an increased rebate program to make sure that those people do not suffer. This would really tax the rich and that is what the Liberals like to do—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Resuming debate.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, we have had a lot of the truth spoken here by the Reform Party members in the last couple of hours, as usual.

• (1310)

I heard a most astonishing thing in the House. A day or two ago the Minister of Finance said in the House, on national television and in front of all members, that the Liberal government had not raised personal income taxes one cent since it formed the government in 1993. A lot of words went through my mind when he made that statement. The closest description to a term I cannot use in the House would probably be something like stable waste. It was such an outrageous statement. The Reform member has just pointed out in clear terms that the Pinocchio syndrome is present in so far as the Minister of Finance is concerned and other Liberals who harmonize with him on that theme.

There are two things I want to talk about today. One is the recurring scenario of the Liberal government limiting debate on this most crucial subject.

We all understand that the GST is probably the most hated tax, the most railed against tax, the most despised tax in all of our taxation system. That was clear from the minute it was brought in. I wish I could say that it was the Liberals who brought it in. That would make my day. However, I cannot do that because we know

that it was the Conservatives who brought it in, under Brian Mulroney, who incidentally still has his protege sitting in the House, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, who now leads the Conservative Party.

We have all heard the hon. member for Sherbrooke say that some day Canadians will realize what a great Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was. We hope he keeps on saying that because we will keep reminding Canadians that it was the Mulroney Conservatives, and the hon. member for Sherbrooke was part of that government, that rammed the GST down the throats of Canadians without a question of whether it was fair or honest or whether the way it was done contained a hint of integrity.

In spite of all the things that Canadians hated about the GST and the Mulroney reign of terror in Parliament, the one thing that they hated the most was the way the Tories used to shut down debate on crucial issues. They used to limit the time that MPs would be permitted, on behalf of their constituents, to put forward their constituents' views.

We watched in absolute astonishment as the leader of the Tory Party did that. He did it time and time again, with the full support of the hon. member for Sherbrooke, who was part of the cabinet and who now leads the Tory Party. He continues to say that the former Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney, was a great leader. We will remind Canadians of that.

The amazing thing is that the Liberals, when they were in opposition, used to speak in utter outrage at the way the Tory government limited debate. Time and time again Liberals rose, individually and in unison. They railed against the government for this trampling of democracy. They were so self-righteous. They called the Tory government the worst dictator that this country has ever seen. They would rail against it.

• (1315)

I want to make a statement that the number of times the Liberal government has brought in closure on debate since it moved from one side of the House to the other would make Brian Mulroney look like a saint when it comes to putting closure on debate in the House.

I think it is such a perfect example of hypocrisy when the Liberals spent day after day slamming the Mulroney government and now they are doing it themselves, only twice as bad. It is almost an embarrassment to sit in the House and watch democracy be trampled on. I said before that the ghosts of the great parliamentarians who once sat in this House and represented the great Liberal Party of years past and who knew about democracy must be hanging their heads in shame when they see these Liberal members trample on the sacred ground they laid here. And let us make it clear that there was a time when that party understood the fundamentals of democracy. They fought for that state of democracy only to see this Prime Minister throw it aside like yesterday's

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garbage. It is almost an embarrassment to sit in the same House with a party that does that sort of nonsense.

I think we will move on now to the harmonization plan and talk about some of the comments from the provinces about this great Liberal harmonization plan.

The province of Ontario said that if the plan were implemented in Ontario it would cost Ontario consumers from \$2 billion to \$3 billion more a year in purchases. The Canadian people have seen a decrease in their disposable income over the last 25 years like they could never have imagined or dreamed would happen. They have seen personal income taxes raised by the government in the last three years. They have seen our national debt go to about \$600 billion. They have seen our health care and our social safety net gutted, having the heart ripped out of it by the \$50 billion we are paying to service the debt. And now the Liberal government has the audacity to present the harmonization plan which is even going to make what disposable income is has left appear to be even less. In fact, it will be less because a tax is a tax is a tax, no matter where it is put or where it comes from; it can only come from one place, the Canadian people.

I share my colleague's thoughts about this harmonization plan. I share the thoughts of the great Parliamentarians who have gone to the great House of Commons in the sky and who look down and see the way these Liberals are trampling on democracy.

All I can say is again, as with many bills in the House, it is truly a sad day for democracy, a sad day for the Canadian taxpayers. We will stay here and fight for the Canadian people. We will fight for their freedom and their tax freedom.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, as we have heard, this is a sad day for all of us in Parliament. We have had approximately 30 other sad days like this when the government has used closure to shut down debate in the House of Commons. Not only do we not believe in democracy in the House but we also, as we have seen time and time again, have no vision for the country in this House either.

● (1320)

This is a despicable act that the government continues to put on Canadians; the lack of vision. I am afraid for our children and our grandchildren.

Having travelled extensively this year, seeing the vibrant, booming economies of the Asia-Pacific, seeing the booming economy of Germany, looking at so many countries that have long term plans, standing in Potsdam plaza and seeing \$7.5 million being spent to rebuild Berlin is a vision. This country has none of that.

We have a Prime Minister who is tired, a Prime Minister who has nothing to offer the country, who will come up with a plan because

he has a dream to bring himself to some kind of glory and maybe get named by the United Nations or something.

It is a disgrace what this government is doing and how it is mishandling the governing of this country. It is hard to believe that as we close each session, all of a sudden we get to a great rush to get legislation through.

The only legislation that we are going to discuss tomorrow will be a prebudget debate, which is promised in the red book. Everyone is excited to get right to it because, again, it is just Liberal propaganda.

Yet there is an issue like the GST in this harmonized tax which affects every Canadian, men, women, children, seniors. Everybody in this country is affected by this and the government uses closure on it to shut down debate.

What kind of leadership is that? What kind of vision, what kind of plan does this government have for this country? When the other side of the House was over here, it called the PCs everything it could think of in all those many times that they used closure.

It certainly is different how things change when those members cross the floor. Let us all of us stand here and say "that cannot happen to us, we cannot let it". Canadian people have lost respect for this place and it is because of those kinds of actions by governments like this one.

We need to reform this place. We need to change this place dramatically. This place is not working. This place is not respected by the people of Canada. The people here are yesterday's people led by yesterday's man.

We are going nowhere into the future. We are going to be out competed by the countries that I have mentioned, by southeast Asia, by the European Community. They will knock us off in terms of our position and our quality of life if we do not learn how to compete, if we do not have a vision that goes longer than six months at a time in this country.

A good example is how many Liberals are not here to listen to this kind of statement. Where are they if this place works? Where are they?

Enough of incompetence, lack of planning, lack of vision, lack of guidance for this country. The Canadian people know that already and will get that message. I am confident in the people of Canada.

We have problems like \$600 billion in debt. We have problems like \$50 billion in interest payments. We spend \$14 billion in education. We spend \$16 billion on health care, \$20 billion on pensions and \$50 billion on interest payments. This country has problems.

We have to turn it around for our children and our grandchildren. We must do that. We must have that vision. What about this GST? We heard lots of comments about it. In my riding we had rallies of

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6,000 people and more who said that the GST was a bad tax, a tax that would not work.

We had an association that put out thousands of bumper stickers. Every car in my riding had a bumper sticker on it saying what its owner thought of the GST. The group is called Canadians AGAST. It had rallies. One of the biggest was over 6,000 people who told the politicians what they thought of the GST. Of course, the Liberals were on that bandwagon as well.

● (1325)

Think of the comments that were made by the now finance minister, the now Prime Minister and the now Deputy Prime Minister. "We are going to get rid of this terrible tax. We promise we will". Why have the Canadian people lost their belief in this place? It is obvious why they have lost it. It is because in here members say one thing when they are on this side and another thing when they are on the other side.

Even though interest rates are where they are today, people are not investing in businesses or in their communities. People are going to the underground economy. They are taking their money out of this country.

Let us think about this. One hundred and fifty-three students who have graduated after a five year course are saying they have a job and are thankful to have a job. However, 90 per cent of these students have a job outside of this country. Those faces, which I can see in front of me, have said they cannot stay in Canada. There were 700 graduate students hired in Sweden in the last couple of years. Those are people who are potential taxpayers and the future of our country. Why are they leaving in droves? It is because they would have to work at McDonald's if they stayed here.

There is no future for this country without a vision. We know we have a country today that has the potential to be the very best and stay the very best into the 21st century. However, it is promises that are not kept and the changing of one's position all the time that have caused us all concern.

People in the Liberal Party are no different than the Kindys and Kilgours of the last Parliament. We can now throw in the Mills and the Nunziatas. If Liberal members disagree with their party they are out on their heels.

There are so many people in business who are disgusted with this tax. There are also many people in Atlantic Canada who are disgusted with this harmonization. In my riding, we have many people in the service industry who are fed up with the administration and the nature of this whole tax called the GST.

We must keep our promise and not harmonize but eliminate the GST.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Madam Speaker, Okanagan—Shuswap is probably the best place in Canada and maybe even in the whole world. It is a great place to live.

Unfortunately we have the same problem as most people in Canada have. We are here today to speak to Bill C-70. In case people out there do not understand exactly what this bill entails, here it is. It is totally unbelievable. It contains 335 pages on how to harmonize a tax. I would hate to figure out the cost of each page. Believe me, Madam Speaker, you probably will not make that much in your lifetime nor in mine nor in a number of other lifetimes in this House.

This government has spent hundreds of hours and days trying to figure out how to broaden the tax base in this country.

● (1330)

Let us take a look at what they mean by broadening the tax base. I want the people who are listening and every member in this House to understand that whenever a politician talks about tax that means they are going to raise the level of tax. That is what it means, no matter what they say.

The Liberals spent days, weeks, months trying to figure out a way to soft sell this to the people. They spent millions of dollars to figure out one word that the public might just accept: harmonize. All they had to do was look it up in the dictionary but I suppose that would have been too simple.

So now we are looking at this harmonization of taxation. We try to debate this issue but the government has decided that we do not need any more debate in this House. It does not want any debate in this House. The government would not like the people outside this House or off the Hill, those people who have a life outside of these walls, to even know what goes on in this House and therefore will invoke closure.

An hon. member: You mean we cannot debate it?

Mr. Stinson: The government says "No, we will put a time allocation on you people. We will see that you only debate it for a certain length of time, and that's it. You will be curtailed to a certain length of time". This is in Canada, in the House of Commons. I do not know what is going on here. I know a lot of people did not spill their blood and die for this type of set-up. And I call it a set-up because that is exactly what it is.

The other day I mentioned a parasite, a bug we have out west. It is called a tick. It latches on to human beings and sucks the lifeblood out of them. Likewise there is politickitis, a two legged insect that is found in government. Ninety per cent of all politickitis sit on the frontbenches; 10 per cent sit on the backbenches. I will not deny that.

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A politick is a politician in power who latches on to the taxpayer and sucks the living blood out of them just as this government has been doing since it got in here. And there has been no change.

I well remember the 1993 election campaign. I remember how we were going to be rid of this GST. Since the Liberals have come to power there is a new name for it. It is called "get stuffed, taxpayer". That is exactly what it is and that is exactly what the Liberals are telling the average taxpayer. "Get stuffed, we're not interested in it". And they get away with it.

But it will stop. The taxpayers will make sure it stops. Sooner or later taxpayers are going to throw this bunch out. It is only a matter of time. They are tired of politicians knocking on their doors every four years. They are tired of politicians getting down on their knees and begging the electorate to put them back in power. They promise they will not do it again.

I have a question for you, Madam Speaker. Name for me one policy, one tax that a government put in which defeated that government and that an incoming government got rid of? There is none. The new government just expands upon it. It raises more money.

• (1335)

As I sat and thought about how the government is broadening the tax base, I came to one conclusion. The main reason it has done this has to be, beyond a doubt, that it needs money for its pension plan. It has to be. The MP pension plan has to be in serious trouble. It is the million dollar pension plan which members opposite will take. That is what it is going to do with the money. That is what harmonization is all about. It has absolutely nothing to do with the word harmonize.

In most places that is called legalized theft. That is exactly what it is. Liberals said it was not personal tax. Every tax in this country is a personal tax. When I buy something, whether it be a shirt, shoes, fuel for my car or for my house, the tax on those items is a personal tax. When they say it is not a personal tax they are snowing the public. It goes on and on. They get away with it because they implement time allocation and closure. Is that a democratic society? No. We have long past the point of being a democratic society.

As a matter of fact, I would probably characterize us, along with many members of the House—and I am sure many members opposite would agree with me—as having probably the greatest dictatorship in the free world. It sits right here in this Parliament. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that we have allowed it to go as far as it has. What is happening in this country is absolutely ridiculous. It is being fostered by many members opposite. When those members disagree, they are kicked out of the caucus. "Do not come back into our caucus. I will not sign your papers".

An hon. member: They think it is funny.

Mr. Stinson: Yes, they think it is funny over there. They think this is the way to do business. They tell their members that if they disagree with them they should keep their mouths shut. "Get out of here. We will disband your organizations and you will never be allowed to come in here again". Is that democracy? I think not.

I have a feeling that underneath the propaganda machines that sit over there some of them could make what happened many years ago look very tame.

It has to make us wonder exactly how far some hon. members will go in order to get elected. It does not take me long to picture these people ringing the doorbells come the next election. They will say "We got rid of the GST, we harmonized it. It is still there. It is still sucking your paycheque, but we harmonized it".

When they go back to the people and say "trust me", I want everyone to understand that for sure their fingers will be crossed. They have not done anything above board yet.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Madam Speaker, before I start I would like to congratulate my colleague for his most excellent speech. We can always tell when a Reformer is speaking from the cacophony of bleating babble which comes from the other side.

We are talking today about another Liberal broken promise. There is a whole bunch of them. We have referred to them over and over again in our interventions on this bill and other bills.

• (1340)

First of all, we are talking about the promise to scrap, abolish and get rid of the GST. We are also talking about the Liberal promise to introduce democracy into this House. The people on the other side of this House yelled, screamed and ridiculed the Tory government for doing exactly what they are doing today.

I would like to respond to some of the comments made by the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls. I have respect for this member and I am aware that on many occasions he has had the courage to stand up and challenge his own government, to challenge his own leader when there was an issue that was going to affect his constituents. He knew and realized that the government was wrong and he challenged it. I congratulate him for that. If more backbenchers in the Liberal government did that then possibly we would get better government. Unfortunately most do not have that courage.

During the intervention of the member for Gander—Grand Falls he was trying to paint this wonderful rosy picture of how great a job this government has been doing for the last three years. He referred to statistics with regard to the deficit and other industrialized nations. For the life of me I cannot understand why this member, who has been very lukewarm to his own government for the last

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three years, is all of a sudden on side with it. I imagine he has his own reasons for that.

In a valiant but vain attempt he painted his government in the best light that he possibly could. He said the government's record is good. We know what the government's record is on the GST. We know what the government's record is on invoking closure. Let us talk about a couple of other issues, issues that are not only near and dear to me but near and dear to many people in my constituency.

Let us talk about the broken promise of the North American Free Trade Agreement for a few minutes. When this government campaigned in 1993 it said it would abrogate the North American Free Trade Agreement unless it worked for Canadians. It had some concerns about the agreement and it wanted to make sure it could go back and renegotiate it and make sure it worked for Canadians.

Let us examine the government's record on the North American Free Trade Agreement. What is the single most important trade issue between Canada and the United States? What is the single biggest net export to the United States that means the most jobs in Canada? It is Canadian softwood lumber. Canadian softwood lumber is the single biggest net export to the United States.

What has this government done in renegotiating NAFTA and standing up for Canada's interest in the North American Free Trade Agreement? When Mickey Kantor talked to the Prime Minister or his office or the minister of trade and said he wanted to do a deal that is going to limit Canadian imports into the United States, the minister said "how high do you want us to jump and when can we come back down again?" The government rolled right over on it.

This is an issue that affects four provinces significantly and every province either directly or indirectly. There are hundreds of thousands of jobs hanging in the balance. This government and this Prime Minister who promised Canadians they were going to make the North American Free Trade Agreement work for us have turned their backs on these people and allowed American trade officials, Mickey Kantor in particular, to dictate to us how we are going to run our softwood lumber industry.

I want to talk for a minute on who benefits from this. Most of the timbered land in Canada is owned by the crown and is granted as tree farm licences. Various sawmills and pulp mills get rights to harvest in these areas but the land is owned by the crown.

In the United States it is different. Most of the timbered land in the United States is owned by private individuals and corporations. Incidentally, most of the timbered land in the United States is owned by a handful of wealthy corporations that have the money and the power to go to Washington, D.C. and lobby for their interests. They are the ones who are benefiting. They are the ones whose asset value has increased as a result of this quota system. They are the ones who are able to demand more money for their timber in the United States.

• (1345)

And who is losing? The first big losers are the consumers in the United States who on average pay \$3,000 more now than before the quota for the construction of a new home. The American consumers have been held up by their own lobby groups and by the wealthy timber owners in the United States. And the other big losers are the Canadian producers and the people who are employed in those industries. They are the ones who are paying for this.

I cannot understand for the life of me where the leadership is from the government benches, the Prime Minister and his trade minister. They allow the North American Free Trade Agreement to be abrogated by the Americans so that it works in favour of the Americans at every step and turn when it becomes an issue that is important to them. But when it is an issue which is vitally important to Canada, there is no leadership whatsoever. They roll over and play dead. This is another example of a Liberal broken promise.

The Prime Minister takes these trade junkets all over the world and spends millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars doing it. He goes to South America, Europe and Asia, all the while telling people he is there to promote Canadian business and industry. He hands over millions of dollars in subsidies, grants and no interest loans to well heeled companies like Bombardier. However when it comes to an issue that is vital to British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, what does the Prime Minister do? He just rolls over.

A lot of potential jobs will be lost as a result of this. Sawmills in my riding, in Terrace, Smithers, Hazelton and Prince Rupert are on the verge of closing. They have announced closures and are cutting back or laying off people just before Christmas because of the lack of leadership from this government.

It reminds me of another Liberal promise. Does anyone here recall the promise about jobs, jobs, jobs? Well the jobs, jobs, jobs in my riding are going gone, gone, gone because this Prime Minister and his trade minister cannot represent the interests of Canadians when it comes to trade with the United States. That is the track record of the government.

I cannot believe it. I am ashamed as a Canadian. I am absolutely appalled and ashamed that the government is so weak-kneed and so willing to accept what Mickey Kantor and the trade department of the United States demands of us rather than standing up for our interests.

While we are talking about Liberal broken promises, the promise to scrap, abolish and kill the GST, the promise to introduce more democracy into Parliament and do away with votes on closure so that we would have the ability to debate these issues at length, there are other broken promises as well which are costing Canadians jobs

right now. Broken promises are costing my constituents their livelihood.

This is totally unacceptable. The government should demonstrate leadership. The Prime Minister should demand a meeting with the President of the United States and put this issue at the top of the agenda and work for the interests of Canada for a change instead of going on golfing holidays with his friend Mr. Clinton while Mickey Kantor beats up on our trade officials.

I am appalled and ashamed of being a Canadian today when I look at how easily American interests have rolled over us and forced us to do their will.

In closing, when the government brags about keeping its promises, when the government brags about how well Canada is doing economically, it is totally ignoring the unemployment rate in this country. It is totally ignoring the people who are concerned about losing their jobs, and there are a lot more of them now as a result of the softwood lumber issue. It is totally ignoring the cost to the people of Atlantic Canada for paying the harmonization cost of the GST. It is totally ignoring the fact that the rest of Canada is going to foot the bill for this billion dollar bribe.

The government is totally ignoring many of the most serious and important promises it made during the last election campaign. We will be reminding Canadians in the very near future of all these Liberal broken promises.

• (1350)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I must say at the outset that it is going to be a really tough act to follow. My hon. colleagues from Okanagan—Shuswap and from Skeena who immediately preceded me have done an absolutely superb job of representing their constituents and the views of Canadians on this very important topic.

I might hasten to add that there is a real problem in this House of Commons when we see the Liberal government bringing forward time allocation 26 times in this Parliament. This is the 26th time we have gone through this to date, where this government has limited debate, shut down debate, shut down the democratic process to ram through a piece of legislation.

And the Liberals have the audacity to go before the Canadian people and talk about democracy. And they will have the audacity in the next election to try to tell Canadians that they have lived up to their red book promise of restoring integrity, restoring credibility in Parliament and in the political process in this country. The Canadian people will reject that as the nonsense it has become.

When that party, the Liberal Party of Canada, was on this side of the House, its members ranted and railed. They criticized the Tories every chance they got for bringing in time allocation or closure. Yet, 26 times the government has used time allocation and four

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times it has brought in closure for a total of 30 times it has shut down debate in this place in just a little over three years. Actually it is in under three years because the 35th Parliament did not start sitting until January 1994. It has shut down debate 30 times on 123 bills.

I am sure that at some point in time someone is going to do the arithmetic and figure out that on a percentage basis, this Liberal government in the 35th Parliament of Canada has used time allocation and closure more often than the Mulroney Tories. That is despicable. It is a disgusting record for a government that said it was going to restore integrity in the system.

On to the GST—

Mr. Cannis: Finally.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): I can hear all the heckling going on over there. They are amazed because they cannot face the truth of what has transpired in this Parliament. They cannot face the truth. That is the problem that exists over there.

Mr. O'Reilly: Tell us the truth.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Okay, the GST. The hon. member says he wants to know the truth. I am here today to tell the truth, to tell the people in TV land exactly what the truth is.

What did the Liberals say during the 1993 election and in the time leading up to it? I will tell you what they said. Did they say they would harmonize the GST?

Mr. Solberg: No.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, read the red book.

An hon. member: Page 22.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): No, of course not. Did they say they would hide the GST? No. Did they say that they would blend the GST? Of course not. That is not what they said.

Mr. Mitchell: Read it into the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Resume your debate, hon. member.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for attempting to restore the decorum in the House. It was getting a little loud on the other side.

I am sorry that the government did not decide to use the term blended sales tax. I am quite sure of the reason it decided to go with the harmonized sales tax instead of the blended sales tax. I am kind

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of sorry about that because they would have had the BST. Canadians would have really appreciated having the letters BS attached to tax, the BST, especially in regard to the promises made by this government during the 1993 election. That describes exactly their promise to get rid of the GST. They should have called it the BST.

• (1355)

Now that we know what the Liberals did not say, what did they really say on the hustings, on the doorsteps and in the all-candidates forums during the 1993 election campaign? We know what they said. They said they were going to kill the GST. They said they were going to abolish the GST. They even said that they were going to get rid of the GST totally. That does not sound much like harmonizing to me.

It is ironic that the Liberals are no different from the Tories. That is why we hear Canadians from coast to coast to coast saying Liberal, Tory, same old story. It does not matter which party they vote for. Once they get into power they do exactly the same thing. There is no difference.

Do we want to see exactly how much difference there is? Let us refer to the notes from a speech by the hon. member for York—South Weston.

I am pleased to see you in the chair, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we will see some decorum restored to this Chamber. I am pleased to see you there.

The member's speech was entitled "Honesty, Ethics and Accountability: Does it Exist in Canada's Political System". This is what the member, who used to be a Liberal, said:

So the problem with today's political system is not the people we have in place, but rather the problem with our system in Canada is the system itself. The system is what is fueling public cynicism and distrust.

My removal from the Liberal caucus in April is the perfect example of the reward/punish system I have referred to. I was removed for voting against the federal budget because it failed to fulfil the Liberal Party's election promise to replace the GST. Prior to the vote, I wrote to the Prime Minister to advise him that I would be voting against the budget. I reminded him that while we were in opposition our efforts to eliminate the GST was one of the most significant battles we fought during the Mulroney administration. While in opposition, the Liberal Party vigorously opposed the GST in the House of Commons. Liberal senators undertook an unprecedented effort to kill the legislation and we forcefully campaigned against it in the last election.

It is trite to say that every government has a moral obligation to keep its major election promises. In my view, the last federal budget represented the final retreat from the promise to replace the GST. I think that the government's announcement that it intends to harmonize the tax has verified this. Voting against the budget was the only way that I could reconcile what I had said and done in the past in the House of Commons and what I had said to my constituents on their doorsteps with the fact that the government—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his compliment to the Chair generally in his remarks. The four of us are very appreciative for any compliments that come our way.

As it is now almost two o'clock, we will proceed to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

JASON BROWN AND DARREN VICKERS

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday I had the pleasure of joining the Goodine family in Woodstock, New Brunswick at a special reception in order to pay tribute to two young boys who through their quick actions and calmness under pressure avoided a tragedy for their 13-year old friend Billy Goodine.

Jason Brown and Darren Vickers were honoured for the responsible action that they took in July during a serious biking accident when Billy Goodine was seriously injured.

To elaborate further, Billy Goodine's neck was broken in the fall which could have led to full paralysis or even death. However, Darren and Jason's refusal to move Billy, coupled with excellent ambulance care by the St. John Ambulance and several weeks of hospitalization and rehabilitation, Billy was able to return home and to school on September 27, 1996.

We hear much about today's youth but—

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[*Translation*]

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, December 10, 1996, we celebrate the 48th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This important document sets out basic international standards concerning fundamental human rights and freedoms and promotes the respect and dignity of all human beings.

• (1400)

During the last half century, we have observed considerable progress in this regard: the Berlin Wall came down, a number of dictatorships were replaced by democratic governments, and the end of apartheid in South Africa gave new hope to the African continent as a whole.

However, many countries are still living under oppressive regimes, and, in some cases, in states of civil war. Over 25 million refugees worldwide are the victims of persecution.

It is our fervent hope that Canada will devote more attention to defending human rights and freedoms, at home and abroad.

* * *

[English]

DRUNK DRIVERS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, with the holiday season fast upon us, I want to remind Canadians who contemplate getting behind the wheel of a car after they have been drinking of one sobering statistic.

Each year on average in Canada, drunk drivers kill two and half times more people than do murderers. In 1994 alone this meant that 1,400 Canadians lost their lives because someone decided to have one more for the road.

I want to remind Canadians that the Liberal justice minister has done nothing to address this obscenely offensive situation. The government has had ample opportunity to redress the problem. Most recently this opportunity has come in the form of a private member's bill presented by my colleague, the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley. The bill would have mandated a minimum sentence of incarceration for those who kill as a result of driving while impaired.

Reform's message is: Don't drink and drive. But Canadians are wondering if the justice minister has a different message.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, a number of sawmills in Quebec are unhappy with the softwood lumber quotas they were assigned in late October under the agreement negotiated with the United States in the spring of 1996.

They are questioning the way in which the quotas were arrived at by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. How is it that, according to the *Financial Post*, BC sawmills were given quotas representing between 75 and 85 per cent of their 1995 production, while Quebec's were between 60 and 65 per cent?

While many sawmills were going to reduce their production by 10 to 15 per cent, many are now thinking about shutting their doors. The whole quota assignment process must be reviewed. Otherwise, there will be more loss of employment in Quebec. Or better yet, I suggest that there be a review of this agreement, which has left people unhappy on both sides of the border, both in the United States and in Canada.

[English]

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BELL CANADA

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that small businesses are the backbone of the economy. In Guelph—Wellington more than half the businesses have less than 10 employees. Many of these barely weathered the recession and they welcome good economic news. That is why the proposed Bell Canada rate increases will be an unfair burden for small business leaders in my community and in ridings across Ontario and Quebec.

If the proposal is accepted, telephone rates in my riding for business customers will nearly double. Over 1,500 of my constituents have signed a petition, distributed from my office, opposing these increases.

Small businesses deserve our support. Fifteen hundred people in Guelph—Wellington have joined me in saying that the proposed Bell Canada increase is a wrong idea at a wrong time.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently hosted a public policy forum in Fredericton on Canada's finances. The discussion included dealing with the deficit, the role of the private and public sectors with respect to economic growth and the HST.

The majority of individuals at the forum expressed the view that the country's social services cannot stand another round of cuts, that the government has hit expenditures as much as it can. They proposed we look at high end tax reform as there is a sense that large corporations and Canadians in the higher income brackets are not paying their fair share.

Discussions about the role of the public and private sectors in the economy focused on whose role it is to create jobs and how to do it. Forum members suggested government does have a role to play in intervening in the economy to protect disadvantaged Canadians and regions, to show leadership in dealing with global adjustment, school to work transition and lifelong learning.

I thank all who participated and in particular my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka. I advise the House that I have forwarded reports to the Minister of—

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[Translation]

QUEBEC PREMIER

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lucien Bouchard dismissed the constitutional position of the Quebec

S. O. 31

Liberal Party as “old hat”, adding that he could not believe in it. In his opinion, “Quebecers have moved far beyond that position. It has become totally irrelevant”.

• (1405)

The PQ leader ought to read what his old friend and political advisor Daniel Turp had to say recently, and I quote: “The ultimate solution for Quebecers is renewed federalism, and a greater transfer of powers to Quebec. It is their solution of choice”.

The QLP’s constitutional position is a fairly faithful reflection of what Quebecers want, as expressed in the 1980 and 1995 referendums. When will the leader of the PQ, who has nothing else to propose except the separation of Quebec, accept this? At least the crown prince, Daniel Turp, has seen the light.

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UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 10, 1948, the members of the United Nations Organization signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In so doing, the political leaders of the time wished to record their determination to ensure that the horrors of the second world war would never be repeated.

The countries which have joined the United Nations since that time have also been bound by this declaration, which is as valid today as it ever was. One needs only to glance at a newspaper to realize that, in many parts of the world, numerous human rights violations are still taking place to this day.

On the occasion of this anniversary, we must recall to mind the events which prompted the international community to adopt this declaration, and we must remind ourselves that human rights are an integral part of every human activity, whether political or economic.

In this era of universalization, where world wide trade turns its back on social considerations, we must keep the commitment that joins us together clearly in mind, and we must make sure that our actions are in line with our words.

* * *

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, during the last election Liberals made a campaign promise that they would abrogate the North American free trade agreement unless it worked for Canadians.

What is Canada’s biggest net export to the United States? Is it designer jeans? Is it electric shavers? Is it toasters? No, it is softwood lumber, by a wide margin.

How are the Liberals handling the single most important trade issue on Canada’s behalf? The Prime Minister went on a golfing holiday with President Clinton while Canadian trade officials rolled over and meekly accepted a quota on softwood lumber. This was after Canada won three separate arbitrations on softwood lumber disputes.

While the minister brags about keeping promises and spends millions on trade junkets to Asia, sawmills in my riding, in Terrace, Smithers, Hazelton and Prince Rupert, are cutting back and laying off people.

It reminds me of another Liberal promise about jobs, jobs, jobs.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of the Environment tabled the long awaited changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. As usual, what the government says about protecting the environment is very different from what it does.

CEPA used to be the supreme environmental law in this country, in that it could override other acts and other departments. The new act will now only apply if the substance of concern is not covered by any other act, and the minister can only intervene if a province fails to do so. This effectively downgrades CEPA from being the most important pillar and centrepiece of environmental law into a law of last resort when nothing else applies. This legislation will take us backwards, not forwards. It effectively forces Environment Canada out of the environmental protection business and allows the harmonization agreement with the provinces to take precedence over CEPA.

The environment committee last year called for the act to be strengthened and revamped, not weakened in the manner proposed by the Minister of the Environment.

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[Translation]

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in November we saw an impressive increase in the number of construction starts in Quebec.

Our government is delighted that its economic policies have produced results. Thanks to the lowest mortgage rates in the last 30 years, Canadians who want to buy a home can now make their dreams come true.

In the Montreal area, there were more than 748 active construction sites, 54 per cent more than last year during the same period. Construction starts have increased by 288 per cent in the Sherbrooke area and by 108 per cent around Chicoutimi.

If it were not for the political uncertainty in Quebec today, all these figures would be twice as high.

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[English]

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, British Columbia is taking the lead in the research of new forms of transportation fueled by battery power.

• (1410)

We welcome the recent federal investment in fuel cell research in co-operation with Ballard Industries. It will help to prepare Canada for the transportation challenges of the future. Research and development of new technologies will be essential as Canada and British Columbia take a leadership role in trading organizations like APEC.

As evidence of the important role played by the federal government in B.C., it now funds 30 per cent of the research in British Columbia.

Research builds new links between industries. Shared research can help to build a strong country from coast to coast. New job opportunities will be created if we work together to transfer the research into new products and services.

These are the challenges we face and the opportunities we have in Canada. Let's take advantage of them.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is vitally interested in the future of agricultural research. Farmers, food processors, marketers and the academic community are all working in partnership with Agriculture Canada for the national good.

Through Agriculture Canada research labs, important work is being conducted to ensure the safety of the national food supply, to develop new crops, to investigate environmentally friendly and economical herbicides and pesticides to improve crop production and to identify new markets for Canadian produce and agri-food products.

Leading the way in the area of research and development, especially in biotechnology, the research labs have developed better methods for growing and storing Saskatchewan produce. Innovation Place, through its harnessing of government, academic and private sector resources, is an excellent model for the effective partnerships that ensure the successes we have seen in research and development.

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They underscore the continued importance of the federal government's leadership role in the area of research and development in western Canada, a role to which my Liberal colleagues and I remain committed.

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[Translation]

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 48th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I would like to draw your attention to the determination and courage shown by several women's groups who established the permanent Arab tribunal on violence against women this week in Rabat, Morocco.

Recent events in Afghanistan are a clear indication of the need for such a tribunal. In fact, the first ones to suffer as a result of the political situation in Kabul are women. They have been excluded from public life and fired from their jobs and are compelled to abide by medieval customs.

The rights of women have been ignored in Afghanistan for many years. The restrictions imposed by the Taliban, such as closing girls' schools, prohibiting women from leaving their homes to go to work and the rule obliging women to cover themselves from head to foot are dramatic examples of violence and crimes against women in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world.

I wish the permanent Arab tribunal on violence against women all the courage and energy it needs to proceed with its difficult task.

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[English]

TOWN HALL MEETING

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tonight the Prime Minister will be holding a town hall meeting to be aired on the CBC with Peter Mansbridge.

Town hall meetings should be an opportunity for Canadians to share their concerns with their federal representative or the leader of the country. However, participants in the Prime Minister's town hall meeting will not be allowed to ask their questions or voice their concerns. Instead Liberal organizers are controlling participant questions to fit the Liberal agenda.

An individual from my riding was not allowed to ask a question on his issue of concern and instead was given a directive on what he could ask.

Obviously the Prime Minister's town hall meeting will be nothing more than a staged event, a puppet show, a pre-election announcement from the Liberal government.

Oral Questions

Shame on the Prime Minister and the CBC for the misuse and abuse of what should be a democratic process. If the Prime Minister is so confident of his success to date, why will he not allow Canadians honest participation in this town hall meeting and open the floor to real debate?

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in today's highly competitive global economy, the need for co-operation between government, universities and the private sector in the area of research and development has never been greater.

One of the best examples of the importance of such research is the RH Laboratory at the University of Manitoba which specializes in blood plasma refractionation. The RH Laboratory is a world class facility which has contributed much to the successful treatment of children with blood disorders. Not only have they produced cures for very serious diseases, but they also produce high quality permanent jobs for Canadians.

Their success shows what can be done through co-operation between the federal government, universities and industry.

The University of Manitoba exemplifies this type of co-operation, from mobilizing world markets with the research done on the canola breeding program to the centre for disease control, the centre of excellence in new composite materials, research on medical devices and the list goes on.

• (1415)

The payoffs from these initiatives have translated into high tech industries, economic prosperity and a better life for all Canadians.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Judy Bethel (Edmonton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's task force on commercializing technology gathered the collective wisdom from western Canadians who know how to discover, develop and apply the science and technology created in our government labs.

We learned first that Canadians can be proud of the excellent work being done in our research laboratories; second, that we have the potential to be world leaders in many fields; and, third, that new partnerships are the key to unlocking this potential.

These new partnerships must include all those who are key to the successful transfer of technology. Each partnership must value the contribution of the others. Each partnership must accept that the

main goal is to be successfully commercialized as science and technology in our lab.

New ways of getting research out of the lab, on to the factory floor and into the home will mean new jobs and new opportunities for Canadians. New technologies will allow rural communities to share in the latest research. New linkages between researchers and businesses across the country will increase the potential to compete in world markets.

I know our Prime Minister values the advice we have received and will act on it in the best interest of all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in his remarks, the Minister of National Defence tried to minimize his department's responsibilities in the seizure of over 20,000 pieces of child pornography at the National Defence Research Establishment, a high security centre, with the explanation that it is not possible to monitor every computer in the Department of National Defence.

Understandably, but how can the minister make light of such events, when in fact the individual using the research centre's network was not only obtaining material, a very serious matter of itself, but was feeding a network, a very large international child pornography distribution network?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree totally with the Leader of the Opposition that we cannot make light of this situation. It is absolutely deplorable. It is disgusting. The individual involved was arrested.

What I was trying to explain in response to journalists' questions is that this phenomenon is occurring everywhere. The Internet, which should be a source of development and change, in the best sense of the word, has now become something that affects not only national defence, but also many people known to members of this House and children at home, because it provides access to totally repugnant information, photos and acts. There is absolutely no doubt about this.

I am hoping that everyone understands we recognize this is unacceptable, and that the person involved, if found guilty, should be punished to the full extent of the law. This morning, I met with departmental officials not only to inform them, but also to ask them to take all possible measures, to investigate and to find out how this sort of access may be controlled.

Oral Questions

The whole question of pornography on the Internet will be not only a burden but a major challenge for everyone in all sectors: in government, in the private sector and even at home. I hope that together we will find ways to remedy the problem.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's explanations, and I will ask him the following supplementary.

How does the minister explain to the people who pay the salaries of the department's employees the fact that, in a top security centre of the Canadian army, an employee in an important position, a high level strategic position, can spend the bulk of his time over weeks, if not months, creating pornographic material without any questions being asked? Can the minister explain that?

• (1420)

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously do not know exactly how much time the person in question spent preparing his material and how and in what context he obtained it. Technology now enables us to do things we would never have dreamed of being able to do before.

I would say to my hon. colleague, that, under the circumstances, when we come across someone—because the man accused is quite sophisticated and well educated—someone who is sick and wants to obtain child pornography, we must obviously be much more careful in the way we deal with these problems. It is complex, not only here but everywhere.

All I can say by way of explanation is that the sort of people interested in this kind of activity do not share their interest with their neighbours or their colleagues at work. I am sure my hon. colleague would be just as disgusted to find out as I would. No one knows how he managed to use the system. We will find out. An internal audit has been requested.

Once again, I deplore the situation. It is unacceptable. However, it is first and foremost the availability of this sort of material on the Internet that presents the greatest challenge to all of us. Would anyone with a way to control it please let me know. I will give out my telephone number at the end of question period.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is very modest. Everyone knows he may be reached at national defence.

More seriously, though, and this is in fact extremely serious, I would like to ask the minister whether, when it was possible for this employee, unbeknownst to everyone, his superiors and his colleagues, to carry on these activities for weeks if not months, using a Canadian army computer in a top security centre, the minister can be certain, with all the challenges of informatics, that the same

thing is not happening with military secrets, for example, or information of strategic importance?

How can the minister assure the public that he has the means to control this if he is unable to control something like child pornography?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question and one that crossed my mind when I was informed of events.

I am assured that, with the way communications work, the link with the service providing access to the Internet is totally separate from what happens on the system used to transmit information of a secret or sensitive nature.

I asked the same question. I was assured that it was a completely separate activity. The man in question was taking information off the Internet, he was trading, if my information is correct. For matters of security, however, the system is totally separate.

I recognize the importance of the question raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I have checked, and the only assurance I can provide is that, right now, my informants are confident this sort of activity could not happen.

I am satisfied that this is the end of the story, but I assure you that we will be watching the situation closely.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

We have learned that an individual who is supposed to be working on top secret projects in a maximum security location, right inside an army research establishment, is able, apparently without difficulty and unbeknownst to anyone, to spend weeks and months using army computers to supply an international child pornography network. This lack of control is impossible to understand.

Given the appalling weaknesses in the army's security system, how can the minister assure us, with any credibility, that there are not other similar activities, or even espionage activities, going on within his department or within the armed forces?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as espionage goes, it is obviously very difficult. We know that this is an environment in which there are many secrets. We do not know if anyone knows what goes on in an espionage environment.

• (1425)

When my hon. colleague asks me whether this could be going on elsewhere, I am going to be very frank, because you are talking about the integrity or the credibility of the minister and of the department. With over 80,000 people working in the department, I would be very reluctant to give you any assurances that there were not among them the sorts of people who visit, here in Ottawa, and throughout the country, as you are all aware, sites that sell very

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explicit videos or advertise their availability. The Internet continues to provide this kind of information, not just to people working in the Department of National Defence, but to people in all sectors of society.

This is not a phenomenon associated exclusively with the Department of National Defence. It is a phenomenon that must be addressed. As I told the hon. Leader of the Opposition, we do not have all the answers as to how to control access, or to be certain that no one will abuse this kind of system.

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, I would remind you to always address your comments to the Chair.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just because it goes on elsewhere does not make it acceptable in this case.

Despite the military police, despite the additional measures that must be part of normal routine in a military research establishment, it was not until the OPP got involved that this scandal finally came to light.

How can the minister explain that, in his department, the same department that held a monumental search a few months ago—they looked in all the files, all the computer files, all the filing cabinets, and they even turned the waste paper baskets upside down, in order to find the missing documents—nobody saw anything then, and that it was not until the OPP investigation that this situation came to light?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member was wondering how these things could have gone on for a period of time. Clearly, no one knows, because if the hon. member or myself had seen this kind of material, we would have taken action.

As for the research establishment in question, it would have been surprising to find any information related to the Somalia inquiry there. But I want to assure my hon. colleague that this will not end here. The issue goes much further, and we will be using the means at our disposal to try to avoid a recurrence of this kind of situation.

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[English]

DISTINCT SOCIETY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister told me in question period that distinct society was something to which he subscribed all along. How soon he forgets: the Prime Minister certainly did not believe in distinct society strongly enough to support the Meech Lake accord when he was running for the Liberal leadership in 1990. Even John Turner

was recently surprised at the Prime Minister's conversion to the idea of distinct society in the Constitution.

My question is very simple. Why the flip-flop? Why is he supporting distinct society and special status for Quebec now when he would not and could not support it in 1990?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the text and the premise of the hon. member's question are simply false.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that but I was quoting from yesterday's *Hansard*.

We were both here in 1990. She was busy busy with the leadership campaign and knows exactly what the Prime Minister was saying on the campaign trail in 1990.

That was flip-flop number one. Let us look at flip-flop number two. It is also from *Hansard*; I am not dreaming it up.

Yesterday the Prime Minister said that he had ruled out a nationwide referendum on distinct society. This flies in the face of the Prime Minister's promise to give Canadians a say in the future of their country. It also flies in the face of his commitment back in 1992, which I am sure the Deputy Prime Minister will remember, to put any major constitutional change to a referendum.

Will the Prime Minister keep the promises he made in 1992 and in the recent throne speech to hold a national referendum on any attempt to entrench distinct society in the Constitution?

• (1430)

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again the premise of the hon. member's question is false.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is something far more serious at stake here than someone standing up and just saying that the premise of the question is false.

I was quoting yesterday's edition of *Hansard* and quoting something the Prime Minister of the country said in 1992 before he was Prime Minister.

It is easy to toss this off, but when the Prime Minister is going directly against things which he said earlier, that he is about to entrench distinct society with the support of only seven provinces and 50 per cent of the population, surely the Deputy Prime Minister remembers what the Prime Minister did only a year ago, which was to entrench the veto for the five regions in the country.

Since B.C., Alberta and Ontario all have serious reservations about entrenching distinct society and special status in our Constitution, I would like to ask this one more time. How do the government, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister expect to entrench distinct society in the Constitution? How in the

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world will it ever pass the five region veto which this government brought forward last year?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we hear the poisonous rhetoric emanating from the Reform Party it is no wonder it is in the position it is in the current polls.

The hon. member, instead of lecturing the Prime Minister on his commitment to recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec, a recognition that he has characterized throughout his career, would be better off if she talked to some of her own colleagues.

I have a quote of the kind of poisonous rhetoric that is emanating from the member for Simcoe Centre who, in a recent unity forum, said: "French Canadian prime ministers have led this country down the road to ruin. The mood is that they are not doing their job".

I would like to point out to the member what the member for Simcoe Centre heard from one of his constituents: "If you dump on French Canadians you are going to send this country down the road to separation".

You are sending this country down the road to separation. That is the kind of vicious rhetoric which pits Canada against Quebec and we will not stand for it.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I would like you to address the Chair in all of your statements, please.

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[Translation]

RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister does not have a reputation for making consistent comments in this House, but there is a limit. For example, when she was appointed heritage minister, she pledged to save Radio Canada International.

Will the heritage minister explain to the House why, barely one year later, she has now decided to shut down Radio Canada International?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all grateful for the work done by the international component of the CBC.

I am pleased to see that the hon. member, who wants to destroy Canada, is nevertheless supportive of the CBC. Now, this shows a lack of consistency in the Bloc Quebecois' policy. These people want to destroy the country, but they also want the CBC to keep broadcasting abroad.

Regardless of that inconsistency on the part of the Bloc, it goes without saying that the government hopes to find the means to

allow Radio Canada International to continue its operations. I have had several discussions with my colleagues regarding this issue. We have not found the necessary funds, but we always want to leave the door open.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not inconsistent on our part to defend the CBC. We paid for it, it belongs to us as much as it belongs to the rest of Canada. Once we have decided to become sovereign and the only thing left to do is to change the name, we will do so.

• (1435)

How could the minister pledge, before the Conseil des relations internationales de Montréal, that Radio Canada International would continue to exist as long as she would be Minister of Canadian Heritage?

Is the minister doing the number that she did with the GST?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[English]

DISTINCT SOCIETY

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the Deputy Prime Minister's response is false. The member for Simcoe Centre referred to Prime Ministers from Quebec's having led this country to ruin. That was the quote, Mr. Prime Minister.

The throne speech referred to all Canadians having a say in the future of their country. The premier of Ontario is a supporter of referenda but he also has his priorities right. He wants to talk about jobs and the economy, not the Constitution.

The premiers of the three most populated provinces, including Quebec, are against distinct society, yet the Prime Minister ignores them.

In order to ensure that the will of the Canadian public, not this government, is reflected in any constitutional change, will the Deputy Prime Minister assure this House that the question on distinct society will be put to a national referendum?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I happen to have a copy of the article that was in the *Examiner* written by Bob Bruton in which the member for Simcoe Centre was quoted as saying: "French Canadian prime ministers have led this country down the road to ruin. The mood of the people across Canada is that they are not doing a good job. The mood is that maybe we should try someone else".

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That kind of vicious rhetoric, applauded by his colleagues in the Reform Party, is an unfortunate reflection of why this party is becoming more and more marginalized—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what is vicious around here is catering to the separatists, the distinct society.

The Prime Minister was against distinct society in the Meech Lake accord. Then he was for it in Charlottetown. He was against raising it in last year's referendum and now he is for it.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister explain to this House why Canadians should support the idea that the Prime Minister himself waffles on and for which does not have the support of the public or of the premiers of Canada's three largest provinces, including Quebec?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would refer the hon. member to his own comments. His comments were not about separatists. They were about French Canadian prime ministers.

There is no one in this country who has fought harder to bring people together, to build bridges, than Prime Minister Jean Chrétien.

When the member labels French Canadians as separatist, he does every Canadian a disservice.

The Speaker: Colleagues, please do not refer to each other by your names but by your ridings.

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[Translation]

RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the decision to shut down Radio Canada International was announced. But the minister had promised, she had given her word, that Radio Canada International would remain open as long as she was the minister. The Minister of Canadian Heritage recently had to resign for not keeping her word over the GST.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us why she is still the Minister of Canadian Heritage today, after once again failing to keep her word and save Radio Canada International?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the door is still open as far as Radio Canada International is concerned.

• (1440)

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister renege on her promise to save Radio Canada International when we all know what the solution is? Everyone knows it and it has been clearly shown that, in making budget choices, she herself has decided to waste \$43 million: \$20 million on the propaganda agency operating under the name of Canada Information Office and \$23 million on the flag project, when all she would need to save Radio Canada International is \$16 million?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that the decision not to fund half of Radio Canada International was made by the board of directors of the CBC. I hope that the hon. member is not suggesting that we force the CBC to spend money outside of its mandate.

That having been said, there is no doubt that I have worked and continue to work with my colleagues in government. We have been unsuccessful in finding alternate funding to cover the money lost because of the CBC's budgetary problems, but we have not shut the door on anything and, if at all possible, we would like to work together, in co-operation, to find a solution like we did last year.

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this exchange on Radio Canada International gives us an idea of just how far out of touch and out of control this minister is. She has absolutely no idea what is going on within her own department.

Radio Canada International's closing was announced in December last year and we had 125 people working for Radio Canada International who did not have any idea what their future was going to be. And now it has been announced again in December this year. What in the world is going on? Why does she not have some kind of idea of where the funding will come from for functions within her very own department?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member actually took the time to examine the estimates of the government he would know that RCI actually falls under the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a news release from the minister dated March 21, 1996: "The enormous outpouring of support for RCI, both within Canada and around the world, has persuaded us that it is a vital voice for Canada which we must maintain. "While we have managed to put together a financial package for the coming fiscal year, all the parties with an interest in RCI must now work together to develop a long term funding solution".

She was responsible, according to this news release of March 21, 1996, yet she has done absolutely nothing, has put the jobs of 125 people at risk and has closed down the voice of Canada internationally.

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Why does she not get her act together? Why did she not have some funding in place so that we would not be going through this fire drill with nobody in charge?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I am encouraged by the hon. member's support for Radio Canada because unfortunately when we as a government announced the rescue package last March this very member spoke out against it. This is the same member who recently passed a minority committee report in which he said: "A national federally funded television broadcaster is not essential". This is the position that he took before the standing committee on heritage.

Perhaps if he could bring the same clarity of thought to the House of Commons as he did to the committee, then with the support of the Reform Party, the support of Bloc and the support of Canadians we could keep this very vital voice alive.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN FLAG

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the heritage minister.

In letters she sent to cultural organizations confirming grants, the heritage minister asked them to display and promote the Canadian flag, and to encourage pride in Canadian citizenship. Federal government grants to cultural organizations therefore now depend on these organizations taking part in Heritage Canada's propaganda campaign.

Is the heritage minister aware that in these and all her other dealings she comes across not as the minister of heritage but as the minister of propaganda?

• (1445)

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of my country and I am proud of my flag.

I find it completely consistent with my cultural responsibilities, just as Quebec's Minister of Culture wants taxpayers to know where provincial grants come from. We made the same request. Our request is exactly the same as that made by Louise Beaudoin, Quebec's Minister of Culture.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am only too pleased to inform the House officially that it does not happen like that in Quebec. All grants are made by the Conseil des arts et de la culture, and nothing comes from the minister herself.

What the heritage minister would really like is to go down in history as the minister who put all those flags out there.

Does the heritage minister realize that, by making the promotion of culture, unity and the Canadian flag a prerequisite for obtaining grants from her department, she is trying to harness culture to political partisanship?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as usual, the Bloc Quebecois does not have all the facts. We never required that the flag be flown. We encouraged it, just as Mme Beaudoin did.

When festivals are financially supported by Canadian taxpayers, it is only natural that the Government of Canada should be recognized. For my part, as long as I live in a country called Canada, I will never be ashamed to fly my flag.

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[English]

NUCLEARENERGY

Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has agreed to import a small quantity of plutonium fuel for testing purposes at the research centre in Chalk River, Ontario. This naturally concerns many Canadians.

Could the minister say what concrete assurances she can provide this House that this action is not compromising the safety of Canadians and that appropriate monitoring procedures will be put in place?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the hon. member and all Canadians in relation to the announcement made yesterday by my counterpart, U.S. secretary of energy Hazel O'Leary.

First, I want to remind colleagues that Canada has a lengthy history in terms of advocating the destruction of nuclear weapons. Colleagues will remember that in April the Prime Minister attended the safety and security summit in Moscow where he said that Canada had agreed in principle to look at the prospect of burning weapons grade plutonium in CANDU reactors.

Yesterday my counterpart, the U.S. secretary of energy, announced the conclusion of phase one of an American study to determine safe and secure methods for disposal of weapons grade plutonium. The CANDU reactor is one of the three options that appears on that list. In fact, what now becomes necessary is to do a fuel test in relation to the utility on the CANDU.

What I want to do today is reassure all members of this House that the fuel test is going to be conducted under the most stringent safety and security measures put in place, regulated and monitored by the Atomic Energy Control Board.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

SOMALIA INQUIRY

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today the Somalia inquiry has requested that the privy council extend its mandate. The inquiry has yet to complete its study on the deployment and the post-deployment phase of the Somalia mission.

Will the defence minister assure Canadians that his government is not going to shut down the inquiry before it finishes all of its work?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commission of inquiry on Somalia has requested the privy council consider an extension of its mandate. Obviously the government will consider that request.

I want to repeat to my hon. friend that I hope all members of this House will express their views on whether or not the inquiry should continue on, if they would like it to go for a year, two years, three years or four years, or if they think there might be some value in trying to learn the lessons of what happened in Somalia so that we can avoid a repetition of the intolerable incidents that took place there.

I guess it is all a question of whether it happens in our lifetime or not.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is very fine that the Minister of National Defence would blame the members of this House for the delay in the Somalia inquiry. We have to remember that it was the Department of National Defence that caused the delays in the work of the inquiry by failing to supply documents that the inquiry had requested in a timely fashion.

Canadians want to know about the post-deployment phase of the mission and what went wrong at national defence headquarters and the Liberal government cover-up.

Why will the minister and his government not prove to Canadians that they care more about the truth than public relations? Give the inquiry the time it needs to do its work.

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always hesitate to comment on public relations because it is not a skill that I have acquired.

As the government considers this matter I think it will be very important to understand what the position of everyone is with respect to this.

It has been suggested that the government wants to continue the inquiry in order to avoid having to deal with it over the next year or

two when an election would have to be called constitutionally. We cannot have it both ways.

If the hon. member through his party wishes to indicate that we should give unlimited time to the Somalia inquiry and the commissioners to do their work, however long that may take, however much it may cost and whatever the results may be, I would certainly ask the government to take that into account. Somehow it does not seem to be consistent with the Reform Party's usual practical and pragmatic and efficient way of approaching things.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN SPACE AGENCY

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

Again yesterday, we questioned the Minister of Industry about what is going on at the Space Agency. Once again, he attempted to minimize the allegations against the president of the agency, by reducing them to a mere matter of destroying handwritten notes, but it is far more than that. Obviously, the president of the agency also has a problem with his expense account.

At the time he appointed Mr. Evans to the position of president of the Canadian Space Agency, was the minister aware that he had made an expense account claim which was dubious, to say the least, and which Roland Doré, the former president of the Space Agency, had refused?

● (1455)

[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, it is very unfortunate that this member seems to be manipulated by information being spun out by a former employee of the space agency whose position was terminated in a reorganization, who is in the process of suing the agency and who thinks that the official opposition can be a medium for trying to prosecute his lawsuit.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not replying to the question in any way whatsoever.

We will therefore ask him how he can explain that the president of the Space Agency attempted to get reimbursed for a travel and meal claim for a trip to St-Hubert on June 3, 1994, when he travelled as this minister's seatmate on the plane and the meal was provided free of charge?

[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.): First, Mr. Speaker, just to illustrate how silly this is becoming, yes in fact, Mr. Evans did fly to St. Hubert on that occasion with me. No, there was no lunch provided. Second, Mr. Evans did not return on the aircraft. Third, evidently Mr. Evans did drive back to Ottawa. Apparently an expense claim was made. It was not paid and therefore was not improperly paid.

This is getting pretty silly. I would suggest to the hon. member that she let the courts decide whether this friend of hers has a valid complaint or not. The courts can make that decision. She does not need to come into this place in order to try to disparage the reputation of a public servant without having any facts on her side.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a letter dated December 14, 1995 from the Canadian Wheat Board to a western farmer stating that it has no commercial market for hullless waxy barley.

Could the agriculture minister explain why Alberta and Saskatchewan wheat pools are allowed to grow and market hullless waxy barley into the U.S. outside the Canadian Wheat Board pooling system yet a farmer like Andy McMechan is thrown in jail for doing the same thing?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously very clear that under the regulations of the Canadian Wheat Board Act and other pertinent pieces of legislation there is an export procedure provided under the law and under the regulations for the exportation of all wheat and barley. All of those who comply with those rules and regulations may export.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Andy McMechan was ordered to refund \$55,000 to the CWB pool account, the premiums he gained for selling his grain into the U.S. Yet wheat board officials have directed Saskatchewan farmers to flour mills in Saskatoon who have paid millions of dollars in premiums outside the pool account for unlicensed wheat.

Would the minister of agriculture please explain where in the Canadian Wheat Board Act it allows for some farmers to gain premiums outside the pool and others are thrown in jail?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously am not in a position and

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would not as a matter of propriety comment upon any particular legal matter which is now before the courts.

Some hon. members: Why not?

Mr. Goodale: Opposition members cry out “why not”. If they do not understand that fundamental precept of justice, then there is nothing that could possibly save them.

In terms of the particular alleged transactions that the hon. gentleman makes reference to, I would be happy to have the Canadian Wheat Board and the relevant grain companies explain the procedure to him.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

Recently in a statement to the Senate committee on banking, the minister committed to increasing the co-operation between regional development agencies, the Business Development Bank of Canada and other branches of its department, including science and research.

What has the minister done to increase co-operation within Industry Canada to promote effective regional economic development and to support science and research in western Canada?

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, the matter of the co-ordination of the regional development agencies with Industry Canada and the various agencies that are part of the industry portfolio both in respect of science and technology as well as small business and the information highway has been a matter of the utmost importance to me.

In western Canada we have seen the delivery of a variety of services related to each of those areas through the 91 western economic diversification offices that are available in western Canada in part through the Community Futures Development Corporation. We have seen contributions through western economic diversification to research and development projects such as that by TR labs based in Calgary for wireless telecommunications and through Paprican and Ballard Technologies, both based in Vancouver, from Technology Partnerships Canada.

• (1500)

These efforts at co-operation and co-ordination will not only provide diversification of the economy of western Canada but will build a science and technology base that will enable the Canadian economy to grow into the 21st century.

*Government Orders***UNEMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday a government study showed the huge cost of unemployment of up to \$91 billion. The IMF has pointed to the high rate of unemployment in Canada as a cause for concern. Even the private sector seems to have lost faith in being able to create the jobs Canada needs. Indeed it is cutting jobs.

Since the Minister of Finance has no vision for dealing with unemployment, will he pull together the stakeholders in this economy so we can build a vision for the future to deal with unemployment? Or, does he not care about all the unemployed people in the country?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we as a government did not adopt the scorched earth policy of either the Reform Party or the Conservative Party in our approach to the deficit. We simply wanted to deal with the question of growth in the economy and the consequent employment that would flow therefrom.

As a result we have put enormous amounts of money into technology partnerships, as stated by my colleague the Minister of Industry. As my colleague the Minister of Human Resources Development has said, we have put enormous sums of money into youth employment. The Prime Minister's Team Canada approach has paid tremendous dividends to the country.

The hon. member may have learned something from that report, but because of the devastating effects of unemployment the government has taken the decisive action it has taken. As a result we will continue to do so.

The hon. member talked about having stakeholder meetings. We have done that with the business community. We have done that with the Canadian Labour Congress. We have done that with virtually every stakeholder. We will continue to meet with Canadians to create employment in Canada.

• (1505)

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will use my time in this debate to talk about two specific aspects of the bill. One is the use of time allocation, and I will speak specifically about the blended sales tax.

It is important that we have the facts on the record. As of December 10, 1996 the government has placed before the House of Commons a total of 162 bills. Time allocation has been used on 20 of these bills or 12.3 per cent of government legislation that has been presented.

On four of the bills, however, either the Bloc Quebecois or the Reform Party gave procedural assistance for the implementation of time allocation, which in fact means that less than 10 per cent of the bills introduced by the government since the last election have been subjected to time allocation unilaterally applied by the government.

Perhaps more relevant are the statistics on time allocation concerning the actual number of times that time allocation motions have been moved.

Mr. Strahl: Are you proud of this or what?

Ms. Torsney: Actually, yes, I am.

Since time allocation motions may be moved only at one or two stages of a bill, no bill may pass the House without opposition co-operation unless the government has applied time allocation two or three times to that one bill.

A quick calculation of these facts shows that government bills in the House of Commons have been considered at 429 separate stages at which time allocation could have been applied. On only 27 of these occasions has time allocation been applied, which is only 6.3 per cent of the time. On five of these occasions, however, at least one opposition party gave procedural assistance to the implementation of time allocation, leaving only 22 occasions on which the government unilaterally implemented time allocation. That is only 5.1 per cent of all possible occasions.

Another important issue about time allocation is that Canadian citizens expect us to get on with the business of governing. They request that we move forward. We hear all the time about how slow government is and how much it needs to move forward. I would suggest, as those of us who came from the world of business know, that the time the discussion is called to an end we can agree to disagree, vote and move forward. I have absolutely no problem with our record.

With regard to the blended sales tax I understand in this morning's debate there were some particularly outrageous comments on the concept of the blended sales tax.

It seems the Bloc Quebecois has spent its time for debate on this important issue telling Atlantic Canadians that their elected officials, the bureaucrats and the people of Atlantic Canada themselves do not know what they want and that the BQ knows what

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Income Tax Act, the Debt Servicing and Reduction Account Act and related acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Atlantic Canadians want. It is a pretty curious situation. They are trying to deny the Atlantic provinces the blended sales tax when they have had that system since the GST was implemented.

The second component of their time was used to talk about the adjustment assistance package when that is not even being considered today. In fact it has already been dealt with in a previous bill.

What do members of the House of Commons do? They are supposed to be debating the issue at hand. They are supposed to be getting on with the business of the day. They are supposed to be implementing legislation that Canadians want. Instead the opposition parties are getting into a silly game of trying to oppose the business we are trying to accomplish, to debate other issues that are not on the table and, in the case of the BQ, to use the time to tell people who actually elected them to make the decision for them that they are wrong and the BQ knows better.

• (1510)

I suggest they run federal candidates in all the provinces in the next election and we will see where the chips will fall.

I am particularly disturbed that my province does not have the opportunity to have a blended sales tax, even though we hear from Canadians and business people all the time about the complicated procedure of two sales taxes on two different bases, with two different collection times.

In the last provincial election our premier advanced to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association the reasons we in Ontario need a blended sales tax. I will quote the premier of the province:

I want something that works. And I'll tell you this: that if we had one VAT (value-added tax), one base, one bureaucracy to collect it, the manufacturers and the businesses in Ontario would save over a billion dollars by being able to deduct those costs that you cannot deduct today on the sales tax.

Mike Harris went on to say:

It has been one of the areas of major competitive disadvantage that Ontario manufacturers have had and Ontario businesses have had and I say, stop the rhetoric, stop the politics, stop the finger-pointing. Get on with harmonization and simplification of the GST—or whatever the new initials are—and the PST.

Mr. Harris underestimated the savings to provincial businesses and manufacturers by some \$6 billion. The savings to the provinces and their businesses would be \$7.8 billion with a blended tax system. So I say to Mr. Harris to stop the rhetoric, stop the finger pointing. Let us get on and make a better system for those provinces and businesses.

Why are we giving a competitive advantage to the provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Quebec? Why do our business people have to struggle with complicated paperwork many times during the 12 months of the year on two different

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bases. Why can they not deduct what they should be able to deduct for their input costs?

Now is the time for action. Now is the time to end this debate and to move on to a vote on this issue. Let us go to the electorate with our platforms in place.

Mr. Allan Kerpan (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate on Bill C-70 since question period and before. It occurs to me it has been a very interesting day in the House of Commons. We are faced with what I considered to be a double Liberal whammy. First, for the umpteenth time we are faced with time allocation or closure invoked by the government.

The second whammy is the HST, the BST, the GST or whatever. I will speak for a second about the speech of the member for Burlington. She had some interesting statistics I would like to discuss.

She spoke about using time allocation or closure for 12.3 per cent of the times that it could have been used. I would hardly be proud of that record. It amazes me. If the bar is set low enough it is easy to jump over it.

To talk about the debt and the deficit, the Liberal government is now claiming what a wonderful job it has done with the economy and the finances of the country. The deficit is still well over \$20 billion a year. They are proud of using closure 12 per cent of the time. It blows my mind. It amazes me that anybody from any party, including my own, would ever have the gall to stand up and be proud of records like that. It just shocks me.

• (1515)

Let us talk for just a second about the idea of closure. After we were elected in 1993, we came to Ottawa and heard all the media stories. The Prime Minister and members of the government would stand up and say: "We are going to be different. This is going to be a new Parliament. The 35th Parliament is going to be something of which we, as parliamentarians, can be proud".

I am afraid that I have been seriously disappointed in that aspect. Yes, the first couple of months of January 1994 started with some level of decorum that probably has not been seen in this House for many years. It deteriorated rapidly.

We are seeing again on a regular basis things like closure being used in the most undemocratic fashion anyone could ever imagine. We live in Canada. I am proud to be a Canadian. I am proud to live in our democracy. By the same token, I am deeply ashamed to be part of a system at times uses the most undemocratic tactics. I

Government Orders

would expect to see those kinds of tactics in many other countries but those are countries that I would prefer not to live in.

To stand up in the House today and talk about using closure 12 per cent of the time is something that I find unbelievable. The member for Burlington said: "Let's have an election. Let's find out what the people want". That is good. Let us have an election. I am prepared to do that. When Canadians see and understand what kind of undemocratic government we have at this point in time, they will say: "Thank you very much. We will try somebody else". I am looking forward to that day with great interest.

The member for Burlington seemed disappointed and was complaining that perhaps the opposition parties, including our party, wanted to stall the debate further. Some of these bills have great importance. She implied in her speech that it is fine to speak in debate as long as we agree with the government.

I think back to three bills in particular, Bill C-68, Bill C-33 and this bill, where the government used closure to ram the bills through as fast as it possibly could. Why did it do that?

It is because Canadians are not in favour of these types of bills. I believe that the opposition has a duty to convey in the House the thoughts of the people of Canada. That is why we did it. We do not do it to stand up here and waste time. We are very busy people. We do not need to listen to ourselves speak.

They are important bills. Bill C-68, Bill C-33 and now Bill C-70 have tremendous impact on the future of this country. It is our right and our duty to speak. That is why I was elected and why everybody else in this House was elected, to truly debate those very critical issues.

Just recently we supported the government on the Tobacco Act. We wanted to see it go through as quickly as possible. We felt that Canadians were in favour of it. We agreed with the government. We said: "Let's do this. Let's get it through". We did. It is done.

I do not think it is fair for any government member to stand up and criticize us for asking for more open, honest, democratic debate. I know I do not have much time left but for the minutes that I have left, I want to talk about the GST or the HST or the BST. I do not care what it is called. They are all one and the same.

The member for Kindersley—Lloydminster talked a few minutes ago, before question period, about the BST. He is from Saskatchewan where we all know what BS stands for. I am from Saskatchewan as well. I also know what HS could stand for. It is all one and the same, it is still a tax. I have horses on my farm and therefore I do know what HS could stand for.

• (1520)

A tax is a tax is a tax. One cannot get around it and it cannot be hidden. People are not stupid and they realize exactly what is

going on. To call it the HST or the BST or the GST or the ABC, it is still a tax. Canadians are tired of taxes. We are taxed to death.

In question period we talked of jobs and what the high unemployment rate costs in dollars. It is difficult to put a number on it but we do know that high taxation causes unemployment. That is just a plain and simple fact of life and there is no getting around it.

I have two friends in my riding, Elwood Nelson and Keith Talbot, who are both auctioneers. Recently I was talking to them about the problems the GST causes in their business. It causes tremendous trouble. These two gentlemen generally hold farm sales where they sell pieces of equipment, tools and so on. There would be hundreds and hundreds of items at any one auction sale on a farm.

Their difficulty is determining for what each individual item has been used and whether it is a personal item or a business use item. There are hundreds of items at one auction sale and these auctioneers hold sometimes 60, 80 or 100 auction sales a year. It is impossible to determine whether that piece of equipment or that tool has been used as a personal item or for business purposes. There is a difference in how they collect the GST and submit it.

They do not have a clue and they have been led down the garden path by Revenue Canada on the GST for six years. The rules change every six months. Somebody comes in with a new idea and they change it all over again. The same thing is going to happen when the tax is harmonized. They are going to have to go back and start all over again just as they have done so many times in the past.

I think of people who run stores. Recently I asked a woman: "What do you think of the GST?" She said: "I hate it, Allan, but at least it is in. It is in my computers, in my cash register and it is done. I don't like it but I have to live with it". What is going to happen when the HST comes in, or the BST, or whatever it is called? They are going to have to change again.

Mr. Speaker, do you know who they are going to remember? They will not think about Brian Mulroney. They are going to think about the Liberal government. They are going to think about this finance minister and they are going to say: "That's the guy that did it to me this time. First it was Mulroney, now it is the finance minister". The same thing, it makes no difference.

My colleague for Prince George—Peace River gave a very fine speech in the House just before question period and he said: "Liberal, Tory, same old story". They are going to remember the people who made them change and cost them a tremendous amount of money once again.

I cannot believe this is going on. If I were a Liberal member of Parliament who is seeking re-election I would be embarrassed to go out back on the campaign trail to be asked: "What about that GST

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thing"? and have to say: "Oh, we are sorry, we made a mistake". I am ready. Let us try it.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is really quite an occasion to be able to stand up and speak one more time on the GST. In fact, if we could go over a little of the history of it, Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will remember all too well back to 1990-91. Many of the people who are in the Chamber today cannot remember the experience but you and I certainly do, sir. You will remember the vitriolic attacks that came from this side of the House. I could point out the seat that you sat in when you criticized the GST. It was really something. Of course, we were in agreement. This member looks so young he was hardly born at that time, but in fact he was around somewhere, but not in the Chamber. I remember all too well the attacks that came from the Liberal opposition about the GST and how terrible it was.

• (1525)

Of course when the Liberals came into power—you remember this, Mr. Speaker, because you campaigned in 1993 just as I did—and it was going to be gone. I am sure the people in the Niagara Falls area as well as the people in northern Alberta thought: "Oh, finally, if the Liberals come into power, then we are going to see an end to this dreaded GST".

For heaven's sake, what do you think happened next? Page 22 of the red book became absolutely famous. I would quote from it now, Mr. Speaker, but you know I do not have my copy any longer, but I certainly know what page 22 said. It said that the federal government was going to do away with the GST. What do we have? It is a kind of symphony really. It is a harmonization. The GST is still here. It is alive and well. Now it is going to be the HST, the BST or whatever it is. It is not a good thing.

It is easy for members to put on a brave face now that the Liberals are in government and say: "What we are doing is the very best thing for you". We hear time and time again about people who have retail businesses. In my area we have a lot of farmers. The horror stories that they are phoning my office with are hard to believe.

Here is a good one, or a bad one, depending on which way one wants to look at it. A farmer phoned my office not too long ago and said that because farm equipment is exempt he is allowed to receive a GST rebate or exemption on it. It was okay if he bought a half-ton truck. He would be able to get the GST back.

However, one farmer bought an extended cab half-ton truck. A regular truck with no extended cab was fine but he bought an extended cab truck because he kept his saddles and bailer twine and so on in the back seat. Do you know what happened? The GST department said: "No, no. This becomes a luxury vehicle and so you have to pay GST on it".

Then I would get another call from somebody else who would say: "I have a suburban, an entirely closed in vehicle, and I can claim exemption on that".

It just shows what a disastrous nightmare this whole thing has been. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you have had the odd call in your office as well. I do not think our regions of Canada are that much apart on these issues that you have not had a call or two in your own constituency office saying: "What in heaven's name is going on here".

I would like to go back to when the GST initially came in. It was going to be revenue neutral. I am sure if I jog your memory, Mr. Speaker, you will remember it was Bill C-21, the deficit and debt reduction account, that was passed in the 34th Parliament. All excess revenue was to go to pay down the deficit and then the debt. Guess what. That did not happen.

I put several dollars into that because I believe that if we are going to put our money where our mouth is then we had better contribute to that. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have put my 10 per cent pay deduction into the deficit and debt reduction account for some time.

The question is far bigger than that. Is this tax a good tax or not. The answer across the country has to be no. Some points of it were good in terms of making it visible. Canadians are not the type of people who are going to remember something for five years generally. We complain about something for 20 minutes and then we get out our cheque book, write a cheque and say: "That is the government for you" and we carry on.

Yet five years later there is a vehemence, a vitriolic spirit across the country about the GST and now the heat is being raised one more level with the BST in Atlantic Canada. If you look at the specifics of that, the Atlantic premiers were bribed into signing this \$1 billion deal. It was borrowed taxpayers' money. They were Liberal governments. They were tempted, if you will. They were bamboozled. It was hogwash. The point is it was \$1 billion of borrowed money.

It is as if the government said: "We are doing a great thing here. We are going to pay off our Visa but we are using our Mastercard to do it". That simply cannot happen. The federal government took this \$1 billion of borrowed money to their political friends in Atlantic Canada, the Liberals, and said: "Come on guys. We have to live up to page 22 here. We have to have harmony here in the symphony, so please help us out any way you can". It cost a billion dollars of taxpayers' money borrowed on MasterCard. There is something dreadfully wrong with that because we cannot live beyond our means. I suppose the Canadian taxpayers, those from Atlantic Canada who have signed on to this deal and those of us who live in other parts of the country can literally say thanks a billion.

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• (1530)

Where is this cash coming from? The money does not just bubble up from under the surface. These are real cheques which are being sent to the government at income tax time from real people working in real jobs. A billion dollars to kick this thing into motion and people on the other side of the House say it is a really great deal. They say: "We are from the government and we are here to help you". No wonder people get nervous when they see people from the government here.

Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia are not even willing to discuss the federal proposal. Support for it is weak in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island. When the government talks about full harmonization and how well everything is going to blend together and that it will be happy times for us in Canada as we move toward the next century, it simply is not true.

People from my constituency, not just farmers but business people also, continually phone my office saying: "Deb, you just cannot imagine how much manpower it takes to fill all of this out". Sadly enough, one more level of it is being added at the Atlantic Canada level. The rest of Canada is saying absolutely not.

It makes me think of my colleague next door in Edmonton Northwest who said that in Alberta it would be really great to blend or harmonize the sales tax. Mr. Speaker, I am not good at math and you know that. You have known that for years. However, if we have zero provincial sales tax in Alberta then what can we harmonize the GST with in order to make it 15 per cent? Any person in their right mind would say: "Wait a minute, I am not sure we can blend this because there is nothing to blend it with". We had enough of a hard time in Alberta going to any tax system. We have been blessed out there and we appreciate it is because of our natural resources.

When I hear the Minister of Natural Resources say that in Alberta it would be a really good thing to blend it, she has to give her head a shake. If she thinks she is going to go door knocking in the next election saying: "Harmony, ebony and ivory, let us live together in harmony", it simply is not going to happen. They are going to laugh her right off the block.

As my friend said earlier, I suspect that whether it was the Tories who brought in the GST or the Liberals who have pushed up the heat one notch on it to the BST, people really do not know the difference. All they know is they have been stuck with this tax and every time they buy two newspapers, let us say the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Edmonton Sun*, which equals a dollar, they also have to find a nickel and two pennies some place in their pocket to pay for them. I know that because every week when I go to the airport I run into the store to buy two newspapers. I cannot just flip a loonie out. I have to find the pennies and a nickel. It is a pain. Not a day goes by that a consumer does not say that they hate this tax.

What is amazing about this tax is that Canadians are still angry about it this many years later. Whether it is the Conservative government that brought in the GST or whether it is the Liberal government that brought in the BST, which it is in the process of doing by ramming it through with time allocation, when Canadians go to the polls next time they are not really going to remember the difference. As far as it goes, with the old line federal parties, they say that whether it is the Liberals or the Conservatives, it means higher taxes, bigger government and more money in debt. Whether it is the Conservatives or Liberals, they are the two sides of the same loonie.

One has to ask how Atlantic Canadians are feeling about this. Let us look at a couple of examples. Let us remember of course that all these people are represented in name by Liberal members of Parliament.

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce predicts that the harmonized sales tax will push up new house prices by 5.5 per cent as well as force municipalities to raise property taxes. Does this make any sense? I would not think so. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce should be able to go to its MP's office and say: "Okay girl, you go on up to Ottawa and tell them just exactly how we feel about it". I am not sure she has been able to do that.

• (1535)

The Canadian Real Estate Association says that harmonization will increase the costs of a new house by \$4,000 in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and by \$3,374 in New Brunswick. Nobody has that kind of cash to pay out.

The GST was wrong. The GST was bad. The BST is wrong. The BST is bad. I know that Canadians are still going to be angry about this in the next election campaign. They will say: "Wait a minute. Liberal, Tory: one gave us one, one gave us the other. They are the same thing. They are the two sides of the same loonie". The Liberals may meet the same fate that the Conservatives did in 1993.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate, we are talking about Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act and other acts so as to accommodate the GST and make it into the BST or blend it or harmonize it or otherwise.

My question to the House and the people of Canada is: What is the impact of the GST? Is this a good thing or is it dividing us?

It has been a very unsettling thing from its inception. The way the government is carrying on at the moment, trying to get different regions to buy into it, is once again pitting Canadians against Canadians. It is characteristic of the government to do just that. It will confer special privileges on some groups of people and say: "If you are in this group, then you have these privileges. If you are not, then you do not have them".

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What we need in Canada is equality. We need equality between all Canadians and we need equality between all of the provinces. My suggestion is that the GST and any of its offshoots are tearing the country apart and that is not good.

The other aspect which I would like to address concerns integrity. I will keep using the word integrity to show in what way the GST is reflective of integrity in government. Let us start with the GST as an election promise.

Canadians are probably tired of hearing all of this, but this has caused us to say: Why did the Liberals as a party make a bunch of promises and put them in the red book? Was it to get themselves elected or was it to better govern the country? The answer is obvious. It was a book of promises cobbled together to win an election. Never mind the results. As long as they could promise enough and get the message out, people would vote for them and then they could do whatever they wanted.

We have used the GST as an example of a Liberal broken promise time after time in the House. Perhaps it is the prime example, but it certainly is not the only one. We did a study of the red book promises. We calculated that 30-odd per cent of the promises in the red book have been kept by the Liberal government. The government's estimate is that 70-odd per cent of the promises have been kept. Canadians can make up their own minds by looking at the red book, if they want to take the trouble to find out who is speaking the truth.

In any event the GST is typical of an integrity issue. Before the government was elected it said: "We must form the government. It does not matter what we say, we have to get the votes".

The red book is also typical of the difference between the Liberals and their way of doing things and Reform and its ways. The Liberals in cobbling together the red book, started from the top. It is a backroom document, with input of course from other areas. They said: "What is it that we need to really convince the public?"

• (1540)

On the other hand, Reformers get together and say: "Here are the principles and policies. We need to make positive changes in the country". Those policies and principles come from the bottom up. They are grassroots stimulated and they are ordinary people who say: "These are the changes that we need". Our fresh start document is a reflection of that, from the ground up rather than from the top down.

I am using the GST as an example, but let us look at integrity as reflected by the current government. There was talk about an ethics counsellor. Again it was a red book promise that there would be an ethics counsellor. Not only would the Liberals deal with the GST but they would do all these other things.

The ethics counsellor has turned out to be a will-o'-the-wisp. What are the terms of reference for the ethics counsellor? Some of them have been published, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, they are concealed. It is a matter between the Prime Minister and that counsellor and not open for the rest of us to see. That is not integrity.

Look at party discipline across the way. The member for York South—Weston is a prime example. Here is a man who stood on his honour and said: "I as a member of the Liberal Party took part in the decision to eliminate the GST. We have reneged on that decision. As a matter of honour, I will opt out". He is being severely punished and will continue to be for being an honourable man. That is not a good example of integrity on the part of the Liberals or the Liberal government, however one would choose to put it.

What else is this negative GST tearing apart? What else is it doing to the country? We hear examples from across Canada about the negative effects of it.

One of my constituents felt strongly enough about the GST that he said he believed the government was doing something illegal with this tax so he refused to pay it. He ran a shop called the Sandwich Tree in Nanaimo. He was prosecuted by Revenue Canada for not collecting the GST, but he held his ground. So far he has won two court decisions on this but of course he is not finished with it. Through Revenue Canada the government is saying: "Get him". Whether the government has good legal background to say this, I do not know. But the evidence I see is that this man is not just being prosecuted, rather I think he is being persecuted. His wife's salary has been garnisheed as has his own. He is not a free man any more, I can assure the House of that, whether or not he has won the first two rounds of this case.

Integrity. There are examples of integrity or its opposite in this House every single day, whether it is talking about the GST or about other subjects. I hear the Minister of Finance every day saying things that are patently not correct about the Reform Party. He puts our policies in a way which is totally twisted, and this is wrong. If that is an example of integrity as with the GST, I am not with it.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage today in exactly the same way did the same thing when talking with one of our members, supposedly answering a question on what our policy is with regard to the CBC. She deliberately chose to say things that are not Reform policy. She absolutely, deliberately said: "No, this is what you guys are advocating", and it was patently wrong.

• (1545)

The GST is not doing good things for the country. It is not doing anything for individuals, for groups or for regions. It is certainly

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not doing anything for our economy except driving it underground. That makes the situation even worse. We do not need the GST.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of debate on the issue. Some tremendous speeches have been made today. They have been entertaining and nice to listen to.

I was reminded of a farmer who got shafted on a horse he did not really want. He went to an auction sale. He needed a good work horse. The auctioneer asked his helper to bring out one of the horses. The helper led it around. It pranced. It was a big, heavy set horse. He felt this was exactly what he needed. He got it at a pretty fair price and went home very happy. He took it off his buggy to take into the barn and found out that it was stone blind. It could not see the barn door.

What does someone do with a blind horse? It is not a very good work horse unless it is led back and forth down the field. He said: "What am I going to do? I got shafted. I have to get rid of this horse. I have to get some money out of it".

This is what this tax reminds me of. He advertised it. He said: "I am going to advertise this huge, heavy set horse as a real good, powerful beast. I will advertise it at a bargain. I will get my money back somehow".

Another farmer read about it in the papers. He came over and said: "Could I have a look at the horse you have for sale? It sounds like a fairly good bargain". He went into the barn and led the horse out. He pranced it around in his yard. He showed the other farmer how big it was, how capable it was and how flexible it was.

The other farmer said: "It looks like a good horse to me". He said: "It is a good horse". He spoke with a bit of an accent. He said: "It is a good horse but it don't look so good". It is not really what you see". He said: "I don't care about looks. It is a big horse. I am going to buy it. I think it will do the job for me".

He took it home and when he went to put it in the barn he found out it was blind. He got shafted. He went back to the first farmer and he was mad. He said: "Look here, you sold me a horse that was a real heavy horse, a good work horse that could pull a big load and it is blind". He said: "I tried to tell you it don't look so good".

That is what I hear with this GST today. He told them that it was blind, that it just did not look so good. That is probably what we heard from the Liberals when they were in opposition: "This GST is terrible. We will have nothing to do with that animal".

What did those terrible Tories do? They brought in eight other people to fill the other place a little more to get it passed. When the Liberals ran for government they said: "These terrible Tories don't look so good. They have this terrible tax. They are ripping off farmers. They are ripping off taxpayers and consumers. If we get

elected we will kill that tax. We will bury it. We will tramp on it. We will hang it".

I do not know all that they said. I heard a lot of different comments that they would get rid of it just like the farmer did with his horse.

Today some lofty Liberals are saying it is a pretty good tax. They ask why we are complaining. It is a good horse. To whom will they sell it next? Could they sell it another time? I do not think they could sell it to farmers. It does not look so good to them.

The other day we talked about a businessman who was dealing with the GST issue. An inspector from the GST department came out to do his audit. He said: "I see you have a truck sitting in the yard. You have not claimed all the GST on it. What is the reason?" He said: "The truck is taxable. The hoist is not taxable. The box is taxable. I have a terrible problem figuring it out". He said: "What do you mean the hoist is not taxable?" "It is a separate entity and it is not taxable. It is for a different use". He said: "I don't believe you".

• (1550)

The inspector wanted to find out if it was true. He phoned his superior but the superior was not in the office. He had gone away on a three-day educational trip or something. The inspector sat in this businessman's office for three days. Finally the superior phoned back and tried to give him a ruling. He said: "I don't know. You will have to ask somebody else". For three days he waited. Imagine how much GST it took to pay his wages.

These are the problems. Not everything is taxable. Some things are taxable. Some of the horses are blind. Some can see.

How will we sell this sucker in the next election? We will have to dress it up some. The horse that does not look so good will not sell again. Let us dress it up and say that we will harmonize it. Maybe we can give it a little better colour. It might just look a little better in the dark even if the horse cannot see. This is the way taxpayers and voters get shafted during elections.

We must start being honest and accountable. We must show the integrity we promised during the election campaign. I guarantee the House that when we sit on that side there will not be any GST. At the least it would be called something else. It will not be a GST. That tax has hurt business and jobs. Why would we keep the sucker? That is why I am saying it will not be there.

I am sure they will all vote for me now. They did in the last election. They put 177 Liberals over on that side when previously there were a few Liberals here and 212 Conservatives on that side. Somehow we have to sell the stuff.

I hope consumers, farmers and electors get what politicians promised them. When the previous government had 10 per cent unemployment nobody thought it was acceptable. We still have

10 per cent unemployment and we have \$100 billion more in debt. Something has to change or the country will not survive.

Promises do not get us anywhere. If all the promises made in this House had been kept I am sure there would not be \$600 billion of debt.

Who will look after those promises in the future? Will it be our children or our grandchildren? Let us show some integrity. Let us call a blind horse a blind horse if it is one. Let us call a Holstein cow a milk cow and not a beef cow. That way we will probably get something done in the House.

It concerns me when I hear a dozen good speeches that will probably have very little effect outside the House. The country is a lot bigger than the inside of the House. Approximately 30 million Canadians depend on the House to set down regulations and taxes so Canada can survive and operate efficiently. They expect us somehow to take care of the \$600 billion that have been put on the shoulders of future generations. If we do not start addressing that issue I am afraid politicians will not be rated second from the bottom as they were in the last CTV integrity poll. They will be rated at the bottom, right below lawyers and other legal people.

We must ensure that politicians begin to climb in the ratings of integrity and honesty. We must try to get politicians back up to the top where former prime ministers, former oppositions and former members of the House once were. We must realize the country was built on broken promises. The promises that were kept built the country. If we do not return to the old system where taxpayers or the electorate hold us accountable for the promises made, I do not think the country will survive.

• (1555)

I reiterate. Let us not sell a blind horse to the electorate in the next election. Let us give them one that really pulls the country out of the mess it is in. Then we will have accomplished something.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Lisgar—Marquette on his very colourful, heartfelt and passionate speech. I certainly do not think I have his experience to be able to provide that kind of wonderful analogy on the serious topic we are speaking about today.

The government is very happy in trundling out many statistics. It is very happy in saying what a good job it has done economically. It is very happy in saying it has kept over 80 per cent of its red book promises. That is simply not true.

Before the last election one of the primary planks in the platform the government ran on was that it would scrap the GST. The GST was to go. If the GST was not scrapped some of its members said

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the would resign. The GST has not been scrapped. It is firmly entrenched into our tax structure.

This is very important for a number of reasons. First, it is disingenuous. Second, it shows the government has not kept its promises. Third and most important, it crushes the economy, affecting the livelihood of every Canadian.

Instead of trying to scrap this hated tax, instead of trying to remove a tax that impedes the ability of companies to get on their feet, to hire people and become more aggressive competitively, the government is trying to harmonize this tax, bury it. This will not help people. Rather it will cost the taxpayer, the consumer and the producer hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

Producers and consumers in the maritimes have been saying that harmonizing the GST will cost millions of dollars. It will not only compromise those who are rich. By harmonizing the tax people in the lower socioeconomic groups are impeded and compromised. It impedes and compromises people on fixed incomes. Those are the people who get it in the neck much more so than anyone else. Harmonizing the tax in the way the government suggests will compromise and impede the poorest individuals living in the maritimes.

Furthermore the tax is being sponsored by British Columbia and Alberta. They have paid over \$1 billion. Those are the facts. It does not bring the country together if one segment of society has to offset another segment of society in this manner.

Certainly the maritimes need money but they need effective investment, infrastructure and skills training to maximize the possibilities and potential which exist on the east coast.

For all it wishes to do the government fails in bringing out its statistics to mention that it has increased taxes over 22 times. It stands there and spouts off about how well we are doing economically. It fails to mention the unemployment rate in Canada is over 10 per cent. In fact the underemployment rate, along with our unemployment rate, approaches 20 per cent.

Sooke in the western part of my riding has over a 20 per cent unemployment rate. This is an area of immense diversity and immense potential. Yet it has a 20 per cent unemployment rate. When I go to the people who work in my riding, the producers, the consumers and the people who hire, the primary obstacle to getting back on their feet is the high taxes they labour under.

There are some possibilities and solutions which I will present today to the House. The first thing we have to do is get the deficit down to zero. We have proposed through the fresh start platform a plan to get our deficit down to zero by 1999. After that we propose to eliminate the GST.

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• (1600)

We also propose to lower the tax burden on individuals. That basically comes down to the fact that our philosophy is very different from that of liberalism. The Liberal philosophy is that the government will take care of society. We agree that society has to be taken care of. We agree that those who are disadvantaged in our society must be provided for if they cannot help themselves. However, it is not the government's position to always do that.

We also feel that people who can take care of themselves have the responsibility to do just that. It is the role of the government to provide people opportunities and skills training in order to maximize their potential.

We have often been accused of being a slash and burn party because of our fiscal conservatism. I would argue that if we profess to have a social conscience, we cannot have a social conscience unless we are fiscally conservative. If we are fiscally irresponsible we compromise social programs and the very people we wish to help. We compromise those who are poorest in our society and the social programs which have defined Canada as a caring society.

Our program of fiscal conservatism would provide people the tools to take care of themselves. It would strengthen our social programs. It would provide health care to individuals.

Our deficit reduction platform will put more money into the hands of Canadian taxpayers. For example, everyone will have an increase in their basic personal exemption. It will go from \$6,456 to \$7,900. That will provide tax relief to every taxpayer in the country.

We would also increase the spousal allowance from \$5,308 to \$7,900.

We would cut unemployment insurance premiums by 28 per cent and eliminate the 5 per cent surtax on high income earners.

These measures are important. They would provide money to consumers. They would enable taxpayers to better care for themselves and their families. That is a significant departure from the Liberal view, which is that the government can better take care of the people than the people can do themselves.

There are other possibilities for solutions which are available to us that would stimulate the economy and decrease the tax burden, which would create jobs for unemployed Canadians.

The International Monetary Fund has recently made some excellent presentations. It said that the government should tighten up the eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance to improve labour market flexibility.

The government has been increasing payroll taxes since it came to power in order to increase government revenues. We do not

think that is fair. By increasing payroll taxes the government is directly taxing producers and employers. When it increases payroll taxes it impedes the ability of employers to hire more people. We do not think that is fair. The government should admit that it is increasing the tax burden on producers and employers. It should lower the payroll taxes. That would provide an incentive for employers to hire more people, invest in their companies and create infrastructure development. That would provide employment opportunities for Canadians.

At the end of the day, the single most important concern which affects Canadians from coast to coast is job security.

• (1605)

In closing, I implore the government to look at what the Reform Party is putting out in its fresh start platform, look at the solutions we have for decreasing the taxes, revamping the economy, getting our deficit down to zero and saving our social programs.

Together we can work to make Canada a stronger place. I again implore the government to do just that.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have been in the House since your appointment. I would like to congratulate you. I wonder if I may say that there but for the grace of God go I.

I feel I must speak in today's debate on this legislation to harmonize and streamline the GST because this government does not support the people of Canada. This government does not keep its promises to the people of Canada. This government is cheating the people of Canada by making promises not once but over and over again and then breaking those promises.

Election promises made by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the finance minister and scores of Liberal cabinet and caucus members to eliminate, not harmonize, the GST have not been kept. For example, the Deputy Prime Minister on October 19, 1993, as we are all familiar with, said: "Food is not subject to GST because it is a necessity. So are books. They are needed for young minds to grow".

The past Liberal whip, who is now the Minister of International Co-operation, said: "GST on reading material is bad policy and undemocratic. It creates more unemployment". Both these members were speaking against the GST.

The defence minister, who was the finance critic in 1990, said: "The Liberal Party would scrap the GST". He pledged in a nationally televised debate with finance minister Michael Wilson: "The goods and services tax is a regressive tax. It has to be scrapped. We will scrap it". That was in 1990.

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The solicitor general said: "Not only do the Liberals oppose the GST now, but opposition will continue even if the bill is passed. We are not interested in tinkering with the GST. We don't want it at all".

The industry minister said: "Our credibility will be in shreds if we do not come up with a thoughtful alternative to tax reform that stands up to scrutiny".

The Prime Minister said: "The Liberals will scrap the goods and services tax if they win the next general election. I am opposed to the GST. I have always been opposed to it. I will be opposed to it always". This was in 1990.

Those were the statements made and we know where we are now. None of them has been kept.

Atlantic premiers in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland were bribed into signing the bill with \$1 billion of borrowed taxpayer money. The finance minister is crowing like a rooster saying "aren't I great, look what I have accomplished". Is this not a bribe? Is this not a one time payment?

Sales tax will go up for the money lost when the \$1 billion runs out because the \$1 billion is paid over three or four years. Atlantic Canadians are going to have to make up for it when the money is gone. The GST may remain the same at 7 per cent but there is nothing to prevent the province from hiking up the sales tax to make up for the lost revenues. I believe at that time it is going to be need that determines the amount.

Instead of trying to help the hard hit Atlantic provinces whose demise of the cod fishery and low economy have made it difficult enough for them, the premiers of these three provinces have fallen into bed with the senior Liberal government and are hitting their people with a 15 per cent GST. We all know that HST is just another name for GST. The new tax is even worse because now Atlantic Canadians will be paying tax on everything, books, auto repairs, funeral services, haircuts, electricity, gasoline and home heating fuel—literally everything. The finance minister has tried to claim victory and a pat on the back for this?

Let us take a look at literacy. On October 23, 1996 the finance minister gave a news conference in which he stated that the Commons would implement a 100 per cent GST rebate on all books purchased by public libraries, schools, universities, et cetera. In the first case, those students, those people, members of our society who are furthering their education, not always school children, are going to need textbooks that they cannot get at libraries. They are going to have to buy textbooks they cannot get at libraries. This is literacy and this is a definite detriment to them.

• (1610)

I noticed that on the notice of ways and means sheet under the explanation of this new program it says under "the printed book"

what is not included. In (f) it says "a book designed primarily for writing on". I imagine a scribbler might fall into that category and students need scribblers in day schools. (g) says "a colouring book or a book designed primarily for drawing on". What about art books?

On page 4 of the explanatory notes it says "also excluded are books designed primarily for writing on or drawing on or affixing thereon items, etc., clippings and pictures". Students use these all the time in their everyday work.

In reality we are not helping these particular students as far as literacy is concerned. We are hitting them in the school room as well.

What about books in the home, what about home libraries? How many people like to keep books in their homes that they can read? They do not want to always have to go to the library and return them every week. There are a lot of good books people like to keep just because they enjoy reading. There again these people are going to be penalized.

I have often said in this House that literacy begins at birth. That means we all should have in our home a good stock of books that are going to help us increase our education and help our children to develop a love of reading.

Workshops, scribblers, mothers going back to school to continue in their education, what if they need a science text that they have to buy for \$100? There is \$15 extra on that. What if they are going into medicine or anybody going to continue their schooling? This HST or GST is not helping literacy. It is making it difficult for Canadians to improve their literacy.

What about businesses and the retail stores? The change over is going to cost a fortune for them to adjust to. We are hitting small business right where it hurts. This is another major tax grab.

The three major retailers in Atlantic Canada have stated that their net annual retail deficit will total \$27 million once the harmonization is implemented. The Retail Council of Canada has said that by forcing stores to bury the new tax in prices the harmonized tax regime will cost retailers at least \$100 million a year more.

Most Canadians, I believe, do not want to see the tax buried. A lot of people would prefer to know what they are going to pay in tax before they go to the cash register. Tax included pricing that hits retailers hits them in these four areas: duplication of information systems and rewriting of software, repricing of prepriced goods, books, greeting cards and so on, duplication of advertising costs, flyers, catalogues, and warehousing and distribution costs. It is really going to hit our small business retail stores.

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What about consumers? For Atlantic Canadians it is going to hit them with a double whammy. They will pay more for funeral services, children's clothing, books, auto repairs, all the things I previously said. The Investment Property Owners Association is concerned about renters. There are going to be higher operating costs for the landlords, so who is going to feel those higher operating costs? The renter. It will be passed on to them. Because renters usually have less income than homeowners the tax increase is really going to hurt those who can least afford it.

How does the rest of Canada feel? How do Canadian consumers feel all across this country? They are footing the bill. I do not imagine they are too happy about it.

On integrity this government, I feel, ranks very low on integrity. Recently I had an opportunity to write an article in my home newspaper. I wrote about integrity. I wrote about the end justifying the means. As a matter of fact, I spoke first about our provincial government. The reason is I had to explain to some of my constituents that we have to look more closely at integrity. "Our provincial government seems to believe the end justifies the means", I wrote, "but I say if the means involves deliberate lies about the budget to mislead the people during an election campaign, if it involves misappropriation of money from charity bingos, if it involves mismanagement of a huge crown corporation like B.C. Hydro, and ministers not reporting their departments' true financial condition just prior to an election, then the end cannot justify the means. British Columbians should be shouting for recall. If we do nothing about the lack of integrity in our provincial government, then we deserve the results".

What about integrity on the federal level? "On the federal level the Prime Minister's office recently sent a memo to Liberal Party officers across this country instructing party officials and media representatives to lie about the Reform Party. Here is another case of the end justifying the means but the media seem to have decided they will just ignore this one. Given this evidence of astonishing dishonesty in the Prime Minister's office, what if the federal Liberals' balanced budget projections are no more honest than the provincial NDP's?"

• (1615)

Mr. Harb: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Maybe the member inadvertently used an unparliamentary word when referring to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's office. I would ask that she withdraw that word.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The Chair was listening to the words that the hon. member used. She may have used an unparliamentary word in relation to the Prime Minister's office. Of course, it is unparliamentary when used in relation to members of Parliament. She was prudent not to have done that. Accordingly I am not sure there is a point of order here, although certainly the

words are getting borderline. The hon. member's point is made. The hon. member may resume her remarks.

Mrs. Jennings: Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the member opposite, I will say mislead instead. The newspapers were very clear and they have already stated it.

Given this evidence, we do have an enormous burden of federal debt, now \$600 billion, which the government has decided to stop mentioning. The Liberals' deficit reduction plans are based on continued strong economic growth but where will that growth come from? Retail sales remain down. Bankruptcies are up 23 per cent. Consumers are not spending. Financial experts warn of the danger of overextended credit cards. We are not looking at a good picture in the future.

Integrity. The HST is not what Canadians were promised by the Liberals in the last election when they went door to door looking for votes. We should have them honour their words. I would like to point out on integrity that when the heritage minister gave up her seat to seek re-election in the byelection she once again mentioned in her propaganda material in her campaign that she gave up her pension which we know was temporary, again misleading the people.

I would like to wrap up. Unfortunately, we did not get the postponement and I am sorry that that did not occur. I sincerely hope and implore this government to rethink the GST and HST.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we have to rise in the House today to address this bill. It is a bill that in reality should not have come before this House. It is an issue we should not have had to talk to. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the finance minister and scores of cabinet and caucus members all made election pledges to eliminate, not to harmonize the GST. The issue that should be before us is the elimination and not the harmonization of this tax.

As members know full well, the heritage minister was forced to resign and seek re-election at a cost of over \$500,000 to Canadian taxpayers because she was unable to fulfil a commitment that was made during the election campaign. The finance minister publicly begged for forgiveness. "We have made a mistake", he said for his complicity in misleading Canadians on this Liberal GST policy.

The member for York South—Weston was banished from the Liberal caucus by the Prime Minister for insisting that the government keep its word on the GST. The member for Broadview—Greenwood went into a self-imposed exile in a rare show of solidarity with the member for York South—Weston.

What is the issue here? The issue is a matter of keeping one's word. Let us think of it in personal terms. If any member in this House or any person in my circle of acquaintances made a specific commitment to me that they intended to do something and then reneged on that deal, somehow tried to back away from it by saying

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that they did not really mean what they said, my toleration for that individual would be surely tested.

It goes without saying that individuals who continually make promises they cannot keep really are not held in high regard by the people who have to deal with them. If they are in business, in short order they will be out of business. If it is a matter of friendship, friends are gone and friends are lost.

• (1620)

The question which comes to mind is, if this is the way we respond on a personal level to people who do not keep their word, what should be the reaction of Canadians to a government, members of which made a commitment in the heat of an election campaign and then are unable to maintain the commitment? The patience of the voters with the government would be sorely tested because of its inability to keep its word.

We have in this harmonization a situation where the Atlantic provinces were bribed into signing the deal with a billion dollars of borrowed taxpayers' money. All Canadians are aware that these kinds of expenditures are only possible because of the ability of the government to borrow money. It is not because there is a pocketful of money which could be doled out to try to get people on side. The fact is that the government is short well over \$100 billion in its term of office and to finance this little escapade it will have to borrow even more.

There are three provinces, Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia that are not even willing to discuss the federal proposal. Support for the harmonization proposal is weak in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and P.E.I. It just goes to show that this is going to be piecemeal legislation.

It will be restricted to one area of the country where in some respects the governments were unable to turn down the federal government because they just did not have the fiscal strength to do so. On the other hand, it is a part of the country which will suffer the most because it entered into this agreement. In essence, if we are going to help the governments in the maritime provinces, in Newfoundland, we should be looking at trying to determine ways to reduce the tax rate to make that area of the country more attractive to industry rather than simply showing them how to hide taxes which they certainly do not need.

Another issue is the impact this bill will have on business. As has been stated in the House today, and which I think is worth repeating, three major retailers in Atlantic Canada have stated that their net annual retail deficit will total \$27 million once harmonization is implemented. Now \$27 million may not be much money to the heritage minister because she certainly knows how to throw around the tens of millions of dollars to back up policies which have little real effect, but for business it is a big wad of money.

One private retailer in the Atlantic region was contemplating opening two stores in 1997 and now has decided against it. That is the danger of this high taxation. That is the danger which is posed to the economy in the rest of the country if we allow the government to lead us into a harmonization program that will only result in higher taxes and which will hide a tax that Canadians are so against.

A study by the accounting firm of Ernst and Young estimated that a midsized national chain with 50 stores in the Atlantic provinces would pay up to \$3 million in one-time costs and up to \$1.1 million a year to comply with a regional tax in price sales system. That is a lot of money: \$1.1 million for 50 stores. It is a huge overload on any one store in that chain. It is only reasonable to assume, given taxation levels of that magnitude, that the chain will be closing stores.

• (1625)

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce predicts that the harmonized sales tax will push up new house prices by 5.5 per cent and will force municipalities to raise property taxes. An increase of 5.5 per cent in housing costs is an unquestionably bad move. Canadians are hard pressed to pay housing costs. Any increase will be felt by the people who can least afford it: the low income earners and first time home buyers.

In essence this tax is making it even more difficult for our children to start the process of putting their own roofs over their heads. We are making it difficult for them to get out of the rental market. There will also be a great impact on the rental market. It is anticipated that rental costs will increase due to the imposition of this tax.

Consumers will pay through the nose. They will pay more for funeral services, children's clothing, books, auto repairs, electricity, gasoline, home heating fuel and haircuts among other things.

As I mentioned, the Investment Property Owners Association tabled a report in the Nova Scotia legislature. It says that renters can expect to shoulder some of the higher operating costs that will hit landlords with the harmonized GST. Because renters have less income than homeowners, the tax increases due to the blended GST will hurt those who can least afford it.

The federal government's proposal will hurt low income Canadians the most. Therefore I move:

That all the words after the word "That" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Income Tax Act, the Debt Servicing and Reduction Account Act and related acts, since the principle of the bill does not seek to abolish the goods and services tax.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The Chair has received the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Delta. Before putting it to the House, it would be appropriate to consult. I will consider the matter and get back to the House in a few minutes.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt to oppose the government's use of closure in its attempt to ram through the House the hated GST harmonization scheme. This debate—

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not questioning your ruling but I would like some clarification on it. The motion was very straightforward. In our opinion it was in order. Could the Speaker enlighten me as to why he wanted to consult on this motion so I will have that for future reference?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I can give the hon. member the benefit of the doubt. I assume he thought the motion was in order since he seconded it. I am sure that is his view. The Chair simply wants an opportunity to review the motion in relation to the authorities on the subject to ensure that it is in order. If that assurance is one that I can give the House I will then put the motion to the House. I hope to have it very shortly and I will be back to the House as soon as I possibly can in respect of the motion. Resuming debate.

• (1630)

Mr. Hart: Mr. Speaker, your chance to review the Reform Party amendment is most appropriate and in order, as is the concept of having an open and true debate in the House of Commons on the GST. Canadians are sick and tired of the attempt by the Liberal government to shut down open and honest debate. It is very unfortunate.

The debate gives me an opportunity to remind the constituents of the Liberals sitting in the House of what was said on the campaign trail about the GST.

We are going to play a little game called recall for a few moments. First let us recall the words of the Prime Minister when he was a candidate for the Liberal Party. He said: "We hate it and we will kill it". He did not say: "We hate it and we will harmonize it".

When the Minister of Finance was campaigning as a Liberal candidate he said: "I would abolish the GST". Pay careful attention to the word "abolish". According to my reference material it means get rid of, to lose sight of, to bury. That does not sound anything like "I would harmonize the GST".

The Minister of National Defence said when he was a candidate: "The GST is a regressive tax. It has to be scrapped and by golly, if

we are elected to government we will do just that. We will scrap it".

All across the country as the campaign went on Liberal candidate after Liberal candidate knocked on doors, spoke at public meetings and said in unison: "We will kill the GST. The Liberal Party will kill the GST if we become government after the next election". Everyone heard it. We heard it on talk radio shows, we heard it on platforms at all-candidates meetings, we heard it at the doorstep, we heard it from coast to coast.

It is sort of fun to go back in time and reminisce about what happened in the 1993 election but there is a very serious part to all of this. The bottom line is that the Liberal candidates prior to the 1993 election deliberately misled the Canadian people about what they were going to do with the GST. They deliberately misled the Canadian public.

In venue after venue in the 1993 election, Liberal candidates across the country told the Canadian voters that they would scrap, that they would kill, that would abolish the GST. Those are the facts we are presented with today. Taxpayers are going to remember because we are going to keep reminding them that they are going to pay for this Liberal promise. This is yet another Liberal broken promise to the taxpayers of Canada.

The taxpayers are going to pay for this harmonization scam of the Liberals. It will hurt every Canadian taxpayer because to get the Atlantic premiers, the ones who agreed to the harmonization, the Liberals will have to give the Atlantic provinces a cash payment to induce them to come on board this scheme. This payment to the Atlantic provinces, the ones that have joined on, that have been duped into it by the Liberal Party, is going to amount to about \$1 billion a year just to satisfy the whims of this government to make it look not quite so bad.

They can once again try to fool the Canadian people, but they will not get away with it. Canadians in certain regions of the country and reasonable people do not think they should be asked to subsidize a tax cut for the maritime provinces that came in on this plan because of the Liberal harmonization scam. The Liberals are using \$1 billion of taxpayers' money to sell the GST to Atlantic Canada so that they can keep an election promise. That simply is not going to sell to the rest of the country.

• (1635)

This Liberal bribe of the Liberal Atlantic premiers is truly despicable. Canadians will not be hoodwinked by Liberal trickery and sleight of hand. Atlantic Canadians will also suffer because while they may pay a lower tax rate in this harmonized taxation scam, they will pay taxes on a greater range of goods and services.

I was told as a youngster that there is no such thing as a free lunch. No one gets something for nothing, particularly when a Liberal government is running the country. If people think they are

actually getting something from the government, they should keep their hands on their wallets in their back pockets. The government will not give what it has first not taken away.

It has become abundantly clear that the government was very opportunistic in discussing the GST and suggesting to Canadians that when it came into power somehow the GST would magically and mysteriously disappear. Just to remind hon. members across the way exactly what their record is on this, let me refer to some quotes that came from government members over the last several years with respect to the GST. I want to remind them how far they have gone astray from their original promise.

Let us go back to the government members when they were in opposition in the wake of the GST coming into this place under the Conservative government. I begin by quoting some members who now hold prominent positions in the cabinet of the Liberal government.

First let me quote the current House leader back in the days following the GST coming into place under the Conservative government. He said: "Not only do the Liberals oppose the GST now, that opposition will continue even when the bill is passed. We are not interested in tinkering with the GST. We do not want it at all".

Meanwhile, the current finance minister said: "I would abolish the GST". The Prime Minister said: "I want the tax dead". One of the quotes that came from the Toronto *Star* back then was: "The Liberals will scrap the goods and services tax if they win the next general election. The leader of the party said that he was opposed to the GST. 'I have always been opposed to it and I will be opposed to it always'".

We saw the climax of the quotes that came from all the various members in October 1993 of the eve of the election when the current Deputy Prime Minister on national television—that image will be frozen in my mind forever, and I am sure in the memories of many in this House as well—when she said: "If the GST is not abolished under the Liberal government I will resign".

The hypocrisy of the Liberal government is astounding. Members say one thing and they do another thing. If it is not the GST, it is the CF-18 contracts. I could go on for hours and hours about the flip-flops of this Liberal government in the past three years. There are so many flip-flops it is hard to keep track of them all.

What about the flip-flop on limiting debate and using closure? In opposition, the Liberals railed against closure. Democracy, it appears now, is irrelevant to our Liberal colleagues across the way. All they care about is lining their pockets and rewarding their friends like Bombardier. When it comes to politics they ram things through the House, forget about the people of Canada, forget about democratic principles and forget about returning integrity to this place. It is a shame that they do this.

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They all care about pretending to keep promises. They do not care that their public relations campaign comes at the expense of taxpayers outside Atlantic Canada and at the expense of democracy and free speech in this place where free speech is held so dearly.

Canadians should know that this bill should be opposed. Limiting debate should be opposed. This Liberal government should be opposed and will be opposed by the people in the next general federal election.

• (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I should inform the House that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Delta is, in the view of the Chair, in order.

The House will now resume debate on the amendment.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect, we would assert that it is not a reasoned amendment opposing the principle of the bill, but rather that it raises extraneous issues that go to the motive behind the bill and that it is not a properly receivable amendment.

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, just to assist the Chair, that sounded to me like a challenge of the Chair's ruling. The Chair has ruled that the amendment is in order. It would seem to me that the appropriate time for the member for St. Paul's to have raised that objection would have been at the time the amendment was moved by the hon. member for Delta. However, that was not done and you have ruled. We would appreciate resuming debate on the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The hon. member for Calgary West is correct. If the parliamentary secretary had an objection to the amendment he should have raised it at the time the amendment was moved. No objection was raised at that time. The Chair has made a ruling. The amendment, in the view of the Chair, is in order. Therefore, we will be resuming debate on the amendment at this point in time.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, if I might apologize to you, there was never any intent whatsoever to question your ruling. I was on my feet as you stood to make your ruling. I was not recognized. I stayed on my feet and I stated my position for the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I want to assure the parliamentary secretary that the Chair did not think there was any challenge to the ruling. I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for that explanation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to state that the official opposition will support the amendment presented by the Reform Party. It does not happen

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often, but since this amendment is in line with our thinking, we shall be very pleased to support it.

The amendment asks the House to decline to give second reading to the bill, since the principle of the bill does not seek to abolish the GST, and the Reform Party members are right. We have been discussing this bill for a number of days, and we pointed out that when the Liberals were in the opposition and also when they were on the campaign trail, their platform included a promise to abolish what they referred to as the bloody GST.

Three years after the Liberals came to power, we hear that the Minister of Finance has just signed an agreement with the maritime provinces to harmonize the GST and provincial sales taxes and that, in a generous gesture, the Minister of Finance will take nearly \$1 billion out of the pockets of Canadian taxpayers outside the maritimes to compensate the maritime provinces for caving in and accepting this political agreement with the Minister of Finance, just to give Canadians the impression the federal government was doing something about the GST and that there have been improvements.

They would have us forget that the Liberals led a heroic struggle against the previous government to abolish the goods and services tax. We on this side of the House are getting used to a situation where the government rises every day to renege on its promises. Other promises were broken by the government as well.

● (1645)

For instance, the government spent part of its election campaign shouting: "Jobs, jobs, jobs. We are going to create jobs". That promise was broken. It will take another 900,000 jobs to get back to the labour market conditions that existed before the last recession. When they said jobs, jobs, jobs, it was just window dressing. They never made any formal commitment to the public to create the jobs that are so badly needed by Quebecers and Canadians.

The unemployment rate is at 10 per cent, and they shout: "Jobs, jobs, jobs". Some campaign promise. A promise that was trashed. A promise to restore a healthy labour market was not kept.

During the election campaign, they also said that poverty must be eliminated, and so forth. Since they came to power, the situation has gotten worse. The latest statistics on child poverty are outrageous. Child poverty is worse in Canada than in any other industrialized country. One more commitment that bit the dust.

The same goes for the GST. In this case, no problem, they are going to harmonize it. They are going to hide it in the price, in the maritimes. It will cost taxpayers outside the maritimes \$1 billion. The government acts as if it had always promised an agreement with the maritimes, plus political compensation, compensation it

will take out of our pockets to put a good face on the way this government is handling the GST.

The Deputy Prime Minister put on a show of her own not long ago. She resigned on a matter of principle, because she had promised the public that if her government did not abolish the GST, she would resign. So she resigned. Her show cost taxpayers a half a million dollars, so she could be reelected in the same riding.

When you have principles, when you have certain beliefs, and you stake these during an election campaign and even before, when you are in the opposition, and when you come to power, you do the exact opposite, you resign outright. You do not run again in the same riding, for the same party and come back to the same position three months later. That is cynical and arrogant in the extreme.

However, the Deputy Prime Minister has broken more promises. Radio Canada International is about to disappear. The decision has been made. During the election campaign and quite recently, she promised to maintain Radio Canada International. She even put her seat on the line with her commitment to the survival of Radio Canada International. Today, it is as though it never happened. The government lacks credibility, and the Deputy Prime Minister lacks twice as much credibility. It is time this government cynicism stopped.

That is why we support this motion for the bill not to proceed to second reading, because it does not contain any clause on abolishing the GST. That is what the government had promised. When we say promises, we do not mean idle promises, but promises that have been written down, recorded on video, like the events involving National Defence.

During the 1993 election campaign, the present Prime Minister was saying: "We will scrap the GST". The Prime Minister also said on May 2: "We hate this tax and we are going to get rid of it". What good is the Prime Minister's word? The Deputy Prime Minister's? What is this government's word worth?

Perhaps it is high time for the public to wake up, for them to realize that this government is thumbing its nose at them, that this government has no respect for the people, that this government is elected only to serve rich Canadian taxpayers, the very rich who transfer family trusts worth \$2 billion out of the country tax-free. It is time for people to realize that, with this agreement on the GST, they are thumbing their noses at all Canadians.

It is not, moreover, only in Quebec that people are voicing opposition to this agreement. Everywhere else, in Ontario, the Prairie provinces, British Columbia, people feel that this agreement is absurd. Moreover, the Minister of Finance has been asked many times to produce the formula used to calculate his billion dollar figure, with no response. The minister refuses to make this formula public.

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Questions arise about the government's honesty and its ability to really carry out the commitments it made during the election campaign. I am not talking about shows where they over inflate promises kept, as the Prime Minister did at the last Liberal Party congress, but actual accomplishments. The GST was one of this government's main promises, and look what they did with it.

• (1650)

Jobs were one of the government's main promises, and the government has fallen some one million jobs short.

The government can boast about the interest rates being very low. Do you know why the interest rates dropped, basically? The first reason is the American economy; the second, the Canadian economy and the third, the fact that people are not working. When they no longer have a job, they no longer spend and there is no more inflationary pressure. At this point, there is no need for the Bank of Canada to strike at non-existent inflation by increasing the interest rate. These are the basic reasons for the lower interest rates, and not good management by this government. This government manages nothing.

This government has managed nothing since taking office. It allowed itself to be swept along by the wave. Things went well, they drifted along and forgot the commitments they had made with respect to jobs and the fight against poverty. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance's gang preferred to make a show of it and look after the interests of rich taxpayers. This is the reality of this government.

[*English*]

Mr. Barry Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder to myself what Canadians might think watching this debate on television. It is quite a spectacle sometimes, especially when members of the opposition stray from discussing and debating the issues before us and launch into a litany of complaints, frustrations and concerns which have nothing to do with those matters.

I will speak to the issue before us and point out what viewers, Canadians observing this spectacle from the opposition, will easily conclude. It is incredible. From members of the Reform Party we have incredible paternalism. Who would expect otherwise? Let me put in a nutshell what they have been saying for hours and hours: "We know better than Atlantic Canada. Don't do this to yourselves because we know better".

One colleague suggested today that perhaps the best response would be for the Reform Party to run candidates in Atlantic Canada and teach the people there what they do not seem to understand themselves. The people of Atlantic Canada have elected governments that know what they are doing and have decided it is in the interest—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I must have struck a chord. The people of Atlantic Canada clearly know what is in their interest and are prepared to rise or fall as governments on that. Unfortunately the Reform Party does not represent that area of the country but thinks it knows best, knows better and knows what would help them. Reformers are prepared to stand here for two days to tell Atlantic Canada just what is good for it. That is some indication of the incredible arrogance and paternalism of the Reform Party with respect to other regions of the country.

With regard to the Bloc let us point out something else that is quite incredible about the spectacle of its interventions in the debate. Let us understand this clearly. Bloc members want to deny harmonization to Atlantic Canada, but they forgot to say in a single speech over two days that the Quebec sales tax is harmonized with the GST. They tell Atlantic Canada not to do it, that it is outrageous. By the way, they go on to say: "You are buying them off. You are doing this adjustment assistance".

I did not hear in one speech any rejection of the adjustment assistance for farmers when agricultural subsidies were removed. I did not hear a word from Reformers on the Crow rate subsidy of \$1 billion plus. No one stood and said at that time: "Don't give this to us". They said: "Don't help us with an adjustment to this structural change. No, don't do that". They were silent, struck dumb.

When it comes to assistance to Atlantic Canada there is not a word from the Reform Party about the Crow rate subsidy of \$1 billion plus. However it is no to Atlantic Canada, no adjustment assistance for them. From the Bloc there is no adjustment assistance for structural change but on agricultural subsidies the cheque can be written. It is really quite incredible and I do not think anybody will be fooled.

The hon. member opposite stands and says: "We are still waiting for the formula". Nonsense. The formula has been well known. It is compensation for a loss of revenue greater than 5 per cent of the sales tax base. He knows it. Hon. members know it. Anybody who has been unfortunate enough to watch the debate for two days knows it because we have said it several times. Quebec does not qualify. Nor would other provinces qualify that have not yet joined but will in due course.

• (1655)

The Atlantic provinces qualify. They are losing that revenue. What did Quebec do when it harmonized? It wanted to keep it secret but did not want the Atlantic provinces to have it. It ran two systems side by side and had an increase in revenue. There was not a decrease when Quebec harmonized. It did not qualify then and it does not qualify now.

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I go back to the history of the last couple of years. I participated in the finance committee when it travelled across the country asking Canadians about the GST. Members opposite can invent what took place but I was there and so were some of their colleagues.

Canadians told us there was an incredible anomaly with two sales taxes in most provinces, some 10 sales taxes in total. Whatever else we do, they told us to harmonize. The following sounds like a quote from the Reform Party, but there is only one taxpayer so there should be only one tax administration, one tax. Canadians asked for simplification over and over again.

To listen to the parties opposite one would think they were not sitting at the table with us. They asked for tax inclusive pricing. They wanted the option of knowing what the tax was. That is why it is provided on the receipt as it is in most of the world. Canadians told us they wanted no more sticker shock, no more counter shock.

In closing, I will make another point about the incredible spectacle we heard from the Bloc. I wonder if the reason its members have not reminded Canadian people about harmonization in Quebec is that it is a competitive advantage vis-à-vis Atlantic Canada. They know that. They do not want Atlantic businesses and consumers to have the advantage available to Quebec businesses and consumers.

This change will result in input tax credits in Atlantic Canada, tremendous savings passed on to consumers, cheaper prices and no net increase in tax revenue. It is good for Atlantic Canada. That is why their governments want to do it, no matter what the Reform or the Bloc may have to say about it.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to follow the previous rant from the member for St. Paul's. It is the first we heard from the Liberals today on the issue and gives me an opportunity to address some of his comments.

It was interesting when he said this move was in the interest of Atlantic Canada. Yet few members on the government side from Atlantic Canada are willing to speak to the issue. Very few members are willing to speak to the issue of GST harmonization. Almost none from Atlantic Canada. One spoke earlier today, the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls. We can check the blues, but I do not think he mentioned GST anywhere in his speech. He obviously was not too thrilled about the initiative.

The government makes the point that it must be governing for the benefit of the people of Atlantic Canada because the Liberal government in Atlantic Canada likes this initiative. The role of the Parliament of Canada, I would remind the parliamentary secretary, is to govern for the benefit of the people of Canada; not just the people of Atlantic Canada but all Canadians.

Interestingly enough we did not hear mention of the people of Atlantic Canada. Where are the petitions to Parliament demanding this harmonized GST? Where are the letters of endorsement from the business community and from consumers groups? We are not getting them in our offices. We are getting precisely the opposite.

The federal government should have a broader view of what is in the interest of the people of any region of the country than just what the party of the government thinks in a particular region.

We get the same line every time the Reform, the Bloc or any other party criticizes a Liberal government initiative directed at a specific region. Its members always say they are the guardians of the region. They ask where we were when they were giving something to our region or to somebody else. The great tragedy of the country is governments that do not govern for the entire country. Historically governments, particularly Liberal governments, have used policies to divide, conquer and pit one against another so they can act as the defender of one region at any point in history, depending on where they need to pick up some votes.

● (1700)

It is a terrible way of approaching government, but that is the history. I am addressing second reading of Bill C-70 on GST harmonization which, as has been pointed out by many speakers, is being implemented with time allocation.

It is important to point out that this bill was read for the first time in this House only on December 2, just over a week ago. This is only the third day we have had any debate at all on this piece of legislation.

The hon. member for Burlington, a Liberal member, had a tremendous argument. This one we need to get bronzed over here. It was that they would not need to move time allocation if the opposition would just support their bills. That would make it much easier.

There is a pattern here. We saw this pattern not just in this fall sitting but in previous sittings in the last three years. That has been that we have had a very slow legislative agenda for several months.

Just as the House is about to rise for a break, important legislation appears which must be passed immediately. In this sitting, the fall sitting, we passed only nine pieces of legislation, including some supply bills and housekeeping measures that were of fairly minor significance.

Last week three pieces of legislation were introduced which most analysts of Parliament would argue are the three most important bills introduced in the fall sitting, the harmonization of the GST, amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board, and the tobacco legislation. These are three of the most important bills.

Government Orders

Now they must all be passed according to some rushed schedule. I should add, just a couple of weeks before that, changes to the rules for the next election campaign. That is probably the fourth most important. It came in only three weeks before the end of the session.

Why does the government do it this way? I have tried to figure that out. Why are we rushing, for instance, an important debate on a GST package in order to have a prebudget debate, which the government will have no intention of listening to whatsoever? It is not on a substantive piece of legislation. Why are we doing this?

Some of it may be disorganization. Some of it may be unclear priorities. I fear the longer I am here the reason it does some of this is it really ultimately wants to rush committee stage of these bills.

Committee stage is where the public and affected interests get to express their views on the bill to indicate where amendments should be made and where parliamentarians and other expert witnesses are able to go over the clause by clause of a bill to suggest technical amendments.

That is the stage the government wants to rush. It has been increasingly rushing it, even on important legislation. The consequences of that have been very obvious in this Parliament to observers. Often we are passing legislation that is not well thought out, that is poorly drafted technically and that ends up being amended or delayed in the Senate.

I suspect we will see that happen again, if not on this bill at least on one of these three bills we are now rushing.

We have today the Liberal Party bringing in a bill to support and enhance the position of the GST across the country. I will not dwell too much on that. It is tremendously humorous to see the Liberal Party now being the one enacting the new version of the GST.

Perhaps even funnier than that was the appearance of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party to vote against the GST. Of course, just his mere appearance in the House of Commons is funny enough, seeing how infrequently it seems to occur.

Let us go back to the original GST. The original GST was discussed in a white paper presented by the previous government in 1987 and implemented in the 1990-91 period. It is important for me to acknowledge, as I want to address a serious issue here, that many conservative people in the country, many business people, very conservatively oriented people, were very supportive of the thrust of the GST, at least initially. Some still are.

Why was this? It is important to understand why some supported it and why they do not today and why it is an error to support this tax.

• (1705)

They supported it because of the deficiencies of the existing manufacturer's sales tax. They supported it because it was a value added tax implemented in a multi-level way that ideally would not distort prices. On top of that it was a consumption based tax which therefore would not have strong incentives against investment.

However, these were very short term reasons for anybody to support this tax. They were very short term reasons because the real issue this country has been facing for the last 10 years and will face for the next few at least is the deficit and whether we will end the enormous deficits of this federal government by increasing taxes or whether we will end them by cutting spending; in other words, whether we will ultimately balance the budget in this country by having very big government or by having much smaller government. Of course, big government got us into this economic situation in the first place and we favour a solution that will bring us back to smaller government.

If we take a big picture look at the GST, the big problem with it is not the specifics of its construction. It is in the end a powerful revenue generator, one that works best if hidden. It makes it easy to raise rates, easy to broaden the base, and it brings the federal government into an area that is traditionally provincial authority. It leads to tax collusion rather than the phrase harmonization or rather than competition between governments.

That is what we see happening with this GST harmonization today. We see a deal that buys off the Liberal Party in the Atlantic provinces, that uses the term harmonization for essentially arranging a collusion scheme between governments to make it easier for them in the future to raise taxes. They can do it with a majority vote. But it makes it virtually impossible for them to ever lower the rates of taxation. It takes another step toward hiding and burying taxes in prices and it broadens the base of existing provincial sales taxes on Atlantic consumers.

The real agenda of the Liberal Party is to make sure the fiscal actions it takes, both on the spending and taxation sides, ultimately secure big government and high taxes in this country. I believe that in the end this is what has caused the slow economic growth in the past generation. This will ensure the country continues to slip.

We need another way. This harmonization of the GST, this tax collusion between provincial and federal Liberal governments, is not the way to reverse the economic decline of this country.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to add to the debate today because of the implications for Canadians, the people from coast to coast we represent.

Government Orders

I reject the statement of the member opposite who said that we have not heard what the people of Atlantic Canada have said. We have indeed. We have heard of those business that are shutting down and laying off staff because they cannot compete under the rules being imposed on them by this new legislation.

I have something to say about the GST in a broad sense. We greatly underestimate the impact it has on our economy. There is a simple rule that if you want people to do something you make it easy for them. If you want people to stop doing something, then you make it more difficult. The taxation of cigarettes is an example. When taxes were reduced, consumption went up. When taxes were increased, consumption and the purchase of cigarettes went down. That is true in every sector.

I will use the example of my father. He is a senior citizen now, well on in years. He is one of those pioneers who helped to build this country out in the west. My dad purchased a new car every four to six years. That became a regular pattern for him. But in 1990 when they brought in the GST and he was ready for a new car he did not buy a new one. So his old car turned four years old and then five and then six.

One day I asked him if was going to buy a new car because he usually did. He said: "No. Between the provincial sales tax and the new federal sales tax, the GST, I am not going to buy a car because that is one tax which I can avoid paying just by making the choice not to purchase a new vehicle". As a result, my dad to this day is still driving his 1985 Oldsmobile. He says it will be his last car because he will not pay tax on a new one. We could multiply that situation over and over again. The people in the car business in Ontario have lost many important sales. If we multiplied it by the number of people who have responded in that manner, we would probably be surprised by the huge economic impact the GST has had right across the country.

• (1710)

As a member of Parliament I have the duty to represent my constituents and also to represent what is good for the country. It seems that in this Parliament the opposition parties are better able to do that than the governing party. I bring to the attention of the House evidence to support that statement.

I believe that the opposition has a very important role to play, so I went back to when the Liberals were in opposition. I read *Hansard* from that time. I went to the PubNet system and said let us see what the Liberals said about the GST when they were in opposition. I have quotes from several Liberal members who were in opposition who I think correctly represented Canadian thinking.

First I would like to cite quotes from the hon. member for Burin—St. George's. He is an eloquent speaker. He frequently speaks on these subjects. This is what he said on March 12, 1993.

He was deriding the government's jamming through the GST at that time. This was on the debate when it was simplifying it. The Conservative government brought in 350 pages of simplification for the GST procedures and that is what the House was debating on this occasion. He said: "The government used every rule in the book and every perversion of most of the rules to get the GST—and that is what I am talking about in case my friends on the other side have forgotten so soon, the goods and services tax. It is called many other names by those 85 per cent of Canadians who vehemently and strongly oppose that tax measure". I believe that member when on this side of the House was correct. As far as we know, about 85 per cent of Canadians were opposed to the tax.

It is a violation of our trust if we bring into this place legislation and we jam it through, as this government is now doing, against the will of the people. How can we expect to have respect as parliamentarians if we go against the will of the people and impose on them what we know best, as opposed to what they are demanding from their government? How can we expect respect for our laws if the people of the country lose their willingness to be so governed?

Let me go back to the member for Burin—St. George's. He said: "I am talking of the bankruptcy of ideas and about the pain that has been inflicted on individuals, families and corporations out there, on people trying to do business, trying to run their homes and trying to maintain and manage their family budgets. I am talking about that kind of bankruptcy, that kind of pain". He was accurately expressing the huge pain of excessive taxation on our citizens.

I quote again: "Go out there and ask almost any Canadian how fair the GST has been for him or for her. Ask a person who is in university and who must buy some books how fair the goods and services tax is. Then remember that the goods and services tax was going to lower prices". Here we are in 1996 hearing exactly the same thing. Those same members, now on that side of the House, with the ability because of their numbers to do something about it, are refusing. When they were on this side of the House they represented the people. They said we should not tax books. What are they doing now? They are increasing the tax on books, effectively, for university students.

I quote again: "We have to understand the double talk of this government on many matters. When it says it is going to do something, then that is code for saying that it is really going to do the opposite. But for the record it has said it will do something else". That is a quotation from a Liberal member talking about the Conservatives and we know where they went.

Unfortunately my time is up. In conclusion, let me say this one sentence. I am here to do everything that I can to fulfil the Reform plan to reduce the GST in stages to zero until it is gone as we bring government spending under control and stop that excessive taxation demand on the taxpayers.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Order. Pursuant to order made earlier this day it being 5.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Call in the members.

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

(*Division No. 200*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Althouse	Asselin
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Bachand
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bhaduria	Breitreuz (Yellowhead)
Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Brien
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Daviault	de Savoye
Debien	Deshaies
Dubé	Duceppe
Dumas	Duncan
Epp	Forseth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gauthier
Godin	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Guay
Hanrahan	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Harris
Hart	Hayes
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hoepfner	Jacob
Jennings	Johnston
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	Leroux (Shefford)
Loubier	Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)

Morrison
Paré
Plamondon
Ringma
Schmidt
Silye
Solomon
St-Laurent
Strahl
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Tremblay (Rosemont)

Nunez
Picard (Drummond)
Ramsay
Rocheleau
Scott (Skeena)
Solberg
Speaker
Stinson
Taylor
Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Venne—86

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allmand	Anderson
Assadourian	Augustine
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaunier
Bélair	Bélanger
Bellemare	Bernier (Beauce)
Bertrand	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bodnar	Bonin
Boudria	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Brushett	Bryden
Byrne	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Chamberlain	Chan
Clancy	Cohen
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Copps
Cowling	Crawford
Culbert	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dingwall	Discepola
Dromisky	Duhamel
Dupuy	Easter
English	Finestone
Finlay	Flis
Fontana	Fry
Gaffney	Gagliano
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Grose
Harb	Harper (Churchill)
Harvard	Hickey
Hopkins	Hubbard
Ianno	Iftody
Irwin	Jackson
Jordan	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Knudson
Lastewka	Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lincoln
Loney	MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
McCormick	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Murray	Nault
O'Brien (London—Middlesex)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Payne	Peric
Peters	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Pillitteri
Reed	Regan
Richardson	Rideout
Robichaud	Robillard
Rock	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Serré	Shepherd
Sheridan	Simmons
Skoke	Speller
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Telegdi
Terrana	Thalheimer

Government Orders

Torsney
Valeri
Verran
Walker
Wells
Wood
Zed—147

Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wappel
Whelan
Young

Campbell
Chamberlain
Clancy
Collenette
Comuzzi
Cowling
Culbert
DeVillers
Dingwall
Dromisky
Dupuy
English
Finlay
Fontana
Gaffney
Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Gerrard
Goodale
Harb
Harvard
Hopkins
Ianno
Irwin
Jordan
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Lastewka
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Loney
Malhi
Manley
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCormick
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)
Mifflin
Mitchell
Murray
O'Brien (London—Middlesex)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Payne
Peters
Pettigrew
Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Reed
Richardson
Robichaud
Rock
Serré
Sheridan
Skoke
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Terrana
Torsney
Valeri
Verran
Walker
Wells
Wood
Zed—147

Cannis
Chan
Cohen
Collins
Copps
Crawford
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Duhamel
Easter
Finestone
Flis
Fry
Gagliano
Galloway
Godfrey
Grose
Harper (Churchill)
Hickey
Hubbard
Iftody
Jackson
Keys
Knutson
Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Lincoln
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Maloney
Marleau
Massé
McKinnon
McWhinney
Minna
Murphy
Nault
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patri
Peric
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Regan
Rideout
Robillard
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Shepherd
Simmons
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Thalheimer
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wappel
Whelan
Young

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre) Béglise
Canuel Caron
Dion Eggleton
Fillion Graham
Guimond Jordan
Kirkby Kraft Sloan
Lee Marchand
Pomerleau Sauvageau

• (1745)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kilger: Mr. Speaker, you will find there is unanimous agreement for members who voted on the previous motion to be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

Mrs. Dalphond-Guiral: Mr. Speaker, the members of the official opposition will vote no.

[*English*]

Mr. Strahl: Mr. Speaker, Reform Party members present will vote no, unless instructed by their constituents otherwise.

Mr. Solomon: Mr. Speaker, New Democrat members in the House this evening will vote no on this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Bhaduria: Mr. Speaker, I vote no on this motion.

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

(*Division No. 201*)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Allmand
Assaourian
Baker
Barnes
Bélair
Bellemare
Bertrand
Bevilacqua
Bodnar
Boudria
Brushett
Byrne
Alcock
Anderson
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bernier (Beauce)
Bethel
Blondin-Andrew
Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Bryden
Calder

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Althouse
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Gaspé)
Bhaduria
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Chrétien (Frontenac)
Cummins
Daviault
Ablonczy
Asselin
Bachand
Bergeron
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brien
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
de Savoye

Private Members' Business

Debien	Deshaies
Dubé	Duceppe
Dumas	Duncan
Epp	Forseth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gauthier
Godin	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Guay
Hanrahan	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Harris
Hart	Hayes
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hoepfner	Jacob
Jennings	Johnston
Lalonde	Landry
Langlois	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	Leroux (Shefford)
Loubier	Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Nunez
Paré	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Ramsay
Ringma	Rocheleau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
Silye	Solberg
Solomon	Speaker
St-Laurent	Stinson
Strahl	Taylor
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Venne—86

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bélisle
Canuel	Caron
Dion	Eggleton
Fillion	Graham
Guimond	Jordan
Kirkby	Kraft Sloan
Lee	Marchand
Pomerleau	Sauvageau

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee).

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Training and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

As a member of Parliament who has fought long and hard for the rights of Louis Riel and the Metis people, I feel that I and other members who have also struggled long and hard over many decades to right this wrong, have been put in a very untenable position. I feel my rights as a member of Parliament have been marginalized because this bill is rooted in everything that Louis Riel did not stand for.

● (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): Order. It is clear that this is not time for debate on the bill. The time has elapsed. This is a deferred division.

[Translation]

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. A point of order was raised so that some members would have a chance to leave and others to save face, because what was raised had already been pointed out by the person who was trying to get out of voting for the bill. She is as much out of order as I am.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The question before the House is on a deferred recorded division. Neither point is relevant to the division before the House, but rather is tending to debate which was completed in accordance with the rules.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

AN ACT TO REVOKE THE CONVICTION OF LOUIS DAVID RIEL

The House resumed from December 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-297, an act to revoke the conviction of Louis David Riel, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): As is the practice, the division will be taken row by row, starting with the mover and then proceeding with those in favour of the motion sitting on the same side of the House as the mover.

[Translation]

Then those in favour of the motion sitting on the other side of the House will be called. Those opposed to the motion will be recorded in the same order.

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

(Division No. 202)

YEAS

Members	
Alcock	Allmand
Althouse	Assadourian
Asselin	Augustine
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Bachand
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellehumeur
Bellemare	Bergeron
Bernier (Beauce)	Bernier (Gaspé)
Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)	Bertrand
Bhaduria	Bonin
Brien	Brown (Oakville—Milton)
Catterall	Chrétien (Frontenac)
Crête	Dalphond-Guiral
Daviault	de Savoye
Debien	Deshaies
Discepola	Dubé
Duceppe	Duhamel
Dumas	Finestone
Fontana	Gaffney
Gagnon (Québec)	Gauthier
Godin	Guay
Harris	Hoepfner

Private Members' Business

Hubbard	Jacob
Jennings	Lalonde
Landry	Langlois
Lastewka	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Paul)
Lebel	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lefebvre	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
Maloney	Marchand
McClelland (Edmonton Southwest/Sud-Ouest)	McCormick
McKinnon	McWhinney
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Minna
Nault	Nunez
O'Brien (London—Middlesex)	O'Reilly
Paradis	Paré
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Picard (Drummond)
Pillitteri	Plamondon
Regan	Rocheleau
Schmidt	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Serré	Simmons
Solomon	Speller
St-Laurent	St. Denis
Taylor	Thalheimer
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Ur
Venne	Verran
Volpe—103	

Speaker	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Stinson	Strahl
Szabo	Telegdi
Terrana	Torsney
Valeri	Vanclief
Walker	Wappel
Wells	Wood
Young	Zed—112

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Bélisle
Canuel	Caron
Dion	Eggleton
Fillion	Graham
Guimond	Jordan
Kirkby	Kraft Sloan
Lee	Marchand
Pomerleau	Sauvageau

● (1800)

[English]

(Bill negated.)

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Baker
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bodnar	Boudria
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brushett	Bryden
Byrne	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Chamberlain	Chan
Clancy	Cohen
Collenette	Collins
Comuzzi	Copps
Cowling	Crawford
Culbert	Cullen
Cummins	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dingwall
Dromisky	Duncan
Easter	English
Epp	Finlay
Fis	Forseth
Gagliano	Galloway
Gerrard	Godfrey
Goodale	Grey (Beaver River)
Grose	Grubel
Hanrahan	Harb
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)	Harper (Churchill)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Hart
Harvard	Hayes
Hickey	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hopkins
Irwin	Jackson
Johnston	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Knutson	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Lincoln	Loney
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mifflin
Mitchell	Morrison
Murphy	Murray
Payne	Phinney
Pickard (Essex—Kent)	Ramsay
Reed	Richardson
Rideout	Ringma
Robichaud	Rock
Scott (Skeena)	Shepherd
Sheridan	Silye
Skoke	Solberg

* * *

PEACEKEEPING

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion; and of the amendment.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat ironic that after we have spent most of this day responding once more to time allocation we now have an opportunity with motion M-31 to discuss at least partial restoration of the prerogatives, dignity and relevance of Parliament.

I would like to open my address by quoting some remarks made by the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the House on October 23. I quote from *Hansard*: “When a peacekeeping mission is being launched, reviewed or renewed, debate is encouraged and the House is asked to support the initiative”. There is no requirement in that statement that the House give its consent but only that it be encouraged to support the government’s moves.

In the same address the parliamentary secretary went on to say: “The government agrees that a debate on our commitment should be held either in this House or before the Parliament of Canada, but it is quite another story to ask that there be a vote before Canada can make any commitment”. Is that not nice? “It is quite another story to ask that there be a vote before Canada can make a commitment”.

Private Members' Business

It has not always been that way. There was a time when Parliament had some relevance, when Parliament had real power.

As usual I notice that most of the Liberal members are conspicuous in their absence from the House. Those sweethearts may have nothing but contempt for this institution but, by God, they should have a little respect for their fellow members. They should show that respect by at least hearing our views and going through the motions of having a real debate.

There was a time when cabinets, no matter how powerful, respected this place. I quote *Hansard* for June 30, 1950, when the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent said the following:

If the situation in Korea or elsewhere, after prorogation, should deteriorate and action by Canada beyond that which I have indicated should be considered, parliament will immediately be summoned to give the new situation consideration.

● (1805)

“Parliament will be immediately summoned”. How Liberal attitudes have changed in this post-Pearsonian era. Parliament is now regarded as little more than a nuisance, but never a serious threat to governmental activity.

In September 1950 Parliament was indeed recalled to debate sending ground troops to Korea. The debate began on September 4. The mobilization order was issued on September 9. Some might call this undue delay, but remember that the UN resolution calling for joint action had been passed on June 27. The government had waited for two months before it decided to bring the matter to a head, discuss it in the House and set the subsequent events in motion.

When the Suez crisis developed in November 1956 the House was already in session, but Canadian participation was nevertheless determined by order in council. That was only six years after the Korean involvement.

In theory, and it is a great theory, Parliament had 10 days in which to determine whether to fund the action. However, in practice, as we all know, it was an exercise in rubber stamping. Here in Canada, with no separation of executive and legislative powers, Parliament cannot, without a vote of non-confidence, restrain the government by denying funding for its adventures.

In contrast, the U.S. Congress 25 years ago was able to stop military operations in Laos and Cambodia by tying the purse strings of the government.

In this century, for those of you who have not followed the political life of our giant neighbour to the south, the U.S. president, prior to the Laos and Cambodia situation, had gradually usurped the power of Congress to declare war. However, Congress is

nevertheless the ultimate authority because of its power to withhold funds.

Of course, the flip side to that is, contrary to our domestic situation, the power of the president as commander in chief confers what has been described by some as a vast reservoir of powers in time of emergency, with the authority to do just about anything anywhere that can be done with an army or navy. It is the type of power which has been usurped by cabinet in this country.

It has become possible to deploy troops in situations where, although combat is not technically involved, there is danger of provoking conflict or where the deployment of troops could be regarded by others as a hostile act. Under the Canadian system governments are not supposed to possess such draconian powers, but cabinet abuses in the post-Pearson era have conferred them as a matter of custom, a custom which must be reversed if we want to reaffirm democracy in this country.

In M-31 it is stated that not only should Parliament be vested with the power to send our troops abroad, but that it should be subject to a free vote of the members. It should not be a partisan issue. Members of Parliament, before they put their constituents or the sons and daughters of their constituents into life-threatening situations, should be able to look into their own souls and they should be able to consult with their constituents to make a decision which bears the imprint, if you will, of the will of the country. We should not be rushing about, sending troops hither and yon without the absolute support of the people of Canada.

● (1810)

It is possible, although I would say by no means certain, that if we had had a reasoned debate and a free vote in the House on the Rwanda adventure that particular fiasco might have been avoided.

I see the Speaker is giving me the finger. I will terminate my remarks at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I was only indicating to the hon. member that he had one minute left. If he wishes to continue for another minute the time is his. I was not in any sense being disrespectful to the hon. member whose views are very important to the House.

Mr. John Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to join in the debate on this motion put forward by the member opposite.

On the surface the bill differs a little from what the government has already put into practice. In fact the government has made a point of encouraging public debate and more open consultation in all major foreign and defence policies.

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Mr. Mills (Red Deer): When did we vote on any of them?

• (1815)

Mr. Richardson: Peacekeeping debates held in the House have been numerous, a practice to which the government remains committed. It is my belief, however, that while this motion is similar in spirit and steps have already taken by the government to increase consultations, it has the potential to deprive Canada of its ability to respond effectively to crisis situations. This motion would transform a well functioning system into a more cumbersome process.

The value of Canada's involvement in promoting international peace and security cannot be overstated. As the government has emphasized in the House on numerous occasions, Canada has a long and proud tradition of helping global communities defend peace, freedom and democracy. It remains committed to creating, in association with its friends and allies, a stable international environment. We realize that our security and prosperity depend on a safer, more secure global order.

As a responsible member of the international community and as a major trading nation, Canada understands the need to contain and prevent conflict. We also want to help reduce the human suffering in situations where outside assistance can make a difference.

Canada has consistently seen peacekeeping as an extremely useful tool in international efforts to manage and resolve conflict. We have excelled at peacekeeping. Our experience and skills are unmatched. We have a long tradition of peacekeeping and expertise based on professionalism, training and courage of our personnel.

We have a wealth of experience in preparing, deploying, sustaining and repatriating peacekeeping forces of various strengths and, more recently, have been in a vanguard of new concepts. Our corporate memory and reputation in peacekeeping thus makes us a natural choice for a wide variety of missions.

For Canada to remain on the leading edge of peacekeeping operations, it must recognize and be prepared to adjust to new global realities. Events in today's world unfold with startling speed. We have seen numerous examples in recent years of tensions, left simmering for years, suddenly boiling over with terrible ferocity.

It is for this reason that the government rejects the motion before us. At a time when an efficient response would be critical, this motion would complicate unnecessarily the government's capacity to react to the UN's request for assistance in peace operations and to respond to changes in the peacekeeping mandate. That certainly is the consensus of many former Canadian UN commanders. They have identified the length of time it takes for the international community to respond to a crisis as a major problem.

Major-General Romeo Dallaire has been an eloquent and passionate advocate of the need for efficient response to emergencies. And who should know better than a man who saw the horrible carnage that took place in Rwanda and Burundi? He witnessed it firsthand.

The motion before this House would add another step, one which is redundant to the decision making process. Should we support a motion which in practice could erode Canada's capacity to become involved and provide help when and where it is needed? If a situation is deemed an emergency, it should be treated like one.

Improving the ability of Canada and the UN to react promptly and effectively to a wide range of humanitarian crises has been a priority of this government. For example, the Canadian Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART, was established this year as part of the response to the kind of conditions found two years ago in the Rwanda crisis. In Rwanda a terrible price was paid because of the slow and ineffective response. Many, many lives were lost.

For some time Canada has played a leading role in efforts to design a specialized military unit to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We have now put our plans into action. The DART team will be able to respond to a crisis in Canada or almost anywhere in the world within 48 hours of a government decision to send assistance. It has the capacity to assist and complement the work of humanitarian organizations in critical situations, conducting emergency humanitarian assistance operations for up to 40 days.

For example, DART might work with non-governmental organizations such as CARE in responding to a major cholera epidemic. They will be able to provide medical resources and treat up to 500 patients a day. They will be able to help provide electrical power and clean water for up to 10,000 people a day. They will be able to build temporary shelters as needed. This capability will also buy time for Canada to assess the situation and determine long term assistance strategies.

Canadian peacekeepers are trained to respond effectively in times of crisis. They have leadership to assess situations and implement plans to assist others. These are the assets so valued in times of crises, assets we cannot allow to be unnecessarily compromised by the added step this motion would introduce in the decision making process.

The proposal from the member opposite may well introduce rigidity where flexibility currently exists, and impede decision making rather than assist it. Rigidity, inaction and cumbersome decision making are exactly the problems Canada is trying to alleviate at the international level.

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Members from both sides of this House have acknowledged that the UN must improve its ability to respond rapidly and effectively. The UN needs to do so to identify and prevent impending crises from escalating. In the aftermath of the cold war there is no reason the UN cannot ultimately perform this role.

Unfortunately, the UN does not currently have the capability, politically, militarily, administratively or logistically, to react rapidly to conflicts or humanitarian crises where security is at risk. The current ad hoc method of obtaining and assembling units from member states while at the same time trying to set up operational headquarters makes true rapid response impossible to achieve.

New approaches are being implemented. This was the impetus behind the Canadian study of the UN's rapid reaction capability in peace support operations. Canada has emphasized the need to create within the UN a capability to respond with humanitarian, diplomatic, military and logistical aid in a more efficient manner and a much improved crisis management apparatus.

Sovereign states must adapt to this new world in order to permit the UN to do the job they do not want to do individually, or cannot do for various geopolitical reasons. Change is required if we were to manage properly future humanitarian crises. In an emergency situation where many lives are at risk, surely the members of the House would not want to complicate Canada's response mechanism by placing an unnecessary procedure in the way. At a time when flexibility of response is critical to meeting demands of rapid change, eastern Zaire being the current example, the motion before us would complicate our process, which has been proven to be effective, and would potentially place the lives of many in unnecessary jeopardy.

● (1820)

The government has demonstrated its commitment to consultation. We have listened to the views of parliamentarians and the Canadian public in formulating peacekeeping policy. We will continue to do so in the future. But not every decision can be reached by committee. The government has established the political guidelines and reciprocal trust must prevail in their implementation. There is a time when action backed by discretion and experience is crucial to success. To abandon flexibility is to be imprudent.

We have listened to those who gave us the mandate to govern, the citizens of this country. They have made it clear through their support the existence of a consensus among Canadians on the approach we have taken in peacekeeping. Now it is up to us to make the difficult decisions that will enable us to accomplish the mission, but to do so the government must have the ability and flexibility to choose from among different options.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I rise in the House today to speak to the motion of the hon. member for Red Deer and the amendment of the hon. member for Témiscamingue, I would like to start by saying that the first few times I took part in debates of an international nature in this House, I realized this could have a tremendous impact, both on the people and the countries where interventions take place and in our own ridings, where we have members of the military who are called upon to take part in these operations.

After being involved in the debates we have had on Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda, and perhaps tomorrow in another debate which may arise unexpectedly, I think the motion before the House is a very interesting one and is also very balanced, which is very important in the area of international relations, especially when we consider the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

If the motion were adopted, as amended, it would say as follows: "That all projects of military commitments abroad involving Canadian troops must, as soon as possible, be the subject of a vote in the House". As soon as possible, and that is in response to the arguments of the government, which contends this would paralyze the government's activities. No, the Bloc Québécois amendment is intended to ensure that the government retains enough flexibility but at the same time will respect the advice it is given in the House. It would do so as soon as possible, always, of course, depending on the emergencies that arise.

I will resume my reading of the motion: "—must, as soon as possible, be the subject of a vote in the House in order to recommend their approval or rejection to the government". The government's responsibility remains intact. There are always aspects of international relations, diplomatic and security aspects that may be considered and of which each member of this House is not necessarily fully aware.

However, I think it would be useful for the government, as part of a review of Canada's international policy, to make a rule of what has been its practice for a number of years, which is to consult the House regularly when it has decisions to make regarding the presence of Canadian troops abroad.

It is important because, as I said earlier, one of the first speeches I made in this House was one I made in a debate on Bosnia. There are young men and women of 20, 25 or 30 in my riding who took part in these operations. I met some of these people last week and they described their experience, the results and how things worked over there.

With the advice of people who were in the field and also what I would call the sense of balance, the sense of responsibility we find in this House when we deal with international issues and when we do not get the same kind of partisan debate we might have on

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domestic issues, I think it is important for the government to be able to consider these roles and the advice that may be forthcoming.

• (1825)

All this is especially important since in future, Canada will undoubtedly be asked to take on an expanded role in these operations. We can expect all kinds of unusual situations on this planet. Every time, this will require a detailed and balanced analysis. We will have to look at the pros and cons of our involvement. The latest crisis in Rwanda and the Zaire question are a case in point.

During a debate in this House on the question, we realized that both the government and the opposition parties had a very balanced approach. They all wanted to ensure that nothing ill-advised was done on the international scene which would be harmful to the populations concerned. This obliged the government to take all recommendations into consideration.

I recall that, among the things that were said, it was stated that care must be taken to avoid sticking obstinately to military intervention if this proved to no longer be the right solution. This was said in the House. Suggestions were made, enriching the debate and enabling the government to take a stand.

The motion presented to us is important in that connection. It restores to Parliament a responsibility which is rightly ours. I know that we are in a British parliamentary system, in which the government assumes total responsibility; it is different from the American or the French system.

When international security is concerned—international military interventions in which human lives are at stake—it is important to give members of Parliament the chance of putting forward their points of view and, whenever possible, a vote ought to be taken when the situation is not urgent and does not require action to be taken within hours.

We have seen the case of Rwanda. We had the time to discuss the situation, to adjust our positions. By taking into consideration the opinions expressed during the debate, the government avoided taking actions that would have been badly perceived, as well as ineffective on the international scene.

They could have come back and asked the opinion of the House, in light of the new information available. The government would have been well advised to base its positions on the results of House votes. In the case of a major international situation for example, the unanimous support of the House would strengthen the government's intervention. The government would also be in a better position internationally.

At home, it can always be argued that decisions are made democratically. They are made in consideration of elected offi-

cial's opinions. If we passed the motion before us, we would show our belief in letting elected officials have a say not only in principle but also in reality.

Our opinion must be taken into consideration, because increasingly a precise way of consulting elected officials in such situations must be defined. The trend will be increasingly to create an international emergency force that would act in difficult situations or situations involving military or humanitarian interventions, matters of practical logistics and of principle.

The government benefits from considered opinions on all these things and from the opinions of the members of the House of Commons, which represents all parties in Canada. This is equally valid in the case of interventions in francophone and anglophone countries, whatever the make-up of the Canadian force and the type of intervention involved.

Recently, on the question of Zaire and Rwanda, we wondered about an American presence and the type of aid they could provide. Would a vote in the House not have given the Government of Canada a stronger position from which to defend its viewpoint? Would that not have been worthwhile? We would all have benefited from such a position.

• (1830)

I would like to come back to the impact that I think is the most important, the human impact. In the course of our duties as MPs, we are often called upon to vote or take a stand on economic, social or cultural issues. When we talk about the presence of foreign soldiers, we are talking about human issues, about families that will be left worrying, separated from one of their own. Therefore, we must be sure that, when these situations arise, we have truly weighed all sides of the issue, because we cannot really afford to be wrong. We must identify the position most likely to resolve the situation and to allow Canada to fulfil its international role. The support the House of Commons can provide in these cases is, in my view, an important factor.

I am not in complete agreement with the arguments we heard earlier from a government member, who said that this would take away the government's room to manoeuvre, that we could not always change course rapidly enough. I think that the opposition parties, in these situations, have learned to weigh all the facts carefully before adopting a position.

The amendment proposed by the member for Témiscamingue meets all these criteria, and it would be a sign of maturity on the part of this Parliament and of the government majority to approve it, so that all proposed military commitments abroad involving Canadian troops can be the subject of a vote in the House of Commons with a view to their approval or rejection. Democracy and Canadian diplomacy abroad would stand to gain.

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[English]

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 31 put forward by my colleague from Red Deer. The motion asks that our peacekeeping commitments, which involve 100 or more personnel, be put to the House of Commons in a manner that would allow a free vote.

This motion has a lot of credibility because, if there is one single issue that I have had a lot of calls from my constituency about, it has been the sending of our troops to different parts of the world to be involved in peacekeeping activities. The opportunity to have free votes on this issue is certainly justified as a result of the input I personally have had from the people of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Also, on page 92 of the Liberal red ink book, the Liberal Party promised more free votes in the House. However, these Liberals have not allowed very many free votes.

We do have debates on certain peacekeeping missions. When it comes to peacekeeping and the lives of our Canadian soldiers, it is absolutely essential that Parliament as a whole is able to have meaningful debate and provide input in these matters. But the fact is that cabinet and only cabinet has the ultimate authority to designate soldiers to peacekeeping activities.

That is an awesome power for the cabinet to have. Regardless of what our constituents may have to say about it, regardless of what the Canadian people may feel about it, the small group in cabinet can make the unilateral decision to send our soldiers abroad. And that has been done. It has been done over and over again. There is no requirement to hold a debate on these matters. It is only required that Parliament be reconvened within a 10-day period following the decision to commit troops in the first place. That is sort of the reverse.

• (1835)

I would think the proper way to handle these matters would be to have a debate and after the debate cabinet would make a decision based on that input. It can make a decision with the confidence that the concerns and the voices of the Canadian people have been heard in the House. But that is not the case.

It is interesting that in the fall of 1994 a special joint committee released a defence policy paper. Lo and behold, the paper had the support of all the parties in the House. Liberals know very well that one of the recommendations stated “nor should the government commit our forces to service abroad without a full parliamentary debate and accounting for that decision”.

As we have seen on the GST issue, the Liberal government can take a promise to scrap the GST many different ways. I would imagine the way it has taken this is that there will be a full parliamentary debate in the accounting for that decision but it will come after cabinet has already made the decision to commit troops. I stated earlier that is the reverse of the way one would assume things should operate in this House. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would agree with me on that point. We have had token debates on peacekeeping and cabinet does what it wants anyway.

If we want to have a full accounting of our peacekeeping decisions as recommended by this policy paper which all the parties agreed on, then MPs must have the opportunity to debate these matters in the House of Commons.

This motion in no way attempts to limit our international obligations; it does not do that. It in no way attempts to somehow remove Canada from its very distinguished role as a peacekeeper.

We have much to be proud of when it comes to peacekeeping. We have done a good job. Since 1947 over 100,000 Canadians have served abroad in over 30 peacekeeping and related operations. We are the only country that can legitimately claim to have participated in almost every peacekeeping mission organized under the UN.

When countries are in need of someone to enforce ceasefire agreements or provide humanitarian aid, they come knocking at our door. We should be proud of that record. The international community is very aware of Canada's professionalism and its commitment to neutrality and evenhandedness.

In helping other countries we are also helping ourselves. A safer and more secure international environment is key to our very own security and prosperity.

While our record on peacekeeping speaks for itself and while we are anxious to assist other countries in dire need of our soldiers' services, these Liberals have not given the military the support it needs and deserves and the lives of Canadian soldiers overseas have been put in danger because of that.

The Liberals have committed our troops to war zones with antiquated equipment. Stories came out of Bosnia of Canadian peacekeepers trading helmets and flak jackets with their replacements at the airport because there was not enough gear to go around. That is an incredible thing to comprehend.

Furthermore, the armoured personnel carriers they were using provided our troops with inadequate protection against bullets and land mines. That is frightening. These are Canadian soldiers. It was only last summer that the Liberals announced that the armoured personnel carriers would be upgraded. That is some consolation but we did have those dangerous situations prior to that.

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• (1840)

Outdated equipment at the department of defence should come as no surprise since it has faced continual cutbacks under the Liberal government. As a matter of fact the 1996 Liberal budget predicts that expenditures at national defence will be cut by 20 per cent in 1998-99.

That leads us to this scenario. While the government is committing our troops to more and more missions, they are being sent off with poorer and poorer equipment. That is not a mission a Canadian soldier really wants to go on. This is why I say that the policies of the Liberal government are putting the lives of our peacekeepers at risk, sending them into areas of peacekeeping and providing humanitarian aid without being properly equipped or properly prepared.

We can see that in the most recent issue as we have been talking about sending our peacekeepers to Zaire. There was no real plan. As far as I know, there is still no plan but the government has been intent to send our troops over there.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs himself has stated that we need to have the views of members of Parliament. The views of members of Parliament are what this motion asks for, nothing more than that. It is not designed to impede our peacekeeping activities. It simply asks that members of Parliament be given a chance to have meaningful debate in the House to put the views of their constituents forward in this House before a cabinet decision is made to send our troops abroad.

I urge all members of the House to support this most worthwhile motion put forward by the hon. member for Red Deer.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to participate in the debate on Motion No. 31 put forward by the hon. member for Red Deer.

In late October in the first part of our debate on this motion we heard criticism of our record of consultation on Canadian participation in peacekeeping operations, especially in former Yugoslavia and Haiti. I would like to remind hon. members opposite that since January 1994 our participation in peacekeeping operations has been debated in this House eight times. They should have been here between 1988 and 1993 and compare that record to this one.

On most of these occasions, particular attention was drawn to our role in former Yugoslavia and Haiti. Furthermore, numerous other consultations took place in discussions with the standing committee on foreign affairs, of which the hon. member is a member, which also has a voting mechanism.

I cannot overemphasize that at every opportunity this government has endeavoured to facilitate the debate on Canada's peacekeeping commitments. The apparent objective of Motion No. 31 to

generate such debate has already been accomplished by this government.

This motion contains no innovative proposals to strengthen the Canadian policy making process with respect to peacekeeping. The only effect it would have would be to hamper Canada's ability to act by making the existing process more cumbersome, which could only compromise the respect and admiration the country has merited through its peacekeeping actions for more than 40 years.

In light of Canadians' ability to express their concerns regarding any peacekeeping operation, their willingness to do so and the frequency with which the House is debating this matter, the motion under consideration is really unnecessary. It can only sap Canada's ability to act swiftly in accordance with its international peacekeeping commitments.

We are the first to implore the international community to react swiftly in times of crisis, as stressed in the report on the United Nations' rapid response capacity which I am pleased to note resulted from a Canadian initiative.

The international community must react efficiently. Having pressured the international community for action on this issue, Canada has a responsibility to play a leading role and must not run up against redundant mechanisms. Even when confronted with humanitarian emergencies such as in eastern Zaire, we were prepared to consult the House, as is only right. Nevertheless the opposition leaders chose to trust us and not to recall members to the House unnecessarily.

• (1845)

Let us take a look at peacekeeping and peace building in the aftermath of the cold war. In the post-cold war era the whole context of peacekeeping has changed. Increasingly, instead of the classic cross-border conflict between states, we are dealing with internal conflicts which threaten to spill over into regional conflicts and to fall into unending cycles of violence. We have seen this pattern most clearly in the former Yugoslavia and in the great lakes region of Africa.

These changes have sparked debate in Canada and internationally about how best to respond to these needs, a debate that informs the quest for reform within the United Nations. In this context, and as I mentioned earlier, Canada tabled a study on ways to enhance the UN's rapid deployment capabilities. Work is under way within the United Nations to implement many of the recommendations made in this study. That is one aspect of the debate, making us better peacekeepers, able to react more efficaciously, with a more flexible, integrated response. This is the premise on which we have built our international reputation as some of the best peacekeepers in the world.

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The other aspect is recognizing the need for a broader approach, not just keeping the peace now, but building peace to last. This broader approach has been termed peace building. Peace building is rooted in the recognition that human rights and basic freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity are just as important to world peace as arms control and disarmament. In other words, if we want to restore and maintain peace in countries plagued by conflict, we must guarantee human security as well as military security.

While peacekeeping seeks to guarantee security on a military basis, the goal of peace building is to put in place a lasting infrastructure for human security. Once a peacekeeping operation is under way, peace building seizes on a brief opportunity, a crucial moment to help a country turn to the road of lasting peace and stability.

It works to bring about the minimum conditions that will enable a country to take control of its destiny after which social, political and economic development become possible. Peacekeeping and peace building clearly have to play closely linked roles, complementary roles, to put an end to the conflict.

In planning international missions to Haiti, Bosnia, and now Zaire, we are becoming increasingly aware that multi-disciplinary actions are needed that address more than one aspect of a problem. Armed forces cannot only enforce a ceasefire but can also establish a framework in which civilians, including NGOs, can act. Civilian operations include both a humanitarian assistance component and peace building activities.

It is absolutely essential to link and co-ordinate these two aspects: assistance and peacekeeping in the short term and peace building in the long run. This need has been recognized in the United Nations Security Council resolution on the forming of a multilateral force in response to the situation in Zaire. The resolution explicitly called for a second follow-up phase in the force's mandate. Planning for that phase began immediately which has never happened before.

This is an example of new approaches to conflict resolution. Other methods may be needed in other situations but what is important is to react in a flexible and innovative way. In accepting his Nobel prize, Lester B. Pearson stated: "The best defence of peace is not power but the removal of the cause of war, and international agreements which will put peace on a stronger foundation than the terror of destruction".

Implicit in this statement are several basic Canadian values. In line with the third pillar of our foreign policy we see peacekeeping as a means to project these values. First and foremost is the commitment to peace itself and to the non-violent resolution of disputes, values which resonate throughout our society.

• (1850)

Crucial to achieving peace is the pursuit of a process of dialogue and consultation, leading to mutual agreements. Our federal system could not work without a firm commitment to the consultative process. Broad international support fortifies such agreements by providing recognition and legitimacy.

Strengthening the foundations of peace, as I have just described, fosters the establishment of an international order based on rules to which Canadians are strongly attached. In short, peacekeeping goes hand in hand with our vision of Canada, our vision of a progressive country that is open to the world and committed internationally. In addition, it strengthens Canadians' fundamental belief in the effectiveness of civil society, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I would like to say a few words about Canadian expertise in peacekeeping. Nourished by these values and by four decades of on-the-ground experience, Canada has developed extensive expertise in peacekeeping. The notion of civil-military co-operation to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping is the cornerstone of the new peacekeeping partnership. This partnership was put into action by the Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre. It is also at the core of the DART, the Disaster Assistance Relief Team, a concept developed by DND to intervene efficiently in the case of a humanitarian disaster and to co-ordinate in theatre efforts with humanitarian agencies.

A national consensus for our peacekeeping policy and operations is also very important. Canadians have a remarkable degree of support for peacekeeping which is a great satisfaction to all of us. Polls indicate that 80 per cent of our fellow citizens take great pride in our country's peacekeeping role. Many of our fellow citizens see it as our most important contribution to the international community. Our national consensus on this issue transcends partisan differences and is supported by all segments of society. The Canadian media as well echo and strengthen that consensus.

I see, Mr. Speaker, you are giving me a signal that my time is up. I thank the hon. member for Red Deer for bringing forward this motion so that we can talk about peacekeeping and peace building. I hope in the future the hon. member would bring more constructive and creative ideas to the whole idea of conflict resolutions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to speak today on Motion M-13 put forward by the hon. member for Red Deer.

As official opposition critic on foreign affairs and vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, I am in fact entitled to draw attention to the appropriateness

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of this motion, which would make the process of sending our troops overseas much more open and democratic.

Let me start off, however, by reminding you that the Bloc Québécois has proposed a very important amendment, because we felt that Motion M-31, while very pertinent, was still flawed. Thus, with the amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois, the motion would read as follows, and I quote:

That, in the opinion of this House, all proposed peacekeeping or peace enforcement commitments involving Canadian troops must, as soon as possible, be the subject of a vote in the House in order to recommend their approval or rejection to the government.

This amendment would be totally acceptable to the present government, since it would have the advantage of adding to the transparency of the decision making process associated with sending our soldiers abroad, without tying the hands of the government when prompt action is required.

You will see that the Bloc Québécois is being very consistent with its previous positions, because we had already, in the dissenting opinion we tabled in November 1994 in conjunction with the report by the Special Joint Committee reviewing Canada's Foreign Policy, recommended that the House of Commons be more involved in decisions involving foreign affairs.

I will quote, if I may, an excerpt from page 4 of the Bloc Québécois dissenting opinion: "We consider that Canada should submit any decision to participate in peacekeeping missions to a vote in the House of Commons, as rapidly as possible, when time allows".

• (1855)

Now that the irritants in the motion tabled in this House by the Reform Party have been removed, we sincerely believe that it would be illogical for this government to vote against it, especially since the Minister of Foreign Affairs is constantly reiterating his desire to consult MPs and the general public to a larger extent.

I do not have to remind my hon. colleagues in this House that the principal role of a member of Parliament is to represent his or her fellow citizens. The government ought, therefore, to do everything it can to involve MPs in decisions as important as sending our soldiers overseas. The lives of Quebecers and Canadians are at stake, whom Canada takes the risk of sending into parts of the world where instability or danger, or both, are constantly present.

Of course, our military personnel possess all of the qualities required to carry out such missions successfully. Moreover, they have our total support and affection, given the excellent reputation they have built for themselves in their many peacekeeping assignments.

We believe, however, that not just the soldiers, but the people of Quebec and Canada are entitled, at the very least, to be informed of the dangerous situations our troops might have to contend with. What is surprising today is that the Liberal government might well vote against this Reform Party motion as amended by the Bloc Québécois, although the Liberals themselves promised in their famous red book that they would increase the involvement of Parliament and the public in debates on major foreign policy issues.

I shall, if I may, quote a particularly significant excerpt from the red book which would be a mere pamphlet if it only included the promises that were kept. It says, and I quote:

A Liberal government will also expand the rights of Parliament to debate major Canadian foreign policy initiatives, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces, and the rights of Canadians to regular and serious consultations on foreign policy issues.

The conclusion is that it makes no sense at all to debate this motion today, since it is clear that if the Liberal Party had kept this promise, the case would already be closed. Of course some of our Liberal colleagues are going to argue that the government would not be as functional or that it has to be able to act quickly.

During the debate in April 1995 on Bill C-295, whose purpose was to promote parliamentary control of peacekeeping operations, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence and Veterans Affairs implied that he would not go along with the idea of being subjected to a set of rules that would restrict the speed with which the government could react.

Motion M-31 as amended would allow the government to act quickly. Adding the phrase "as soon as possible" means that the government could act immediately in a crisis and would not have to wait for Parliament to reconvene before making a decision.

If, for instance, a crisis arose somewhere in the world, our troops could be dispatched immediately to the theatres of operations and subsequently, parliamentarians would be able to have a debate on this decision.

The Americans have already thought about this and came up with a solution in 1973 in the form of the War Power Resolution. The three main points may be summarized as follows: after sending troops abroad, the president has 48 hours to inform Congress in writing of what he intends to do; the use of force by troops must cease within 60 days, unless Congress authorizes an extension. However, the president may request a further 30 days to ensure a safe withdrawal of the troops. Congress could demand the withdrawal of the troops within 60 to 90 days by passing a resolution to that effect, a resolution that would be passed simultaneously by both chambers.

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It is clear that we are nowhere near this kind of control. Motion M-31 as amended by the Bloc Québécois merely proposes to have an open debate on sending our troops abroad.

This motion would give members a chance to make their suggestions and opinions known in this House. The last time troops were sent abroad, it was clear that the members of this House had not been consulted but merely informed.

It is too bad government does not pay more attention to the advice of parliamentarians, despite its claims of openness and transparency.

• (1900)

Take for instance the case of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. The minister does not seem to realize that the members of this committee examine a certain number of issues thoroughly. We hear witnesses from all walks of life with often exceptional knowledge of often very complex subjects.

The minister keeps saying that the work done by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade is very important. He says that he intends to keep committee members informed of the government's decisions, and to take into consideration the positions formulated by this committee.

Is there not something ironic about the fact that these eloquent, gratuitous and inconsequential statements come from the same government which waited until the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade were held up abroad as members of a parliamentary delegation to sneak through the House the bill to implement the Canada-Israel free trade agreement, despite the reservations expressed by members of this committee during clause by clause consideration of the bill and after hearing witnesses?

When the government decided to lead what was supposed to be a multinational force that would go and help refugees in the African great lakes region, it did not even bother to consult or even inform members of the committee or at least the chairman of its decision.

The government has already promised that members sitting in this House will have a say in the deployment of peacekeepers. That is exactly the purpose of motion M-31.

I see you are signalling that my time is up, but you allowed the member of the Liberal Party a few seconds more, so I shall, if I may, use the time I have left to say that this is exactly the purpose of Motion M-31 as amended by the Bloc Québécois. It does not deny the government the authority to act quickly when the situation so requires and it would have a major impact in that it would open a window on that rather closed decision making centre which is the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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[English]

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved:

That this House take note of the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the importance of this declaration in the promotion of human rights both domestically and throughout the world.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lead off an extremely unusual debate in the House of Commons. It is the kind of discussion that we need to have more frequently not only in Parliament but among ourselves as Canadians.

[Translation]

This debate is on human rights in the world and at home. Two years from today, the world will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the first time in the history of man, a declaration was adopted in which all peoples of the world agreed that, and I quote:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Mount Royal and chair of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for having requested this debate and the former hon. member and Secretary of State for External Affairs, Walter McLean, for his hard work.

[English]

For all of us who have known her in the House of Commons, it is no surprise that it is the hon. member for Mount Royal who is the prime advocate for this discussion, where we examine our conscience as parliamentarians and our hearts as human beings. It is no surprise because the phrases "advocacy of human rights" and "Sheila Finestone" go hand in hand.

[Translation]

I would also like to recognize the contribution of the United Nations Association in Canada, which encourages Canadians to focus on education, public awareness, the participation of young people and community involvement in human rights on this historic occasion.

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The United Nations was created so that the world had a place to come together. Right now, in the search for a new secretary general, countries are thinking more about their veto than reflecting on the fact that the United Nations is the only world vehicle we have for advancing true world harmony.

- (1905)

Yes it is possible for countries to stymie one another at the United Nations but to do so for reasons of national vanity is very wrong. At the UN we come together, we put aside our individual interests so we may act in harmony and collective honour.

As President John Kennedy said in his state of the union address to the United States Congress in 1962: "Our instrument and our hope is the United Nations, and I see little merit in the impatience of those who would abandon this imperfect world instrument because they dislike our imperfect world". John F. Kennedy's statements are as true today as they were when he spoke them in 1962.

Yes the United Nations needs to be reformed. But member countries also need to reform their attitude toward the United Nations and they should start doing something about paying their back dues.

[Translation]

The people of Canada consider Boutros Boutros-Ghali highly talented, extraordinarily committed, most dignified and a great friend of Canada. We hope whoever succeeds him will have the wisdom to continue his sensible and considered actions.

Two years from today, celebrations will be held around the world to mark the anniversary of this declaration. Three years from the end of the month, we will be celebrating the advent of the new millennium.

[English]

It is my profound hope that as we prepare for these occasions, Canadians take to heart the awesome meaning of these words: "Now, therefore, the General Assembly proclaims this universal declaration as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations to the end that every individual and every organ of society—shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms".

What the world agreed to 48 years ago was not just a statement from governments. It was a statement for each and everyone of us in our daily lives, in our communities and in our own homes.

The declaration committed us to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It committed all of us to equal pay for equal work, a radical concept those many years ago. It committed us to respect

for privacy, to peaceful assembly, to opposition of inhuman punishment, to protection against discrimination, to freedom of movement, to just and favourable conditions of work, to food, to clothing, to housing and medical care and to basic education for everyone in the world.

Have we achieved these goals completely here in Canada? No we have not. Have we achieved these goals completely in our personal lives? I know the answer for me is no and I suspect the same is true for most other Canadians.

We have all from time to time advanced our own interests at the unfair expense of someone else. We have harboured views of people based simply on their language, or their religion, or their social or economic status, or their race, or their sexual orientation, or where they lived in the country.

[Translation]

We tend to promote our own rights. Too often we make disparaging remarks about others rather than try to find a way to work together to do things well.

The upcoming celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the declaration will give us an opportunity to underscore the fact that Canada and its people have always been at the forefront of those defending human rights. Canada and its people, especially, know, however, that they can always do better.

The United Nations declaration was drafted by a Canadian professor, John Humphrey, who died last year. Professor Humphrey, who was from Quebec, carried the torch for Canada's campaign in favour of human rights worldwide. His words, in their wisdom, convinced the world. At the time we acknowledged that: "Yes, we make mistakes, and yes, we can do better and we believe we must do better".

This desire to do better and more underlies Canada's commitment to peacekeeping. It also underlies our commitment with respect to multilateralism and our faith in the United Nations.

- (1910)

Despite the many infractions against human rights, it is important to remember that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has helped to change things for the better.

Democracy has spread in Latin America, the Berlin wall has come down, apartheid is no more, the threat of nuclear war has faded. These were all just dreams not so very long ago.

[English]

Yet at the time this declaration was drafted, most scoffed at the dream of an end to totalitarianism or the opening of the iron curtain. These were the visions of a freer world that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights dared us to dream.

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And as hope has come to so many in the life of this declaration, our world continues to rest on other dilemmas and reflect on other problems: the problems in northern Israel, the stalemate in the Middle East, the millions of frightened refugees in Rwanda and Zaire, the manifest in ethnic hatred in Bosnia, the terrorism in Paris, Tokyo, New York and London. We need to be inspired by human rights, to renew our hope and translate it into action. In the life of this declaration time and again people have endured great suffering and have achieved great progress.

As we approach the millennium it is sobering to realize that at the beginning of the current millennium there was no Magna Carta, there was no democracy. People were either masters or slaves. Communities were built up or thrown away on the basis of race or ethnic heritage. Human beings were treated as gods or garbage depending upon where they were born, what they believed in or what they held sacred.

It is even more sobering to realize that as we approach the dawn of a new millennium, race, religious and ethnic divisions are still tearing people apart across the globe. For all of our political advances as human beings, for all of our economic and social accomplishments, for all of the marvels of industrialization, people are still bombing one another because of how somebody looks, how they sound or what they think.

[Translation]

This is the dark side of human nature. This is why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is so important. It makes it possible to bring out the positive side of human nature.

We are grateful for the chance to be able to debate widely diverging points of view in the House, and we do so day in and out. We also know that, as citizens, we have the power to bring about change by marking an X on a piece of paper.

But the credit is not due solely to us in the House. Many generations of Canadians have preceded us.

We are the envy of the whole world because, for decades, Canadians have acted responsibly and fairly towards each other and, in particular, towards the rest of the world.

[English]

The United Nations was born out of a war where a star or a triangle sewn on a lapel meant death. The United Nations was born out of a war in which millions of teenagers became dismembered to save the world from a madman who would not respect basic human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights consists only of a short preamble and 30 articles. It is the length of a political pamphlet but it is the critical affirmation of decency which flows from the work of the world coming together to stop another world war.

[Translation]

That this document was written by a Canadian, and that Canadians like Mr. Pearson took the initiative to have this declaration adopted, are surely reasons to be proud. We should also take much credit for the enforcement of the principles set out in this declaration.

Certain steps in achieving respect for human rights will take much longer than others, or will lead to controversy. Certain steps will require that people set aside old grievances and old settlements of account.

And Canada's contribution to all these steps will force us to remember the mutual respect we owe one another as citizens of this country.

• (1915)

It will also encourage us to continue in our role of leader in financial, human and political issues abroad.

[English]

It is far too easy to point to instances in which all of us as a country, and each of us as individuals, have failed to live up to that dream of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is far too easy to give up trying to solve very complex and difficult problems. But no great human challenge, no great human dream was every easy, and no human glory was ever achieved without determination and hard work.

In two years it will be the 50th anniversary of the declaration which speaks to justice, freedom and peace. Three years from now we will be entering a new millennium. Where do we go from here? How do we get there? No one knows for sure, but one thing is certain. If we follow the principles laid out 48 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we can be certain that tomorrow will be a better time than what we inherited.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, with your leave, I would like to ask for the House's consent to split my time with my colleague, the member for Mercier, giving us both 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Madam Speaker, as the official opposition's human rights critic, it is obviously a very great pleasure for me to take part in this debate to mark the fact that 1998 will be the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to note, as the Deputy Prime Minister has done, that this declaration was written by a Canadian, John Humphrey, a citizen of Quebec, and by Eleanor Roosevelt.

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Although respect for fundamental rights is now guaranteed the people of Quebec and of Canada through their respective charters, this is not the case in certain countries, where governments are still trampling citizens' individual freedoms and fundamental rights.

We, as parliamentarians, have an opportunity today to restore the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to its rightful place in the forefront of national and international debate. The 50th anniversary must mark the renewal of the declaration and not just the commemoration of a date.

My colleagues will have a chance to go into more depth on the historic evolution, present situation and probable future of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its enforcement throughout the world. But I will begin, if I may, by recalling briefly the birth of this declaration, certainly one of the major historic events in humanity's evolution.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This marked the turning of an important page in the history of mankind.

Indeed, the horrors of the second world war greatly contributed to raising world awareness and truly expanding the concept of human rights. As early as June 1945, the United Nations Charter and the statutes of the International Court of Justice were ratified in San Francisco. The following year, the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women were created.

Finally, after adopting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the UN passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which we are celebrating today.

• (1920)

Since then, there has been continuous progress in terms of respect for basic individual rights almost everywhere in the world. I say "almost" because, unfortunately, in certain areas of the globe, there is still a great deal of progress to be made.

Right from the start, in order to better ensure respect for basic human rights, and to promote their implementation, the UN decided to set international standards, protect human rights and provide technical support where needed. In order to attain these objectives, however, the United Nations Organization had to draw up clear rules relating to human rights, hence the necessity of adopting this Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This universal declaration may be the keystone of United Nations declarations on human rights, but it is not the only one. In fact, the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, and the 1992 Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced

Disappearance strengthened the United Nations' moral interventions.

It is, moreover, important to keep in mind that all of these declarations are not legally binding, and that the UN, lacking a real United Nations military force, performs more of an international ombudsman role.

Fortunately, on the other hand, the international conventions and covenants have force of law in the states ratifying them. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both drafted in 1966, are highly binding on signatories.

International conventions, on the other hand, focus on more specific attacks against human dignity such as the 1969 convention on racial discrimination, the 1981 convention on discrimination against women, the 1987 convention on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and finally the 1990 UN convention on the rights of the child.

All these measures have achieved concrete results such as stays of execution, the release and medical care of prisoners, and sometimes even a complete overhaul of legal systems emphasizing the importance of human rights.

For instance, Bulgaria, Malawi and Mongolia recently received assistance in drafting a new constitution and new legislation, both conforming to the conventions on human rights.

Even more recently, in 1993, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution creating the position of High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose duties consist in preventing and managing crises, sometimes by providing technical assistance to states in transition and co-ordinating interventions aimed at promoting fundamental rights.

As we can see, we have come a long way over the years in our respect for human rights, and we should proudly emphasize events like the one that brought us here today. The future celebrations around the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be more than just that. This great event should not be just another occasion for organizing huge banquets, cocktail parties, receptions and shows for the benefit of venerable dignitaries the world over.

We are all familiar with the propensity of our leaders to slap each other on the back as a sign of satisfaction and to congratulate each other while singing the praises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It will be available in pocket format, as a poster either laminated or beautifully framed in acrylic, and it will be seen at its best. People will shout that they love it, they venerate it, and they will very pompously wish it a very happy 50th birthday.

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• (1925)

But for thousands of victims of torture and summary imprisonment by unscrupulous governments, this anniversary will not be a joyous occasion. In fact, for all these people, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains nothing more than a hope based on the action of countries, which, like Canada, protect fundamental rights and might have some influence on the leaders of those countries that still refuse to do so.

Often, this declaration is universal in name only. There was nothing universal about it when the Government of China decided to crush the student movement for freedom in Tiananmen Square barely a few years ago.

There is nothing universal about it for the victims of oppression in East Timor or for the children exploited in India or for the political prisoners in Indonesia or for the demonstrators in Belgrade and other major Serbian cities.

Canada has an important role to play in this area. We must develop a policy of international trade that includes respect for human rights. We can no longer simply close our eyes to these atrocities in the name of profit. We must make it known to the entire international community that Canada will make no human rights compromises out of a need to trade with these countries. Is it not both deplorable and embarrassing when the Prime Minister of Canada signs lucrative trade agreements with countries heavily criticized by Amnesty International without any mention whatsoever of human rights?

I might point out that barely a few years ago, when the whole world knew that the communist regime in Romania was systematically ignoring the fundamental rights of its citizens, Canada welcomed its dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, with open arms and great pomp. Madam Speaker, I will conclude, if I may have one minute. I would not like this situation repeated.

In conclusion, we must continue to promote basic freedoms wherever necessary. We will stop the day the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is truly what it is supposed to be: universal. The whole world will have achieved its goal: peaceful co-existence of peoples and respect for human dignity. Are we dreaming?

[*English*]

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you could enlighten us about whether there is a question period following the interventions, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Does the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead have unanimous consent to share a limited 20 minutes of his usually unlimited time with his colleague from Mercier? There are no questions on this 20

minutes. After the next member's speech we will enter into questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with a feeling of honour, pride and great responsibility that I rise to speak on this extremely important issue. Of course, we are celebrating the 48th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I need hardly remind anyone that the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights came about because of the atrocities committed during World War II, and that, coupled with the social movement that had existed prior to that time, these terrible wars forced, and indeed helped nations to adopt unanimously in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

• (1930)

Having armed itself with the means, the UN was able to begin protecting human rights, and it continues to offer assistance and experience to states that want to advance the cause of human rights and freedoms.

In addition to being a specific instrument of the UN, this Universal Declaration of Human Rights was also a rallying point for all people, all groups in different countries suffering injustices of all sorts, to help them continue their struggle and call for justice, sometimes when they did not have a voice.

Through its efforts, the UN obtained concrete results, as my colleague pointed out. Releases, stays of execution, improvement in prisoners' living conditions, and input into the domestic legislation of certain countries are examples of what the international community can achieve by bringing pressure to bear. We can only rejoice. It is a step in the right direction.

However, I would like to say that the situation is not so rosy that we can afford to sit on our laurels. As we know, not only are human rights violations still taking place openly and publicly throughout the world, but we must sadly point out that, depending on the location, and sometimes the nature, of the conflict, the international community does not always react in the same manner.

It must be acknowledged, in fact, that the international community did not react to the invasion of Kuwait in the same way it reacted more recently to the situations in Burundi, Zaire, Bosnia, Tibet and Indonesia. One may wonder what made such a difference that, in one case, an extraordinary military force could be drawn up, while in others not even a minimal force could be assembled, and millions of innocent victims were left to not only live through the war, but to suffer—as civilians, which is what they generally are nowadays—the horrific aftermath of war.

We are living in a world where we are assailed daily with images so horrific that they ought to convince us to do everything in our power to defend human rights. Yet, as we know, we continue to

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view those images and to carry on living our calm and tranquil lives, while sometimes taking a voyeuristic interest in the suffering that is going on elsewhere. One might say that the duty to intervene varies in intensity, depending on the place involved.

The great powers are not interested, either, in insisting with equal vigour, regardless of the location, that human rights be respected. It cannot be denied that economic and financial interests play an extremely important role.

Recently and most tragically, western Europe was unable, or claimed it was unable, to help resolve the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

One might say that, if the will of the international community is truly there, it is high time it gave itself a reliable means of ensuring the protection of civilians during conflicts, as well as a permanent means of intervening, no longer just to maintain peace, but to restore it.

• (1935)

We know that many countries are discussing this question. We know that Canada, pushed by the official opposition, has made concrete proposals and has struggled to advance the idea, which is supported by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, of having a permanent force in a position to step in when it deems necessary.

More consistency is needed in the actions of the international community, and efforts must be made to do away with this justice which is really not justice, this double standard, which considers some dreadful situations more dreadful than others, and which mobilizes the international community over some cases and not others.

I can only vigorously underscore that, in the effort to find support for all those who suffer and specific ways Canada and other countries so wishing may help these people and groups in countries where human rights are not respected, there must be no trade relations independently of international involvement in the respect of human rights.

In this regard, Team Canada provided a very poor example and confirmed the Prime Minister's oft repeated statement that trade relations for Canada would now be dictated by "business as usual", and this is what characterizes relations with countries known worldwide not to respect human rights. Team Canada brought no honour to Canada in this regard.

The official opposition will continue to urge the government to bear in mind that it cannot continue to have close, warm and lucrative trade relations with countries that do not respect human rights, while continuing to boast about being responsible and being

a leader in the respect of human rights. I feel obliged to state this fact here, this evening, and my colleagues will confirm it in the coming minutes.

On the eve of the 50th anniversary, we must see the horror of the international situation in order to decide to take the next step in organizing solid support for the respect of human rights.

Mr. Kilger: Madam Speaker, I simply want to point out to you and to this House that the members of the government will now share their time. Therefore, instead of 20-minute speeches, we will have 10-minute speeches followed by 5 minutes of questions and comments.

[English]

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Red Deer.

I am pleased tonight to be able to speak to the commemoration of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both to reflect on its helpfulness in providing guidelines for national institutions and specific human rights issues as well as to call on the Canadian government to account for the steady erosion of these principles in public policy today.

Forty-eight years ago the world, having endured two world wars, one which threatened the global with the spectre of fascism, called on its leaders to commit to a fundamental standard of responsibility toward both their own citizens and to people around the world.

• (1940)

Forty-eight years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born to form the basis of many national human rights acts. In 1976 it was coupled with the international covenant of economic, social and cultural rights, the international covenant on civil and political rights and the optional protocol to the latter covenant, to become the international bill of human rights.

The declaration has much to commend it. It has been used to protect many vulnerable Canadians. It has been used not only to direct public policy but also to remind individual Canadians in their own private relationships about their responsibility to respect others. It has been used to frame policy which has made Canada a safe haven for those who have fled from oppression and almost certain death in their own country.

Unfortunately, as each day passes it becomes more and more evident that Canada has lost its commitment to the essence of the human rights debate, the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and unalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. With the loss of the vision it has also lost its commitment to our fundamental institutions.

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In my brief time tonight I want to reflect on three issues, the lack of protection for existing basic human rights, the evolution of the broader interpretation of rights, with their infringement on existing rights and basic institutions, and the denial of the full equality of Canadians.

First I want to talk about the erosion of our protections. There have been many UN conferences in the past few years on a wide range of issues, from population to habitat, from women to the environment. It has become clear that special interests dictate the agenda, not those representing the main concerns of many countries.

The UN process is not democratic, in violation of the universal declaration's affirmation of the importance of democracy. Certainly in Canada there is no accountability to Parliament to ensure that delegates accurately reflect the views of our country.

My own experience at the Beijing conference on women showed me how developed countries, including and especially Canada, trampled the human rights of delegates from other countries as well as those of Canadians. When they are advancing narrow special interests, the commitment made to the most basic of human rights like the freedom of opinion, conscience and religion found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights do not matter.

I read into the record last week a statement from the official Canadian facilitating committee report. It specifically advised Canadians to criticize the opinions of Muslims, Catholics, pro-life groups and REAL Women. This kind of intolerance, which is condemned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, appears to have become standard policy among Canadian delegations to UN conferences over the past few years.

Even more disturbing is the way countries like Canada use the UN to lever legislative change in Canada as well as in the domestic policies of developing countries, contrary to the democratic process. An example of the influence of the UN policy is in the guise of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which seeks to broaden children's rights at the expense of family and parental autonomy.

The most significant institution recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as in the broader international bill of human rights is the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society. Yet astonishingly this is one of the sections which is most ignored by the federal government today.

The international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights in article 10 states that the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establish-

ment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependant children.

The international covenant on civil and political rights, in article 23, says that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state.

The framers of these documents recognized that the family was the key social institution for effectively realizing all other rights that are mentioned.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is being used to eliminate parental freedom and responsibility in child discipline through its demand that Canada repeal section 43 of the Criminal Code. Despite the strong majority view in Canada that the discipline of children should be the prerogative of parents, the UN has demanded that Canada repeal the protection for parents who choose to use responsible corporal punishment.

• (1945)

The fact that such a demand comes not through democratic process but by way of an international body does not seem to matter. The fact that it attacks the autonomy of parents and, therefore, the UN's human rights commitment to the family seems to be irrelevant. The fact that such a decision has ramifications for the freedoms of religion, opinion and conscience which are protected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not appear to matter.

Canada's leading anti-corporal punishment group, the Repeal 43 Committee said that: "Freedom of religious belief does not include the freedom to engage in practices that threaten health and safety," yet there is no evidence to defend its link between responsible corporal punishment and health and safety.

Reform supports the original understanding of human rights as they apply to children, that is protection rights which obligate us to make the health and well-being of children a priority by combating abuse and seeking their best interests in situations such as family break-up.

But in the same Beijing document I cited earlier we can read the following: "Human rights activists applauded a Canadian breakthrough that recognizes children's evolving rights to make their own decisions even though the issue pits a child's right to learn about issues against the right of parents to prevent access to subjects in which they do not believe".

The new notion that legitimate protection rights should be expanded to include what could be termed choice rights for children denies the autonomy and importance of parenting and the family. Despite the problems associated with giving children the freedom to make choices they are not ready to make, and despite the opposition of most Canadian parents toward this idea, Canada has been advancing this ideology domestically and on the international stage.

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Finally, another violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the system of special rights that has contaminated almost every sphere of public policy in this nation.

The Reform Party has told Canadians clearly in our fresh start election platform that we support the repeal of section 15(2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which provides for the establishment of discriminatory treatment of Canadians based on sex, race, ethnic origin, family status and other irrelevant characteristics. Untold destructive policies have been introduced in Canada and justified by this mentality: employment equity, official bilingualism, official multiculturalism, the ongoing paternalism toward our native population and divisive immigration policies.

It is astounding that in 48 years, almost half a century, the Canadian government has lost its commitment to true equality and the dignity of every human being.

In conclusion, those who constructed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had noble intentions. They worked hard and produced a commendable document. Unfortunately, while bureaucrats and governments have been busy redefining and massaging the message to their own ends, here in Canada and elsewhere real human rights abuses still exist.

There are many around the world who face death each day as they take a stand for the most basic of human rights. The spirit and letter of the universal declaration supports their cause and calls on the world to respond. There is much to be done at home and abroad to honour our 1948 commitment. Let us never lose sight of its original intent.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in listening to the debate, the member forgot to even remember a recent happening in the world when the world thanked Canada as a people for asserting our collective conscience once more.

Our Prime Minister, through his leadership moved the United Nations to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Zaire. We should continue to remember that, for the essence of human rights is about the integrity of any one person which if violated destroys the essence of our humanity and the soul of any nation. When the Prime Minister took that action, we should not lose sight of that very caring and creative leadership. It is fitting to be able to comment on this on such a special day of debate devoted to human rights.

• (1950)

An ancient Chinese proverb said: "A journey of 1,000 miles must begin with a single step". The first step in the journey to make human rights the acid test of any civilization was taken when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. Nearly 50 years ago, on December 10, the conscience of mankind said never again: never again to the disregard and contempt for human rights which resulted in the Buchenwalds of that time; never again to all the death camps and the dictators who marched people into slavery; never again to all those barbarous acts which provoked and killed an entire wartime generation.

When the Prime Minister took that step, the member from the Reform Party should have taken pride in that step. The men and women of that time took the first step in Paris knowing full well that the journey ahead of them was long and full of danger. In taking that first step, the assembly of citizens of the world, men and women, turned a corner in the course of world history. Henceforth there shall be a world in which human beings will have freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Today, in 1996, when we look back to the idealism of those early defenders of human rights we see that the record is very mixed indeed. I would like to call hon. member's attention to the international tribunals which have been frustrated in their attempts to prosecute those same dictators who, at a different time, had marched Bosnians, Haitians, Somalians and Rwandans into times of barbarisms unmatched in human history.

We must remember the leadership taken by the Prime Minister. On this day we look at all the violence of unrestrained ethnic and racial conflict across the planet. We look at the unconscionable social and economic inequities which in our time are growing. However, let me say that the fundamental rights of humanity are not just civil and political rights but critical to these rights are our civilian societies in the mature western democracies.

I agree with the member that human rights have as much to do with the right to medical care as it does to the right to vote. Human rights have as much to do with having a roof over one's head as it does with privacy. Human rights have as much to do with children in poverty as it does with the brave and courageous individuals around the world who fight for freedom in countries where intimidation, fear and oppression are daily realities.

In commenting on this debate, we must look at the question of human rights in this perspective.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to take the second half of my fellow member's time and to again remember December 10, 1948, the conference on human rights and the statement made at that time.

Human rights is something that hopefully every single one of us as Canadians feel strongly about and are concerned about. I am sure we could talk about it in many different ways. What I intend to do tonight is concentrate primarily on the international aspects.

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Each and every day my office receives a great many letters from across the country appealing to the government to do more about human rights. I suggest that many Canadians who have written those letters feel that the current government has done a poor job in many areas of human rights.

• (1955)

In much of the current debate a false dichotomy has developed. On one hand, many human rights activists argue that Canada should completely cut off countries with abusive governments. They argue that we should not trade with them, that we should publicly condemn them and that we should isolate them. On the other hand, the government has taken the approach of cosyng up to at least 99 per cent of the dictators, of being their best buddy and of saving its outrage and contempt for the other 1 per cent to make it look like it actually cares. Neither of these approaches achieves the goal that most Canadians want.

From speaking to Canadians I believe they want government policy to accomplish several things. First they want Canada to help people who live under abusive regimes in the most constructive way possible. In order to help people, Canada must have a presence in the affected country. Canada has a lot of experience in building legal and democratic institutions in the developing world. This is an important feature of Canada's current foreign aid program.

That is why Reform supports this process which includes things such as monitoring elections to make sure they are free and fair; providing legal expertise to reform the court systems; and providing training for police so they will serve and protect rather than intimidate and bully their populations. It is our hope that through this type of policy we can help the people in the developing world to establish democratic and legal institutions that ordinary people trust.

Reform also supports working with non-governmental organizations and the private sector to build civil societies in developing countries. With this policy Canada will be able to help people in the developing world to help themselves to a better future. As social and business groups emerge as legitimate political forces in developing countries, they will be able to assert themselves and work against corrupt and abusive governments.

Reform also sees international trade as a source of hope for people in developing countries. Certainly there is an intense debate surrounding this point but I believe supporting human rights through various programs and reforms will mean little if the people we are trying to help continue to live in absolute poverty and destitution.

International trade creates jobs and incomes for millions and millions of people who would otherwise have nothing. This is not to say that wages are always at an acceptable level. It is not to say that the workplace conditions are what we would expect here in Canada. But if we ask the question, would the people living in abusive countries be better off or worse off if Canada and other

developed countries refused to trade with them, I believe the answer is clear.

In the political debate in Canada, Reform has consistently argued that the best kind of welfare program is a job. If this is true in Canada where we have a whole social safety net which includes free health care, employment insurance, old age security, welfare and a host of other programs for our citizens, then it is doubly true in countries where no such programs exist.

For all of the reasons I have mentioned: providing jobs, assisting in democratic institutions and building and reforming corrupt legal systems, Canada should not choose the path of isolation. Even though cutting countries off would be a strong symbolic statement, I do not think it is the best way to help those people who desperately need our assistance.

• (2000)

Nonetheless, neither should the Canadian Prime Minister be best buddies with foreign leaders who reject democracy and frequently run corrupt and abusive regimes. This sends out all the wrong messages. I believe this is where the current government and our Prime Minister have failed.

It must be clear to Canadians that our government is not condoning the kind of massive repression and abuse that frequently takes place around the world. Unfortunately it is not clear. In fact many Canadians have written me to complain bitterly about the behaviour of the Prime Minister. They believe he has callously ignored human rights abuses in his foreign travels and this has left them outraged.

This reminds me of a highly ironic point. Just over a month ago the Prime Minister attacked me and the leader of the Reform Party for having met with the U.S. speaker of the house of representatives, Newt Gingrich. He was shocked and outraged. It seems the Prime Minister believes that Reform should not meet with the democratically elected leaders of our closest ally, the U.S., but it is a demonstration of true Liberal Party leadership when the Prime Minister befriends dictators all the time.

In fact I would not even be surprised if we find the Prime Minister golfing with Saddam Hussein over the Christmas break. How many people commented about the Prime Minister dancing with the Prime Minister of China and some of his past history? Or how about embracing Mr. Castro and some of the abuses there? I have been in some of the jails in Cuba and have looked at them and have seen the human rights abuses in that country.

My point is that while Reform does not advocate isolation, we do reject the government's shameless pandering to foreign dictators. We reject it and so does the Canadian public. It is for this reason that at the last Reform Party assembly in Vancouver our membership voted overwhelmingly, over 90 per cent, to oppose federal government foreign aid to governments which suppress basic human rights. That is the commitment our party has made and we will follow through on it when we form the next government.

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Reform will end the Liberal government's practice of giving handouts to abusive regimes.

In the future Canada must provide an example to the world. We should use our foreign aid program to constructively promote democratic and legal reforms. We should encourage expanded trade to generate jobs in developing countries, but we should make it perfectly clear that the systematic abuse of human rights is unacceptable. We should voice our concerns and cut off aid to those who reject freedom and ignore human rights.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question but before doing so I thank him for an interesting address.

Has he considered the relationship between human rights under the universal declaration and under national constitutional law.

He will know of course that in the actual drafting of the UN document Canadians played a very large role, but still it is a different document from the charters we have been used to in the common law world. It is designed for legislators. Ours is designed, the American bill is designed and western bills are generally designed for judges and judge made law. Still our own charter of rights and freedoms borrowed from the universal declaration in its drafting.

Has he considered the correlation between the universal declaration and its enforcement and a national charter such as ours and its enforcement? Is it the obligation, in his view, of national legislators to bring national law in line with the universal declaration?

Mr. Mills (Red Deer): Madam Speaker, I cannot give a legal answer to that question.

My honoured colleague obviously is an expert in international law and constitutional law. I respect him for that.

I would say that when it comes to human rights it comes more to the point of common sense, not the sorts of things where we could get hung up in a court of law, in international courts, where we could debate it for years on end.

• (2005)

It reminds me of the couple of monks in a monastery back in the 17th century who debated for 100 years whether or not angels have wings. The debate went on for 100 years and at the end of the time, they came to a conclusion. Their conclusion was that some angels

do and some angels do not. That is what happens when we get too hung up in the legal ramifications.

I would say in answer to the hon. member's question that the role of Canada is to show leadership. Through our Constitution, which I believe does give equality to all within the law, that is what we should try to achieve on an international basis. The closer we come to achieving that, the better this world is going to be for the human beings living in it.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be able to participate in this very special debate to raise awareness of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

My portfolio as Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women deals specifically with human rights, the rights of women and minority groups to have an equal place in the economic, social and political life of this country.

The difficulties facing many Canadians, women and men, are rooted in inequality, in gender and in ethnic socialization and outmoded customs, attitudes and practices.

[*Translation*]

The activities related to the two components of my mandate, the status of women and multiculturalism, are closely linked and are also complementary. The purpose of both components is to ensure that all Canadians avail themselves of their right to equality and realize that human rights are sacred.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada is deeply committed to the realization of women's rights as human rights. Human rights relate to every aspect of people's lives, be they male or female. Human rights speak to the ability of people to live, to work, to play, to worship, to be safe from societal harm and to contribute fully to the social, economic and political life of their nation.

Respecting human rights means promoting choices, opportunities, equality and fairness. Women cannot assert themselves effectively nor can their human rights be respected when their economic base and their social status are not as secure as those of men or when the integrity of the person is still subjected to rape and to violence.

Our blueprint for action to the year 2000 is the 1995 federal plan for gender equality, a comprehensive plan of federal government initiatives to advance women's equality. As well, Canadians, whether they be disabled, aboriginal or gay and lesbian, who face the barriers to social and economic equality because of racism and

discrimination miss out on opportunities to contribute to society, a society in which we all have a share in building or destroying. The choice is ours. When we do not respect others because of their differences or respect their rights to make basic choices, we create a society that is bound for destruction.

To work for the full implementation of human rights is to strive for a democratic ideal. This in itself should be incentive enough for Canadians to promote the full realization of human rights. But if it is not, there is a second and more pragmatic argument to persuade Canadians to demand the full observance of human rights in our country. We must improve the lives of women, aboriginal peoples and Canadians of all ethnocultural origins and as we do so, the social and economic life of the nation will benefit as a whole. As we respect each other's equal rights, we create a social structure based on respect, on accommodation and therefore on finding peaceful resolutions to conflict.

These are not the worst of times, but neither are they the very best of times. We still live in a society here in Canada where there are those in this country and in this Parliament who would deny jobs to persons because of their race or their sexual orientation, who say that in order to foster equity we must treat everyone the same. On a very practical level Canada cannot afford to have or to deny even a few of its citizens an opportunity to contribute as fully as possible to the economic, political, cultural and social life of the nation.

- (2010)

We only have to look at nations of the world where there is ethnic cleansing, intolerance and denial of equal opportunity to see that people will not for long stand to be oppressed. They will rise in anger and with violence to assert their right to the basic human freedoms to achieve their individual potential.

Canada must ensure that human rights are given more than just lip service here in our territory because the world looks to us for leadership on the international stage, to show by example, to assist in encouraging and building democratic processes. By isolating those who do not conform to our ideals, we lose the very important opportunity to teach and to inform.

As a signatory to a number of instruments that have been developed to protect and promote human rights, Canada has an obligation to assist when and where we are able in carrying out an international mandate, but also to ensure that we practice here at home what we preach.

Behind all of our human rights activities at home and abroad is the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. In the aftermath of the horrors of the second world war, Canada worked for change to create a world where fascism and totalitarianism could not survive, a world where peace could

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become a reality, a world where individuals were free to live productive and fulfilling lives according to their own ability.

We have been working hard in the field of human rights, both domestically and internationally, and there is firm evidence of our progress. In Canada we have the charter of rights and freedoms which guarantees all Canadians equal protection and equal benefit of the law. Women's equality rights were enshrined in the charter in 1985. We have a Canadian Human Rights Commission where all can seek justice and ensure equality.

We have the court challenges program which allows access to disadvantaged groups and individuals so that they can put forward selected cases of national significance on language and equality rights. We have the world's first multiculturalism act and we are working to build a multifaceted strategy to address violence against women and children. Treasury Board recently agreed that a number of federal government spousal benefits should apply to same sex couples.

In October I was very pleased to honour our government's red book commitment to launch the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. This foundation will facilitate the development, sharing and application of knowledge and expertise to contribute to the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination in Canada.

We are world leaders in advancing women's rights globally, particularly with respect to violence against women and children. At the 1995 United Nations world conference on women in Beijing, women's human rights formed the cornerstone of Canada's position. In Stockholm, Canada pledged to do all in its power to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

Through the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, Canada has long supported international women's rights organizations and developed gender sensitive programs to assist women in achieving their economic potential in developing countries. We have also supported organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Women and Women in Law and Development in Africa. We are the first country to create gender discrimination as a criteria for refugee status.

We are moving forward, but the job is not yet done. If we can envision our ideal, then we can believe in its reality, a reality that seeks to foster equality by treating people differently and by using different strategies to do so. With a strong enough belief and hard work to back it up, we can realistically hope to achieve our ideal which is to keep that belief strong and our incentives fresh.

We need occasions to remind us of the worth of what we do. Such an occasion is the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I urge everyone in this House to use this day and this time to recognize the importance of serving each other and

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permitting each other to live with equal opportunity in this very great country.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we are approaching the 50th year of the magna carta of human kind. When the United Nations General Assembly adopted this magna carta, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on December 10, 1948, United Nation member states committed themselves to recognize the inherent dignity of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

• (2015)

I want to thank the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, for agreeing to launch on this day this important debate. I would encourage all people to think about these matters over the coming year and plan some activity to celebrate next year's 50th anniversary.

I also wish to express appreciation to the Hon. Walter McLean, a colleague of this House for many years, a secretary of state himself, who has been very instrumental in raising all these issues and talking about the importance of planning ahead.

[*Translation*]

This declaration was a powerful idea that inspired us. It recognized that we all have rights as human beings.

[*English*]

That is not because we inhabit a particular country, are the product of a particular class, of a particular group or the product of a particular ethnic background; it is because we exist as human beings.

This declaration was drafted by a really fine Canadian. I am glad that my colleague in the Bloc noted this in his remarks. I know that the family of John Humphrey and John Humphrey himself would have been very proud of this day. Unfortunately, he passed away last year. He lived in the Mount Royal riding and he and Eleanor Roosevelt were the key drafters of this declaration of human rights. Although most of his fellow citizens might not even recognize this great Canadian's name, his achievement has an ongoing impact on the functioning of our governments and, as a result, on the way that each and every one of us conducts our lives.

The universal declaration revolutionized international law by enshrining the principle that the international community has an abiding and important interest in the fundamental rights of all human beings. It established the framework for the international recognition of the rights of human kind.

In the 50 years that followed the United Nations put into place covenants, principles and monitoring activities which all demon-

strate a fundamental international agreement to recognize different aspects of the indivisible, inalienable and fundamental rights of individuals.

[*Translation*]

During the ensuing 50 years, and I feel I must repeat this, the United Nations adopted conventions, principles and control mechanisms which all reflect this strong desire on the part of the international community to recognize all aspects of the indivisible, inalienable and fundamental rights of the individual.

[*English*]

The principles, the goals and the fine phrases have been put on paper and agreed to. Now what?

To no one's surprise, when we look at how the international human rights system actually functions, we confront a paradox. Many of the ringing statements of principle in the universal declaration and various covenants are honoured more in the breach than in observance.

The United Nations human rights system is a patchwork. The monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are imperfect. Too often the politicians, the bureaucrats and diplomats natter on and on about what is wrong and how to improve things, but it is often too little and too late. It is a very slow process.

I heard the secretary of state a few moments ago allude to the fact that in Beijing we had to reaffirm the fact that women's rights are human rights, inalienable, et cetera. It was quite a critique on the state of the world, although let us not despair.

What about the people? We have all read about the Holocaust, which is now called the Shoa. We know about racism, fascism and intolerance. What have we learned? Have we learned very much?

All we have to do is turn on our television to see the horrors of Cambodia, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and mass killings in Rwanda. It is no wonder that when we did our television study children find that the most terrifying thing on TV is the daily news. The world is still struggling with ethnic, cultural and religious differences. How to accept and live as equals peacefully and respectfully is still the challenge to meet.

• (2020)

Other people at risk, with disadvantages to overcome are the disabled. They are still among the poorest and rank at the bottom or the end of the queue to receive services and remain the most marginalized and vulnerable group in this world.

Then we must complete the circle, for there is hope, a light shining to mark the way.

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[*Translation*]

In fact, we are still guided in our actions by hope, because without the Universal Declaration and the other UN conventions, we would have no landmarks, so to speak.

The peoples and nations of the world and their governments would be disoriented, without purpose, without standards, without ways to measure their progress or to know what they did right or what they did wrong.

[*English*]

So this brings us to that ultimate recognition. I would say that domestically we have moved ahead, that the UN's involvement in human rights has become part of the evolving process, a kind of perpetual motion machine. In the half century since the adoption of the universal declaration internationally accepted values have shifted and goals as well as programs have moved forward, in large part pushed by the very existence of these United Nations declarations of human rights principles.

Domestically, Canada confronts the same paradox. The principles of fundamental human rights for Canadians are well entrenched here. We have cause to be proud of section 15 of our charter of rights and freedoms. We have cause for pride in other aspects of our charter; the recognition of human rights in the basic constitutional fabric of this country.

The Canadian Human Rights Act assures protection against discrimination in areas within federal jurisdiction. The language of human rights and of inclusiveness is spoken everywhere throughout Canada, in all our provinces and no more or no less, might I say, than in my own province of Quebec, which passed the first human rights act in Canada in 1977.

Like the United Nations, Canada has ways of monitoring compliance with human rights standards. The supreme court, of course, is one and the most important, but there is as well the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The standing committee that I have the privilege to chair is another. We may be different singers but we sing the same tune.

Progress has been made, no doubt about it. But why does this paradox, the difference between principle and practice, continue to confront us so starkly even here in our own country? I would say that the perpetual motion machine I spoke about earlier comes into the picture in Canada too, just like at the international level.

The acknowledgement of human rights in Canadian laws and institutions has fostered an environment where awareness of rights has promoted awareness of practices. The awareness of practice has promoted awareness of flaws, and awareness of flaws has promoted demands for change. And while changes have been made, more needs need to be address. The goal remains the same

but the distance between the players and the goal posts has widened and so we have to become even more vigilant.

In the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons we have become very aware that we need to keep the gap from widening even more. As we develop and apply new technologies we must keep in mind that all of us, knowingly or unwittingly, attach social values and responsibilities to technological developments.

Take the debate over new technologies right now and their implications for privacy, which is a human right. We have been looking at new physical and biological surveillance techniques and personal identification practices, including new ways of testing an individual's genetic make-up. We have become aware of the tension between progress and rights and why it is so crucial to protect privacy in the face of new technology.

● (2025)

Supreme Court Justice LaForest said in a 1990 decision: "The limits of our personal privacy define in large part the measure and the limits of our freedom. Not to be compelled to share our confidences with others is the very hallmark of a free society. That is where we hope human rights is headed".

We know there is no ultimate answer in finding the balance between an individual's right to privacy and society's broader requirements. Defining human rights is a constant process of evolution, just as our Canadian federation is constantly evolving, particularly when balancing rights against social policy.

In order to build equality into the fabric of our society we have to take a positive approach that goes beyond using the courts to deal with abuses. Recognition of fundamental human rights is essential for individuals to develop a sense of belonging, a sense of equality and a sense of the rights and obligations of citizenship.

A true economic and social democracy, like the one I believe Canada must keep striving for, has to build equality and justice into every aspect of every human relationship. We must never lose sight of that goal. We must intensify and strengthen our message. That is the reason we must emphasize the importance of marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1998; plan now, act later.

As the drafters of the charter did almost 50 years ago, we must use the concepts of human rights to point the way to ongoing respect for each other as human beings. We can move toward our vision of equality but we can do this only together for the full enjoyment of our lives.

[*Translation*]

We can do it together to more fully experience justice, peace and freedom.

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Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

I appreciate this opportunity today to draw your attention to World Human Rights Day. The world has undergone profound changes since the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 48th anniversary we celebrate on this 10th of December.

During those past 50 years, considerable progress has been made. In recent years, humanity put an end to a number of dictatorships, including the hated apartheid regime in South Africa, which gave new hope to the entire African continent.

In 1989, we saw the Berlin wall, that symbol of the cold war, collapse, and we also saw major changes taking place in the countries of eastern Europe. The rivalry between the two great blocks has ended.

The issue of human rights was officially mentioned at the beginning of this century in the Pact of the League of Nations which, among other things, led to the creation of the ILO and the United Nations Organization. The UN preparatory commission, which met in 1945 immediately after the closing session of the San Francisco conference, recommended creating a commission to promote human rights as defined in section 68 of the Charter.

Finally, the draft declaration was submitted, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly meeting in Paris. The declaration was adopted on December 10, 1948. In two years we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of this declaration, which constitutes "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms".

The declaration provides that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" and "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people".

• (2030)

The horrors of World War II played a large part in making the whole world aware of the direct link between the respect of human rights and peace. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the cornerstone of the UN human rights conventions. It was followed by the Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986, the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disap-

pearance in 1992, and several others. These declarations and conventions are not legally binding, except on ratifying states. However, many countries have incorporated certain provisions into their legislation.

The principle of the declaration which states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" has served as a model for the laws and institutions that today protect Canada, Quebec and many other countries.

Human rights, peace and development are the three pillars of the UN.

Since it was first formed, the UN has adopted over 50 instruments concerning human rights: the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to freedom of expression, religion and association, the right to protection from discrimination, the right to adequate food and housing, and the right to an adequate standard of living.

We are told that international promotion of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign policy. However, the present government is closing its eyes to repeated violations of human rights in certain countries, especially when it is a question of developing trade ties with those countries. This is true in the case of China and Indonesia.

The cold war is now a thing of the past. It has been replaced, however, by other types of threats to peace and security: interethnic hatreds; breakdown of social and government infrastructures; an increase in the frequency and intensity of internal armed conflicts, with all the massive migrations that result. Twenty-five million refugees have been forced through persecution to move or leave their country of origin. As you know, the situation today in Zaire and neighbouring countries is tragic.

Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all the other covenants and protocols on human rights, there have been genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda and Burundi. In the 1960s and 1970s, several cruel dictatorships sprang up in Latin America. Flagrant violations of human rights in Chili—assassinations, tortures and disappearances—forced me and my family to leave my country of origin and come to Quebec. Even today, according to Amnesty International, a number of Latin American countries continue to violate certain fundamental rights.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Guatemala and the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala on the peace accords and definitive ceasefire that were signed not long ago. Peace has been restored after 35 years of fighting between the armed forces and the guerrillas. I hope that Canada will play an active role in supervising these accords and help to promote and defend human rights, including those of the Indian peoples in this country for whom I have great respect.

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We have a duty to condemn human rights violations throughout the world. But this is not enough. We must establish a permanent international criminal court. This decision is urgently needed, considering the intolerable situations experienced by various peoples, and I am thinking of Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and other countries where war criminals remain unpunished.

• (2035)

I want to congratulate the Ligue des droits et libertés du Québec on starting a campaign to establish this kind of permanent tribunal, and I would ask the government to give its vigorous support to this initiative. I have always been active in promoting human rights, especially in the "Ligue" where I was a member of the board for a number of years.

The international community must acquire the necessary tools to implement existing standards effectively and wisely throughout the world. It must also have the tools to punish the perpetrators of crimes against humanity. It is necessary to reinforce international control, investigation and monitoring mechanisms, especially in cases of forced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture. We must narrow the gap between the solemn principles set forth in the Charter and the suffering endured by peoples throughout the world.

Furthermore, we cannot dissociate the protection of human rights from the process of democratization. Poverty is a major obstacle to the genuine implementation of the principles underlying democracy. It is on behalf of this ideal that third world countries have started a long and difficult struggle to obtain recognition of the right to development and to find a solution to their debt problems.

In concluding, I would urge the Canadian government to make this issue an absolute priority and to intensify and reinforce the promotion and defence of rights and freedoms here and throughout the world.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for his speech, which is as well informed and well researched as usual.

He pointed out the lack of an international criminal court with a general jurisdiction. We have only *ad hoc* courts, special courts such as the tribunal on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia.

But does he consider that creation of a criminal court with overall jurisdiction would be enough to guarantee application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Is it not possible to also consider creating a United Nations court mandated to implement human rights?

The European charter has its own special court, the European court of human rights. The great German and French charters both have their special, constitutional courts. In Germany and France, when a constitutional matter is involved, there is the special jurisdiction of the council of state and even the appeal court, the court of cassation. May I ask these questions of my colleague?

Mr. Nunez: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his high praise. I acknowledge that he is a great jurist, and he is asking me a question that has no easy answer.

I believe that, like the Civil Liberties Union in Quebec, the International Federation of Human Rights in Paris has always called for the creation of a permanent international criminal tribunal. I believe this is necessary, particularly to judge those who have committed crimes against humanity.

It is true that there is a human rights tribunal in Europe, but it has no jurisdiction over war criminals who have committed crimes against humanity.

I support his suggestion, if that is what he is suggesting, that the UN create its own tribunal, particularly when infractions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are involved. The UN is a formidable body, an extraordinary organization, but it does not have the capacity to apply its fine principles.

What we need is a body that is capable of monitoring and controlling application of the charter, and of judging those responsible for offences under that declaration and other international conventions on human rights.

• (2040)

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I too am pleased to rise on this important day, on which the international community celebrates the 48th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It was no doubt at the time an important event. It was the end of the second world war and of all the atrocities it engendered. At the time, the 48 members of the League of Nations felt there should be a charter that would serve, as my colleague from Mount Royal said, as a sort of measure to assess progress or the lack of it.

However, certain questions arise. Was it a real desire to mark a new stage in the respect of human rights or was it rather vague declarations that might be described in popular language as wishful thinking? The answer no doubt lies somewhere in between the two. There was wishful thinking, because not a whole lot of progress has been made.

I refer, as proof, to the latest report of Amnesty International, which appeared in June of this year and which mentioned, and I will take the liberty of reading a few paragraphs: "Torture,

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arbitrary detention, rape, mass executions, disappearances and human rights violations occurred in 146 countries in 1995". The report obviously criticizes the inaction of the international community.

We learned that there were human rights violations in 146 countries. The report goes on to say that 4,500 prisoners were tortured to death, 140,000 people disappeared and 2,900 people were executed. We might well ask then whether any progress has been made and whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights achieved the importance it might have.

We could talk about the complicity of the international community, because, in the end, countries are always trying to defend certain interests. There are outrageous paradoxes that we will never understand. How is it, for example, that the five permanent members of the Security Council alone manufacture 80 per cent of the world's armaments? And yet there they are on the Security Council. Do the words still have any meaning?

My colleague, the member for Bourassa, referred earlier to the sad history of genocides. He gave some examples. One is, of course, the elimination of six million Jews. Another is the cruel treatment of Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge. Another is the endless war in the Sudan, now in its tenth year, that is no longer even mentioned in the press, where the government is systematically fighting people in the south, who practice a different religion. There is the former Yugoslavia, of course, where Muslims have undoubtedly been persecuted by Croats and Serbs in equal measure. There is Rwanda, where close to a million people have died in ethnic wars.

• (2045)

The worst thing in the case of Rwanda is that the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development led a mission there in 1992.

They described what they said were all the conditions needed for genocide to happen. The report was submitted to the Secretary General of the United Nations, nothing was done, and the inevitable happened. The genocide took place, and now we find ourselves in an extremely difficult situation in this region.

One of the major problems is the whole question of impunity. Rwanda, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia are examples. Crimes against humanity are committed and the international community is unable to bring the guilty parties to trial and sentence them.

Remember what happened in Haiti after the military coup. General Cédras was finally persuaded to leave. He was showered with money to help him make up his mind. It was tragic to hear President Aristide, on his return, talking as though reconciliation were possible, when the rule of impunity was in place. In my view, reconciliation—and this is undoubtedly true in Rwanda as well—is not possible unless a minimum of justice has been done.

My colleague, the member for Bourassa, spoke of the need for tribunals. That is elementary. Ad hoc tribunals with minimal powers are established and, eventually, as it just happened in the former Yugoslavia, they try some individuals very low in the hierarchy, but the real culprits always manage to elude pursuit.

What can ordinary citizens do? There are a number of things that can be done. I referred earlier to Amnesty International. Any man or woman in this country may choose to work with Amnesty International to help free prisoners of conscience.

This morning, at the foreign affairs committee, we heard from a NGO known as PEN Canada. There is also a PEN Québec and PEN International. This organization is dedicated to having journalists and authors released from prison. It handles the cases of 900 individuals jailed for their ideas. This is another NGO the public can support financially or through volunteer work.

Here, we have the international centre for human rights, which is government subsidized. This is one of the good things this government has done in terms of human rights. The centre is already operating in a dozen countries, helping non-governmental organizations involved in human rights and other organizations in the civil society get established to ensure that they gradually develop the capacity to face arbitrary or military powers in these countries.

What is missing is any real political will. It is true in many countries, and in Canada as well, unfortunately. In its last foreign policy statement, Canada put trade relations before human rights. Such an action certainly does not do much in terms of promoting human rights around the world.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with pride and humility that I take part in the debate on this motion.

I am proud to be a citizen of a country known throughout the world for its enviable record on human rights.

• (2050)

I am proud also that Canada has given its solid support, during the last 48 years, to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am proud, moreover, to belong to this government, which continues, to this day, to make our country a leader in the promotion of peace and security throughout the world.

The promotion of human rights is an objective that is unanimously supported by Canadians, regardless of their political beliefs.

[English]

Despite our best efforts, however, people all around the world still suffer violations of their basic human rights. Discrimination and abuse still exist. There are human rights abuses in all societies, ours included. Continued efforts are needed to achieve progress.

We, both citizens and leaders, are collectively responsible for dealing with the problems at home and abroad.

My colleagues have spoken very eloquently on this subject tonight. I think of the speech by the hon. member for Mount Royal. As minister responsible for our international development programs, I would like to acquaint the House with the activities of the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, for which I am responsible, to promote human rights, democracy and good governance activities which have begun to bear rich fruit.

[*Translation*]

CIDA's mandate was clearly stated in the government's foreign policy document entitled "Canada in the World", tabled in the House in February 1995. And, regardless of what may have been said a little earlier, one of the six priorities for our official development assistance program is, and I quote: "Human rights, democracy, good governance: to increase respect for human rights, including children's rights; to promote democracy and better governance; and to strengthen both civil society and the security of the individual".

According to the official CIDA policy statement: "Human rights are derived from the inherent dignity of the human person, and they are of basic importance for the well-being of individuals and the existence of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

[*English*]

Translated into CIDA programming, taking a human rights approach to development does not simply mean lecturing recipient countries about democracy and human rights. It means making difficult choices among the competing demand for aid and setting priorities for how we use our limited resources. As minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency, I know what it is to be pressured by various individuals for various good initiatives, most of them quite worthwhile but not all of which can be supported.

CIDA has done its job with a good deal of success. We have been able to put in place projects and programs that are helping to enhance the will and capacity of developing countries to respect the rights of children, women and men and to govern in an effective and democratic manner.

During the two year period 1993-94 and 1994-95, CIDA spent some \$46.5 million on 384 projects around the world directly related to human rights and democratization. These are the most recent detailed figures available. The rate of approval of such projects is accelerating and they cover a wide variety of initiatives. Let me enumerate a few.

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Thirty-seven per cent of the money that was contributed was done in efforts that strengthened the democratic process, including elections and building democratic awareness. A further 25 per cent supported initiatives to build a rule of law, including strengthening the judiciary, training for police and prison officials and greater access to the law. I had the opportunity to open a tribunal recently in Haiti along with my colleague from Louis—Hébert across the way.

Finally, 20 per cent of the funds provided are for projects to strengthen civil society, including building human rights awareness of disadvantaged groups and the advocacy role of civil society organizations.

[*Translation*]

CIDA's mechanisms are flexible and they adjust to existing needs. In fact, statistics do not reflect the nature of the work done. Let me give you some concrete examples.

As I said earlier, when I spoke about Haiti, CIDA's contribution in that country allowed RCMP officers, members of Montreal's urban community police force, and members of other Canadian police forces to teach Haitian police officers how to conduct investigations in a democratic society.

In Guatemala, our support to the office of the ombudsman for human rights helped the ombudsman uncover and confront those responsible for human rights violations in that country.

[*English*]

Legal assistance, counselling and training were provided for Somali women who were victims of sexual violence in the refugee camps at the Kenya-Somali border. Funds were also used to improve the security of these same camps.

These projects focused on women because, unfortunately, women remain, to a large degree, the chief victims of human rights abuses.

In East Africa, judges and magistrates from several countries have received training to increase their awareness of issues relating to human rights, democracy and good governance. In Malawi the Canada fund paid \$50,000 to help the United Nations organize a constitutional conference and prepare a bill of rights and employ a human rights adviser for their police force.

[*Translation*]

And the list goes on. As I said before, there are some 384 projects on the go. Together, they provide a lot of information on democracy and human rights. This kind of information is accessible to every Canadian, through schools, the media, and the elections that have taken place at the municipal, provincial and federal levels for over a century.

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While we are getting together today to highlight the significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must also recognize that human rights and good government go hand in hand with lasting social and economic development.

To conclude, I will refer to the policy statement of the Canadian International Development Agency, for which I am responsible. It says that respect for human rights, democratization, and good government are essential to the security of children, men and women alike, and the development of society.

These three issues are an integral part of CIDA's mandate, and I would venture, the goal of every Canadian involved with promoting sustainable development to reduce poverty and make the world a safer, fairer and more prosperous place.

[English]

This is CIDA's goal, this is the government's goal and I would suggest it is the goal of human beings everywhere who long for a healthy, secure global society.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has the privilege of heading an incredibly effective agency, CIDA. I have been witness to much of its work. I congratulate him on its undertaking.

I would suggest to my hon. colleague that there is a lot of questions from some Canadians who are not as well informed about the importance of interlinking countries, both developing and underdeveloped countries, with democracies like Canada.

They ask when we are in difficulty here, why are we spending money elsewhere. What do we plan to accomplish by helping women through micro credit or the World Bank, or building bridges or teaching farming and agriculture, marketing and good production, civics and civism and democracy? What does that have to do with us when we are poor, hungry and when we need to be looked after? Dollars here first. Charity begins at home.

I wonder if the hon. minister would care to comment.

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, this is an excellent question, one that should be raised at every opportunity to give all Canadians the opportunity reflect on this important issue.

• (2100)

First, if one were to look at humanitarian aid and programs of development only on selfish grounds, which would not be the focal criteria in any case, one would have to come up with the following equation nonetheless. Almost 70 per cent of all the aid that we provide comes right back to Canada in the form of purchases of goods and services and so on from Canadians. I am not saying that it would be the sole criteria to use. As a matter of fact I said it was

not. One should at least bear that in mind when one is making the equation. I thank my colleague for bringing that up.

Second, it is important for us to know the reputation that this country has right around the world. Whether it is in Haiti where my colleague for Louis-Hébert and I were the other day, or when I had the opportunity to be in China, our reputation as a nation is far greater than our absolute numbers. I was told in China by more than one political leader that what they know the most about Canada is Dr. Bethune and the Canadian International Development Agency. It is absolutely amazing that a country of 1.2 billion people would know of a development agency of Canada, a country of 30 million, as something that they would all have in mind.

It is linked very much to their way of doing things. When they undertake purchases, when they find goods, services and so on, Canada is there. It is no coincidence that we are the most trade dependent nation in the western world. It is largely due I suspect to the fact that we have internationally the great reputation that we enjoy.

Finally, we are in government and as such we have a collective responsibility. I know some will disagree with that proposition and perhaps I will get one or two letters tomorrow for saying this, but I feel that it is our responsibility to help out fellow human beings. Those of us who know or study or even remember the two wars of this century and how sad they were, will know that when there is a war, it involves a lot more. Not only does it involve the nations that are at war directly but it can involve virtually everyone.

The war in Rwanda, that tiny African nation the size of Vancouver Island, has consumed billions of dollars over recent years. That in itself should tell us that having peace, again if that were the only criteria, is much cheaper than not having peace. Our role in contributing to peace, good governance and the respect of human rights even if we were to use economic criteria alone makes sense. There is the human criteria to invoke and that is the most important one of all. I thank my colleague for raising this issue.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this place of free and open debate to speak in support of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998.

I intend to speak today about the reasons why we must commemorate this important occasion. As Canadians we must lead the world in celebrating and reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for four basic reasons, and I will give the House the four reasons.

First, Canada was instrumental in the declaration's existence. Second, our Canadian society has been profoundly shaped by the declaration's articles. Third, we must applaud the victories that we

have made in human rights internationally. Fourth, we must acknowledge that our work is not complete.

Canada and Canadians have been a force in establishing this important document. After the second world war our country shared the belief with our allies that we needed international institutions like the UN to prevent future wars from happening. It was the determination of Canadians like Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson that pushed for an institution which respected the sovereignty of states but also valued the rule of international law.

• (2105)

After the allies liberated the concentration camps at the end of the war, people around the world were shocked and dismayed by the inhumanity of the holocaust and the tyranny of the axis powers. This prompted Canada to join with other nations to establish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It was a Canadian who authored the original draft. The member for Mount Royal spoke about Dr. John Humphrey, a New Brunswick born Quebec lawyer, former dean of law at McGill University in Montreal, one of Canada's finest jurists, a key figure in setting out the scope and content of this great human rights convention. We have a great deal to be proud of and we should celebrate the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration because of this.

Canada has had an important place and has played an important role in developing this international convention. However, Canadian society has also reaped the fruits of this great document. Our society, the envy of the world, has nurtured the seeds of the virtues of respect, tolerance, freedom and democracy.

This declaration has been a guiding force for these virtues right here at home, for example, the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947, the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977, the Canadian Employment Equity Act of 1986, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and last and most important, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms adopted in 1982.

All of these important roots of Canadian human rights law were inspired by the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must celebrate our Canadian accomplishments as part of our international ones. That is why we must mark this important day.

As we approach the 50th anniversary, let us applaud our successes over the last few years. We have witnessed the transformation of South Africa from apartheid to a multiracial democracy. I witnessed this firsthand. I was fortunate to be chosen as the Canadian representative to observe South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994.

We have also witnessed the progress to democracy in many parts of Latin America. My past riding president and provincial Liberal

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candidate Bruce Davis also went as a Canadian representative to monitor elections in Nicaragua a few years ago.

We have seen progress in Haiti, Russia and parts of eastern Europe. The spread of freedom, justice and democracy throughout the world is owed to this great document. This document has also been a rallying point for many international conferences on global issues.

Last year I was fortunate to attend the international conference on women in Beijing, China. It was there that the nations of the world met to affirm the principle of equality in article 2(1) of the universal declaration. It states:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

To put it simply, women's equality rights are human rights and countries of the world must reflect that. The declaration has been instrumental in our successes around the world but there is still work to be done. With regimes like Nigeria's, where oppression and corruption prevail, with gross violations of human rights in countries like Burma, Indonesia and Iraq, with conflicts fed not by ideology but by perverse commerce in places like Liberia, Afghanistan and Somalia, we must celebrate the UDHR and demand that these nations respect and honour the universal declaration.

• (2110)

With atrocities in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, we realize that our work as a peace loving nation is not done. With the growth of hate messages on the Internet, we realize that our work as a tolerant, respectful, multicultural society is not done. With terrorist groups from Ireland to the United States to Israel spreading violence and fear in order to achieve political power, we realize that our work to preserve freedom and democracy and to respect the opinions of our opponents is not done.

We must celebrate and promote human rights by aiding the work of the international criminal tribunals, promote the strengthening of international labour standards, help establish an international criminal court and fight for the international initiatives for the welfare of children.

Until we do that, our work to establish free, democratic and civil societies around the world will not be done. We can begin this work by reaffirming our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by celebrating its 50th anniversary.

In closing, I can sum up my address by turning to the words of my esteemed colleague and friend from Winnipeg South Centre, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He remarked in a speech earlier this year: "If we turn away from the desolation and dismay of human suffering, if we fail to stop hatred from flowing through the channels of our new electronic networks, if we do not care about the present or future of vulnerable children, if we do not counter the capricious and arbitrary actions of authoritarian governments with

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no legitimacy beyond weaponry and terror, then we will face harsh consequences down the road. In the larger landscape of human society, what began as hateful rhetoric may turn into open terrorism, regional warfare or genocide”.

If we are serious about human rights around the world and here at home, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with all the glory it deserves. Every member of the House will join with me in affirming all 30 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights today and especially in 1998.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to speak today on this extremely important issue of international human rights.

In the post-cold war era we all came to believe that there would be a newer and brighter future for everybody. We thought that the cold past and the cold times of two terrible wars were over and we would see a time when the future would look brighter, when human rights would be respected and we would all live in a safer and more peaceful time.

Unfortunately, the post-cold war era has demonstrated that anything but that has occurred. We have seen an explosion of regional conflicts, primarily internecine conflicts, affecting nation states. Many of these states were boiling over and when the cold war ended, the shackles which prevented these conflicts from blowing up were removed. We saw a time of violence, destruction, raping and pillaging in nations which were relatively peaceful.

We need not look any further than the situation in the former Yugoslavia to see a graphic and tragic example of what has happened in our midst. Potentially those situations could have been prevented. I will say more about that a little later on.

Prior to the cold war ending, the nations of the world got together and developed a number of declarations on human rights, beginning with the Hague and going on to the Geneva convention. They sound very good and mean well. If we were to adhere to those conventions we would not see much of the terrible suffering that people, primarily innocent civilians, have endured over the last several decades. Unfortunately, with these declarations have come an absence of enforcement.

• (2115)

Enforcement is essential if we are going to have a rules based human rights network that is going to work. Without the enforcement, some countries will not adhere to these basic human rights.

It is unfortunate that what we have seen over the last 20 years is a change in who the victims are. The victims are no longer the combatants who have UZI submachine guns, who have AK-47s. Ninety per cent of the victims we see in today's internecine conflicts are innocent civilians who have no part whatsoever in the trials and tribulations they have been subjected to. That is why when we are developing a rules based human rights network and an enforcement policy for the future, we have to remember that we are trying to protect those individuals who are most vulnerable in our society and are the least able to take care of themselves.

One can see that many of the situations in so many of the terrible civil wars that have taken place have occurred under the guise and under the leadership of individuals who are draconian rulers. In no way, shape or form do they represent the best interests of the majority of their people.

Zaire and the former Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milosevic, Radovan Karadzic, General Mladic, Sese Seko Mobutu and others have demonstrated that they do not represent the wishes of the majority of their people. They are prepared to subject their people to terrible atrocities for their own gains and the gains of their own political elite.

That is why when we develop rules for the future, we now have to start being a little firmer in what we are putting forth and recognize that the leaderships we are integrating with and so-called negotiating with may not represent the best wishes of their people.

First we have to develop a warning system, one that will identify the precursors to conflict. After that, we have to develop a rules based response system to the precursors to conflict. I say the precursors to conflict because foreign policy throughout the world has focused not on conflict prevention but on conflict management.

We talk about peacekeeping and peacemaking as part of conflict prevention. It is not. Conflict prevention means preventing the conflict. When peacekeepers and peacemakers have to be put into a situation, the conflict has already occurred and it is too late. The seeds of ethnic discontent and hatred have already been laid and therefore the seeds for future conflicts are laid. This is not necessary. It is possible to prevent these and future conflicts if we change our mindset on foreign policy from conflict management to conflict prevention. How do we do that?

The first thing again is to identify the precursors to conflict, of which there are many, and precede the conflict by many years. Examples are inappropriate arming, the subjugation of democratic and basic rights of a group of people, terror campaigns against a group of people, the withdrawal of the economic abilities of certain groups of people to function, the breakdown of judicial structures and the rule of law falls apart. These are all examples of the precursors to conflict that take place before a conflagration occurs. Let us set up monitors so we can identify that.

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The second is we need a response and the response has to be multinational. The problems that are affecting these nations will not be solved if only one country is going to respond to them. The international community has to respond to them and that is why we need a multinational response system.

These responses can involve a carrot and stick approach. If they are going to engage in these behaviours, we can prevent them from doing that or suggest that they do not by offering a carrot. The carrots could be such things as approved loans and preferred trade status. By doing this we could convince the nation states that it is not in their best interests to engage in a conflagration, but it is certainly in their best economic and social interests to engage in peace building between disparate groups.

• (2120)

There is the stick approach. We could remove or withdraw loans. We could recall loans which were made by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other nations. We could cordon off areas. We could withdraw funding. We could discourage nations from engaging in activities with surrounding nations. We could impose sports bans. We could freeze the assets of the draconian rulers.

It is exceedingly important to hit those individuals who transgress international rights and to hit them in their own pockets. Too often what happens is that these groups or individuals who are engaging in draconian measures are doing so with complete impunity. We have to hit them, because hitting the country at large sometimes does not work.

Some of the sticks that I proposed may not be appropriate in certain circumstances, but sometimes they will be. We have to be careful and balance it out to ensure that those who are least advantaged in a society will not be hurt.

Another activity which has been used before but not often enough is to engage in positive propaganda. Oftentimes when the breakdown of structures occurs before a war, we find that one group is engaging in negative propaganda against another. That was done very effectively in the former Yugoslavia. We also saw it in Somalia.

The international community, especially the United Nations, could transmit positive propaganda and peace building messages to the groups. They must also engage in efforts to bring the disparate groups together in an effort to try to build bridges of understanding.

What often happens in a conflict is that one group demonizes the other. It breaks the communication between groups, which enables one group to develop negative myths about the other. It also instils fear within the borders of the other group. This must be broken

down. The only way to break this down is to foster levels of communication between the groups. The best way to do that is to do it on the ground with civilians. Civilians can be easily manipulated by the powers that be.

Fostering a sense of democracy and the support of judicial structures is also extremely important, as my Liberal colleague mentioned in her speech. It is exceedingly important to do that. Without a strong judicial structure, without the influence of democratic principles and the support of democratic structures within a country, there is the breakdown of infrastructure which lends itself to conflict.

This is an area in which Canada can take a leadership role. To do this will require the revamping of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations. As the United Nations is looking for a new secretary general, Canada can influence that secretary general with respect to the role which he or she might take.

Right now we have a window of opportunity. The problems that are going to face nations will require a multinational response. To do that will require a revamping of those three structures. It will also require a level of co-operation among the members of the international community which we have not seen, but just because we have not seen it does not mean it is not possible. If we do not do it, all nations will pay a very heavy price.

No country in the world is looking very clearly at the problems which will affect us in the 21st century. There will be environmental problems, population explosions, conflicts and many other problems. All of those problems are not being looked at in a multinational fashion. We get together to study them a lot, but studies do not necessarily produce action. Oftentimes one study will lead to another rather than leading to a course of action.

We have an unusual situation in our country. We are one of the few countries in the world which has an international reputation and ability to engage in the revamping of those international structures which is so greatly needed.

• (2125)

Power in the future is going to come from three areas: traditional military power; traditional economic power; and a non-traditional form of power which will go to those countries which can act as a mediator to organize international consensus. This is where I believe Canada can take leadership. We, along with a handful of other countries such as Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand to name a few can band together as a group and collectively utilize our diplomatic corps, our foreign affairs consultants and experts to bring forth this consensus within the international fora.

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Again, we are doing it not only for ourselves but for the international community. There are some powerful and perhaps self-centred ways in which we can justify this involvement. I will not argue the humanitarian grounds because they are self-evident as we speak. However, I am going to argue in a very self-centred fashion.

If conflicts are allowed to occur, we then see a migration of population to our shores. We see greater demands on our official development assistance. We see greater demands on our defence department assistance. We see greater demands on our domestic expenditures on social programs. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you would agree that people like to live in their own countries and in their own cultures if they have a choice. Why not facilitate that and enable these people to live in peaceful surroundings? By getting involved in doing this, we are doing it primarily for international peace and security but also for some very conclusive domestic reasons.

There are many things that we should do in terms of trade, aid and human rights. We have to convince the private sector, and I think we have abrogated our responsibilities in large part on this, that it is in its best interests to ensure that there is going to be peace and a civil society in the areas where it wishes to engage in trade. Engaging in trade and speaking out for human rights are not mutually exclusive; in fact they go hand in hand.

I propose that our government ask that our private sector demand of its companies when they go abroad that they adhere to the same basic rules and regulations of labour that are engaged in in our country, that they engage in the same basic rules and regulations of human rights that are engaged in in our own country, that we support companies that are going to help to promote democratic structures and human rights in those countries abroad. These things would be useful and again would make Canada look very good.

We had a great opportunity recently with the Canada-Israeli free trade agreement to do just that. We had an opportunity, and I think we missed it in a big way, of ensuring that the Canada-Israeli free trade agreement was going to be equitable for the Israeli people as well as the Palestinian people. Economic emancipation for the Palestinian people and economic interactions between the Israeli and Palestinian people are going to promote peace. That is the way in which it is going to be done. It is not going to happen on diplomatic initiatives only. It is not going to happen by standing back with an armed or walled mentality. It is going to happen when Israeli and Palestinian, Jew and Arab get together and engage with each other, understand each other's hopes, fears and aspirations and understand that very clearly their hopes, fears and aspirations are very similar.

I hope the government will continue to pursue this, and ensure that the agreement is going to be mutually beneficial to both peoples. I hope it speaks out on the transgressions that are occurring there as well as in many other parts of the world.

We can take a much stronger role. The Prime Minister and the ministers of trade and foreign affairs are going to go to southeast Asia again. East Timor has an egregious record of human rights abuses. It is important for us to engage in trade opportunities with the area, and also engage in speaking out against human rights abuses there.

• (2130)

In closing, I would summarize by saying that the government has a great opportunity to work with members of the House to ensure that Canada takes a leadership role in support of human rights of people around the world whose rights have been transgressed, people who cannot speak for themselves for various reasons.

Our role in the 21st century is to be that third party which brings nations of the world together to work co-operatively to address the problems that affect us all. That is the only way we will collectively survive in a better and more peaceful world.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to participate in the debate this evening on the 48th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today, December 10, we are all observing international human rights day. On this day it is important to remember why this declaration was born. The declaration came about because of the devastation and horrible slaughter resulting from the continual violation of human rights around the world.

The men and women who drafted the declaration had themselves witnessed the extermination of entire peoples as a result of twisted racist ideologies and were resolved to put an end to such atrocities. Their long term vision to establish universal principles recognized that human rights and peace were intertwined.

Unfortunately, man does not always learn from his mistakes, as we still see around the world violations of human rights in the form of torture, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, executions, killing of defenceless demonstrators and detention because of one's beliefs. When these attacks occur far away from us they are still attacks against each and every one of us. For every time there is a violation of human rights, there is a violation against humanity and the human spirit.

However, we must not be discouraged by this, for the declaration has paved the way for the progress in the struggle of human rights. While the declaration set out the principles for the protection of human rights, the United Nations has developed specific bodies and procedures to deal with human rights issues. The International War Crime Tribunals in the Hague for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda represent a critical element to the progress made in the

area of human rights. These tribunals have shown that individuals responsible for atrocities should not be protected by the state.

That is why the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada strongly urges the establishment of a permanent international criminal court as a new instrument in the fight against human rights violations.

Another advantage of the declaration is its universality. The countries which proclaim it found that it expresses values and norms shared by all their cultures. Many nations which became independent after the proclamation of the declaration also saw that their aspirations were reflected by the document.

I recall speaking about human rights abuses in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. Indeed, many suffered for many decades under totalitarian rule. How many suffered and died in the Gulag for their beliefs? How many millions died in the Ukraine because of man-made famine in 1932-33? How many Polish officers, professors and priests were massacred in the Katyn Forest in the former Soviet Union, never to be heard from again? In my riding Canadians built the Katyn monument to mark this atrocity.

Last week my wife's family, the Radziszewski family, received a telex from the Government of Belarus apologizing because, as the telegram said, the Radziszewski family was sent to Siberia in error. My wife was nine weeks old and together with her mother and eight other children were shipped off to Siberia. Now they get an apology because they were sent there in error. As a baby, my wife survived, but her 10-year old brother did not. This telegram does not bring him back to the Radziszewski family.

• (2135)

Nevertheless, the human spirit endured in that part of the world and since the collapse of the Soviet system we have seen the emergence of independent countries developing their democratic and civil societies. Countries such as Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Ukraine are all moving in the right direction but the world must remain vigilant.

I am reminded of a recent human rights case involving Alexander Nikitin, a retired Russian captain who has worked with the Bellona Foundation of Norway to highlight serious environmental dangers of the Russian northern fleet that has been found to be the source of radioactive contamination of both northwest Russia and the Arctic.

The environmental report was compiled using knowledge and statistics available from open sources, yet Alexander Nikitin was imprisoned earlier this year by the Russian security police on trumped up charges of espionage and high treason against Russia for providing the Bellona Foundation with so-called top secret

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information. He remains in custody under threat of a death sentence.

In my opinion this is a setback for Russian behaviour in human rights. Mr. Nikitin's imprisonment and the accusations against him are not only flagrant breaches of human rights and the rights of free speech, but also threaten human health and ecological safety, both in Russia as well as in neighbouring countries.

In the spring of 1993, I served as an electoral observer in UNTAC, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. This was the first free and fair election in 14 years of civil war in Cambodia. Indeed, the Khmer Rouge did much to violate human rights in this country through intimidation and the most brutal killing the world had ever seen. I was horrified to see the killing fields where piles of bones lay like open graves.

Today I read in the Ottawa *Citizen* that 5,000 photos of those who were tortured and killed by the Khmer Rouge will appear on the Internet next month. I shudder to think what the families are going to go through when they recognize relatives and friends.

Ensuring sustainable human security means providing basic needs in a political and economic way, which includes the protection of fundamental human rights. When there is a breakdown to protect human rights there is also a breakdown of civil society. Civil society, that sector between the individual and the state, often is there to monitor the activities of the government and functions as a check and balance. The services offered by non-governmental organizations, otherwise known as NGOs, fit this description. NGOs are the lifeblood of the human rights system and it is crucial that the United Nations be accessible to them.

Organizations such as Amnesty International or Ambedkar Centre for Justice and Peace, which is run by Yogesh Vahardi, a constituent of mine, offer important information and advice. Yogesh Vahardi has made it his crusade to speak against the caste system in India, saying that it is the root cause of Indian slavery and the exploitation of millions of children.

The Canadian government has made the rights of children of utmost priority. Therefore, I recommend that the government make it illegal for Canadian firms to employ child labour abroad. Since the relationship between trade and labour standards is an emerging global issue, I also recommend that we strive for an international convention that any product which is made by children have marked on that item "made by children". With such labelling, hopefully no company, no country, no individual will buy this product.

To conclude, I would like to quote the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar:

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I should like to say that the rights recognized by the Declaration exist truly only in so far as they are exercised by those who possess them. One learns to be free. One can also renounce freedom. The best and most scrupulously applied law means nothing if the people prefer assistance and dependence. Freedoms can die if they are insufficiently used, insufficiently valued, or insufficiently cherished.

Whatever view one takes of the revolutionaries whose memory you will soon be evoking, they cannot be denied one essential virtue: They loved freedom. May we, like the authors of the Universal Declaration and the innumerable defenders of human rights share their enthusiasm, we who know by experience that world peace, progress and civilization are at stake and that henceforth it is our hopes that hang in the balance.

● (2140)

Thus in honouring the memory of the founders of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we are honouring their principles and their importance to the countries of the world. Let us work together for their universal attainment in order to ensure for our children a humane international community, firmly based on the pillars of human rights, justice, dignity and peace.

I forgot to mention that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Fredericton—York—Sunbury.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to participate in this special debate on the UN declaration of human rights which will be commemorating its 50th anniversary in 1998. As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Persons with Disabilities I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

This document has been key in advancing the protection of human rights not only in this country but around the world. The drafting of a framework for human rights legislation is an accomplishment of which we as Canadians can truly be proud.

Mr. John Humphrey, a native New Brunswicker, authored the original draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the assistance of others in 1948. The preamble captures the spirit of the declaration by stating:

Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

The inherent dignity of the human family is not dependent on religion, race, colour, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The act states in section 25(1):

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

As chair of the recent task force on disability issues I have heard many individuals from across the country express their desire for the federal government to outline its role regarding disability issues. This exercise has resulted in the final report entitled "Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act".

Canadians with disabilities need to know that no matter where they live in Canada they can be assured a decent quality of life and a level playing field. The federal government's role is significant. The challenge is to provide leadership. Leadership involves accepting responsibility to remove inequities, barriers and obstacles.

The report suggests changes that include amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and amendments to the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act to improve access to the criminal justice system. Many more changes have been recommended and they are all a function of the fact that people with disabilities are first and foremost Canadian citizens. They have the right to expect that their government is doing its part to remove inequity.

If you have a disadvantage, the Government of Canada has an obligation to do whatever it can to remove that disadvantage. I want to encourage the government, particularly on this anniversary, to accept the report's recommendations and applaud the former minister of human resources development for having the foresight to set up the task force to look at this very important human rights issue.

In order to keep the community of nations united in shared goals, of dignity for all citizens, prosperity and freedom, each government needs to continue to look to each other and avoid the pitfall of looking only inward, of putting on blinders to the outside world. We need to keep watch, to question human rights abuses, to look out for each other.

● (2145)

I believe this government is continuing to prove its commitment to human rights issues. We have drafted legislation that will enable criminal prosecution in Canada of Canadians who go overseas to engage in prostitution related activities with children. We are addressing the problem of the propagation of hatred on the information highway. We have contributed to the human rights field operation in Rwanda and to the program of operations in the former Yugoslavia. We are currently looking into the issue of privacy in technology in the human rights committee of Parliament.

We have participated in the United States world conference on human rights in Vienna and the fourth UN conference on women in Beijing.

These are but a few examples of how the government is proving its commitment to human rights issues. We need look no further

than our recent leadership role with respect to the refugee crisis in Zaire. That intolerable situation is being resolved largely thanks to the Prime Minister and the ministers who convinced many key leaders to commit troops and resources to helping the refugees before it was too late.

Canadians across the country can be proud of the influence that a middle power can have in such important international events.

Much has been done but there is much yet to do. I hope that this anniversary will bring attention to the need for vigilance on every nation's part, vigilance against human rights abuses, infringements on personal freedoms and inequalities rising from gender, age and disability.

I applaud the government for allowing this debate to take place. I commend all members who have participated. I offer my support and encouragement to the human rights committee of the United Nations association for Canada on its planned commemoration next year.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maud Debieu (Laval East, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague, the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

To ensure world peace and security, to show our support for human rights and democracy and to contribute to the fight against poverty, we must stop considering the development of human rights as a marginal question and place it instead at the very heart of our foreign policy, at the centre of our concerns. The 50th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, coming up two years from now, commands such reflection.

For too long, the concept of human rights did not include women's rights. Fortunately, now it finally does. This shows how much progress has been made. The concept of fundamental rights has widened and become more all-encompassing.

However, in all countries, without any exception, poor people are still mostly women. Women and children are by far the main victims of the conflicts in the world; according to data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, women and children represent 80 per cent of all refugees. Furthermore, whatever the country and whatever the type of government, women are always underrepresented in politics.

Why is it so difficult, even today, to have people recognize that human rights also include women's rights? The right to own property, the right to be protected against any form of violence, the right to solicit public and political office, these are all rights that are universally recognized, but that women cannot claim in many countries.

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Of course, women got organized and continue to do so to change this. At the world summit for social development that was held in Copenhagen in March 1995, political leaders from all over the world said, and I quote: "Economic and social development cannot be ensured in a sustainable manner without the full participation of women". They added that "equality and equity between men and women is for the international community a priority objective that must be at the centre of economic and social development".

No one challenges the principle that women's contribution is essential to any social development. However, some doubts arise when we ask ourselves how women's fundamental rights are reflected in society and in the context of real equality with men: an equal presence, equal chances and an equal weight in the real governing of our world and our society.

• (2150)

From such an angle, we quickly realize that there could be a double standard here, that the issues affecting the freedom, health, security and working conditions of women could continue to be of secondary importance compared to those of men.

Delegates from almost 200 countries reviewed these issues and others at the fourth world conference on women held by the UN, in Beijing, in September of 1995. Quite often during this conference, we were reminded that the first conference of its kind was held more than 20 years ago and that no country in the world had since seen fit to ensure that women enjoy full equality in terms of salary, status, opportunities or power. No country has as yet seen fit to ensure that the rights of women were truly considered as "human rights".

The Beijing conference led to a concrete measure, the approval of an action plan for the year 2000. Negotiations on the content of this action plan were difficult at times, but in the end the main problems of poverty, health, violence, economic equality and human rights were taken into consideration. The action plan also stresses the fact that many women face other obstacles to equality based on race, religion, disabilities or other aggravating factors.

Of course, in the end, a conference is only a conference; an action plan, only a few sheets of paper. But the Beijing world conference on women did still have at least two positive and concrete consequences for women in Canada and Quebec. It gave them the opportunity to see what is left to do around the world with regard to women's fundamental rights. It also showed them specific objectives towards which they can work at the family, community, national or international level.

As important as it is for the Canadian government to preach by example, the best indication of its commitment to human rights is its accomplishments in this area. What is the status of women and

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children in Quebec and in Canada? What impact do the basic rights of women and children have on our government's foreign policy?

In Canada and in Quebec, children's rights are protected under the human rights legislation and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At the international level, they are protected under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite these political and legal instruments, poverty among children is increasing constantly here and elsewhere. In February 1995, the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development warned us, and I quote: "[Canada is] simply not doing enough to ensure that [our children's] future is a bright one. With close to one-fifth of our nation's children living below the low-income cut-off, our record of concern for children and their future, in comparison with that of other relatively affluent industrialized nations, is quite simply unacceptable".

In Canada, one child in five lives in poverty. This means one in five children does not have enough to eat, does not have decent housing, does not have the security to which all human beings have a right. On the international level, 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working, half of them full time.

The Canadian government must finally acknowledge the key roles played by women and children in the community and in society. Not only must the highest priority be given to the needs of poor families, but it must also be realized that human rights, the rights of women and children, must at all times guide our actions, since they are the most vulnerable members of society.

• (2155)

Great principles are not enough on their own. There must also be concrete actions. The Canadian government is dragging its feet in this regard. Parents, especially mothers, should have access to employment or to better educational and training opportunities, and this must include the assurance that their children are being properly taken care of.

All of this should—and this can never be said too often—fit in with the transfer of powers and funds to Quebec, in order to enable it to control all elements of an overall pro-family and anti-poverty policy.

On the international scene, the least the government could do is to ensure that the conditions regarding the work of children are respected when it comes to its aid programs and international trade relations as well as its grants to promote international trade. Satisfying basic needs should be a priority on the national as well as international levels.

One thing is for sure: respect for human rights will not come about automatically, either in isolation or through trade. Whether it

be through legislation, promotion or protection, basic rights must, like anything else, find their place among the humanitarian priorities of this government. In real life, the principle that all human beings have a right to the same level of respect and deserve to be treated fairly is not always a top priority. It is important to change that.

Mr. Ménard: Madam Speaker, before I start, may I raise a point of order and say that you will find there is unanimous consent for extending the debate beyond the time allowed, so that I can make my 10 minute speech and a few other hon. members can do so as well.

Since you seem to be in excellent form and superb health, I do not think you will mind if we go on, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is there unanimous consent to hear the members who wish to speak to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, you have my undying gratitude and this also applies to the pages and the staff of the House. I also want to thank the security staff, and I hope Camille Dagenais is listening as well.

That having been said, time or the lack of it should not make us unmindful of the importance of the debate we are having today, as parliamentarians, to commemorate the upcoming 50th anniversary of what in contemporary, in recent history was certainly the first text, with the text produced in the French Revolution, to actually define human rights in a legislative text, which has led us to try to establish an international public order.

As I prepared my speech this evening, I wanted to briefly recall the role played by former U.S. president and democrat Woodrow Wilson, who was a professor at Princeton University. He was, without a doubt, one of the great driving forces behind human rights in the history of the 20th century. He gave his country and the international community a document entitled "Fourteen Points", which served as the basis for the League of Nations.

You will remember that President Wilson was a visionary. He was convinced not only that men and women were equal, but that the countries in the international community must have the same rights and responsibilities.

A Democrat who faced a great disappointment in his life, because the American Congress denied him the mandate he sought to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and join the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations, President Wilson said something very important in his "Fourteen Points".

• (2200)

He pointed out that there had to be an international community with common interests and responsibilities. However, there also had to be a forum for discussion and the expression of multilateralism.

Sir Wilson was a visionary. In his 14 points, which the pages certainly studied in political science and have not forgotten, President Wilson said there should be no more secret diplomacy. When President Wilson urged us to establish a lucid and transparent international order without any more secret diplomacy, he was surely thinking of the European system of the 19th century, of which Bismarck had been an architect, and which led over time to a very opaque system of concealed alliances which led to the mess we are familiar with and to what Clémenceau called the first European civil war, which was of course the war of 1914-18.

All this has not been in vain, however, since it led us over a single century to believe that every individual has rights, regardless of where he or she lives in the world. That is what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 50th anniversary of which we will celebrate in two years, is all about. This is the basic idea.

Nobody can say that the declaration is a long, dense, arid document. About 30 clauses make up the text and there are 5 “whereas” in the preamble, which you have surely read, Madam Speaker. This document is younger than you are—No, I mean the document is older than you are. I almost made a diplomatic faux pas that could have cost me dearly.

These “whereas” point to something that is very important. They remind us that every state is a country and must make a commitment to promote human rights.

The concept of human rights implies a number of things that are very clearly stated in the declaration. First, there is the dignity of individuals, which is above all about physical integrity. In a country unable to respect the physical integrity of its citizens, there cannot be respect for human rights.

Moreover, in addition to talking about the physical integrity of individuals, the declaration mentions the right to own property, the right to take part in public life, which is part of the right to dignity, the right to run in an election, the right to live in a country where freedom of expression is recognized, and the right of all its citizens to take part in public life.

It is awesome to think that in 1948, as the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead and the secretary of state for multiculturalism reminded us a while ago, the declaration was a gamble that in international law, opposing parties could sit down together and agree that the rule of law must prevail, no matter what. In the history of international relations, this was a huge step forward, called multilateralism.

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True, this declaration does not have force of law. Each nation state wanting to follow through with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is responsible for translating into policy the underlying principles of each of the 30 articles which are statements of principles, values, beliefs and duties.

• (2205)

Each of the 30 sections show a number of principles, values, beliefs and obligations.

In Canada's case, this took a number of forms. First of all, it took the form of the Declaration of Human Rights that was put forward by former Prime Minister Diefenbaker and where it was mentioned essentially that, as a community, we are opposed to any form of discrimination based on religion, origin, sex, religious or political beliefs. This is an important part of Canadian law reflecting our belief in the equality of all citizens.

Thereafter, we had the Canadian Charter of Human Rights in 1982, in a context that it is not appropriate to mention tonight, for it has not always been in the interest of Quebec. This must be said because entire sections of the main language act, the only national redress act to have been passed by Quebec was invalidated.

When I say this, I must also say, for the sake of truth, that in some respects the Constitutional Act and the 1982 charter had an extremely positive effect on human rights.

I am thinking in particular of the whole issue of the rights of those who experience discrimination based on sexual orientation. The hon. member for Mount Royal knows how sensitive I am to this issue that always brings us to the same reality. The only reality that must prevail in a state is the rule of law. It is extremely important that the rights and obligations we all have before the law be codified in the legislation.

Does that mean that there is no need to update the charter of human rights, the universal declaration of 1948? No, it does not mean that. It means that, for a document nearly 50 years old, it has aged very well. It remains just as relevant and topical now as it was then, to anyone who believes that we need clear authority on the matter of human rights.

I will conclude by saying that I am very proud to see that everyone in this House, members of all parties, all support a document like this one.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, almost 50 years ago, the United Nations approved conventions, principles of recognition and monitoring mechanisms, which all reflect the overwhelming desire of the international community to recognize all the various aspects of the indivisible, inalienable and fundamental rights of individuals. We are now having this little debate and you have just alluded to this important issue.

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We want gender equality, which means all the inalienable rights every woman and man should have in our society. The most sensitive and difficult issue in my mind is the fact that, in the past, we used to talk about “droits de l’homme”. I think the time has come to replace that expression with “droits de la personne”.

Since the hon. member also referred to this issue earlier, can he enlighten us on the differences between “droits de l’homme” and “droits de la personne”?

Mr. Ménard: Madam Speaker, this is an extremely interesting question at this late hour. I am sorry not to have more time to answer it.

• (2210)

The fact remains that the first time I went to the UN—I am not sure if the hon. member for Mount Royal was part of the delegation but I do not think so—I was very surprised and very disappointed to see that all official documents in French still referred to “droits de l’homme”. This is an extremely outdated phrase that should no longer be part of international terminology, since, as we know, women account for 52 per cent of the population. Countries with governments led by women are usually more successful than countries led by men.

Indeed, we should speak of “droits de la personne”. I subscribe completely to the comments made by the hon. member for Mount Royal. I hope Canada and its partners will press for the updating of titles and names of international organizations. I think that the current names are extremely discriminatory.

If the Canadian government, through the foreign affairs minister or the Minister for International Cooperation, ever decided to make representations in favour of these changes, I am sure it would have the unanimous support of the official opposition.

Mrs. Finestone: Madam Speaker, I would like to make an additional comment. This is precisely what Canada did at the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We proposed that the expression “les droits de l’homme” be amended in the statutes to reflect this equality, and in fact the even greater number of women than men in society.

Unfortunately, France steadily opposed the proposal. It was debated in committee and in plenary. The executive and the committee of the whole rejected it, based on the fact that “les droits de l’homme” contains in its very conception the notion of women, and that it should therefore not be changed. What do you think? How are we to deal with France?

Mr. Ménard: Madam Speaker, I know that the member for Mount Royal is a very gifted diplomat. Even though I have, in the past, found her more closely aligned with the Anglo-Saxon reality, I believe that, were she to give it all her charm, conviction and talent, she could persuade the motherland to change reality.

[English]

Hon. Raymond Chan (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is International Human Rights Day. I want to draw attention to the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a year long celebration of Canada’s commitment to human rights which will begin one year from today.

The United Nations has invited all countries to organize programs of activities in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the declaration. It has also proclaimed 1995 to the year 2004 as the United Nations decade for human rights education, calling on member states to develop plans of action to address the needs in this area.

Last April the Minister of Human Resources Development was the first Canadian foreign minister to address the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. At that time he promised to keep the High Commissioner on Human Rights advised of Canada’s plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to ensure maximum international impact for the occasion.

As our Minister of Human Resources Development said in Geneva: “The celebration of the 50th anniversary should not be an occasion for complacency or sentimentality. Rather, it is the time for reaffirmation and renewal, for tough concerted action that will move the human rights agenda to the centre of a reformed and revitalized United Nations”. The minister described the universal declaration of human rights as “the linchpin that joins us all, governments and citizens alike in our shared aspirations”.

Canada has a special attachment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A Canadian, the late John Peters Humphrey, was one of the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the first director of the UN human rights division. His great personal qualities, enthusiasm and vision continue to guide Canada’s strong involvement within the UN in the field of human rights.

• (2215)

Canada has played an active, often central role in the evolution of UN human rights principles and machinery. The 1986 all-party parliamentary review of Canada’s foreign policy, and the government’s response, emphasized the importance of human rights as a fundamental integral part of Canadian foreign policy.

The 1996 parliamentary review of Canadian foreign policy reaffirmed this commitment and made clear that respect for human rights is key to international peace, prosperity, development and to an environment where Canadians can best pursue their interests in the world. That the emergence since World War II of the principles of human rights in any country are a legitimate concern of all governments and a legitimate topic of discussion in international

fora represents a quantum leap in the evolution of international relations and law.

Of course, as in most other fields of international law what remains to be done is the hard part: ensuring effective, that is, timely and universal implementation and enforcement of the established norms.

For instance in China, legal experts from both China and Canada are working together on a series of projects to strengthen the Chinese legal framework.

The International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, funded in part by the Canadian Development Agency is an excellent example of Canada's support to China's efforts to implement international standards for human rights. A transparent system based on the rule of law is of growing importance to the Chinese people. Another way to encourage internationally established norms is through support for democracy worldwide. Many of the countries that Canada supports through its human rights programming are in the midst of adapting more democratic forms of government.

As the Minister for International Cooperation said, taking a human rights approach to development does not mean lecturing recipient countries about democracy or human rights. It means supporting projects and programs that enhance the will and capacity of developing countries to respect the rights of children, women and men, and to govern in an effective and democratic manner.

I would like to draw to members' attention a few examples of such projects.

In Asia alone, a region which is close to my heart, CIDA was involved in 72 human rights and democracy projects during the 1993-94 and 1994-95 fiscal years. This does not include initiatives that address rights and democracy indirectly or as secondary objectives.

CIDA has contributed to a peace fund in Sri Lanka. The fund, is aimed to promote peaceful resolutions to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflicts through dialogue. It provided for a wide range of activities including the production of educational material and support for Sri Lanka's peace committees.

In Pakistan, CIDA provided support to the Women in Development Support Fund. This project's goal was to help remove discriminatory barriers to women's economic, social and political participation in society. One of its accomplishments was the creation of the Women's Desk at the Human Rights Commission of the Pakistan Secretariat in 1995.

The relationship between trade and human rights are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they reinforce each other. We should be able to

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discuss human rights issues with our trading partners and we should be able to use trade as a tool to improve human rights.

• (2220)

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said at the United Nations General Assembly in September: "The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be an occasion not only to reaffirm our commitment to its principles but also to further what practical steps remain to be taken by governments to implement them".

Let us prepare ourselves to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the secretary of state for his remarks. They bring the degree of clarity we need as we have been talking about trade, international law, human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of the person and the assurance that politicians and people who speak out do not end up being incarcerated because they have cared to speak about democracy and freedom and the right to self-expression.

The member did not address the situations in Vietnam and Burma. He did address the situation in China. In the view of the secretary of state, what would be the outcome of isolating, of not trading or of undertaking sanctions against countries like Burma or Vietnam? I could mention many other countries in the same breath that have incarcerated their parliamentarians or that have ignored supposed open democracy. They have had free elections yet they have ignored those elections and in many cases put the elected persons into prison. What does the member believe we can do in the light of the work we have already undertaken at the United Nations and in the light of the helpful remarks made by the foreign minister?

Mr. Chan: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. We have to look at those issues according to the situations in the individual countries. Situations differ between countries.

It is very unfortunate that even though Canada has discouraged our business community from trading with Burma, many other countries like the United States, Japan, Australia and the Asian countries have been trading with Burma. It is very difficult for us to unilaterally impose sanctions on Burma. On many occasions we continue to speak out against the human rights situation in Burma, but we are limited in our ability to effect change.

In countries like Indonesia the government has shown signs of co-operation. It has established a human rights commission which has demonstrated its integrity in its last report on the January 27 riots in Indonesia.

In those countries I do not think that isolation or trade sanctions would be effective, positive or constructive in pursuing human

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rights. The best way to go is to continue trading with them, to encourage them to open up their countries and accept our norms on human rights. We have seen progress in those countries.

In Vietnam we have seen there is higher degree of freedom among the civilians. They can pursue their own economic agendas and they are able to move around freely. At the same time, the dissidents and political activists are still facing a lot of trouble. We use every opportunity to share our views with them, to talk about those issues with them. During my last visit to Vietnam I actually raised individual cases with the prime minister. I made sure that human rights and trade could go hand in hand.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Status of Persons with Disabilities, on which I was privileged to serve as chair last year, recommended in its second report to Parliament this past June that the Government of Canada should set aside time today, on International Human Rights Day, for a special debate on the pivotal role played by the universal declaration of human rights in promoting human rights abroad and at home and to begin to make Canadians aware that December 10, 1998 will mark the 50th anniversary of its adoption. Therefore I am delighted that the Government of Canada proceeded to announce that a special debate in honour of International Human Rights Day would take place tonight.

• (2225)

Earlier this evening during comments and questions I spoke about human rights having as much to do with children in poverty as they have to do with the brave and courageous individuals around the world who fight for freedom in countries where intimidation, fear and oppression are daily realities.

When we look at the question of human rights in this perspective, it is clear that in spite of the wonderful technological progress of this decade, there are still far too many who have shown too little responsibility for the vast majority of the human race.

I speak of peace not just as a north-south issue. I speak of peace as well as a concerned Canadian who knows only too well the magnitude of the war on poverty we all have to make in our own country. Again, I do not speak here only of freedom from oppression but of freedom from hunger and hopelessness as well.

Nelson Mandela made the same point in his speech to the joint session of the U.S. Congress on October 7, 1994 when he said: "As the images of life lived anywhere on our globe become available to all, so will the contrast between rich and poor become a force impelling the deprived to demand a better life from the powers that be".

Here at home Canadians have built a compassionate country anchored with the spirit of tolerance and the idea of strength through diversity. Canada is a multicultural federation which is in many ways a microcosm of the planet. Thousands of newly arrived Canadians enrich our national dream. Thousands more wait in immigration offices around the world seeking access to a

country where the red maple leaf signifies peace and freedom and compassion and respect for the rights of the individual.

Too many of us, in the rush to rise to the challenges of the world economic revolution, forget that Canada is seen as a special laboratory for social change in all corners of the planet.

Today on International Human Rights Day we must reflect on the real priorities for Canadians. No society or country is truly free if it neglects the rights and freedoms of the most poor and illiterate, the most defenceless citizens among them. The true test of a civilization is how it treats the poor, how it treats the illiterate, how it treats the most defenceless.

Antoine de Sainte Exupery once wrote: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye".

May this December 10 teach us to look with our hearts; we must look with our conscience. We must think of the tiny babies and the small children growing up in our decade.

As a paediatrician I might add I often think of such babies and children. They do not understand globalization and computers, trade pacts and gross domestic product. But they are born among us, raised among us with rights, rights to shelter and good health care, rights to nourishment and protection, rights to societies which respect and love them. But most of all, they have the right to grow up in a country in which they have a fair opportunity to do their very best, a country where the right to equality does not depend on the neighbourhood they come from or the ethnic community they belong to, or whether they are of aboriginal parents in Winnipeg or whether they are of English parents on the Island of Montreal. You have the right to grow up equal and in some respects that is the real moral test of our time.

Today we think and look with our hearts because the real essentials are invisible to the eye. We think back to that United Nations General Assembly meeting in Paris nearly half a century ago, when the first step in the long 1,000 mile journey toward a freer, fairer world was taken.

Let us resolve and endeavour to answer the unspoken questions in every human heart: Why are we here? What are we to do?

We in this House can take pride that this government under the creative and caring leadership of our Prime Minister remembers our humanity at home and abroad. Indeed we must remember the intended purpose and meaning of our being. We must remember our humanity. This is the essence of today's celebration of International Human Rights Day.

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): My intervention is more in the nature of a comment, Madam Speaker. I want to note that this debate has been most interesting. I am really delighted with the number of people who have participated for the government and on all sides of this House.

It is particularly important to note that the last speaker for the evening is the past chairman of the Standing Committee on Human

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Rights and the Status of the Disabled. He was the guiding spirit in that new committee and certainly oversaw some very wonderful pieces of research, particularly in relation to the disabled. I want to congratulate him on the work which he and his committee did and to tell him how pleased I am that he who in, of and by himself speaks to human rights in his everyday life is a real testament to the nature of the kind of debate we had tonight for which I thank him personally.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Pursuant to order made, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.)

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