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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 28, 1998

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 28, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (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 two petitions.

* * *

• (1010)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the eighth report of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

The committee reports that it has considered and adopted the votes of the main estimates of 1998-99 for the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

* * *

PETITIONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour and privilege to present to the House a petition which has been certified correct by the clerk of petitions.

The great constituents of Hamilton West request that parliament support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of

an international convention which will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very timely petition to present. It is from individuals who feel that the hepatitis C compensation package is inappropriate.

They are asking for the government to offer a compensation package to all victims of hepatitis C just as the premier expert in the blood system in Canada suggested, that being Horace Krever.

These individuals are from the Ottawa area. The flow of petitions is starting today.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present on behalf of hundreds of constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan a petition on the multilateral agreement on investment, asking parliament to impose a moratorium on negotiations of the MAI until there has been a full public hearing in the best interest of Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 81 will be answered today.

[*Text*]

Question No. 81—**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:**

Given that veterans of Canada's Merchant Navy who served in World War II do not receive the same benefits as veterans of the army, navy and airforce, what actions, if any, has the Minister of Veterans Affairs taken to make equal benefits available to Merchant Navy veterans?

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Merchant Navy veterans have had service eligibility for all currently available veterans benefits since 1992. In view of this, no action need be taken by the Minister of Veterans Affairs "to make equal benefits available to Merchant Navy veterans."

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Supply

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ) moved:

That this house reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000, urge the government to act, and strike an all-party special parliamentary committee with the main objective of considering Canadian parliamentarians' ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor in the new context created by the globalization of markets, because of the following facts:

(1) despite the economic growth of recent years, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen;

(2) the globalization of markets greatly affects governments' ability to develop their countries' economies in accordance with their priorities; and

(3) globalization and the international agreements that frame it, particularly the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) as now written, may limit some of governments' powers and consequently those of the representatives elected to this House.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first I should inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Today, the agreement on multilateral investment is being negotiated in Paris. Today is the deadline. Fortunately, and it is indeed fortunate, it looks like there will not be an agreement, but we all know that negotiations will eventually resume one way or another.

To debate this agreement, the MAI, is to raise the whole question of a global economy. On two or three occasions, the Bloc Québécois has asked the government to hold a special debate on this issue. Each time, the government has refused.

Last week, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean dragged out the topic again, so to speak. But his action highlighted a fundamental issue, because a discussion of the MAI, of globalization of the economy, raises the issue of the gap between rich and poor.

The number of low income earners in Canada jumped from 14.2% of the population in 1975 to 17.9% in 1996, twenty years later. On a global scale, the share of total revenue earned by the top 20%, i.e. the planet's richest individuals, increased from 70% to 85% between 1960 and 1991, while the share of the bottom 20%, i.e. the planet's poorest inhabitants, dropped from 2.3% to 1.4%. There is a very private club of 358 billionaires—not millionaires, but billionaires, as in 1,000 times one million—who control an amount equal to 45% of the entire world's revenue, while poverty continues to grow.

There are two possible attitudes to this alarming situation. One would be to sit back, give up, say nothing or, worse still, even contribute to the problem. The other would be to roll up one's sleeves and try to do something about the widening gap between rich and poor. In raising this issue and including it in its platform, the Bloc Québécois has opted for the second course of action. The action taken by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean has shown where he stands; this is the issue he raised. This struggle is one that concerns me as well, and has always concerned me since my earliest involvement in social and political affairs.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the present Liberal government. Its recent EI reform has plunged more of our fellow citizens into poverty. Promises, supposedly made for the purpose of eliminating child poverty, have never been more than base ploys, election slogans, calculated to bring in votes. Yet the Liberals have substantial play in the budget, with a surplus of \$21 billion above and beyond the 1997 estimates, an amount that once again was not forecast.

The Minister of Finance is not good with figures. The government has an extra \$4.4 billion and he did not forecast any surplus this year. But, instead of using this money to reduce the gap between rich and poor, the government is squandering \$750 million on submarines and interfering in provincial areas of jurisdiction, in particular by investing \$2.5 billion on millennium scholarships.

• (1020)

We will see it this afternoon. In spite of all the statements made by Liberal members, who claim they want to protect hepatitis C victims, the government refuses to allocate money for this issue, but it is discussing with professional sports tycoons to reach a tax deal with teams whose players make millions of dollars. How nice.

The concept of globalization is not just theory and ideology. There are concrete numbers associated with it, and these figures are telling. In 1997, world exports totalled US\$5,295 billion, while commercial services totalled US\$1,295 billion. It is a daily reality.

Does this mean that we oppose the globalization of economies? Definitely not. However, discussing globalization does not mean talking strictly about money. We must also talk about establishing fair and just rules for every country, for the people of each of these countries. We must talk about social and human rights. These are the issues that we must talk about when discussing globalization.

Supply

The MAI is the latest attempt to put together, in an international agreement, multilateral regulations in the three key foreign investment sectors, namely the protection of investments, the liberalization of investments and the dispute resolution mechanism.

The MAI is a good example of the lack of powers of democratic institutions, because the federal government opted to negotiate behind closed doors, instead of holding an open debate in this Parliament and involving the Canadian people. It could have held this controversial debate in public.

This is what we are condemning. We are asking the government to stop ignoring the public's will, to listen to the various groups, particularly the poor, and to listen to parliamentarians from all parties. It is with this in mind that we are making this demand, and that we will oppose the signing by Canada of any treaty dealing with multilateral agreements on investment, of any treaty that would not include provisions on social and labour laws, the environment and cultural exemptions.

We do not want a standardized, Americanized world, in which the only culture would be the American culture, and in which Dallas and its imitations would be the only television series available. This is not what they want in Quebec or in Canada, I have no doubt.

We are also opposed to the provision in this agreement that protects investments for 20 years. Today the elected president of Burma, who is in exile, is visiting Ottawa. That country without any democratic rule, dominated by a military junta, could sign despicable agreements with major companies that would be protected for 20 years. Should democracy return some day to Burma, and I am sure it will, the government elected by and for the people will be forced to honour these agreements. That is not acceptable.

When we talk of the danger of parliamentarians and democratic institutions losing political power this is what we are talking about. We will also oppose having such agreements signed within the OECD, the club of the well-to-do. We cannot let the rich determine the living conditions of all peoples in all countries in the world. Such agreements must include all countries and be discussed within the World Trade Organization. This is the place for such discussion.

Some will say that globalization leaves no room for the small countries. The opposite is true. We see economic borders dissolving and a number of countries emerging each year.

In this new context, Quebec's sovereignty expresses nothing more than the political, economic and legal ability of the people of Quebec to decide the conditions of their interdependence with other peoples. If it is true that small countries are impotent against globalization, how do we explain the fact that countries with populations of between 4 and 15 million inhabitants, such as Austria, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, outperform Canada in socio-economic terms.

• (1025)

These are eloquent examples of how, in these times of rampant globalization, small countries can make different choices according to their needs, the needs of their population, how they can have an important public sector, progressive social policies, and yet have lower unemployment than Canada and a higher gross domestic product. That is part of reality.

The question is not, therefore, one of being against globalization, but rather of defining a framework which will forge links that will unite the countries of this planet in a fair and just manner. The question for all peoples of the world is to determine how they can participate fully in major economic entities.

Speaking of the European Economic Community, and France of course, according to François Mitterrand, to be part of a whole one must first and foremost be oneself. That is what the sovereignists want. That is what the Quebec sovereignist project is all about and that is how the sovereignists address the question of globalization.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the leader of the Bloc's comments regarding the MAI and the potential consequences for Canada in terms of our culture.

Given that we already have a NAFTA investment agreement that governs something like 70% of our foreign investment in Canada which comes from the United States, and that NAFTA also contains a cultural exemption but the right of the United States to retaliate in kind for any measure that we take on the cultural side, would the member not agree that the main threat to our culture seems to be coming from the United States where we have an agreement that is going to stay in place regardless of whether we negotiate the MAI?

How would the leader of the Bloc protect culture? How would he see the MAI affecting culture considering we already have NAFTA and the main forces that might threaten our culture come from the United States where we have an agreement that is going to be in place for some time? Would he roll back NAFTA in the areas of culture exemption?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, the question surprises me somewhat, because I believe the danger to be just the opposite, that such a multilateral agreement on investment, commonly called MAI, could impact upon NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

The rich countries club, or in other words the OECD, could then impose this agreement on a number of countries bilaterally, thus ensuring that the WTO would be governed by such an agreement and NAFTA forced to follow suit. That is where the danger lies.

Supply

I would remind my colleague that, in the debates on free trade then on NAFTA and even in the last round of WTO negotiations, it was Quebec, with the support of many of the European countries, which pushed for the necessity of cultural exemptions, of protecting cultural identity.

This inclusion in NAFTA was a gain, but still not enough of one. We need only think back to the debate, strange, paradoxical, even unfortunate for Canada I would say, around the purchase by American interests of Ginn Publishing. Not one "Canadian" party here in this House spoke out against the fact that one of Canada's major publishing houses was going into American hands.

• (1030)

It was the Bloc Québécois, the sovereignist party that wants its own country, which rose in defence of Canadian interests.

This is why we want a debate. I think that it is high time those across the floor, and the Reform Party as well, quit thinking that the multinationals, the economy seen in isolation from other human values, is a kind of golden calf. That is a major mistake. Others have made that same mistake before you and I hope fewer and fewer will make it after you.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have the opportunity to speak today on this very important motion. We need to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.

[*English*]

When I think about reducing the gap between the rich and the poor, the remark made by the hon. member is very true. The governments are not very serious about this.

For example, all we have to do is look at my province of Nova Scotia. We see governments by way of loan forgiveness giving \$47 million to large corporations like Michelin. On the other hand I am personally dealing with a complaint from an aboriginal family living in a home that is worth less than \$20,000 who are in danger of being evicted by CMHC on mortgage foreclosure. It demonstrates very clearly the difference and gap between the rich and the poor and where we as a government put our priorities.

I really do not have a question but more of a commentary. I want to commend my hon. colleague for bringing forth this motion. It is a very important motion, one which deserves worthy treatment by all members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, in an attempt to question the power of parliamentarians, I took my chair out of the House in order to trigger a public debate on the paradox that often emerges from the new economic context of globalization. This paradox is the gap between the rich and the

poor that continues to widen despite the economic growth of recent years.

I also wanted to urge people in general to reflect on what is at stake in the new economic reality that is the globalization of markets. This will hopefully help to mobilize the people and force us, parliamentarians of all stripes, to come up with concrete measures to ensure everyone's well-being.

Recently, we saw how people can mobilize and come together on an issue. The Multilateral Investment Agreement was supposed to be ratified today by the 29 member states of the OECD. But after the citizens of several signatory states mobilized against it, the agreement is now being questioned.

This agreement, considered by some to be the constitution of the world economy, is only one aspect of the globalization phenomenon. When people mobilize, agreements can be thrown back into question even though their acceptance had been presented as being imperative and inevitable.

My action was very much inspired by this mobilization campaign, to show people that decisions affecting them directly are being made without meaningful consultation.

I wanted to bring people to take an interest in these decisions. My action obviously satisfied a need because people mobilized in great numbers. Today, I come to the House with the support of hundreds of people and organizations of all kinds from everywhere.

I think people want concrete solutions because they responded favourably to the message I wanted to send through my action, which, all in all, was provocative.

I think people are concerned about the growing gap between rich and poor in our society, particularly in the context of globalization.

• (1035)

I share their feeling. That is why I will consult with those who are interested in this debate so that people can express their concerns and suggest adequate solutions.

These consultations, whether they take the form of focus groups, informal coffee meetings or any other form, will have a dual objective: first, to foster a broad public debate and, second, to give us, as parliamentarians, effective tools to help us define the parameters for this new debate in our society.

I hope that, apart from these consultations, people will mobilize to sign the petition I am circulating, asking that a parliamentary committee be struck to examine our ability, as parliamentarians, to reduce the gap between rich and poor in the new context of market globalization and to suggest concrete solutions.

I would add that I have no doubt as to the people's approval. As I was saying earlier, the support I have received shows that a large percentage of the population believes in the urgency of such a

debate. One of my objectives is to bring this petition to the House with 50,000 signatures on it, as a start.

I just mentioned two concrete objectives: involving people in this debate and making sure parliamentarians can find ways to solve the problem. This being said, for parliamentarians to find solutions, they have to know the kind of issues the committee will be called upon to review.

To this end, I suggest the committee should be asked to examine not only the impact of globalization, especially on parliamentarians' decisions, but also how to reconcile economic growth and social development in the context of international competition.

To learn more about international agencies, it might be helpful to examine their democratic legitimacy and understand fully the consequences of their various decisions on the manoeuvring room we, as parliamentarians, are trying to establish at the national level. Is there a need to reform these agencies, as several have suggested, in a way we would approve? We must look into it.

I believe it would be useful to further explore current social policies adopted by parliamentarians in other countries in the context of globalization and examine the inclusion of so-called social clauses in various international and multilateral agreements. I suggest we really have to take a serious look at this for the MAI. How could we establish a democratic and effective counterbalance that could be used to promote, protect and maintain social benefits in nation-states?

Across the world, suggestions and solutions are being put forward to counter the negative consequences of globalization, especially to adapt it to mankind instead of forcing mankind to adapt to it. In his last budget, the finance minister said that basic problems required basic solutions. I say that international problems require international solutions.

I guarantee that this committee would allow us, as members of Parliament, to be forward-thinking at the international level and find concrete solutions to the issue of the lack of power of our respective seats in the context of globalization.

To underscore and highlight the significance of this motion, I move the following amendment, seconded by the member for Richelieu:

That the motion be amended by adding the words "without delay" after the word "act".

This covers the urgency of such a debate.

Moreover, to show people we, parliamentarians, are really serious about the issue of the gap between rich and poor, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to make this motion votable.

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

• (1040)

Is there unanimous consent to make the motion and the amendment votable?

Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

An hon. member: Is it the amendment and the motion?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Is it agreed that the amendment and the motion be votable?

Some hon. members: Yes.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent. The question is on the amendment. Questions and comments. The hon. whip of the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Unless I am mistaken, you asked once for consent and it was given. You asked a second time, and it was then refused. In my view, consent was given.

The Deputy Speaker: No. When I first put the question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport asked "For the amendment?" I replied "For the motion and the amendment. Is there consent to make them votable. It is for both".

Mr. Louis Plamondon: You are here to serve the House, not the Liberals.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that the House has decided that the motion is not votable at this time. The question can be put again, and I can certainly do that. As members know, such a request is frequently made in the House.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear, and perhaps the blues will show it equally clearly, that when you first asked for the unanimous consent of the House, it was agreed.

Following this consent, we heard the parliamentary secretary ask you a question, but that was after you received the unanimous consent of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I will put the question again. Is there unanimous consent to make the matter votable?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[*English*]

An hon. member: You are here to serve the House, not the Liberals.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I am here to serve the House. I am a servant of the House.

Supply

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is disagreeing but I think it was clear. I asked the question. The parliamentary secretary asked a question in response. I then answered the question for the parliamentary secretary and asked the question so that the House got the question clearly. He was asking for clarification of my question about whether or not it was votable and I answered the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that, when you asked for consent, you obtained it. The parliamentary secretary, who was near the curtains, moved forward after consent was given. He asked whether consent was on the amendment or the motion itself.

You obtained this consent, Mr. Speaker. If you decide to change the House's decision, to change the rules in mid-stream, it is a very sad comment on the kind of debate that is possible among parliamentarians on the issue of globalization.

[*English*]

Mr. Stan Keyes: Mr. Speaker, I think what is clear is that at the first instance when you first put the question, my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board said no. Then when you rose and asked the second question, I asked for clarification because I did not hear the translation in time. I asked if this was a request for unanimous consent to have the non-votable motion become votable and at that point I thanked you for that clarification. You asked the question and I said no. This is a non-votable item and it will remain so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, here is another version of the facts. You are saying: "We said yes". No one heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board. Earlier it was yes. Now we are getting a new version to the effect that someone said "no". Maybe somebody thought "no". We are here to think, I hope, but also to speak. So now there is a second version.

I hope the decision to give unanimous consent will be honoured. If that does not happen, it will be, as my colleague put it, a very sad comment on debates in this place.

• (1045)

If you uphold the decision, I hope they will explain their opposition and their subservience at the time of the vote later today on hepatitis C. It is the attitude of the irresponsible.

The Deputy Speaker: When there is unanimous consent in this House for a proposal, the House must understand the question. The

hon. parliamentary secretary indicated exactly what I said. He did not understand the question I put to the House. He indicated the lack of clarification on this point.

Unanimous consent is not indicated until the Speaker of the House has, after the question has been put, indicated that it has been given and the matter decided.

I did not make such a pronouncement or decision, because I have entertained the question. The issue is very clear and the matter is now closed.

We now continue with questions and comments.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: If it is on the same matter, I will not hear other arguments. I have heard enough arguments on this point.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I will speak no more than ten seconds. When we sought unanimous consent, the parliamentary secretary was not present. He cannot therefore say that he was opposed. Therefore there was unanimous consent.

I would point out that I will not give unanimous consent for you to seek another vote again.

[*English*]

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I was in the House at the time and I said no. Maybe it was not loud enough, but I said no and shook my head. I was in the House at the time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely and respectfully suggest you review the tapes and the blues to confirm that you had unanimous consent, although that was later denied, but you had it. And it is not normal for you to keep asking for consent until you no longer have it.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Treasury Board, who was not in his own seat, has just admitted it. He did not speak but shook his head no.

He has just admitted that he did not speak but shook his head, and I agree that one ought to use one's head before speaking, but when the time comes for a person to indicate consent or non-consent, that must be done by speaking, not nodding. He has just said that is what he did.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. That is the end of the argument.

It is obvious that what we have here is a case where there was no unanimous consent.

An hon. member: There was consent.

Supply

The Deputy Speaker: No, there is no consent until the Chair indicates that the matter is settled. I did not so rule. I did not give such an indication because I did not receive clear unanimous consent.

When the parliamentary secretary asked his question and I responded, he indicated that he did not give his consent, and that is the end of the matter. The debate is closed.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. He had the guts to stomp out of the House with his chair to stir up a discussion over the issue of poverty in Canada. There are children who go to school on an empty stomach.

I want to congratulate him. I hope the media will change their coverage on this issue, stop dealing with the chair incident and start talking about the poor in this country.

Here is my question for my colleague. Now that we have had free trade and NAFTA in Canada for such a long time, and now that we are leaning toward signing the MAI, does he not think we have more food banks than ever in Canada?

• (1050)

This is not the Royal Bank I am talking about, but food banks families have to go to because they do not have any money left to feed themselves. The EI fund has billions of dollars in surplus, but some Canadians are starving.

Could my colleague for Lac-Saint-Jean respond to this?

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am very pleased to see that I have support coming not only from the Bloc Québécois but also from other parties. I hope that my colleagues opposite and from all parties will seize on this issue. Furthermore, if they choose not to do so right now, I think time will prove me right and we will eventually be forced to take a very serious look at this issue.

In response to the question my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst asked me earlier, essentially, I left with my seat to elicit a broad societal debate. I never said I had all the answers. I plan to focus my efforts on getting the point across to the public and to parliamentarians alike that a debate must be held on this matter, that is, the consequences of globalization on political power.

If we find that globalization does limit the power of parliamentarians at home and abroad, there will be an urgent need for the public to look into the matter and understand what is at stake.

I have said repeatedly this week that any loss of political power means a so-called loss of democracy. This therefore concerns us

all, the political parties represented in this House as well as the public at large.

I do not claim to have all the answers, far from it. However, it seems to me that there should be a debate in which parliamentarians and the public would share their views and there is none. This is of greater concern to me.

Of course, we can look at the immediate consequences of globalization, and there are many. But what will be required, and sooner than later, is a comprehensive debate. Then, we will be able to deal with specifics, the consequences, the stakes and, more importantly, possible solutions we can explore to ensure a framework is in place for globalization to benefit the citizens of this and other countries.

That is the challenge facing us. As I said, this is a complex message and the debate is just beginning. It will probably be a 10-year process. That is why it must start as soon as possible.

I hope that, as the public gets further involved in these issues, parliamentarians in this House will pay close attention and make sure that more concrete solutions are found.

[English]

Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment about my young friend from Lac-Saint-Jean. I am very glad that he brought his chair back and will continue to sit in this House.

I was in the House when he expressed frustration and left with his chair. I saw the frustration of someone in his twenties whose idealism has not yet been tempered with the reality of age as it goes on.

I would just say to him that he should never give up his idealism. He should always keep it. As the years go on he will find that it is always tempered with reality.

It is frustrating to watch poverty in the world, seemingly on the increase. I do not think that child poverty can be isolated from poverty in general. It seems to me that if there is family poverty, then there is child poverty. The two go hand in hand. There is no magic formula for simply eliminating child poverty with the stroke of a pen or a chequebook.

• (1055)

I would also comment that some of the contents of this debate tend to argue against some of the very elements that are helping child poverty and helping the economies around the world. In order to get a perspective on that one has to look at history and the human condition that existed before countries began to interact with one another.

Supply

It was in the fifties that Canada began to interact in an official way with other countries with which it had been trading in the past, mostly under the colonial system that we were under at that time. Investment agreements began to be made in the 1950s. Up to now, as I understand it, there are 54 bilateral investment agreements that exist between Canada and other countries. Around the world there are 1,600 bilateral investment agreements.

The intent of the multilateral agreement on investment is very simple. It is to allow more countries to sing out of the same hymn book. Ultimately our hope is that once that framework is established the World Trade Organization, which represents 132 countries, will see the wisdom of operating under a common framework.

Canada does all right because our biggest trading partner is the United States. We understand each other's society and so on and we try to treat each other, even though there are glitches from time to time, with some fairness. That trade can go on without an MAI and without more agreements, but as other countries in the world, which are impoverished, want to raise their standard of living and want to put an end to their poverty, certainly we find that having some common rules among those countries will help them and will help us.

I also should point out that I think we all recognize that closed governments do not do well in the global village. Closed governments are failing very badly. I give the example of North Korea, a totalitarian communist government that has put walls around itself and almost chooses not to communicate at all with the rest of the world. Starvation and impoverishment there are incredible, to the extent that South Korea, its arch enemy, is now sending aid to North Korea to try in its own way to help North Korea through these crisis times.

I would suggest, on the other hand, that open governments overall are gaining. They are gaining in wealth and in economic base. Therefore they have a better opportunity to look after the impoverishment which exists to some extent in every country in the world. It exists in Canada, in France, in Europe, in Asia and so on. We recognize that.

The answer is not simply to throw cash at the problem. The answer is to provide a common denominator and an economic foundation so that countries can prosper and do well. That is why we seek these agreements, so that the rules can be established and so that a Canadian company is not afraid to invest in another country.

I bring in the example of what happened with the Nova Scotia firm that went into partnership with Aeroflot and the Russian government in the building of a hotel last year. Conflict arose because there is no MAI with Russia. There is no bilateral agreement with Russia.

• (1100)

As a result those people were left in the jungle on their own and they ran into serious trouble. That is a terrible detriment to a company or a potential investor who wants to go into another country and establish themselves there and in so doing help the economy, help jobs and help the growth of that country.

This interaction is a positive thing for all of us. Globalization represents empowerment for all countries if they will simply take it on. I know there are fears. There are fears expressed about cultural intrusion and so on. Every country that has been negotiating in the MAI has its own set of reservations and its own set of concerns. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with wanting to keep the cultural debate right out of the agreement. We have said that. We have made it very clear. We have said that if some other countries insist on having it in their agreement we will have a country specific reservation. That is a bottom line. There is no big deal.

Over the 40 or so years that these agreements have been made no company has come in and taken over the policies of this country. No multilateral organization has overwhelmed Canada. If anyone wants to see an example of industry and large organizations having an influence on the policy of a country, we only have to go to Washington and see how that government works. The dollar a year men in with companies actually construct policy that favours those companies. That does not happen in Canada. It has not happened and it will not happen in Canada as long as the people of this country see that it does not.

Our exports have increased tremendously since we started having agreements. As a result jobs have increased as well. We want that to continue but we want it to continue for us which is selfish but generous. We want it to continue for every country in the world, all the people in the world and we are most anxious to use all the tools we have to get rid of poverty, child poverty particularly.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville, for questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Mercier: Mr. Speaker, since my colleague for Lac-Saint-Jean would like to speak, I will give him my spot.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on a few things mentioned by the member opposite during his speech.

He spoke about my illusions and said that, as I will get older I should lose my illusions. Is that his answer? Does this mean I should give up now since I will have lost my illusions 20 years from now? I do not think so. I feel concerned about the future.

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I feel that some valuable debates must take place now. There are new ways to hold such public debates. I should not give up because of what was done in the past and say “we have no choice”.

This is what I reacted to. I reacted primarily to this attitude that makes some say “let us face it, we have no choice. Market globalization is unavoidable. Fellow citizens, your governments no longer have any power”. I refuse to believe that.

I think that if the public decides to mobilize, if it believes that we can turn globalization into a tool for us all, particularly those of my generation, then we will be able to change things.

Some may accuse me of being idealistic, of believing in a utopia, but I will at least fight. This is what I want to do. I want to fight for the public's interest.

• (1105)

When eight people out of ten support me for the action I took, an action that questioned fundamental values of our society, namely democracy, I think we should ask ourselves some questions.

I do not want to talk specifically about the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, but rather about the way this was done, secretly. Ultimately, they were rewriting the world economic constitution, but no one, or almost no one, knew about it, certainly not the people or me, a parliamentarian, a representative of the people. We were informed later about the content of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment.

I think that, when such a vast society debate has to happen, the people must be informed. And even though the debate is complex and long, as I agree it is, this does not mean we cannot dwell on it now.

Consequently, I do not intend to give up. I think the only thing that is unavoidable—No, in fact nothing is unavoidable. Come to think of it, nothing is unavoidable. Giving up is the only thing that makes things unavoidable.

[*English*]

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I hope my hon. friend did not misinterpret what I said. I told him not to give up his idealism in any way but over time recognize that politics is the art of the possible and what we try to do is head down a track or a road, and it is necessary to fight very often to get down that road.

I am glad my hon. friend accepts the principle of globalization. Representatives from the World Bank were in committee today. One of the things they said had to do with rural development and poverty which is a very serious concern of the World Bank. They recommended further worldwide liberalization of agricultural trade, a necessary condition for ensuring that countries can rely on

international markets, rather than self-sufficiency policies, for their food security.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, one of the great concerns of Canadians in this whole thing has been the secrecy of this agreement and the kind of things that have been going on behind closed doors.

We did not hear about this until last year during the election campaign. It has been going on for several years. What is in this agreement that is so secret that it has not been publicly disclosed to the Canadian people?

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, the process for negotiating the MAI had its roots in the processes for negotiating all the bilateral trade agreements that have gone on for years. The information was available through OECD from the very beginning but no reporters picked up on it, nobody ever looked at it until one draft appeared on the Internet last May. A draft is not a text, but it was interpreted as a text and what was not included at that time was a recognition that there was a list of reservations that not only Canada but every country in the OECD has included. Those are the bases for negotiation.

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary but his time has expired.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in this Bloc supply day motion although I admit I have a little trouble understanding exactly what the Bloc is asking for.

I see it has tied the issue of child poverty into the whole aspect of globalization and the multilateral agreement on investment and I want to deal with those issues in their own right. But it seems there is a problem right from the very beginning with this motion because I do not believe that they are related.

• (1110)

I believe it is clear the Liberals are mishandling the economy. Poverty still exists in Canada where it should not exist. I also believe that child poverty cannot be disassociated from poverty in families. If we correct that with family members having the opportunity to work and have well paying jobs it will go a long way to correct that problem.

I also believe the Liberal government is mishandling the MAI. Today the minister is over at the OECD in Paris putting the deep six on the MAI at the same time as the Prime Minister is in Cuba talking about signing an investment agreement with Cuba of all places.

Cuba expropriated all Canadian and foreign investment in Cuba and the Prime Minister is now talking about signing an investment agreement with that country and putting a deep freeze on the

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multilateral agreement on investment which would help a lot of Canadian companies and therefore a lot of Canadian workers and their children because there are a lot of high paying jobs. It seems to me there is a problem.

My colleague from Calgary Centre will be speaking more on the aspect of child poverty and what can be done but I want to raise a couple of things.

The Reform Party believes it is important for all families in Canada to have the opportunity to work in meaningful and well paying jobs. We think that through proper government this can happen. It is absolutely deplorable to still have Canadians paying income tax in Canada when they are making \$15,000 a year. That is simply not acceptable. There are 2.6 million Canadians in that category we believe should be taken off the tax rolls altogether and be given an opportunity to keep some of their hard earned money.

I want to raise the question of the role of government. The NDP and the Bloc would have us believe the role of government is interventionist. We have seen that from the Liberal Party in the past. For about the last 30 years we have had a very interventionist government in Canada, social engineering. Some would have us withdraw and form an isolationism in the world. Some would have us put up big tariff barriers again that existed from Sir John A. Macdonald's time. However, I do not believe that would serve Canada very well. I think we can look at the example of Atlantic Canada to point out that it has not worked very well.

Prior to Confederation Canada had several areas of the country that were doing pretty well. Atlantic Canada had a very healthy trade relationship with the New England states. It was in close proximity with an existing natural trade corridor.

Confederation came along and Sir John A. Macdonald instituted his national policy of high tariffs meant to direct the flow of goods and services east and west. What did that do to Atlantic Canada? It became dependent over a period of time on things like unemployment insurance, regional development grants and welfare because the central part of the country was draining it. The barriers meant that it could not trade effectively with New England states any more.

I think it has been demonstrated worldwide that barriers do not work. Any country that has even unilaterally dismantled barriers to trade has benefited. Therefore we need to foster a better environment for our Canadian companies to do well. By doing that, workers in those Canadian companies are going to do well and have high paying jobs.

Our committee did a study on small and medium size enterprises in international trade. We heard testimony that the environment for business in Canada to do well is not good at all. Witnesses said we are not internationally competitive because we are paying very high taxes. Canadians still have the highest tax rates in the G-8. We

have a lot of regulation that is hard to overcome. We heard from one company that said it was easier to do business by moving out of its home base in Ontario to Illinois and then ship its product back into Canada. This was easier than shipping across Canadian provincial borders. That simply is not good enough.

I believe because we have had interventionist governments we have \$600 billion worth of debt, debt that has made the Canadian taxpayer have to pay one-third of every tax dollar to Ottawa just to pay the interest on the debt. It is just like digging a hole in the ground. These types of governments that have intervened in the economy and in our personal lives have caused this to happen.

• (1115)

We just have to think of all the companies that have been privatized in the last few years that were on the government gravy train needing big subsidies every year to exist. CN Rail is now making a profit. Air Canada is now making a profit. Petro-Canada is now making a profit. All these companies were draining Canadian taxpayers.

Canadian airports are functioning on their own and doing well. A small airport in Peace River, which was turned over to the community in the last two years, is doing very well and is actually making money. Prior to that it took \$400,000 of taxpayers' money every year to keep that airport in business.

The interventionist government, which brought us the national energy program and FIRA, the Foreign Investment Review Agency that discouraged investment in Canada, intervened not only in the economy, in our personal lives, but in provincial areas of jurisdiction such as education, housing, tourism and job training, causing duplication in governments.

Why is it that with such a great country we have areas in Canada where there are unemployment rates of 60%? It simply is not acceptable. It is the debt load given to us by interventionist governments which have caused these rates. As I said, 2.65 million people earn less than \$15,000 a year and still have to pay taxes to the federal government. It is not acceptable. We have to get our house in order first.

The social engineering of the past has given us employment insurance. Some 25 different regions of the country qualify for employment insurance because of different criteria. For the last 30 years employment insurance has had 5% higher rates than those of the United States year in and year out. We can chart it. We can plot it. They have gone up and down but are 5% higher than those of the United States. Why is that? It is because of interventionist governments doing social engineering.

This brings me to the aspect of the motion today which deals with globalization in the MAI. My party and I believe that Canada needs a liberalized trade and investment regime if it is to prosper.

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For the first time in 1998 the amount of Canadian investment outside Canada has exceeded the amount of foreign investment in Canada. It is a trend that has been happening for the last four or five years. This says something about a new found confidence of Canadians seeking the big market out there.

There are 30 million people who think the Canadian market is too small and want to take advantage of the world. We have many things to offer, so if we are to trade with these countries, as we are, in many cases it will require Canadians to make investments.

Which multinational Canadian companies are out there investing? They are companies that are home grown. They have Canadians working for them here at home. There are investments from the pension funds of Canadians in those companies. They are publicly traded. We have mutual funds. We have RRSPs invested in these Canadian companies. It is in our interests that they do well. They need the protection of some base rules of investment and we can do it more than one way.

The MAI should be allowed to die. The trade minister seems to be allowing it to be put into a deep coma at the OECD. We can sign bilateral investment agreements to achieve the same end. We have done quite a bit of that in the past. We also have an investment agreement with the United States and Mexico in NAFTA that governs 70% of investment in Canada already. That will not change whether or not we have the MAI.

We can continue down that road, but there are something like 1,600 investment agreements worldwide. It would be a simpler process to have one that we could all look at and say here are the simple rules for investment in the same way as we have had rules for trade in goods for 50 years. If we do not want to do that we do not have to.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean in a symbolic act the other day took his seat from the House of Commons and got a little publicity from it. It says a little more than that. It says something about a party that wants to withdraw from Canada and to put borders around Canada, to have an isolation policy. That simply does not work.

A lot of change is happening in Canada. All of us have difficulty with change, but we cannot freeze a certain section of our lives and say we want to stay at 30 years old. Change is something that happens to us all the time. Trade and investment are like riding a bike. If we stop peddling we will fall off and I do not think we will be served very well.

I cannot support the motion although there are certain aspects concerning child poverty that are important to deal with through well paying jobs.

• (1120)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State (Parks), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member. It is good to see that he has his own private cheering section.

The member's speech demonstrated a very important difference between his party and this side of the House that Canadians should recognize. He talked about the Canadian taxpayer and the need to reduce the burden of taxation, something the Minister of Finance has been doing in his last few budgets and continues to do. We see the Reform Party's inability to make the distinction between taxpayers and Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Andy Mitchell: I hear members opposite. They do not realize that literally millions of Canadians are not taxpayers and are in need of assistance just as much as somebody who is a taxpayer. What about someone who is unable to get a job or to find work? I know they believe every Canadian can get a job if they want one, but that ignores Canadians with disabilities and those who are unable to enter the workforce.

The bottom line is that members of the Reform Party do not encompass the broad range of Canadians. They select who they want to help. They focus on whom they want to help, but they will not reach out to the full Canadian family.

That is the basic premise of what the hon. member said in his speech. He ignores large segments of Canadian society and only wants to deal with individuals who fit their mould of being appropriate for help.

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, that was a very interesting intervention. The member correctly observed that there were big differences between the Reform Party and the governing Liberals. I am glad he finally got that point. It is pretty clear that there are.

The point I was making is that we do not believe intervening in the economy is the right role for government. We believe, however, that there is a proper role for government. We think it is fostering an environment for Canadian businesses, their workers and their shareholders to do well here and to do well internationally. We also believe there is a role for government to be the shepherd of environmental programs and competition laws by ensuring they are looked after for Canadians.

When it comes to taxation the member raised an interesting point. He said that we did not recognize the difference between taxpayers and Canadians. I suggest Canadians at tax time do not see much difference either. They are taxpayers and they are paying very heavily. They want some tax relief.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am disappointed in the direction the debate is going and in the way Reform members are diverting the debate. Liberals are

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jumping on the bandwagon and saying: "We are the best in the world; we are beautiful, good and nice".

My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean tried to start a non partisan debate on a world issue that is very real and is simply redefined in our motion.

The Reform member started his speech by saying: "We do not know exactly what Bloc members want". We can therefore deduce that he does not agree with what we want, but he does not know what we want. If we listen to his speech, we realize it is rather inconsistent.

Secondly, I will explain to him what we want and I will ask him if he agrees. The motion is relatively simple: That this House reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000 and urge the government to act by quickly striking an all-party Special Parliamentary Committee that will consider the matter.

The Liberals had made this commitment in their first red book and have said they were in favour of it. What we want is to eliminate poverty. We want to strike a parliamentary committee to study this matter. I ask my Reform colleague if he agrees with this.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any disagreement. We want to get rid of poverty in Canada but we have different methods of doing it.

• (1125)

The Bloc, the Liberals and the NDP seem to feel that the levers of power by government intervening in the economy is the proper way. We have seen 30 years of such intervention and I believe it has failed.

Unemployment is still running almost in double digits and has been for a long time. The Canada pension plan needs a massive infusion of taxpayers' money or a 72% increase to keep it viable. Health care is in trouble. The federal government has cut back payments in health care by \$6 billion to the provinces.

Maybe the government should not intervene so much in the economy and the business sector and let business do what it does best, that is create well paying jobs. We have to be competitive internationally. On the issue of globalization, certainly that is happening, but I do not think it is something we can stop or would want to stop. It is a smaller world and we have to take advantage of it.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I think you would find consent for the following order:

That the deferred recorded division on the amendment of Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford) to the opposition motion of Mr. Hill (MacLeod) scheduled for today at the conclusion of Government Orders be deemed defeated on division.

And that the remaining recorded divisions scheduled today at the conclusion of Government Orders take place in the following order: the main motion of Mr. Hill's opposition motion, the motion for second reading of Bill C-39, the motion for second reading of Bill C-216, Motion M-85, and the motion for second reading of Bill C-32.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. deputy whip for the government have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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SUPPLY**ALLOTTED DAY—ELIMINATION OF POVERTY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP supports the motion that has been brought forward by the Bloc Quebecois. We welcome the attention that is being paid to the issue of globalization and give credit to the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for provoking this debate. However, contrary to what the member said when he was on his feet, the debate is not just starting but has been going on for some time. I would suggest that it has been going on since about 1987 in the lead-up to the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States.

I am quite happy to hear what the member has to say. I agree with him that there is a new consciousness among young people, among those of his own generation, about the extent to which forces are being gathered together within this globalization model. They are very much leading to a future that not many young people want to contemplate.

It is a future that has within it a low wage economy for a great many young Canadians. I have seen it in my own work on the MAI over the past several months going across the country and speaking on campuses and in other places. I have spoken to students about the multilateral agreement on investment and how it is the latest stage in a globalization model that the NDP rejects and that I want young people to reject. There is a new awareness on the part of young people at the university level and elsewhere about how wary they should be of this globalization model.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean said that he hoped time would see him right on this motion even if everybody did not agree with him at the moment. Without malice I say that I have felt this way for a while. I remember making a similar speech in 1987 when I said that time would see us right on the downside of free trade.

• (1130)

I think we are reaching one of those times—and I am not speaking of the member now—when people who otherwise were very supportive of this model as it emerged in the context of the FTA, the NAFTA and the WTO are now beginning to have second thoughts about the wisdom of this particular model.

These second thoughts are not just coming from the left, where people had not second thoughts but first thoughts about the downsides of globalization, they are coming from people on the right and in the centre who are asking themselves whether the effects of an unfettered global marketplace are not more than they bargained for when they first began to promote this model of globalization.

I am very happy to see the motion here today. I noticed that it begins by referring to a motion passed in this House in 1989. That motion was moved by my former leader, the member from Oshawa, Ed Broadbent, at the time of his departure from this House.

I think the fact that this motion is referred to at the beginning of the Bloc motion points out something that many people are aware of, that is, that there has been a certain affinity between the NDP, and before that the CCF, and the social democratic tradition in Quebec which is represented by the Bloc Quebecois, which in the past was represented not just exclusively by the Bloc Quebecois from Quebec but by Quebecers in general.

It is fair to say that Quebec has had a tremendous impact on the kind of country Canada has become over the years. A large part of our social democratic nature has come from Quebec. In English-speaking Canada it has come largely from the tradition that the NDP represents.

Those two things acting together, often synthesized by a Liberal government at the federal level, have led to the kind of country which is now being dismantled by the very globalization model the member for Lac-Saint-Jean refers to, which we in the NDP have been criticizing for some time.

This debate gives me an opportunity, as the NDP House leader and also as the trade critic, to reflect on the relationship between the NDP and Quebec nationalists, not only nationalists in the Bloc Quebecois but also nationalists outside the Bloc Quebecois who are not necessarily sovereignists or separatists. There was always thought to be a great deal of affinity in so far as we held these social democratic values in common.

Supply

What has happened over the last several years, particularly since the creation of the Bloc, but going back to the beginning of the debate on the free trade agreement, is that we have disagreed with the Bloc Quebecois, and not just about separation, obviously. We are federalists and they are sovereignists. They understand that. We understand it. It is fair ball.

However, where we have had problems and why I welcome this motion as an opportunity for all of us to reflect, is the way in which we have seen the free trade agreement, the NAFTA, the WTO and now the MAI as models for globalization that work against social democracy, that work against the ability of governments to create, to preserve and to maintain social democratic values.

We have always found it odd, frustrating and even irritating on occasion to see Quebecers of various political persuasions embracing free trade and the NAFTA. I say this in all earnestness. I am not trying to provoke a partisan debate, I am trying to extend an opportunity for all of us to reflect on this. Recently, they did not even bother to file a minority report on the MAI.

• (1135)

In the last little while there seems to have been a bit of a shift, within the ranks of the Bloc in particular, and I welcome this shift.

I think from our point of view this particular model of globalization, which the FTA, the NAFTA, the WTO and the MAI represent, is not just something that we should be sceptical about as social democrats from the point of view of whether it creates justice, because we certainly should be sceptical of it on those grounds. It has led to increasing poverty and increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, not just within countries, but between countries in many respects in terms of north, south and so on.

We also should be sceptical of it in so far as it is a threat to the sovereignty of governments; to the power of governments to intervene, to shape, to contain, to regulate, to do all of the things that we have been able to do in the economy over the years to create a more social democratic Canada, which Bloc members would want to have at their disposal if there was an independent Quebec and they wanted to shape the Quebec economy.

I hope this debate might be an opportunity to hear back from Bloc members on this. It has always been a bit of a puzzle to us why they embrace that particular view of the global economy and why at one point the former leader of the Bloc, now the premier of Quebec, talked about the end of ideology, that ideology had been replaced by trade. That was on March 15, 1994 in this House.

Trade in itself is an ideology, in particular liberalized trade without government regulation, without core labour standards. This is in itself an ideology and there is ideology to be debated within different models of how global trade will unfold.

Supply

To pretend somehow that there is no ideological debate here is to play the game that the government wants us to play, but not so much the Reform. I think they acknowledge that there is an ideological debate here and they are very clear about what side they are on.

I welcome this motion from the Bloc. I look forward to hearing more of what they have to say and reading more about how they square what they are saying today with some of the things that have been said in the past. I look forward to working together with them and with others who see the real threat that this model of globalization presents, not only to social justice, but to the sovereignty of all governments whether they be federalist or of any other nature.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the remarks of the House leader of the New Democratic Party are interesting and raise a number of questions. For instance, he sees a contradiction between our being Quebec sovereignists and our position with respect to globalization and our adherence to the free trade agreement with the United States, and then with Mexico.

I cannot speak for the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, who is perfectly able to speak for himself, but there is not necessarily a contradiction. Globalization is an inescapable reality in our society. Whether we like it or not, we are headed in that direction.

As social democrats, we must however ask ourselves the following question: In the face of globalization, can we, as social democrats within our various parties, be it the Bloc or the NDP, contribute to the debate to make sure that this movement toward market globalization is more civilized and that a national perspective is taken to domestic interests? It is our duty as parliamentarians and members of Parliament.

• (1140)

I think we can also make a contribution with respect to working conditions, especially in countries like Mexico, and compliance with environmental rules that apply to every country in the world. Much remains to be done in this respect.

I think that is what the call from the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean is all about, by demanding that those who decide economic issues and political issues too—because he called on parliamentarians as well—finally comply with the terms and conditions that the people want to see enforced.

I clearly recall that, when they took position in favour of free trade, the members of the Bloc Québécois knew at the time there would be a price to pay for this change and that transition measures would be required to help industries adjust.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona may want to respond to these comments.

[English]

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is true that globalization is a fact. But what is up for grabs is what kind of globalization we are going to have. Are we going to have globalization that is really just a global marketplace with this race to the bottom where governments and societies give up their social and economic values by trading away their labour standards and their environmental regulations in order to attract investment? Or is our form of globalization going to be a global community?

I think it raises the matter of global governance. In spite of what the member for Peace River keeps accusing the NDP of, we have never suggested that we should be isolationists, that we should put up tariff walls or that we should go back to the days of Sir John A. Macdonald. What we have suggested is that if we are going to have a global market we need to have forms of global governance that do for global markets what national governments used to do for national markets. That is the way ahead. We are not looking for a way back, we are looking for a way ahead that creates some form of global social and economic justice, and the MAI is not the way to do it.

The MAI is a replication of the NAFTA at a much larger level. I think that is something that people who were for the NAFTA have to take into account—

The Deputy Speaker: On a brief question, the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the irresponsibility and the naivete of the member for Winnipeg—Transcona. I would like to remind him that this is a country of 30 million people who produce far more in a year than we could ever consume. Therefore it is an absolute necessity that Canada trade with other nations and take part in the global marketplace. That is what fuels the economy of this country.

In case the member does not know it, if it was not for the NAFTA and the free trade agreement right now the economy of this country would be in disastrous shape because we do not have a buoyant domestic market.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I guess it is just one of those things where it does not matter what one says because Reform members only hear what they want to hear. I never said Canada did not need trade. I never said we did not want to be part of the global marketplace. I never said any of those things. Reform members either have wax in their ears or they are just committed to a particular point of view no matter what people say.

Supply

I said we had to have a global marketplace that was regulated in a certain way so that there was social and economic justice. That does not mean we do not trade. It means we trade in a particular way.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to commend the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for the intent of this motion. While we may differ on the means, we agree on the end. We would like to eradicate child poverty in Canada. Progressive Conservatives recognize that one of the best levers to eradicate child poverty, not only within Canada but globally, is liberalized trade.

It was a Progressive Conservative government that led Canada into the free trade agreement in 1988 and the NAFTA in 1993. In fact if members want to talk about transparency and about openness and engagement, there was a federal election fought in 1988 on the free trade agreement. Compare that to the secrecy of the current MAI discussions and negotiations, Canada's participation and lack of consultation within Canada.

An hon. member: Where do the Liberals stand on that debate?

• (1145)

Mr. Scott Brison: The Liberal Party has been consistently inconsistent in its trade policy. Recently the Minister for International Trade said the Liberal Party was on the vanguard of the rising anxieties of the free trade agreement of 1988. In fact the Liberals were the leaders of the anti free trade movement in 1988. Now the Liberals cannot get enough free trade. In fact they like it so much they do not feel it is important to negotiate or to engage Canadians in these discussions. That is how much they like free trade.

We actually have some commitment to commitment. They are born again free traders. Now with the public opposition mounting they are posturing against the MAI agreement. Or at least they are indicating in a very public sense that they have some difficulties with it when in fact privately they do not have a great enough understanding of it to have any opposition to it.

The PC Party believes that a good multilateral investment agreement could benefit all Canadians. However we do not believe that any agreement at any cost without any negotiation or consultation with Canadians is the right agreement. The lack of public consultation within Canada on the MAI is appalling. The motion today has helped us bring to light some of this lack of consultation.

It is important that we have public debate on this kind of issue. Public debate is the best way to dispel some of the arguments put forth by some of the most vociferous opponents and indeed proponents of the MAI. There is common ground between these two extremes. That is why the PC Party asked the subcommittee on

the MAI to table the agreement before parliament 15 days before it was ratified by cabinet. The idea was taken from a bill introduced by Alexander Downer, the Australian minister of foreign affairs, in the Australian parliament in 1996. This became the Australian model for treaty negotiations.

The Bloc motion claims an agreement like the MAI would weaken legislative rights. That is why the PC Party introduced a recommendation to the MAI subcommittee to conduct a full impact analysis of the effect the MAI would have on our federal, provincial and municipal programs.

The Bloc's motion blames globalization for the growing gap between rich and poor around the world. Globalization is not the largest contributing factor to this dangerous spread between the rich and the poor. Globalization is not all bad nor is it all good. It is like most things. It brings risk and it brings opportunities.

The Americas and Europe have come to see the benefits of trade union rights and child labour legislation but they have become wealthy enough to absorb those costs. Without the expansion of liberalized trade, the engine of job growth, workers in underdeveloped countries may never have that same opportunity.

Liberalized trade is the most effective lever that developing countries have to bootstrap themselves into a decent standard of living, the decent standard of living we take for granted in this country. Free trade critics argue that globalization pushes labour offshore to cheaper markets when in fact the majority of foreign investment flows between rich countries, or flows between rich countries in search of markets, not poor economies offering cheap labour.

The effect of globalization forces free trading economies to increase labour flexibility. For those countries that increase their labour flexibility, it allows them to react quickly and adapt to shift people and resources away from declining industries and toward growing ones.

This motion should not be about the fear of liberalized trade and its perceived effect on the gap between rich and poor. Free trade has not been the cause of the increase in this gap, and there is very little substantive or credible data to support that argument.

If one looks at the export levels of Quebec in 1988 before the FTA and in 1996, exports have increased from \$16 billion to \$40 billion. Those exports are extremely important to Quebec. Those figures have helped to stabilize the employment levels in Quebec, not destabilize them.

If we are serious about child poverty in Canada, perhaps we should be working together to create an economy that works in a country that works. We know full well the cost of separatism, the debate on separatism and the cost to children and all people in

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Quebec in terms of poverty. We should be very careful that we are not blaming the wrong demon when we talk about child poverty.

Bloc members should be reminded that their PQ cousins in Quebec have vowed to remain part of NAFTA if separation occurs. They understand full well that NAFTA has benefited Quebec as it has benefited Canada.

The most important contributing factor to the gap between rich and poor has been a global transitional economy from the resource and manufacturing based economies to the information technology and knowledge based economies. This gap between rich and poor has been exacerbated at this critical and pivotal time in this paradigm shift by the cuts in the health and education transfers made by the Liberal government in Ottawa.

• (1150)

A new study which came out recently states that after the changes were made to the unemployment insurance fund, only 36% of unemployed Canadians now actually collect EI. The 35% decrease in health care, welfare and education funding to the provinces invoked by the Liberal government has disproportionately affected the poorest of Canadians. It has denied the poorest Canadians equality of opportunity which is fundamental.

We believe in the free enterprise system. We believe it is the best system for all Canadians. For the free enterprise system to be sustainable, all Canadians need access to the levers of the free enterprise system. They need a strong health care system. They need a strong education system.

Unfettered capitalism is not sustainable, nor is unfettered socialism. A balanced free enterprise system with a sound education and health care system is the best system for everybody. It could be argued that Marx was wrong about unfettered communism, but he may have been right about unfettered capitalism.

We need to ensure that a balanced approach which combines lower taxes, globalized opportunities in trade and strong health care and education systems is a recipe that will not only benefit Canadians but will benefit children around the world.

The cuts the Liberal government has inflicted on ordinary Canadians and the poorest of Canadians have affected the access of young Canadians to the opportunities provided in a global knowledge based economy as we enter the 21st century.

If we are really serious about addressing child poverty in Canada, I have some suggestions. I reiterate that we should support and continue to seek solutions to this problem. The government should work toward this.

We must utilize a progressive trade policy and a progressive free enterprise domestic economic policy. The combination of those

two policies will first of all ensure that Canadians have opportunities to participate in the global economy and second, that they are not burdened by intrusive government in Canada which denies them the opportunity to participate effectively in that global economy.

I would suggest as well that we work together across Canada toward a national unity agreement that works and stop this endless debate on the national unity issue. We must work to stop the tremendous cost that has been borne by ordinary Canadians and ordinary Quebecers for the separatist movement over the past 20 years.

We must start working together to build economic bridges across Canada and economic bridges around the world which will benefit young people in Canada and around the world.

If we work seriously toward those ends we will all be better served. In fact all Canadians will be better served by constructive policies coming from all sides of this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague refer to Marx, and I am glad he did, because I myself have based my speech on something Marx said that is one of the reasons I am obviously supporting the Bloc Quebecois motion. I will explain.

Marx—or Engels, but I think it was Marx—said that the gap between rich and poor would only widen under capitalism. With the introduction of communism, the system he founded, it became clear that, despite what he hoped, this gap between rich and poor continued to widen, with the disproportionate wealth of the *nomenklatura*.

Bearing in mind what the leader of our party said earlier about the gap between rich and poor also widening in our capitalist society, I wonder whether it has something to do with human selfishness, with the powerful doing what they can to become increasingly wealthy, even if it means trampling the poor. One might think it was inevitable.

• (1155)

I support the motion just introduced by the Bloc Quebecois, because I think that, if capitalism is not to prove Marx right, this debate on growth must go hand-in-hand with a debate on everyone's right to share in the fruits of that growth.

I therefore support the motion because, although I am not a Marxist, I do not want his prediction to come true.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention from the hon. member.

I have tremendous concern about the gap between the rich and poor. In the U.S. there is the gated community concept. Families and individuals live in gated communities. They pay for their children's private education, private hospitals and their own security service. They live in gated communities which are effectively insulated from the public at large. They do not really care about what goes on outside their communities.

Capitalism without the effective interventions of the state in areas of health care and education is not sustainable. I mentioned Karl Marx and said that he may have been right about unfettered capitalism but he was wrong about communism. The communist system arguably would not have a tremendous gap between the rich and the poor because everybody would be poor. However, I do not think that is the most effective system either.

I again commend the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for having initiated this debate. The benefit is that we have the opportunity to debate in a very philosophical and concrete way important policy initiatives. We are able to look at the problem very seriously.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I think there would be unanimous consent to declare the motion votable.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to make the motion before us votable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to my hon. colleague's remarks with interest, and I would like to give him a few figures concerning the matter of smaller countries and globalization.

In 1997, the unemployment rate in Canada stood at 10.3%. It was 3.6% in Austria, 8% in Denmark, 5.4% in Norway, 6.8% in the Netherlands, and 3.6% in Switzerland. So a country's size has nothing to do with the impact of globalization.

We have never suggested that globalization per se is bad. What we would like is some parliamentary control over globalization so that ordinary citizens can benefit from it, and not only those who can make big profits. Profit is important for companies, but the governments should also be able to redistribute wealth.

My colleague said he finds it strange that Quebec sovereignists should support free trade. He should not forget that it is Quebec that brought free trade to Canada, because it was in its own interest to do so, and Quebec's development depends on north-south trade.

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Will the hon. member not admit that it is the way countries are governed and the development tools they give themselves, and not size, that determine how well they do internationally?

[English]

Mr. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I would say that although Quebec has been strongly supportive of free trade, I come from a province that was in free trade prior to Confederation. We have some contributions and agree with the member on that.

Smaller countries have more to gain from liberalized trade in many ways than some of the larger countries. That has been demonstrated in almost every equation, such as in the access to larger markets, especially for a country like Canada where it is absolutely essential.

In terms of the support within Quebec for free trade, I would expect that the support would be there and will continue to be there. The benefit has effectively led to the tripling of exports since 1988.

I appreciate the member's intervention. I look forward to continuing this dialogue elsewhere.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe that at this point in the debate it is very important and opportune to read the motion again because we have heard all kinds of things even if there was not much in way of a debate, except from one or two speakers from each party.

The answer given by my colleague from the Reform Party confirms why we should support the motion moved by the Bloc Québécois leader. I support the motion and I am going to read it again to prevent the debate from going further off course. After only a few speeches, it is already off course.

The motion reads as follows:

That this House reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000, urge the government to act, and strike an all-party Special Parliamentary Committee with the main objective of considering Canadian parliamentarians' ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor in the new context created by the globalization of markets—

This motion does not indicate we are against liberalizing trade or that we are against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, quite the opposite. The motion does not indicate anything of the sort.

This motion suggests that parliamentarians from all parties look into a problem which is very real. In their first red book the Liberals said they would eliminate child poverty before the year 2000. What we are asking is to strike a committee to see whether

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this deadline is realistic, to see if we can reach this commendable goal which is desirable for all.

I would like speakers from the Liberal Party to tell us why they are now opposed to something they had espoused before. It is rather odd. When the Liberals, the New Democrats and members from other parties say: "Therefore the Bloc Quebecois is against liberalizing trade, against the MAI", it becomes necessary to remind them of the spirit and the wording of the Bloc Quebecois' motion.

The third point in the motion says: "globalization and the international agreements that frame it, particularly the Multilateral Agreement on Investment as now written—". I believe this is underscored by what the international trade minister just said in Paris. We are not against the MAI, but the Bloc Quebecois would never give its support to a government's signing such an agreement as it is currently written, because there is a risk of limiting certain powers of states and hence of the representatives elected to this House—we are not saying it does so, but there is that risk.

What we want is a committee of parliamentarians. I would be very surprised if MPs wanted to shirk their responsibilities. That is why I am surprised the Liberals are unwilling to agree to discussing the MAI among other things in a committee setting.

I would point out that I am going to split my 20 minutes with my colleague for Rimouski—Mitis.

I wish to focus on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. As my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean has demonstrated with his speeches and with his exit from the House, many in Quebec, in Canada, and everywhere else in the world, are intrigued and greatly concerned by the gap between rich and poor due to globalization. What exactly is this agreement? Where does it come from? What is its intent? What are this agreement's objectives?

We have heard many legitimate fears expressed. Many concerns have been raised about the signing of an agreement such as the MAI. Negotiations or discussions on it date back to 1995 under the auspices of the OECD. It is worth repeating here that we call the OECD the rich countries club. The NGOs often use that same term. It is a group of 29 countries that make up the OECD.

There were some consultations, it is true, but for the most part negotiations were held in secret.

• (1205)

When 29 rich countries negotiate behind closed doors agreements that are designed to promote investments, it is only normal for the populations of these 29 wealthy countries—and of those other countries interested in joining them—to wonder about these agreements and to even question them.

It is also important for Canadians to remember that the Multilateral Agreement on Investment includes about 90% of Chapter 11 of NAFTA, dealing with investments. Therefore, it is not completely new stuff, since 90% of the MAI is found in Chapter 11 of NAFTA.

Why were discussions held on such an agreement? There are two main reasons. First, the purpose of the agreement is to set rules and to regulate—I know this is somewhat redundant—the investment sector, since there are currently over 1,300 bilateral investment accords, of which 50 were signed by Canada, including NAFTA.

The idea was to promote, regulate and facilitate exports and investments from Canada to other countries, and conversely.

The purpose of the agreement is also to benefit from globalization. There are disadvantages, but there are also some advantages, such as increased investments. Also, if the agreement is amended as we wish, it should promote economic development.

These are the two reasons why we supported the principle of the agreement. But again, in its current form, we cannot support the ratification of the MAI.

As our party leader mentioned earlier, the Bloc Quebecois has been supportive of the free trade agreement with the United States, since the beginning, and we also supported its extension into NAFTA.

We even supported in principle the continuation of the negotiations, but we object to the signing of the agreement in its present form. We are not like the Liberals who, in 1988, were opposed to multilateral agreements and saying that they were the worst possible things for Canadians, but turned around after the election and started signing all kinds of such accords. We are consistent in our position and we will continue to be.

Those who have been following us are aware of the very serious reservations that the Bloc had regarding this issue. Among other things, and the member for Rimouski—Mitis will elaborate on that later on, we want a general exception clause for cultural industries, which we did not have as of this morning, and that is why we would oppose the signing of the agreement in its present form.

The Bloc Quebecois wants countries to retain the right to take or maintain measures to protect the environment and labour standards. We would not sign or support the signing of any multilateral agreement that would not include a clause to protect the environment and labour standards.

We also want such an agreement to specify that countries cannot lower their national standards with regard to health, environmental safety and occupational safety in order to attract foreign investors.

We also want legislation such as the Helms-Burton Bill to be deemed ineffective and non enforceable under such an agreement because it goes against the principle of trade. We also want immigration laws, regulations and national procedures to be given

precedence. And, of course, we want provincial jurisdictions to be fully recognized in an agreement such as the multilateral agreement on investment and other agreements. Without that, we will never sign or support the signing of such an agreement.

Regarding the lowering of health and occupational safety standards, particular attention must be paid to the text of the agreement in these two areas. There are two versions of that part of the agreement. One says that a party "should not" lower its health, safety and environmental standards. The other version says that a party "shall not" lower these standards. There is a world of difference between "should not" and "shall not". If we ended up with a version that said "should not" or "it would be desirable", again we would not support such an agreement.

The exception for cultural industries is also a precondition that must be met before we sign or support such an agreement, as well as a clearer definition of "expropriation" and "expropriation requiring compensation".

• (1210)

We also have to ensure that the role of the provinces will be respected before we give our support.

The Bloc Québécois, the Liberals and the Reformers signed a report in which they asked that the agreement be submitted to parliamentarians before it was signed, as requested by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, so that parliamentarians can fulfil their duties as auditors and as the people's representatives.

We ask, we demand that the text of the agreement be submitted to the subcommittee before it is signed, which hopefully will not be until all the issues are resolved. Now that the OECD is no longer considered the forum for negotiating such an agreement, we also ask that the agreement be referred to the WTO, so that all the countries in the world can take part in its development.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech made by my hon. colleague.

The motion urges the government to immediately strike an all-party special parliamentary committee. I would like my hon. colleague to comment on the fact that globalization emerged a few years back and that we had to wait until today for the heartfelt cry of the hon. member for Lac-St-Jean to reflect the awareness that all kinds of dealings and agreements are in the works.

We hear about the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas. We have NAFTA. We have the MIA. We also have organizations like the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, and the WTO. What

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about the people in all of this? What role do the citizens expect their parliamentarians to play? What do the people expect their parliamentarians to say or do to ensure that globalization serves the interests of all and not only of those who want to make money out of this phenomenon?

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It gives me an opportunity to clarify parts of the motion before the House today.

I would first point out, with respect to the role of parliamentarians, that, when the Liberals were in opposition, they demanded a special debate on the free trade agreement with the United States. They did not insist on an opposition day, as the Reformers did, they called for a special debate.

The 1988 election campaign focused primarily on the free trade agreement with the United States. What is happening today? The free trade agreement with Chile was negotiated under wraps by unelected negotiators and officials. What was the role of parliamentarians? They passed the bill implementing the agreement. Not one comma of the agreement was debated.

Members would surely agree that the free trade agreement with Israel and Palestine is likely to have some fairly special provisions. And what was the role of parliamentarians in this agreement? They passed the bill to implement it. The agreement and its conditions were negotiated by unelected officials. Canadians today are facing a fait accompli and are obliged to live with these agreements.

We are requesting initially, as my colleague mentioned, to be increasingly involved in these multilateral agreements. Parliamentarians must have a role to play. They must first look to see how their role as representatives of the public may be expanded in the proliferation of such agreements. That is what must be done.

I would like to ask the Liberals why they refuse to fulfill their parliamentary duties. Why are they not meeting the commitment they made in black and white in the red book? Why do they refuse to strike a committee or, at the very least, why do they not say something?

If they do not want the role of parliamentarians—and there are a number of them here who have been re-elected—why are they here? They are here to serve as parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, but they do not honour their commitments. They do not fulfill their parliamentary responsibilities. They hide and refuse to speak.

I would like them to answer certain questions in their speeches. It is indeed vital to keep a close eye on all the agreements, often negotiated on the sly by officials who have not been elected and often presented to parliamentarians as a fait accompli.

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• (1215)

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to speak on the opposition motion moved by the Bloc Québécois, which calls for the striking of a committee to consider parliamentarians' ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor in the context created by the globalization of markets.

As the Bloc Québécois critic for Canadian heritage, I will deal with this issue from the perspective of the MAI, the famous Multilateral Agreement on Investment, but from its cultural dimension or the impact this agreement might have on the cultural sector, because this agreement, as presently designed, represents a real danger for cultural sectors in Canada and Quebec.

We cannot think of a massive liberalization that would lead to the outright abandonment of policies and measures designed to support the cultural sector without first knowing the economic importance of this sector.

Cultural activities in Canada provide about 900,000 direct jobs and an estimated 300,000 indirect jobs, for a grand total of 1.2 million. These jobs account for 9.2% of the labour market. The direct contribution of cultural activities to the economy amounts to \$29 billion, or 4.7% of the gross domestic product, while its indirect contribution is \$42 billion, or 6.8% of the gross domestic product. Consequently, we cannot consider the cultural sector as minor and make it a pawn to be sacrificed on the altar of major international trade agreements.

Over the years, Canada has put in place some measures aimed at supporting domestic art production. The main measures implemented were the imposition of limits on foreign property and of quotas on Canadian content, subsidies, support for distribution and exports, tax credits and the creation of crown corporations.

Despite their scope, these measures barely allowed Canada to have access to part of its domestic market. Indeed, Canadian cultural products have a marginal position in the market. For example, 92% of the movies shown on our screens are foreign, 60% of books sold in Canada and Quebec are American and 88% of sound recordings put on the market have a foreign content. As you can see, we are far from being protectionist in the cultural sector. We only want to keep some room so that our creators can express themselves.

Obviously, without those support measures, Canadian and Quebec artists would not even have that minimal share of the Canadian market.

Quebeckers distinguish themselves from their Canadian fellow citizens by the fact that in some areas they have a preference for their own writers and productions. However, in the event of complete deregulation, foreign conglomerates could flood our market with products so cheap that even that preference would not allow us to preserve a Quebec content.

The supporters of neo-liberalism often argue that Canada is an exporter of cultural products and, hence, it would be beneficial to liberalize trade in cultural products. They forget that to begin with you must have something to sell. In the cultural area, it is vital to have a safe domestic market to develop products we will then be able to export. Government policies were the means which stimulated and encouraged the creation and production of cultural works for Canadians and which indirectly created cultural goods and services that could be exported.

If we destroy the base for cultural creation in Canada and in Quebec, there will probably still be a cultural industry, but it will in no way be the mirror of Canadian and Quebec identities. We will become producers of americanized cultural products that will be sold in Canada as well as in foreign countries.

The MAI includes copyright in the definition of investment. Since the most recent commercial agreement always takes precedence over other agreements, the MAI would weaken copyright by invalidating the gains made under previous agreements such as the Rome Convention, the Berne Convention and the International Treaty on Intellectual Property. The MAI would bring to an end collectives which defend the rights of artists. This would be the triumph of the American business approach over the rights of creators.

This problem was well understood by the Culture, Youth, Education and Media Commission of the European Parliament, which stated in January 1998, and I quote:

Incorporating intellectual property issues in a general agreement to regulate investment would be the equivalent of applying an extremely minimalist approach to the whole idea of intellectual property. This is why the MAI should not be applied to that area but should abide by the international agreements already in force that are the result of long and complicated technical negotiations.

• (1220)

We deeply regret that there is no single Canadian position regarding the cultural industries, but rather multiple positions that change according to the mood of the Minister for International Trade, the public whom he addresses or the pressures exerted on him, in particular the telephone calls from the U.S. Trade Secretary.

For instance, on February 12, the minister asserted that this agreement would not be signed unless it provided for a full cultural exemption. However, the next day, he was less definitive. On February 13, he said that, if he did not get a full exemption, he would settle for country specific reservation. The minister speaks out of both sides of his mouth in his response to the report of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment regarding the MAI.

Is there a distinction between an exemption and a country specific reservation? Yes, and an important one. A country specific

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reservation is neither sufficient nor acceptable. Reservations have a lower legal status. Moreover, to settle for a country specific reservation instead of a full exemption would be a major compromise never seen in multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The general exception clause has the advantage of not identifying a particular country. All countries are entitled to the same exception, while a mere reservation identifies a country trying to protect itself. A reservation clause shows that this protection is an irritant that will eventually disappear.

Reservation clauses are limited by two principles: the status quo and dismantling. The status quo principle implies that the only authorized changes to measures to which the reservation clause applies would be those which would make those measures more compatible with the agreement. It would therefore be impossible to establish new cultural protection measures, either in the traditional sectors or in the new media resulting from technological progress. Under the dismantling principle, all the measures listed by the various countries are gradually eliminated. Once a country has abandoned a measure it is for good, it cannot be reactivated.

If we agree to sign a MAI which does not have a general exemption clause for cultural matters, we must realise that we are forsaking whatever small Canadian or Quebec content we still have. Without a way of expressing our culture we cannot preserve our Canadian or Quebec identity.

There is also a democratic component, because without a truly Canadian or Quebec cultural space it is impossible to maintain a diverse public space allowing our citizens to participate in our cultural life, which is necessary to public life. We have to leave some room for a democratic expression which goes beyond the simple producer-consumer relation.

The minister must be inflexible concerning the MAI. Without a general cultural exemption, no MAI. A reservation is not acceptable. The heritage minister must play an active role in the international negotiations to have culture excluded the same way defence is excluded. If they really care about the future of their own country, Liberals should worry more about the MAI than about separatists because the MAI is a bigger threat.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Rimouski—Mitis for her excellent speech and the point she made concerning the cultural exception clause in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment as well as in the other agreements. As she reminded her Liberal and “Canadian” colleagues in her conclusion, it is very important that we think not only of us but also of their future.

I want to put a question to my colleague from Rimouski—Mitis about something that is a surprise to me this morning, the inconsistency in the speeches and positions of my colleagues from the Liberal Party.

• (1225)

I would like to have her opinion on what we heard in the House, because she also listened very carefully to the speeches, as we do. How can the Liberals—who wrote in their red book that they wanted to eliminate child and family poverty in general by the year 2000—oppose today a motion reiterating the 1989 commitment to eliminate poverty by the year 2000?

I would also like to know what she thinks of the position held by Liberal members about our demand to strike a committee made up of Reform, Liberal and Bloc members. A majority of committee members would be Liberals since, as everybody knows, they hold the majority in the House and form the government. But Liberals are opposed to the creation of such a committee.

What, in her opinion, are the Liberals thinking, if such a thing is possible, in opposing a motion for the elimination of child poverty by the year 2000 and the striking of a parliamentary committee to take position on this matter? I would like to hear her opinion on this.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is clearly a worrisome situation.

Indeed, we are asking that a special committee be struck to look into this extremely important issue. My hon. colleague from Repentigny mentioned that many things have happened since 1993. All kinds of agreements were signed without parliamentarians being involved. Individuals who are not accountable to anyone have negotiated agreements on our behalf and did not even ask our opinion. That is unacceptable.

I will take what I witnessed this morning as an example. A sub-committee of the heritage committee was set up to examine the issue of sports in Canada. When we heard witnesses from amateur sport, no one was there. The room was almost empty. There were no reporters, hence no media coverage, and just a few Liberals. In attendance were, besides the chair of the committee of course, perhaps one or two Liberal members and myself, the only opposition member.

This morning however, there were not enough seats for all the members who came to hear NHL officials lament about the horrible situation their industry is in because they are not generating enough profits. Mr. Corey told us Molson made only \$5 million in profits last year. My comment to him was that it was too bad that members of his team earned more than he did.

That is the tragedy, no effort is made to sit down and discuss. I have nothing against businesses turning a profit, that is what they are about, but they should also pay their share of taxes. Only those who make money have to pay taxes.

I have met with people in my riding throughout the Easter break and all day yesterday. They told me “We do not want to pay for Montreal again, Mrs. Tremblay. We hope you will object to that.”

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We are still paying for the Olympic stadium and now we are expected to pay for the core revival. We are unemployed. On the lumber issue, we went three or four times before NAFTA panels. We won every time, but nothing came of it. Our foresters are going through tough times”.

NAFTA also applies to hockey teams. Let them go and argue before a NAFTA panel their case against the unfair subsidies American hockey teams receive from the municipalities, states and federal government in the United States. Do not come and ask us to give them money.

[English]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was rather interesting to hear one of the speakers from the Bloc asking a question of Liberal members. I believe the question was why are you here. I believe that is what I heard him say. I find that an extraordinary question coming from someone from the Bloc. The reality is its own members have questioned the validity of their being in this place because of the results of the last referendum. There has been a suggestion by members from that party that they should just resign, take their ball and go home, which would be just fine with me.

• (1230)

In fairness I must admit I thought the speaker who just finished made some very interesting points. She talked about the success of the Canadian cultural industry.

We have indeed been successful as a government, as a country and as a nation in supporting our cultural exports. Let us take a look at the greatest box office hit I believe in history, *Titanic*, which featured a Canadian director and the music of the wonderful and talented Céline Dion. One of the biggest stars in Europe is a Canadian, Bryan Adams. We have many things we can be proud of from the point of view of the arts and Canadian culture.

I thought the member actually made some very valid points which sounded a bit to me like she was speaking in support of some of the government programs.

We then get the other extreme. The Bloc members are a bit like chameleons. They change their colours as the mood moves them. They are difficult at times to understand from a logical point of view. I heard a Bloc member this morning say they are democratic socialists. I assume that means they are the NDP en français. It had not occurred to me before but apparently that seems to be their philosophy.

I think what the members of the Bloc need to do and what they should be doing is debating an issue in this place that basically says

what kind of a society we want if we are to have an impact on eliminating child poverty.

Child poverty does not happen in a vacuum. Child poverty generally results from family poverty. It seems to be politically more attractive to talk about the children. What about the parents? What about the mothers and fathers working at part time jobs, the working poor in society?

The Reform Party seems to have a solution, broad base tax cuts right across the board so that everybody, particularly its friends, would receive huge tax breaks while the poor it purports to defend would receive minimal or nothing in the form of tax breaks. Reform's solution to child poverty is myopic at best and is simply misguided.

Let me go back to the Bloc and what kind of society we want. Do we want a divided society based on our differences? Do we want a society where we continue to concentrate on the issue of national unity in this great country based on our differences? Of course we have differences. I think the message should be *vive la différence et vive le Canada*.

If the Bloc would take some of its ideas and put them into practice in terms of constructive debate in this place it might be surprised at some of the support that could arise. I thought some of the debate we have sat through was reasonably well thought out and gave some valid points and concerns.

I think the principle of the motion the young member has put forward, now that he has decided to bring his seat back and join the rest of us, is not a bad principle. The concept is there is a disparity between the rich and the poor and we should strive to eliminate that. There is a problem as it relates to family and child poverty and we should strive to eliminate that.

In my view our government has done a number of things in the last budget with family tax credits, commitments to education and the youth employment strategy. We have done a number of things to help in the area of eradicating poverty. However, it is not enough. I admit that. I think the finance minister and the Prime Minister would admit it is not enough.

• (1235)

When we take it in the context of the overall job of running corporation Canada, this great country, and we are the board of directors, we have to prioritize. We have to make commitments to keep the interest rates down, to keep inflation down, with record numbers. Of course the hon. member does not agree. He is giving me the thumbs down. I would not expect the thumbs up from someone whose sole purpose in life is to destroy this wonderful country. If I ever got it I would be nervous.

We cannot even talk about something like globalization or the MAI without hysteria coming out of members opposite, coming

out of people like Maude Barlow champing at the bit, demonstrating everywhere, whipping people into a frenzy, putting out false information all over the country and the members opposite using the negotiations around the MAI for their own political purposes. It is unfortunate.

Free trade and globalization are all part of reality. We cannot be isolationists. Members can clap if they want. I have never said anything different. We cannot be isolationists.

The Bloc would like to put borders around its own province and be in isolation. That is what would happen. The number one trading partner for the province of Ontario is the province of Quebec.

I think interprovincial trade is a very important issue. There are barriers that should be eliminated in interprovincial trade. We should be working toward that together as the board of directors of corporation Canada. I think we can move in that direction.

At the same time we cannot ignore that there is a requirement, an obligation in fact, for us to have negotiations with foreign countries. If we see where the Prime Minister is today and has been for the past day or two, there is an interesting problem there. The Americans do not want to sign the MAI because they do not like the fact that we are upset with the Helms-Burton act. They want to be isolationists. They do not mind trading with China. They do not mind trading with a country whose human rights record is undoubtedly and arguably the worst in the world, but they do not want to trade with the little island of Cuba.

Yet we see what our Prime Minister has been able to accomplish in softening the relationship with Cuba, in getting a settlement from the Cuban government for Confederation Life. We have to have these kinds of discussions and negotiations if we are to play on the world economic stage.

We should just settle down. Let us get the MAI document out. We should not be abrogating our labour standards, we should not be abrogating our environmental standards, we should not be abrogating our health and safety requirements in this country. This government would not allow that to happen. But because these things are put on the table we get knee-jerk reactions from people who put blinders on and refuse to even discuss it.

We must have negotiations on globalization, on international trade if we are ever to increase the marketplace for the 30 million people in this great country. We cannot do it all internally. Interprovincial trade is a problem but globalization is here to stay. Canadians should embrace it and have confidence to be able to compete on a world stage in the business community and in the arts and culture.

I have that confidence and I know our government does as well.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to what the member who just spoke was saying, but I have to say I find it utter nonsense.

The member is in favor of free trade, in favor of international trade. But does he know that, for example, Quebec's Unibroue, the micro-brewery Quebeckers are so proud of because it produces a quality beer that is sold all over the world, is unable to sell a single bottle of beer in Ontario because of the tariffs and structures the Ontario government has put in place to keep out producers from Quebec and, I suppose, from other provinces also?

• (1240)

I would like to say to the member that, without customers from Quebec who bought cars made by Ford, Chrysler and GM in Ontario, at almost double the price these same products are sold for in the United States, without protectionist measures, the Ontario economy would have taken a nosedive and its automobile industry would be dying.

I am in favor of trade, but we have to start from identical bases and production costs must be identical because of the commitment of governments to respect certain rights.

How can we sell a welding product, for example, when a welder in this country must wear special protective clothing, his workshop must be heated, and he must receive a minimum salary, whereas in Venezuela, I saw a welder working in shorts, barefoot, on the street corner, using the bottom of a bottle for a mask? How can we be competitive in these situations?

I would like my colleague to explain this to me because he seems to be the one who has the absolute truth, today, in the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with the concern raised in the case of the micro brewery in Quebec. It is ludicrous.

The problem is the beer distribution system in the province of Ontario is fundamentally controlled by the big brewers. That is where we need to resolve the problem. They control the distribution system. The hon. member's micro brewery in the province of Quebec cannot get listed on Brewers Retail. We do not sell it in corner stores and in grocery stores like in other parts of this country. There is a fundamental problem there. The hon. member raises a valid point. Quebec and Ontario should sit down and discuss how we can alleviate that injustice.

The province of Quebec buys over \$9 billion more from Ontario businesses than the reverse. We have a very healthy balance of trade. We have a very healthy interest in working with the province

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of Quebec. We have some room because of that balance of trade. I invite those issues to be put on the table.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Mississauga West did say there was a \$9 billion surplus. I have not checked the figures, but surely they will want to keep those billions once Quebec becomes sovereign—

An hon. member: Surely.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: A \$9 billion surplus is very attractive to them.

His speech made us aware of the importance, the relevance and the rightness of the motion and the debate put forward by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. How can anyone remain insensitive to so much nonsense, inconsistency and madness in a 10-minute speech? Perhaps this would deserve a mention in the Guinness Book of World Records. I don't know, but I never heard such thing.

First, about eliminating child poverty, Canada signed an agreement in New York on the elimination of poverty. They were there in New York.

Second, in their red book, they talked about eliminating child poverty. He is a member of the Liberal Party.

Third, I would like to ask him if the number of poor children has risen or fallen since he has been sitting here. Why is he shying away from his role as a parliamentarian and refusing to let a parliamentary committee be set up to deal specifically with these matters?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear what this government has done in relation to the economy. Our recent budget set out how we have the country on track. We have eliminated the deficit of \$42 billion. All that is vitally important to the success of programs that will help eliminate poverty. It will create jobs. That is how we are going to eliminate poverty.

Unlike the members opposite, who appear to be social democrats or socialists en français, we believe in working in partnership with the provinces, with the territories, with the private sector, with trainers and with educational institutions to ensure there are job opportunities for all Canadians. That will eliminate poverty.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today on this motion. It calls for “considering Canadian parliamentarians’ ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor

in the new context created by the globalization of markets”. Why have we come to this?

• (1245)

One of the main movers behind this debate is the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, who spoke from the heart when he said “I am an elected representative. I want to act, I want to be able to have an impact so that my fellow citizens can have a voice in this transformation we see going on throughout the world, where we hear continually of dollars, of effects on investment, of effects on cost-effectiveness”.

But his question was this. “Are these changes good for the people of my country? Are they aimed at improving the collective well-being? Am I, as an elected representative, capable of exercising enough influence to harness globalization?”

Everyone favours increased trade. We know that the number of wars in the world is decreasing, which makes it possible to have broader economic markets and allows small countries to also benefit. Wide political room is no longer needed, just wide economic room.

How, though, can we ensure that certain people do not get hurt by this globalization? I will ask two questions to illustrate this. First, is it or is it not true that the total annual income of the more than 250 million poorest people on earth equals the net worth of the six richest people? The answer is that this is true. This is not surprising, considering that close to one-third of humanity lives in abject poverty and earns less than US\$1 per day.

Second, is it or is it not true that, as the world gets richer, the gap between rich and poor is widening? This is false. It is not narrowing. The gap has more than doubled in a little less than one generation. Why? Because out of each \$100 in economic growth, \$86 goes to the richest 20%, and only \$1.10 goes to the poorest 20%.

These are questions and answers that are food for thought. This situation is not the result of chance. It is the result of people looking after their own interests, people seeking to have their economic interests taken into account and promoting the increase of trade. We have had agreements such as NAFTA, the creation of agencies such as the WTO, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund. All these organizations look after their interests.

As parliamentarians, what is our duty? Our duty is to be the democratic hope of people. When someone in Saint-Alexandre-de-Kamouraska, where there is a hog slaughterhouse, tells me: “It seems to me that suddenly there are fewer jobs. What is going on?” Well, this is linked to globalization. Somewhere in Asia there is an economic crisis going on. It has an impact on the marketplace, on the sale and consumption of pork for example, and in turn it results in fewer jobs in a village in my riding.

Supply

These are issues I must, as an elected representative, find ways to rectify, change, modify. It may not appear like much but, for instance, Bill C-36 contains a clause providing for an increase in the amount of money the federal government can give the International Monetary Fund to deal with international crises. It looks perfect at first glance, but is it not a way to invite speculators to provoke crises because to cash in and, in the end, force the states and the Monetary Fund to make up the difference and find their way out of these crises?

These are important questions and the motion sets them out. Now that the private sector is responsible for creating wealth, we assume the equally important responsibility of distributing it.

In that regard, the performance of the last few years leaves much to be desired. In the motion, there is a historical reference. In 1989, the House adopted a motion calling for the elimination of child poverty by the year 2000. We have our work cut out for us if we really want to do it before the year 2000. This morning, the National Council on Welfare submitted a report to the Standing Committee on Finance in which it says that "There are about one and a half million poor children in Canada. About two thirds of them, roughly one million, live in families on welfare".

If the Canadian Parliament had to be evaluated today on its performance in its fight against child poverty, it would be judged to have failed miserably. It would not get a passing mark, because it is not living up to its commitment.

• (1250)

Given the apathy of the Liberal majority in particular, and given that it does not want to support this motion, what will it take for parliamentarians to act on this issue?

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean rose to the challenge. He is asking parliamentarians from all political parties to commit to finding solutions. We have not yet reached that stage. We are merely asking parliamentarians to commit to finding solutions, and we cannot get this commitment from the Liberal majority. We will have to come up with an even more compelling way to get results.

We set an objective. We mentioned 50,000 signatures on the petition being circulated to ask that these positions be considered. The Liberals are silent on the issue. They are not even prepared to have a debate and to allow a parliamentary committee look at it. We will counter their silence with thousands of signatures opposing it. We already have 50,000 of them and, if more are needed, we will get them.

Child poverty is present everywhere. Last weekend, I took part in various activities and I asked people about the appropriateness of the chair episode. No one questioned the fact that fighting poverty is the way to ensure globalization does not turn to our disadvan-

tage. Everyone feels it is an important issue for which solutions must be found. I do not have these solutions. I do not know yet whether bank mergers are a good thing and I do not know yet how this ought to be done.

But I do want the debate started by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean to take place. We must ask ourselves these questions, otherwise the year 2005 or 2010 will roll around and we will still not have any solutions. We ourselves will no longer be in this Parliament, because we will have found another option, but the situation will not have changed.

In 1989, almost 10 years ago, the House pledge to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Today, there are still 1.5 million Canadian children living in poverty. We must not find ourselves in the same situation 10 years from now, or in an even worse situation.

I will conclude on this note. How can we achieve such a result? Some people say we are naïve. Being naïve can trigger change. One who is naïve and politically organized and who has the determination to do achieve results will put the issues on the table, will discuss them and will find effective solutions.

But we must never do what the Prime Minister did. After having almost strangled a protester, he is now heaping ridicule on the youngest member in this House because he asked this basic question "What can we do to narrow the gap between rich and poor? How can we make sure that globalization will not have negative impacts, but positive ones?"

The Prime Minister will have to live with the consequences of his actions. I think he knew very well what was happening. He knows very well that he is unable and unwilling to deal with this issue. The Prime Minister, the Liberal members and all members of Parliament should react by saying this "It is indeed an important issue that has been raised by the member for Lac-Saint-Jean".

It is an issue of paramount importance and members of Parliament have a key role to play. It is on that, in particular, that the people in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada will judge them. Have they managed our country well or have they only been spectators who zap from place to place with their remote control while letting others decide in their place and waiting to see how things will develop?

[English]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member from the Bloc and I am wondering if the member could tell the House what aspect of globalization is hurting Canada. Is it the free trade agreement with the United States? Is it the NAFTA with United States and Mexico? Is it the World Trade Organization where we have negotiated with 132 other member countries or is it the MAI?

Supply

Could the member explicitly tell us what aspect of globalization is being hurt by treaties Canada signed?

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, there is a concrete example that can be readily given, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. If we ever negotiate such an agreement without a basic exemption for cultural matters, it would be unacceptable and very dangerous for Quebec as well as for Canada.

If we were to close our eyes on how different countries treat their employees or environmental issues, we would allow the development of submarkets or situations where there would be undue competition. People will be treated unequally to attract capital and to meet requirements. These are elements of globalization that we must control.

There is no contradiction. And if there is anyone who can understand that in Canada, it is Quebecers. We were the architects of the signing of the free trade agreement with the United States. We were in favour of signing the agreement, but we wanted to ensure that its conditions were acceptable.

When you go in with a considerable capital—as in the case of the MIA, for example—the people living in the countries to our south who profit from these investment projects must have an equal opportunity and these projects must be made under acceptable conditions.

We must also ensure that productivity gains due to globalization are distributed among the country's citizens. If it is always the same people who are profiting from the revenues, there is a major problem.

We had the same problem at the end of 19th century, before the Industrial Revolution. Ten- to twelve-year old children worked in mines and textile mills. Some people said this did not make sense; it was the start of labour unions. They tried to humanize these attitudes.

Today, on the eve of the 21st century, we are faced with the same challenge because, in effect, if the annual revenue of more than 250 million of the poorest people on earth equals the net assets of the six richest persons, then something is not working in the system. As an elected representative, I am responsible, as are all other members in the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member talk about the need for cultural exemptions. I was trying to find out what area was the biggest concern.

The member stated that unless Canada achieves a cultural exemption under the MAI there are serious problems for Canada.

We have an investment agreement and a treaty with the United States and Mexico called the NAFTA. We have a cultural exemption under the NAFTA but I wonder if the member recognizes that the cultural exemption also provides for the United States to retaliate in equivalent measure for any protectionist measure we take.

Given that most cultural people in the industry seem to think the threat is coming from the United States, I am wondering about the logic of this because the NAFTA is going to stay in place no matter what we do in terms of the MAI. I am wondering if the member is not giving a little too much credence to the MAI. The NAFTA is going to stay in place and it takes precedence in terms of the culture agreement with the United States in any case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, we should not forget that one of our goals in NAFTA was to have a judicial body that could make binding rulings in certain circumstances.

We had the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States, for example. There did not seem to be a way out of this problem through discussions between our two countries. The free trade agreement provides for a set of rules to make this kind of decision and includes consultation mechanisms so that we can use an arbitration process if appropriate.

That is but one way of reining in international agreements so that, in the future, decisions will be made in an appropriate and compassionate way.

Other conditions are equally important. It is crucial for Quebec to get a clause protecting provincial jurisdictions. For as long as we are a part of Canada, if an agreement such as the MAI is signed without such a clause, it will be an encouragement for members opposite to resort to the same practice the Conservative government used to encroach upon our jurisdictions. They could also justify these intrusions under international agreements and say that, because of these, they have to take action in education and other sectors.

This is essential for us. To conclude, we believe the assessment we will make of the impact of globalization will depend not only on the wealth that it creates, but also on the distribution of this wealth between the people who live in the various countries that are involved in different trade relations.

• (1300)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We are a bit out of rotation, so will go to the hon. member for Quebec and then to the member for Laval West and then back to our normal rotation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, work is a right, employment is a necessity, and poverty is an affront to

human dignity, an injustice to our learned institutions and an infringement of fundamental freedoms.

It is in this context that the Bloc Québécois supports the proposal by the youngest member in the House, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, that a parliamentary committee be struck to look at the issue of the role and authority of governments with respect to the redistribution of wealth.

A debate on this scale cannot be partisan. It is therefore with confidence that I urge my fellow members in the House to take an active role in the Bloc Québécois' proposal.

I would like to take a moment to read out the motion. It goes as follows:

That this House reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000, urge the government to act, and strike an all-party Special Parliamentary Committee with the main objective of considering Canadian parliamentarians' ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor in the new context created by the globalization of markets, because of the following facts:

(1) despite the economic growth of recent years, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen;

(2) the globalization of markets greatly affects governments' ability to develop their countries' economies in accordance with their priorities; and

(3) globalization and the international agreements that frame it, particularly the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) as now written, may limit some of governments' powers and consequently those of the representatives elected to this House.

I will begin by recalling the observation of one of this century's great thinkers, Fernand Dumont, who said, in *Raisons communes*, that "Problems do not go away because we have talked about them too much; they persist because we have not resolved them". He was right, of course.

Indeed, in our ridings, we are constantly reminded of the increase in poverty by the very people who suffer because of that problem. Every day, the fact that poverty is on the rise is reported by the media and by members in the House of Commons. Since we came to the House in 1993, this issue has been a priority of the Bloc Québécois. It is an ongoing concern among our members.

As for statistics, they leave no room for argument. They show that, despite economic growth, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow rapidly. A study from the national forum on family security concluded that, between 1981 and 1991, in the bottom 20% of the income scale, \$25,000 or less, incomes dropped by \$400 million. In the middle income group, between \$39,000 and \$54,200, incomes dropped by \$2.7 billion. However, in the top 20% of the income scale, \$74,000 or more, incomes increased by \$6.6 billion.

What is the situation elsewhere? In 1992, the wealthiest 20% of the population in the United States had an income that was 11 times

Supply

higher than that of the poorest 20%, compared to seven and a half times in 1969. Internationally, the wealthiest 20% of the population have seen their share of the world income increase from 70% to 85% between 1960 and 1991, whereas the poorest 20% have seen their share drop from 2.3% to 1.4%.

But beyond these statistics, there is pain. There are children who are hungry and parents who are desperate because they cannot give them what they need. There are young people who are reluctant to bring children into this world because they are in dire financial straits. Do we have the right to remain silent and to continue to include in our legislation what really amounts to the social and economic exclusion of an important part of our collective wealth?

People looking for a job must not be reduced to developing productive resources. They are human beings who want to take an active part in economic growth. It is in this perspective that we must reflect on the globalization of trade and, particularly, on the multilateral agreement on investment.

● (1305)

Globalization is more than a theory or an ideology. It is a reality we see every day. Whether we like it or not, rising to a changing and knowledge based international environment has become the main concern of industrial strategies and national economic policies.

The Bloc Québécois is aware of this reality. That is why we agree with the MAI principle, which is aimed essentially at defining a legal framework for alleviating the uncertainty associated with investing in a foreign country by making it an obligation to implement the same measures for national and foreign businesses, to promote investment and, at the same time, economic growth.

But before we support this agreement, we must get right to the bottom of an aspect of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. I would like to raise one of the aspects that concerns me the most, that is the increasing impoverishment of people and the gap between rich and poor.

The social clause is the most important aspect for me today and I would like to stress it. I know there are others claimed by the Bloc and by the Canadian people, but the social clause is the one that would allow us to have a better control so that the gap between rich and poor would not deepen.

Since 1994, OECD union organizations have been calling for the inclusion, in all trade agreements, of a social clause committing countries to respecting the seven fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization. What is at stake here is the freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the ban on forced labour and job discrimination, among other things.

Supply

With respect to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, I know that the preamble to the report does mention the attachment of signatory states to the 1992 Rio Declaration. But how can such an undertaking be taken seriously when it is known for a fact that the United States ratified only one convention out of seven and that Canada has signed only four of them?

Some may fear that this agreement on investment could be signed without a social clause. Instead, we would like the investment treaty to be negotiated under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, because it is more representative. At the moment, the OECD has only 29 member states, while the WTO has 130.

The Bloc Québécois wants more transparency and I think it has the support of the people. We want more transparency because we know that the people are very concerned and did not have a say in this agreement which will probably be signed next fall.

More transparency is needed. This agreement must generate more local benefits and some guaranteed net benefits for the countries involved in increasing capital flow. The people must be the first to benefit from any increase in capital flow. We are well aware of the problems associated with some agreements that may not be complied with. Capital outflows could be catastrophic for some of the countries involved in this agreement. National economies would become more vulnerable.

Safeguards must be in place to avoid abuses and to ensure that this agreement benefits people. I strongly support the motion tabled this morning.

Since I was elected, child poverty and the impoverishment of the people have been at the heart of all my comments and speeches in this House.

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will not repeat the figures just cited. They are correct and everyone can consult them. However, I am going to give a few examples from my riding.

• (1310)

Yesterday, I learned that two young people in Bonaventure killed a senior citizen. Many will say that is the way young people are, but that is not true. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility that we very often fail to assume.

Do we have to do what Martin Luther King did? Everyone is still talking about it years later. What did he do? He got directly involved. Do we have to do what Monsignor Romero or Terry Fox did?

What do we have to do? As parliamentarians we can see that although we are needed it is sometimes hard to get an idea across and to open hearts and minds.

My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, who I also congratulate, and of whom I am very proud, has raised a question. I would say it is a non-partisan question: Can something be done for young people? Can something be done for older people? Can something be done for the people in our ridings? That is what we are after. That is why we were elected.

I did not want to be passionate. I wanted to remain very calm today, for the subject to remain above partisan politics. It must appeal to our hearts and minds. We have to loosen the purse strings. Perhaps we should be the first to do so.

However, without a debate, if there is not an actual committee responsible for weighing the pros and cons, and especially possible approaches, what means do we have at our disposal in the next two years to ease the situation a bit?

The Prime Minister has often said that Canada is a rich country. It is. The wealth is there, but who holds it? Twenty per cent of the people who are starving come from our ridings, and it hurts.

My colleague spoke of the next ten years, I want to ask about the period up to 2000. How could we get people some help? There are petitions, of course, but is there anything else?

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, earlier, I said that globalization is more than just a theory or an ideology, it is an everyday reality. My hon. colleague talked about the sadness and despair he often sees among his fellow citizens, at least among those who do not have a decent salary, because there are no jobs.

Indeed, the fact that this issue can be addressed in the House of Commons, that we are having a debate and that the people can take part is indeed a good thing. I think we are about to sign an agreement the people have never heard of before and even us, as members of Parliament, have not had the opportunity to discuss it.

The people will have to be heard on this issue. I invite all my constituents to express their concerns about this agreement. We will have to further inform the people of all the issues the agreement will likely raise.

I talked earlier about the flow of capital. There could be flights of capital. It happens when, for some reason, agreements that have been signed are not honoured. In such cases it is the population that suffers the very serious consequences of a loss of investment.

Therefore this issue has to be taken seriously. I am glad to see that we can discuss the MIA. We could bring it up with our constituents. We will see, with the passing months, what the people think about the agreement and what are the reservations that the various countries could put forward.

We also have to respect the particularities of the various countries. Here, in Canada, we know that some of the provinces have particularities that are not mentioned in the agreement.

We have to live with the globalization of the markets, but we also have to take into consideration the capacity of the countries to evolve in tune with this huge globalization phenomenon.

• (1315)

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in response to the Bloc Québécois motion.

For the next few minutes, I will be emphasizing that, in its latest budget, our government has taken effective, targeted action to maintain and improve the situation of low and middle income Canadians.

The 1998 budget marks the beginning of a broad based tax relief effort comprised of two major initiatives and designed to maintain targeted relief for those who need it most and in areas where the greatest benefits will be achieved.

Over the next three years, the measures contained in the budget will translate into \$7 billion in tax relief benefiting mostly low and middle income taxpayers.

Relief will be small at first, as the fiscal dividend it comes from will itself be small. We will not make tax cuts that risk compromising neither the fiscal health we have just restored nor the priorities identified by Canadians, including health care, education and public pensions.

That is why, in accordance with this country's priorities, the government will start by reducing the taxes paid by those who can least afford them: low and middle income Canadians.

The first of the two broad based tax relief initiatives consists in increasing the non taxable income of Canadians who earn a small income. Currently the basic personal exemption is \$6,456, while the married exemption and the equivalent to married exemption cannot be more than \$5,380.

The budget provides for a \$500 increase of these amounts for low income Canadians, as a result the amount of income taxpayers can receive on a tax-free basis will be increased by \$500 for a single person earning less than \$20,000, and by \$1,000 for families earning less than \$40,000.

This measure, which is to come into force July 1, 1998, will take 400,000 low-income Canadians off the tax rolls and reduce taxes for an additional 4.6 million Canadians. The income tax relief will amount to \$85 for single taxpayers, and to a maximum of \$170 for families.

Moreover, the budget provides for the elimination of the 3% general surtax for Canadians with incomes up to about \$50,000. This surtax, a tax on tax created in 1986 to help reduce the deficit, will be lowered for Canadians with incomes between \$50,000 and around \$65,000.

Supply

As a result of this measure, which will come into force on July 1, 1998, close to 13 million taxpayers will pay no federal surtax in 1999, and another one million Canadians will see a significant reduction in their surtax liability.

These two measures provide for a very progressive distribution of tax relief since the biggest tax relief, as compared to current taxes, will go to taxpayers with the lowest income. For example, singles earning \$30,000 a year will see their tax burden reduced by 3%, while singles earning \$50,000 a year will receive a 2.4% tax reduction.

A family with an annual income of \$30,000 will get a 31% reduction, while for a family earning \$50,000 taxes will fall by 3.3%. As a result, a family earning \$30,000 will see its total federal income taxes falling to about \$300 or about 1% of its income.

True to previous budgets, the 1998 budget provides for targeted tax relief for those who need it most.

Under the Canadian Opportunities Strategy, for the first time ever, interest payments on student loans will be deductible.

• (1320)

This measure will be extended to all students and will benefit more than one million people. For example, for a student with a typical debt, this measure will mean a federal and provincial tax reduction of almost \$530 the first year and of up to \$3,200 over a ten year paydown.

The budget also proposes several measures that will allow Canadians to improve their qualifications, for instance the extension of the education credit to part time students. A part time student taking two eligible courses will be able to save \$120 in taxes. This measure will reduce the costs associated with education and will facilitate continuing education for over 250,000 part time students.

In recognition of the expenses associated with education and to promote continuing education, the government will now allow part time students to claim the child care expense deduction. This measure, which will affect about 50,000 part time students, will allow a parent with two children who is taking two courses to save about \$550 in taxes.

Together, these two measures will more than triple, from \$300 to almost \$1,000 a year, the tax savings for a typical part time student with two children.

To support continuing education, the budget also proposes to allow Canadians to make tax free withdrawals from their RRSPs to finance full time education and training.

Taxpayers will be able to withdraw, tax free, up to \$10,000 a year, without exceeding \$20,000 over a four year period. To preserve their retirement incomes, taxpayers will have to reimburse these withdrawals over a ten year period.

Supply

Support measures for families are also included in the budget. For example, there is an increase of the child care expense deduction from \$5,000 to \$7,000 for children under age 7, and from \$3,000 to \$4,000 for children aged 7 to 16. A parent with two preschool children will have his or her taxes reduced by \$1,600. This measure takes into account the child care expenses paid by full time working parents and will benefit 65,000 families with children.

The 1998 budget contains another family support measure. It adds \$850 million to the \$850 million increase in the child tax credit announced in the 1997 budget, to come into effect in July 1998. This will be introduced in two stages. The first calls for \$425 million more per year, starting July 1999, and the second the identical amount in July 2000.

The government also plans a credit for natural caregivers, which will decrease the combined federal and provincial tax by \$600 for those taking care of an aged parent or a disabled relative. Some 450,000 natural caregivers, who would not normally be eligible for the disabled dependent credit, will benefit from this assistance. In addition, a GST and HST exemption will apply to expenses incurred in providing temporary assistance to a person whose self-sufficiency is limited through disability.

In order to encourage the hiring of young people aged 18 to 24, employers will pay no EI contributions for new jobs created for young people in 1999 and 2000.

I would like to add, before closing, that I will share my remaining time with the minister.

Along with the reduction in employers' contributions to employment insurance, which have been dropped to \$2.70 per \$100 of insurable earnings since January 1, 1998, this measure marks an important step in facilitating job creation for young Canadians.

• (1325)

In order to treat self-employed workers and limited companies more fairly, the budget proposes that Canadian self-employed individuals may, starting this year, deduct their contributions to health and dental insurance plans from business income.

In closing, I would like to add that globalization definitely poses considerable challenges to our society. The technological progress of the past two decades outstrips that of the entire last century. The 1998 Liberal budget reflects this phenomenon by proposing targeted tax relief and by building a solid economy—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised at what the member had to say. I thought we were talking about the MAI and its impact on the gap between the rich

and poor. What I heard sounded like a budget being brought in. It was as though the Minister of Finance were making his budget speech.

This is the sort of self-congratulation we often hear from the members opposite when it comes time to hold a debate. They are always telling us how wonderful they are, as though we were living in the most wonderful country in the world and had no problems here in Canada.

Why has child poverty increased? It is certainly not because of everything the government has done. I will take my cue from the member opposite. If she wants to refer to the budget, I too can play at that.

What is her opinion of the non-indexation of the child tax benefit, of the personal tax tables, of the tightened EI eligibility criteria, of the cuts in the Canada social transfer that have taken a serious toll on the public? The end result is that the public is worse off. Not once did I hear the member expressing any concern over the agreement being signed. Is she not concerned about the various provisions. The member did not point to one provision that concerned her.

I have two criticisms of what she said. First, I do not think the government has anything to crow about. Second, I would have liked her to tell me which provisions in the MAI caused her the most concern.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the member's question. What surprises me in her criticism is that she does not seem to understand the role played by the Government of Canada.

The role of the government is to help people. How does it do that? It does it mainly through its budget. The budget is the most important element because, as we all know, it controls the allocation of moneys to the various departments.

What I have tried to demonstrate in the speech I just made in this House is how our government is responsible, how it pays special attention to the poorest, to young Canadians who need money to pursue their education. As a government, it is our responsibility to meet the needs of young people and low income families, those with very low salaries, and that is exactly what I have tried to demonstrate.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting debate today.

The Liberal member who just spoke used a lot of facts and in some respects was talking about the budget. We should examine that a bit.

The issue that has been brought up here is child poverty and globalization. In terms of poverty, would the member agree that

something should have been done in the last budget for the over 2.5 million Canadians who are still paying taxes to the federal government and earning less than \$15,000 a year? In fact the 1997-98 fiscal year which ended on March 31 would have had a surplus of over \$4.5 billion if the government had not decided to spend it.

• (1330)

I see the member is getting some coaching from her colleague but that is all right. Maybe together the two of them can figure out something.

It seems to me it would have been an opportune time to have some tax relief for low income Canadians, to take them off the tax rolls altogether. What is required are good paying jobs. People who are not in the category of having high paying jobs should not have the extra difficulty of having to pay federal taxes on an income that is very low, \$15,000 or less.

Would the hon. member agree with me on that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to that comment by saying that poverty is a very serious issue and a basic concern of our government.

I will repeat what I have already said. Let us not forget that, thanks to our budget, 400,000 people will not be paying any taxes next year. Those are the very people referred to by the member, that is people with extremely low salaries.

I would also remind the member that our fundamental task and our first priority this year has been to reduce the deficit. Not only have we reduced it, but we have eliminated it completely. It was a monumental task, and I am very proud of our achievement. We would like to do more—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but the time provided for questions and comments has expired.

[*English*]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate the hon. member's motion.

The hon. leader of the Bloc Quebecois has presented the House with a rather broad sweeping motion. I will direct my comments at the portion of the motion dealing with the elimination of child poverty which falls within my specific mandate.

While families have the primary responsibility to nurture their children, they are not alone in this critical undertaking. The healthy development of our children requires the attention and collaboration of parents with territorial and provincial governments and the private and voluntary sectors. The Government of Canada is most certainly prepared to do its part.

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I assume the hon. member was in the House during last September's Speech from the Throne. If he was he would know that the Government of Canada is working with its provincial and territorial partners to build a comprehensive and effective national child benefit system. During the Speech from the Throne the hon. leader of the Bloc Quebecois would have heard the government reiterate its commitment to "ensure that all Canadian children have the best possible opportunity to develop their full potential".

It should be noted that there is a real need to demonstrate this by one stark statistic. Eighty-five per cent of single parents are women and 65% of them live in poverty. Other groups are equally affected, such as aboriginal youth and disabled youth and children.

The throne speech went on to say that the government has already demonstrated its commitment to the well-being of our children in part by increasing our contribution to the Canada child tax benefit by \$850 million during the course of this mandate. This was not hollow rhetoric.

It is unfortunate if some members find the budget to be something reprehensible. Most of the initiatives for human development are directed at children and families in need.

The government demonstrated its intent quite clearly in the budget by repeating its commitment to increase the child tax benefit by an additional \$850 million. That is \$850 million on top of the \$850 million we committed to the Canada child tax benefit in the 1997 budget. This is already an increase in advance of what we had planned to do.

The government will live up to this commitment in a fiscally responsible manner. The \$850 million committed in the 1997 budget will come into effect July 1 this year. Of the new funding, \$425 million will be allocated in July 1999. The remaining \$425 million will come into play in July 2000. That is a total Government of Canada commitment of \$1.7 billion to try to help in part fight child poverty in Canada.

I say to the hon. member that this investment demonstrates quite clearly the government's commitment to do as much as it possibly can to move toward the elimination of child poverty in Canada. This in real terms is action. In the meantime, while we are working with our partners in planning these new strategies the government already has a number of programs in place to assist children and their families. I would like to bring a few of those programs to the attention of members.

• (1335)

The child care visions program was created in 1995. This national program for research on child care and development is administered by Human Resources Development Canada. The program supports research and evaluation projects to study current child care practices and delivery of services.

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The 1997 budget increased resources by \$100 million over the next three years for two existing community based programs that benefit children at risk. These are the community action program for children and the Canada prenatal nutrition program.

I am at the midpoint of a national tour on youth and children which will go to every province and both territories visiting and consulting with all stakeholders for children and youth. I have seen many, many wonderful programs, successful programs at the community level undertaken with the priorities as demonstrated by the people. Just yesterday I was in Quebec and Verdun visiting some stakeholders.

The community action program for children responds to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and helps community groups address health and social needs of at risk children up to six years of age. This program will allow communities all across Canada to design projects most relevant to the needs of children in their communities. It provides a variety of services such as toy lending libraries, infant stimulation, parenting education and support, and integrated services through family resource and child development centres.

Through the development of the national children's agenda and such programs as Health Canada's prenatal nutrition program, we can also begin to address issues such as fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects.

It would be most advisable to undertake the appropriate steps to ensure that we have some kind of capacity in the name of a national advisory committee for that, as well as to undertake a number of strategically appointed pilot projects that would deal with not only identifying but relating these to issues that affect things such as young offenders.

In my capacity as Secretary of State for Children and Youth, I have begun discussions with street youth, street youth workers and health care professionals on possible approaches to the issues of street youth.

One issue which affects street youth is that because they lack an address, street youth cannot enter any kind of training program. They cannot enlist in any kind of government service or program. This is very important. A mechanism should be instituted by which street youth will be able to give information that is satisfactory to various learning institutions which will allow them to participate.

We also need to be concerned about the security of these youth. These young people are someone's children and they are our country's children. While not being able to resolve this overnight, we should be able to provide some security for them, some kind of clearing house mechanism where they can have the time to make decisions. Some of these young people actually have children as well. Security is a big issue.

The First Nations and Inuit child care initiative helps to bring the quality and quantity of child care services for aboriginal communities in line with child care services available to the general population. The Government of Canada is providing \$72 million over three years to help create 4,300 new child care spaces and improve some 1,700 existing spaces. We also have committed \$36 million annually to maintain the program.

To ensure that these programs and any others that may be developed are effective, it is necessary to gather up to date information on the social condition of Canadian children. To that end Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada are currently engaged in the national longitudinal survey of children and youth. This is a long term study which revisits individuals every two years from birth to adulthood. It presents an integrated picture of their lives. The data we are gathering is assisting us in planning future programs.

• (1340)

Besides the initiatives I have mentioned, we are collaborating with our provincial and territorial partners in working toward establishing a national children's agenda. The agenda will be a broad comprehensive strategy to improve the well-being of Canada's children. The agenda's impetus will ensure that all Canadian children have the best possible opportunity to develop to their full potential as healthy, successful and contributing members of society.

As part of this national agenda we will expand our aboriginal head start program to on reserve children. We will measure the readiness of Canadian children to learn. We will establish centres of excellence for children's well-being. Federal, provincial and territorial governments will work together to fully develop the national children's agenda, one of the most significant social policy initiatives in 30 years.

There are many other programs I could speak to. Yesterday in Verdun I had the opportunity to visit the children and youth centre *Toujours ensemble*. It is a wonderful centre. I encourage members opposite to visit it. It demonstrates the excellent initiatives people undertake when they are adequately resourced by various levels of government.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speeches by the member for Laval West and by the minister. I think anyone who defends themselves for 20 minutes when no criticism has been leveled at them must have something to hide. We have not accused them of anything, but they defended themselves for 20 minutes. Something is not quite clear.

The minister said the Bloc Québécois motion was all over the place and all muddled. I will help her out with a reminder. We want

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to create a special committee to examine the disparity between the rich and the poor. That is not so very complicated.

I have two very simple questions for the minister. First, has the number of poor children increased or decreased since the Liberals have been in government? Second, why is she opposed to creating an all party special committee to consider the problem of the gap between the rich and the poor?

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I am not a person who is usually against very much. What I am in favour of is what the government has consistently been doing. That is, throughout all the successive budgets since 1993 when we became government, there are two areas where we have not reduced funding, where we have built programs consistently. We have enforced and expanded programs dealing with children and youth.

I must say that I did not state that that was confusing. I said that it was broad sweeping, that it pulled in such issues as the multilateral agreement on investment and the globalization of markets affecting the government's ability to develop the country's economies in accordance with its priorities. These are all broad assumptions and are broad sweeping issues that do not directly relate to my mandate. My mandate deals with les enfants et la jeunesse. In that mode I wanted to talk about something that is relevant to my mandate, the elimination of child poverty.

We look at the throne speech and the budget, the programs instituted, the prenatal nutrition program, the community action plan for children. I do not know whether the member opposite has bothered but I have gone to the grassroots level, to the various communities not just in Liberal held ridings but to various places. I have seen the programs. They are excellent programs. I advise the member to visit them as well.

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the hon. member.

I would like to know how the member would respond to the government's failure to set goals for decreasing unemployment. How would she respond to health and education transfers that directly affect poverty? No one would argue that increased education is one of the greatest weapons against poverty.

• (1345)

How would the minister respond to the cuts to EI that greatly affected aboriginal seasonal workers who no longer meet the requirement and are forced to go on welfare at a time when they are fighting to increase their self-worth?

We cannot look at child poverty in isolation as her other colleagues have been mentioning today. I think everyone realizes

this. How does the minister respond to only isolating child poverty from the poverty of all?

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her questions.

We are not in the practice of setting quotas or targets that we cannot meet. We put all our efforts into eliminating and trying to reduce unemployment. We have done that. We have gone from double digit to a single digit unemployment figure. That says something.

We have also created an opportunity for people by way of reducing and eliminating the deficit on top of trying to do what we can for poor people. We are not continually putting pressure back on the taxpayers of Canada. I think that speaks for itself.

We can talk about numbers but we cannot achieve anything if we do not put a concerted effort into something, which we have done consistently.

I encourage the hon. member to read the budget. It was an education budget. I do not know if she recalls but the media were calling the Minister of Finance the minister of education because of the budget he put before parliament. I encourage the member to look at all the granting systems and the millennium scholarship fund. Much debated they were, but they were necessary.

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion today. I was somewhat amused when I looked at the television broadcast of this debate and saw the line underneath the picture indicating "elimination of poverty". I thought some might say we have reached a point of arrogance to assume we in the House will eliminate all poverty.

I have some comments regarding the motion which I would like to share. The particular motion proposes to eliminate the gap between the rich and the poor and to eliminate child poverty through government intervention.

For some individuals these are noble sounding goals, but Reform would take issue with how the Bloc and others in the House propose to achieve these goals. Often the method and the determination of the outcome are more critical than just lofty sounding goals.

Some feel the answer to these problems is more megagovernment programs, more government make work projects, more protectionism, more bureaucracy, more taxes, more debt and a more unfocused federal government, more of the old vision of how a government should work.

It is because this has not worked that Reform takes a different view of how these issues should be addressed. Reform would point out that we have been through the age of megagovernment programs and it has not worked. It certainly has not eliminated the

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problems. The Bloc ostensibly says that this is an attempt to address the issue. Instead of eliminating poverty or the gap between the rich and the poor, what has been the result of megagovernment that the Bloc seems to wish to promote today?

A short list would include a \$600 billion debt, the highest taxes in the industrialized world, one-third of every tax dollar going to interest on the national debt, job insecurity for many Canadians, almost one in five of our trained young people not finding work, and a brain drain of our brightest to better opportunities in other countries.

We could do better but more of the same and bigger government are not the answer. This megagovernment vision which the Bloc and others in the House seem to support has resulted in low and single income individuals and families paying higher levels of taxation with the hope of getting some back through some government program.

Even after the latest budget an individual starts paying taxes at approximately \$7,000. Surely such individuals cannot be classified as rich, but the government still forces them to hand over their income to their megagovernment so that perhaps their megagovernment can think of some sort of bureaucracy growing program for them.

An individual earning \$29,000 will pay about 20% of his income to the federal government in personal income tax, employment insurance and CPP premiums. This total does not include the Liberals' beloved GST or any provincial taxes.

• (1350)

A megagovernment comes up with megaproposals and megaprograms which are not easily tailorable to the needs of individuals. Given the diversity of the needs of the regions in Canada, the big brother approach does not meet people where they are at.

An example might be the child tax benefit. One can agree there is value in recognizing the increased costs of raising a child, but we can take issue with how it is recognized by the government. It is important to recognize the responsibility of raising children. In the words of supreme court Justice La Forest:

Marriage has from time immemorial been firmly grounded in our legal tradition, one that is itself a reflection of longstanding philosophical and religious traditions. But ultimately its *raison d'être* transcends all these and is firmly anchored in the biological and social realities that couples have the unique ability to procreate, that children are the product of these relationships, and that they are generally cared for and nurtured by those who live in that relationship.

The family is an important relationship. The child tax benefit essentially takes money from families with children through taxes today. Then one year later they are sent a cheque. This is a year after they filed and paid their taxes. Would it not be easier to simplify the process and simply reduce their tax bill at source in the

first place and eliminate much of the bureaucracy involved in processing the program? Let the family have the money in the month it is earned and not a year later.

There is a family in my riding, the Lucas family, that shared with me a story of how there was an error in the child tax benefit the family received. Revenue Canada sent a cheque for \$1,000 and said "We underpaid you on the child tax benefit". This is a poor family that is just starting out with one young child and another one on the way. This was a windfall, \$1,000 out of the blue. The family enjoyed the \$1,000 by spending it on some immediate needs.

Three months later the family got a letter from Revenue Canada saying it was an overpayment on the child tax benefit and now the \$1,000 had to be paid back. The stress it put on that family I cannot begin to fully articulate today. However after many calls and many appeals to the taxman the family was allowed to pay so much off a month. It put tremendous stress on the family. In researching the whole situation it was not the only family that had been ground up in this bureaucratic nightmare. In fact there were many families across Canada. It is the height of administrative bureaucracy when it loses touch with the impacts it is having on everyday people.

This kind of complexity adds to the burden of taxation and administration that families have to carry. Not only have taxes become the greatest expense in the family budget, but it has become a family expense just to file an income tax return because it is so complex. There are 600 pages in the act and 700 pages of special interpretations. The Income Tax Act and the special interpretations that go with it are thicker than most phone books and it started out as a 36 page document to fund the war effort. Bureaucracy has gone crazy and it is impacting on families. The bottom line is that more government intervention in recent years has worked against the family and their children.

What is Reform's vision? Reform has pointed out that the old vision of megagovernment just is not working. This is the vision which has us working half the year just to pay the tax bill. The old vision of the current government promised job creation and social justice. That is what it promised but it delivers chronic unemployment, chronic poverty and youth crime. It is a vision which promises national unity through national programs and national standards but delivers friction, disunity, non-accountability, duplication and waste.

• (1355)

Current government vision trivializes the individual, family and community contributions by implying that only through government programs, government spending and government propaganda can the country be held together.

Reform's vision is that of a country defined and built by its citizens rather than by its government. It is a vision of smaller government and lower taxes. It is a vision that reaches out to the

initiative, drive and diversity of Canadians and calls upon individuals, families and communities to lead the way to growth, progress and unity. It allows families and communities to enjoy the fruits of their labours.

The best way to address child poverty is to address the needs of the family. This may be attained through jobs for parents or youth. This can be achieved through lower taxes and less bureaucracy. Children are members of families in the care of their parents. They are not disconnected free agents.

Reform believes that we can best help families by simplifying and reducing the burden of government on them and by showing that they make an important contribution to the health of our country. More than that, Reform would point out that we need to better respect the autonomy of families and not undermine these relationships by driving a wedge between parents and their children or between husbands and wives with greater government intervention in family relationships. That is not the answer.

These are not just my comments. These positions are written into the policies, statements and documents of the Reform Party. We affirm in our statements the duty of parents to raise their children responsibly, according to their own conscience and beliefs. We further affirm that no person, government or agency has any right to interfere in the exercise of that duty as long as the actions of parents do not constitute abuse or neglect.

Rather than saying we need bigger government and the higher taxes that go along with it, Reform is saying that we need smaller government. The money earned by families is best left in their pockets, the pockets of those who know how best to spend it to address their needs and those of their children. Children can be best served by those closest to them, that is parents and not governments. Parents know best how to address the needs of their families.

I refer to the publicity stunt we saw performed by the Bloc Quebecois member who carried his chair out of the House in protest. It is interesting that he did this to demonstrate the government's ineffectiveness in addressing child poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor—

The Speaker: The member still has well over nine minutes in his time, but seeing that it is almost two o'clock and I want to lay a report upon the table, I wonder if he would cede the floor and of course be immediately recognized when we take up the debate again.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the supplementary report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, volume I, for April 1998.

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[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e) this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, April 28, is the national day of mourning for workers who are killed or injured as a result of their jobs. In honour of this solemn occasion the Canadian flag flies at half mast on Parliament Hill and in cities and towns across the country.

According to the Canadian Labour Congress, nearly 1,000 workers die each year because of their workplaces. A million more are injured or contract some form of occupational sickness. Federal and provincial labour laws have gone a long way to protect Canadian workers, but as the numbers indicate workplace injuries and fatalities continue to occur with tragic frequency.

On this solemn occasion I wish to offer my sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones in workplace accidents and my best wishes to those who have been injured on the job. The number of Canadians killed and injured at work must be reduced. I call on hon. members to keep this in mind today and throughout the year.

* * *

● (1400)

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what is tonight's vote all about? It is about people who contacted hepatitis C through no fault of their own, people who are hurting like Mark Bulbrook of Hamilton, Ontario; James Lodge of Victoria, B.C.; Karen Neilson of Oyen, Alberta; Leona Martens of Alamed, Saskatchewan; Pat Lyons of Port Coquitlam, B.C.; Dale Strohmaier of Edmonton, Alberta; David Smith of Victoria, B.C.; Ronald Thiel of Saanich, B.C.; Louise Schmidt of Maple Ridge; Geraldine Clements of Naramata, B.C.; Rita Wegscheidler of Penticton, B.C.; Brad Baldwin of Dalman, Saskatchewan.

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These are all people left out of the hepatitis C compensation package. They deserve equal compensation with all other victims of tainted blood because they are people who are suffering just as much as those who are to be included.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval-Ouest.

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[*Translation*]

WORK RELATED ACCIDENTS

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each year, the lives of thousands of Canadian families are shattered overnight because of a work related accident. Too many families have to live through these tragedies that involve huge social and economic costs for our society.

We will never overstate the need for governments to make sure that occupational health and safety legislation and regulations are strictly enforced. In a society such as ours, this great number of work related accidents is downright unacceptable.

Our challenge is to ensure healthy and safe work conditions for all Canadian workers.

Why do we not establish as a goal in our society a rule of zero tolerance for work related accidents in order to show greater respect for the dignity of millions of Canadian workers?

* * *

[*English*]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—Cochrane, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight the House will be asked to vote on a Reform motion condemning the government's \$1.1 billion compensation package to the victims of hepatitis C.

This agreement was signed by all 10 provinces and 2 territories and by governments of all political parties.

Today I challenge all four opposition parties to come clean with Canadians. If they wish to condemn the federal government they must also publicly condemn their provincial counterparts.

I challenge the leader of the Reform Party and the leader of the Conservative Party to publicly today condemn their friends Mike Harris and Ralph Klein. I challenge the leader of the New Democratic Party today to publicly condemn Roy Romanow and Glen Clark.

[*Translation*]

I challenge the leader of the Bloc Québécois to publicly condemn right now his leader, Lucien Bouchard.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg South.

* * *

[*English*]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of the decision taken by the Minister of Health and his provincial and territorial partners concerning compensation for hepatitis C victims.

In particular I want to acknowledge the strong principled leadership of the Minister of Health in the face of clearly partisan and opportunistic criticism levelled against him by the opposition members of this House.

The easy path would be for the minister to simply pay those who are making a claim upon the government. But as the minister has noted, he and his provincial and territorial colleagues are the custodians of Canada's health care system. Because of this they have a larger responsibility, a responsibility to deal with the tough questions that confront them and make the right decisions.

The opposition members seem to think the moral high ground belongs to those who advocate the easiest and most expedient course of action, to offer blanket compensation today without thinking about the consequences for tomorrow.

It is clear, however, that the true moral high ground—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what is tonight's vote all about? It is about real people with hepatitis C, people who are sick, people who need help from this government, people like Mrs. Laurie Stoll of Maple Ridge, B.C.; Mrs. Joyce Smith of Mission, B.C.; Ed Wheeler of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; Theresa Robertson of Peterborough, Ontario; Allan Ordze of Edmonton, Alberta; Lisa Holtz of Edmonton, Alberta; Ed Neufeld of Winkler, Manitoba; Mr. Wish of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Verla Sherhols of Kanata, Ontario; Cheralynn Adie of Ottawa, Ontario; Etienne Saumure of Gatineau, Quebec; Don Jamieson of Toronto, Ontario; Joan Laing of Calgary, Alberta.

● (1405)

These are people who live in our neighbourhoods all over Canada. Every member of parliament must remember these suffering people in tonight's vote.

HEPATITIS C

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been much discussion about the rationale used by Canada's government in deciding on a collaborative approach to hepatitis C compensation.

Since the Krever commission delivered its report, the federal government has been working very hard to find a solution to this difficult problem. When Justice Krever presented governments with the facts it became clear that many of the hepatitis C infections between 1986 and 1990 might not have happened if things had been done differently.

The beginning of 1986 was when surrogate testing was first used on a national scale in the United States. To ignore that benchmark date would lead us to an unsustainable rationale for offering assistance. Even after 1986 the science of hepatitis C was still unsettled and indeed it is still evolving.

Those who claim governments should ignore such benchmark dates altogether are perhaps arguing for some sort of retroactive scheme which would eventually apply to all health care harms suffered by Canadians.

Allowing that to happen without due discussion and consideration of the consequences—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement reached by territorial, provincial and federal governments to compensate victims of hepatitis C is not perfect. No amount of money can ease the pain of those who have been infected.

By supporting the current agreement we are acting responsibly by providing assistance to those infected between 1986 and 1990. For those not covered in the current agreement we have a collective responsibility to find ways to ensure their needs are met.

The health care system in Canada is one of the finest in the world and provides a safety net for those who otherwise could not afford the services they need. That is why it is imperative to work with the provinces to improve services and ensure a better quality of life for every victim. As long as there is one victim suffering we still have work to do.

I applaud the Minister of Health for his courage and commitment to doing what is right.

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HEPATITIS C

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what is tonight's vote all about? Tonight's vote is all about people, people who could be our next door neighbour, child, spouse or even ourselves.

Hepatitis C victims are ordinary people, people like Jean Drapeau of Laval, Quebec; Steve Kemp of Toronto, Ontario; Mike McCarthy of Sebringville, Ontario; Kim Kingsley of Goderich, Ontario; Neil Van Dusen of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; Jeremy Beaty of Mississauga, Ontario; Abraham Weizfeldt of Montreal, Quebec; Charles Duguay of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario; Derek Marchand of Tottenham, Ontario; Sherry Fitger of Calgary, Alberta and her husband Don Fitger of Calgary, Alberta; William Harrison of Edmonton, Alberta.

Tonight all members of parliament have a chance to do the right thing, to stand up for the rights of victims.

We call on all members of this House, regardless of their political affiliations, to join together in affirming our support for those the government has wronged.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canada's health ministers announced the compensation package for hepatitis C victims they acknowledged that testing was available but not used in Canada between January 1, 1986 and July 1, 1990. This is the key principle underlining the compensation package.

The Reform Party motion ignores this key principle when it states that the government should "compensate all victims who contracted hepatitis C". What it is advocating is a no fault insurance scheme for Canada's health care system.

This is a wholly separate issue from the blood system inquiry. It is an issue that should be addressed on its own merits and, quite frankly, this debate has yet to happen.

Health care insurance is a provincial responsibility. I am unaware of any initiatives to establish a no fault insurance scheme for the blood system or health care in general. No fault insurance is not a feature of our health system and should not materialize by default—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laval East.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MONSIGNOR JUAN GIRARDI

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were saddened to learn yesterday of the death of Monsignor Juan Girardi, the Guatemalan assistant archbishop and human rights activist.

S. O. 31

Monsignor Girardi, who was brutally assassinated, had just presented a scathing report on the holocaust suffered by the Guatemalan people during the civil war that lasted over 36 years. His death could jeopardize the fragile peace accords signed by the factions a year and a half ago.

• (1410)

The Bloc Québécois wants to pay tribute to this brave man, who was able to warn the international community about the horrors of the armed conflict in Guatemala.

Once again, the long road to respect for human rights has been sullied by the blood of innocent victims who have sacrificed their lives to defend a fundamental right.

We extend our sympathies to the people of Guatemala.

* * *

[English]

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the flags in the House of Commons are flying at half mast out of respect for workers who are injured, killed or made ill in their workplace.

April 28 is the international day of mourning for injured and fallen workers and it is recognized by more than 70 countries around the world. Last year the United Nations conducted ceremonies to commemorate the international day of mourning at its headquarters in New York City.

Canada is a civilized and developed nation and yet today three more Canadian workers will die on the job and the same will be true tomorrow and the day after. In fact, 1,000 Canadian workers a year will die at work and almost a million more will suffer some form of lost time due to injury, sickness or occupational disease.

Canadian workers get up in the morning to earn a living, not to be injured, butchered or maimed on behalf of some arbitrary production schedule. Why can we not end the carnage in our workplaces? When will industry and government commit to decent enforcement of our health and safety legislation?

Our caucus is committed to working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

* * *

[Translation]

HEPATITIS C

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have personally been affected by hepatitis C.

A childhood friend of mine died, about two months ago, of hepatitis C.

Like many Canadians who have been closely following this debate, I am deeply worried about the expectations our blood supply system has raised and the impact these great expectations can have on our overall health care system.

Medicine is not infallible. Science is not infallible. Some types of treatment, medication and material are more risky than others. Blood is the gift of life, but blood is also a high-risk natural biological product.

The health care system, including the blood supply system, is doing its best to reduce the risks for those who use it.

Governments and other stakeholders have the responsibility to react when harm can—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

* * *

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, the hepatitis C issue is not about faceless, nameless Canadians who are affected not only by this tragic illness but by this government's tragic policy.

Hepatitis C is about our neighbours, our sons, our daughters and people who work and live beside us every day.

One of those people wrote the Minister of Health recently:

You need to hear this from my heart. I live with hepatitis C every day, and don't think it's easy to live with somebody who has only days to live. Hepatitis C has destroyed his liver. Every day I watch him fading away—preparing myself for his death not being able to get physically close. How extraordinary considering that my husband has worked his whole life to support the health care system. The system gave him this disease and now at 47 his only recourse is \$700 a month on disability. You've taken away his health, you've have taken away his will and now you take away his dignity.

I only ask that members opposite carefully listen to these words and vote for compassion this evening.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING FOR INJURED AND FALLEN WORKERS

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Mourning for Injured and Fallen Workers.

Designated by Parliament and observed in more than 70 countries, as well as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, this day underlines the seriousness of occupational diseases, accidents and deaths.

Oral Questions

In federally regulated sectors alone, there is a work related injury every two minutes: 57,000 workers are injured every year, over 50 of them fatally.

In the agricultural sector, between 1991 and 1995, there were 503 deaths, making farming the most dangerous occupation in North America.

There is a huge gap between the legislation governing safety and security in the workplace and its enforcement. It is shameful that even today there are so many workers killed while trying to make a living.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tonight's vote is about real people like Ronald Thiel of Saanichton, B.C. who was infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood when he had a heart valve replaced in 1983.

His liver is badly damaged. He had to stop working at age 53. He has suffered many medical complications which have made his life a misery. He writes "I know that I am dying before my time but I have no intention of going to my grave without fighting this injustice as long as I can".

Mr. Thiel speaks for all excluded hepatitis C victims when he paraphrases Shakespeare. "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? If you wrong us, do we not revenge?"

The government cannot escape its responsibility. The victims of the tainted blood scandal and the people of Canada will one day require justice. But how much more honourable, how much more noble it would be for this parliament to offer compassion to the suffering today, rather than be forced to do so by the heavy hand of the law tomorrow.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tonight MPs have a chance to vote in favour of compensating all those victims who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood.

The health minister says that the government should not accept responsibility for victims prior to 1986 because there was no way

to detect hepatitis C in the blood supply before that time. However, Justice Krever says that there was a test available to the government as far back as 1981 and the government never acted.

I ask the government again, in the name of justice, why will it not simply let MPs vote for these victims tonight?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is an agreement between the federal government and all the provincial governments and territories.

If the opposition parties are silent and do not criticize the provincial governments for being part of this agreement, then logically and credibly they should not be attacking the federal government for being part of the same agreement.

I invite the Reform Party and the opposition parties to rethink their positions. If they do, I think they will see why we are opposing the motion.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is an irrelevant answer to a question that was never asked.

The real arguments come from the health minister. He keeps on repeating that compensating hepatitis C victims would open up the legal floodgates to everyone, but that argument is also false.

Contracting hepatitis C from tainted blood was not some unavoidable accident. What we are talking about is compensating people who became ill because of proven government negligence.

I ask again, in the name of compassion and fairness, why will the government not allow the MPs to vote for these victims?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is it that since the last election the Reform Party did vote as a group on every measure except three times?

Certainly there is an argument for coherence on the part of the Reform Party. Certainly there is the same argument when it comes to measures like this one.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this government has not only lost its head, it has lost its heart as well.

It is forcing Liberals who got involved in politics to build a just society to be unjust. It is forcing Liberals who profess compassion to vote against compassion. It is forcing Liberals who know what is right in this case to vote against it.

My question is, why is the government forcing its members to vote against justice, compassion and against what they know in their hearts is right?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is the leader of the Reform Party shedding crocodile tears for Liberal members today when the real fact is he is not interested in their best interests, he is interested in his best interests and those of his party?

Oral Questions

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is not true and this government knows it.

The tears are being shed by all victims of hepatitis C who contracted this disease through government negligence and government negligence alone.

Many of these Liberal backbenchers got involved in politics because they really cared. They really thought that they would go to Ottawa and do the right thing.

They may laugh, but I have one question for this government. When people know what is right in their hearts, why is it they might wear just a little ribbon and say "I love you, but only on my lapel"?

• (1420)

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here to do our best and to do what is right. That is the position of all of us in this House.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the government talks about doing what is right. It knows exactly what it has to do to do what is right, that is, to compensate all victims of tainted blood. It did it with HIV. It did it over the years with thalidomide. It could do it today because it knows in its heart what is right.

I want to ask this government one more time: Why does it hide behind legalities and technicalities? Why does it not do what is right and allow its members to vote for hepatitis C victims?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is the hon. member completely silent when it comes to the matter of talking about the position of the provincial governments on this matter? Their position is exactly the same as the federal government's position.

I repeat, if they cannot criticize the provincial governments, then logically, credibly, on every basis, they should not be criticizing the federal government.

If the provincial governments are right, then the federal government, on this issue, cannot be wrong.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, usually, it is the opposition parties that insist on having certain issues become the object of a confidence vote.

However, as regards the motion on which we will vote this evening, it is the Prime Minister himself who raised the issue of confidence, contrary to the conventions which, generally speaking, provide that only budget issues can be the object of a confidence vote.

How can the government insist on making the vote on the hepatitis C motion a vote of confidence, if not to muzzle some of its members who want—

The Speaker: The Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong. In our system, it is up to the Prime Minister, not the opposition, to decide whether a motion is a motion of confidence.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us take an example. When the House voted on the amendment concerning school boards, the Prime Minister decided it would be a free vote, on the grounds that members should vote according to their conscience.

Why was the vote on an amendment affecting school boards a matter of conscience, but not the vote on a motion to compensate hepatitis C victims? Can the Deputy Prime Minister explain that?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation is not the same. It is a different situation and this is why today's vote is a confidence vote.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister suggested to recalcitrant Liberal members that there is a possibility of a new compensation program for excluded victims. The Minister of Human Resources Development ruled out this possibility, however, as did the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister have the courage to admit that he alluded to the possibility of a new program for the sole reason of reassuring members such as the member for Gatineau and making sure that they vote against their convictions?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not announce a new program, nor was it my intention to announce a new program.

We are here to reject the attack on the agreement between the federal government and all provinces, including Quebec, relating to this difficult matter.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to treat hepatitis C victims differently from HIV victims, claiming that the cost would be too high.

Why is the federal government, which is certainly not short of money, refusing fair and equitable treatment for hepatitis C victims?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we applied the same principle in the case of hepatitis C victims that we did with HIV victims. We accepted the notion of responsibility, or fault. In the case of HIV victims, it is clear that, during the period in question, the government could have taken action to prevent these infections. We applied exactly the same principle.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health who, like his colleague, hides behind the provincial governments.

• (1425)

Is the Minister of Health not aware that under questioning in the Manitoba legislature the minister of health for Manitoba, the hon. Darren Praznik, has as much as said that the provinces were prisoners, somewhat like Liberal backbenchers, of the Minister of Health's willingness to only put money on the table for the 1986-1990 window? That was all that was on the table and the provinces—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolute nonsense.

Coming to the point, there are those beyond the political forum who are able to see that the governments of Canada are right in the approach they have taken to this issue. I refer, for example, to the 16 deans of Canada's medical schools who met last weekend and whose executive issued a resolution saying that indeed the governments are right in offering compensation to those who were infected in the 1986 to 1990 time period.

It is good public policy. We are all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not address the matter of the provinces being willing to go beyond the 1986-1990 period if the federal government had been willing to put more money on the table.

Instead of hiding behind the provinces and blaming them for a situation they did not create, would the minister be willing to put more money on the table and start up the negotiations to get some compensation for the other victims?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know, for his information, that as of last summer there was no provincial government prepared to talk about compensating any hepatitis C victims.

The only reason we have \$1.1 billion being offered to 22,000 victims of hepatitis C is that the federal government took the leadership and made that happen.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is finally showing some concern about human rights in Cuba, but what about human rights and the rights of the innocent victims of tainted blood here in Canada? What about the rights of elected MPs who are being made prisoners of bad Liberal policy?

The vote tonight on hepatitis C is not about which political party wins or loses, it is about doing what is right.

Why will the Prime Minister not stop tearing the heart and soul out of some of his MPs by forcing them to vote against their conscience and do what is right to correct this injustice?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when members vote tonight, of whatever party, I am sure each and every one will be doing what he or she thinks is right.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, tonight's vote is not about confidence, it is about conscience and compassion. If they are going to do what is right, and if they are going to do it with compassion, we know that we will win for sure.

This is about some Liberal members of the House being forced by the Prime Minister to support an unjust compensation package.

Not one member of the PC caucus would criticize the Prime Minister or a member of the government if this injustice were to be corrected tonight and a motion brought forward to treat all victims equally.

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me right, and perhaps I am wrong, if *Hansard* is checked it will show that last week in the debate a Conservative member said that this was a vote of confidence.

I suggest the hon. member check *Hansard*. I suggest the hon. leader ought to talk to her own members.

I think if Liberal members have a choice, and they have a choice, they would much rather stand with the Prime Minister than with the hon. member and her colleagues.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have had quite a bit of correspondence on the hepatitis C issue. I have just such a letter here, a letter that calls for compensation for all victims of hepatitis C.

It is fascinating where this letter came from. It came from the Liberal official opposition of British Columbia. Why should the Liberals in B.C. know what is right and correct when the Liberals in Ottawa are obviously on the wrong track?

• (1430)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has now been some days that the hon. member has been asking these questions. I urge the hon. member to remember that we are talking in the last analysis about our public health system in Canada.

Members of the government realize that we have no greater moral duty, we have no higher responsibility to all Canadians including the victims of hepatitis C, than to ensure that our

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publicly funded system of medicare will be there when they need it into the future.

There is no greater way of imperilling that system than to take the course urged—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Macleod.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister stood today and said nobody was criticizing the provinces. Here are his cousins in B.C.—

The Speaker: I ask the hon. member to address the Chair and not to use any props.

Mr. Grant Hill: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. The question we have to ask the government is a simple question. Why is it not compensating all victims of hepatitis C just like its Liberal cousins want to see happen in British Columbia? Why not?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question at the heart of this matter is not the question put by the hon. member for his own reasons. It is the question he refused to respond to in the debate last week, namely, should the public make cash payments to those injured through the health system where they were injured through no one's fault. The answer to that has to be no.

Indeed in the last analysis, as disclosed in *Hansard* of last Thursday, the hon. member came to that conclusion. That is the reason this government and all governments of Canada are taking the right course.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The auditor general has criticized the fact that 66% of military equipment expenditures are unnecessary.

How does the minister explain that, of three billion dollars in annual purchases, two billion dollars' worth of equipment are not required by the army?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not the case. We have less resources. We have to learn how to operate within less resources, and our people are doing that.

Yes, a lot of improvements need to be made in the system and have been in fact made over the last number of years. We are in accordance with the recommendations that the auditor general presents. We are working with them to bring about improvements in our system in terms of procurement.

[Translation]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problem in this department is not the lack of money. It is the way it is being spent.

Before requesting more money to keep his capricious generals happy, will the minister prove to us his ability to manage his department by putting an end to the horror stories the auditor general continues to report?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the hon. member read the same report I did. I read the auditor general's report. I talked to the auditor general.

As I said a few moments ago we are implementing improvements and changes. We go through very extensive analysis as to what is required for the Canadian military. We do not have all the money to do all the things we would like to do, but we are buying the best equipment. We are trying to provide our troops with the best equipment possible to make sure they can do their job.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Christine Campbell had a blood transfusion for a gall bladder operation in 1985 when she was 29 years old. She writes:

For the past 13 years I have suffered extreme fatigue, bowel problems, nervous conditions and a lot of burnout—. I live in fear of deteriorating even more—. I did not ask for this but I am paying for it and therefore I feel I am being treated unfairly by—being excluded from compensation for hepatitis C victims.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing Liberal MPs to vote against Christine and her family?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the hon. member's question. We do not think we are voting against anyone. We think we are voting for an agreement which is reasonable in the circumstances, an agreement representing the views of all the provinces as well as the federal government.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a constituent wrote to me telling me about her life since contracting hepatitis C from tainted blood. Dorothy writes:

I'm an innocent victim along with thousands of others. My life is not what I intended it to be and the things I wanted to do will never be accomplished.

● (1435)

Why will the Prime Minister not put principles before politics and power and let his MPs vote to help victims like Dorothy in this tragedy?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our first obligation to Dorothy is to make sure there is a good health care system in place when she needs it.

Our first obligation to Christine Campbell is to make sure medicare remains alive in the country.

Our first obligation to all these victims is to make sure that our social safety net is there to provide disability benefits, medical attention and treatment, and to research until we find a cure.

We are not going to do that if this hon. member's course is taken because it will be the end of publicly financed health care.

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[Translation]

BURMA

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the exiled Prime Minister of Burma, Sein Win, appeared this morning before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and described the systematic human rights violations occurring in Burma. He even told the committee of the government's intended genocide of Burmese minorities.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs not consider it vital to adopt stricter sanctions against Burma and order Canadian businesses to stop doing business with this country?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last summer we announced a series of economic sanctions against Burma. We have also initiated a number of diplomatic initiatives, particularly the ASEAN front where we put the matter on the agenda and asked them to address it.

When I met with Dr. Win Sein yesterday I indicated that furthermore at the foreign ministers meeting of the G-8 that takes place in about two weeks we will put it on the agenda to have foreign ministers of the eight most developed countries in the world take up the issue of Burma to see what we can do to bring an end to this very dictatorial regime.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order to increase pressure on Burma's illegal and illegitimate government, is the minister prepared to organize a mission of Canadian parliamentarians, as recommended to him by the group Les Amis de la Birmanie?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we would certainly be prepared to send a group of parliamentarians. The question is whether the Burmese will accept them.

We put that initiative before them last summer. They rejected it, but I will certainly raise it on behalf of the member.

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HEPATITIS C

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Doris Corrigan is an 83 year old Surrey resident who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood during an operation in 1987. Although she qualifies for compensation under the Liberal's plan she will refuse to accept any compensation unless the government extends its offer to include all hepatitis C victims of tainted blood.

Why is the government renegeing on its promise to allow more free votes in the House of Commons, forcing its members to support a compensation package that is not fair and not just?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all governments in the country, including the provincial governments that actually deliver services and are the proprietors of the health delivery services on the ground, agreed that the appropriate response when it comes to paying cash compensation is to pay those for whom infections resulted from fault or negligence, and that is exactly what we have done.

It is the right principle. It is recognized to be good public policy and all governments agree on that course.

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has ignored Justice Krever and created two tiers of hepatitis C victims, those who will be compensated and those who will be ignored.

Theresa Robertson of Peterborough, Ontario, was infected in 1984 and she cannot work. She has liver damage and she suffers from the side effects of medication.

Why is the Prime Minister using strong arm tactics to coerce his MPs into voting against innocent victims like Ms. Robertson?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Theresa Robertson is going to need Canada's health care system. She is going to need medicare, a publicly financed system of the highest possible quality of care in the world.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

• (1440)

The Speaker: My colleagues, we are listening to the questions and we should give the ministers or whomever the chance to make their responses. I go back to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Allan Rock: It would not be difficult to identify a wide category of people who suffer harm or illness because of risk inherent in the health care system.

However, as we have been saying in the House now for four weeks, if it is our policy to pay cash compensation to those who become ill, if it is our policy to pay cash to those who are victims of risk inherent in the health care system, we will no longer be able to have the system of public health care of which we are so proud.

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[Translation]

CRAB FISHING

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

On April 9 the ice committee, made up of fishermen and officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, gave the green light to crab fishing in zone 12 of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. More than three weeks later, the minister has yet to give the go ahead to this industry.

Why is the minister taking so long to make a decision, penalizing thousands of workers, especially when he knows this means the loss of significant amounts of money, especially—

The Speaker: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is clearly aware of the situation in the crab fishery in that area. He will understand that putting in place an agreement, which takes into account the interests of all the various interest groups and people affected, is not at all an easy task, particularly in light of some of the declines in crab stocks.

We are trying to make a system that is fair to all. That unfortunately takes time. It is easy when there are plenty of resources, but it is difficult when the resources are limited.

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SUDBURY NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

The eyes of the world scientific community are focused on the inauguration of the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory in the town of Walden in northern Ontario.

Could the minister tell the House how this partnership of governments, universities, agencies and the private sector will benefit Canadians?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that today and tomorrow we will be opening the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory. It is an example of world class scientific research. Unfortunately the Reform Party does not seem to understand it.

Those who are interested will know that it has the key to opening some of the secrets of the universe. It will be attended with the support of several Canadian universities, the Government of Ontario and the federal government. We will be able to uncover research in that facility, true fundamental research.

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HEPATITIS C

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Edith Jameson, a resident of Calgary East, phoned me last Saturday. She contracted hepatitis C prior to 1986. Her liver has been damaged and her gall bladder has been removed. She told me her health has been going downhill and her financial resources are stretched to the limit.

My question is for the Minister of Health. Will he stop acting like a lawyer and for the love of God offer something to Edith and thousands like her? He should make the right moral and compassionate decision and not a legal decision.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope I am acting like the custodian of Canada's health care system.

As the custodian of Canada's health care system I can imagine hundreds of cases that pack emotional power of people who are in difficult circumstances, who suffer illnesses, injuries and harm as a result of risk inherent in surgery, in taking vaccines or in taking new prescription drugs, each of them with a compelling emotional pitch about how much they need our help. That is what medicare is for.

If we compensate in cash—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River.

• (1445)

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tonight's vote is about real people like Keray Regan from Vernon, B.C. who was infected with hepatitis C through receiving tainted blood in 1986. Keray Regan said that he will continue to fight for all hepatitis C victims.

Will this government tell Keray Regan that it will do the right thing and compensate all victims of hepatitis C?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell Keray Regan as I said to Dorothy, Christine Campbell and all the other victims to whom reference has been made, I say to all those victims that we will ensure there is a publicly financed system of medicare there to look after them in their illness. We will ensure that Canada's social safety net constructed by Liberal governments in the past will be there to respond to their needs. We will make sure that responsible public policy guarantees the future of those services because that in the last analysis is our most important moral responsibility.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today at the hepatitis C rally a 15-year old boy named Joey Haché had this to say about the Prime Minister: "Why is he making political prisoners of the Liberal backbenchers? Why is he forcing them to vote against their conscience?" Joey got hepatitis C through no fault of his own, through numerous blood transfusions. He does not know why he was infected.

Why is this government forcing Liberal MPs to vote against Joey and all blood injured Canadians?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. member why the NDP government in Saskatchewan does not allow a free vote on this subject. Its position is exactly the same as ours. Why does she not turn around and direct her criticism at her own NDP government which is taking the same position in its legislature as we are taking in this House of Commons?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we also learned today at the hepatitis C rally that the office of a Liberal member called the family in B.C. that makes hepatitis C ribbons and asked for 160 of them for Liberal MPs to show their sympathy for victims. However that office refused to pay for the ribbons or the courier. They want to wear the ribbons but they do not want to pay for them. Is this meant to be an example of this government's—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know but I will tell her that I was wearing that ribbon long before she ever saw one. I got it from Jeremy Beaty of the Canadian Hepatitis C Society when I met with him to talk about victims compensation. The difference is that this government has produced \$1.1 billion in compensation for 22,000 victims. That is the way we feel about the issue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, PC): Mr. Speaker, before and during his trip to Cuba, the Prime Minister criticized Fidel Castro's lack of respect for democracy. This is rather surprising from a leader who does not allow his caucus to vote freely on the motion dealing with hepatitis C, particularly since some of his members asked for a free vote, because they are not pleased with the current compensation program.

My question to the Deputy Prime Minister is this: Why is the government so intent on promoting democracy all over the world, when it does not even respect it at home?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have democracy in this country and in this House. This evening's vote will be proof of that, because I am confident that the House will reject the Reform Party's motion.

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, PC): Mr. Speaker, last week, we saw on the lawn of Parliament Hill rows after rows of crosses bearing the names of innocent hepatitis C victims. These crosses were put there by fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, spouses and children, in memory of the loved ones they lost as a result of this terrible tragedy.

Will the Minister of Health finally assume his responsibility and compensate all victims?

• (1450)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we assumed our responsibility together with the other governments in Canada, including the Conservative ones. We accepted responsibility for the period during which officials could have done something to prevent infection.

It is the policy of the Canadian government, and it is the right policy.

* * *

[*English*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Science and Technology. As we speak, a rocket is being sent off from Canadian soil at Churchill, Manitoba, the first in almost a decade. This is a precursor to launching a polar orbiting satellite.

How will these activities enhance Canada's technological preparedness in the changing world of telecommunications?

Hon. Ronald J. Duhamel (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development)(Western Economic Diversification), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first rocket that has been launched from Churchill since 1989, launched successfully I might say today at 7:10 a.m. It has a payload of scientific experiments for the Canadian Space Agency. One instrument is called Active and it will analyse the thermal plasma in the atmosphere.

This is good for Canadians. They see the benefits of space exploration. This enhances Canada's image in science and technology throughout the world.

*Oral Questions***HEPATITIS C**

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting what this government finds important when Canadian lives are on the line.

My constituents Sherry and Don Fitger met and fell in love in a Calgary hospital following separate car accidents in 1980, but their beautiful love story turned into a horror story. Both Sherry and Don recently discovered they have hepatitis C from poisoned blood they were given at that time. Health care does not cover the cost of the herbal remedies Don and Sherry find effective.

Why is this Liberal government turning its back on innocent victims of tainted blood like Sherry and Don Fitger?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Sherry and Don were injected with contaminated blood, there was no possible way, no way at all, that science could have discovered what contaminants were in that blood.

The hon. member has suggested and her colleagues are insisting that governments across the country make cash payments to those who suffer harm or become ill regardless of fault because of risks inherent in the medical system. That is not the responsible or appropriate way to proceed.

The Prichard committee in 1990 said do not do it. Krever said no fault. The Prichard committee said no fault, you cannot compensate unavoidable harm. The deans of the medical faculties agree.

* * *

[Translation]

B.C. MINES IN BLACK LAKE

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Human Resources Development admitted that, of the 250 former employees of the B.C. mine, only 40 to 50 could benefit from his active measures.

Can the minister go one step further and contribute financially to the efforts made by Lab Chrysotile and by the Quebec government to put in place a pre-retirement program for the 200 workers who cannot benefit from his active measures?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. I never said that only 40 to 50 workers could benefit from active measures.

What I said is that, so far, 40 of the 300 miners have already been hired in two other mines. Ten have retired. I said that 40 to 50 are interested in training for other jobs. That training will be given in August and September. Five or six were placed by the workers

assistance committee thanks to targeted wage subsidies, and four or five are interested in starting their own businesses—

The Speaker: The member for Acadie—Bathurst.

* * *

[English]

THE ATLANTIC GROUND FISH STRATEGY

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the Atlantic and along the Gaspé coast there is a crisis in the fishery. The TAGS program is coming to an end. Thousands and thousands of people, including children, will suffer from the cuts in this program.

My question is for the minister of fisheries. Will the government change its mind and extend the TAGS program as Tobin is asking right now, one of your good Liberals?

• (1455)

The Speaker: I will ask you to address the question always through the Chair.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, TAGS was originally designed to provide temporary help to individuals in communities in Atlantic Canada that were facing a very difficult situation.

We now realize that there is a problem and the fish are not coming back to the levels we had hoped for and had expected. Our government is working very hard and consulting with the communities and individuals and the province of Newfoundland to identify the right kind of approach to take in this post-TAGS environment.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are on their way back to town. My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. How much is this vote on a mere motion going to cost Canadian taxpayers? What are the travel costs to fly ministers, members, other sheep and staff back from their junkets around the globe and return after this vote? Why could those dollars not have been put where they should have gone, to hepatitis C victims?

Instead of earning frequent flyer points perhaps the Liberals could earn points with ordinary Canadians—

The Speaker: I do not know how this comes under the administrative responsibility of the minister. The hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

In 1993 the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry serving with the UN in the former Yugoslavia distinguished themselves for their courage under fire during a peacekeeping operation at the Medak pocket.

Will the minister take steps to officially recognize the tremendous work done by the 2nd Battalion under extremely dangerous circumstances and to say thank you for a job well done on behalf of all Canadians?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian troops who appeared before the defence committee yesterday made a very moving presentation. I would commend all members of this House to familiarize themselves with it.

It is a story where they distinguished themselves under fire. They showed discipline, professionalism and a great deal of courage. We can all be proud of them.

Some of them have already received recognition and received a commendation from the United Nations with respect to this matter. I think the issue now is perhaps more recognition of something about which very little is known. I would certainly agree with that and I am proceeding in that manner.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, 80% of those people who are infected with hepatitis C get liver cancer, become unhealthy and die prematurely. Robert is one of those members in my constituency. Since he has been infected he has lost his house, he has lost his health and he has lost his life.

When the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health talk of fairness and compassion, why is the Prime Minister forcing his members to vote against their conscience, to vote against Robert and to vote against victims like him?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is essential that when tragedies such as Robert's happen we as a country provide the finest possible medical care and a health care system that can respond to his needs. That is why cash compensation paid by governments for those harmed without fault should be avoided.

The hon. member for Macleod agreed with that when he said last Thursday "I accept that governments should not pay cash com-

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pensation to people who are injured when there is no fault". I urge the member to consider the position of his colleague.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I appeal to Liberal backbenchers to reach deep into their hearts to take a stand—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for York—South Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata: —to help sick and dying fellow Canadians.

Earlier the Minister of Health referred to the ribbon. I want to say to the Minister of Health that the ribbon which people are wearing represents justice and fairness for all innocent victims of hepatitis C.

• (1500)

I want to ask the minister, will he have the courage to wear this ribbon later today?

[Editor's Note: Mr. Nunziata crossed the floor and placed a ribbon on the Minister of Health's desk]

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I urge all hon. members in the name of decorum in the House to abstain from such antics in the future. I would appeal that this type of thing not occur again.

• (1505)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to answer the question because for four weeks of House sittings I have stood in my place and I have responded to questions from every corner of this House on a matter of great difficulty.

I have answered those questions to the best of my ability and I avoided being partisan. I avoided being cheap. I avoided emotion.

What we just saw after four weeks of questions and debate debased the House of Commons, debased this process and brought the member into disgrace. He should be ashamed of himself.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your efforts and the challenges you have in the House. I gain appreciation for your position more and more all the time.

Supply

To carry on with my speech regarding the Bloc motion, I make reference to a publicity stunt we saw in the House some days back by a Bloc MP who carried his chair out of the House to protest government ineffectiveness in addressing child poverty and the gap between rich and poor. It is interesting that the Bloc comes back with this motion which proposes greater government intervention to address these problems.

However, let us continue to use this illustration or analogy with the chair. We do not need more politicians establishing programs which tell families what kind of, for example, chair they should have, which is what the Bloc seems to be proposing. Rather, this decision should be left to parents. Give them back some of the resources they had so that they may decide what kind and what size of chair they need.

The chair that a child needs is best provided for and decided on by parents. Parents and not government know what kind and size of chair their children need as they grow up. Going from that first chair with the hole in the middle, through the high chair, the stool up to a student's desk, parents are in the best position to make these decisions because they are closest to the children.

Parents know when to make the changes, big governments do not. Big government programs which promote a one size fits all approach serve to diminish the value of the individual and cost more than the benefit they deliver. The responsiveness of government is so slow and delivers a one size fits all solution that it never brings out the best of the individual.

One of the many Reform proposals to assist the family refers to changes to the negative tax treatment of families. We would extend the child care deduction to all parents, including those who care for their children at home, and put this decision in the hands of those closest to their children. Let the parents decide how to raise their children. It seems to make sense. We would increase the spousal amount to level the playing field for parents who choose to stay at home to look after their children and help their families meet the needs of this demanding time we all live in.

Why is this a good idea? Research indicates this is good for children. Polls indicate this is something parents intrinsically know and want. I refer to some polls.

In 1997 a research project done by the National Foundation of Family Research and Education, NFFRE, performed a comprehensive meta-analysis of current research on child development. According to NFFRE the core findings from this meta-analysis are that regular non-parental care for more than 20 hours per week has an unmistakably negative effect on social and emotional development, behaviour adjustment and the emotional bonding of young children to their parents. In addition, the report stated parental care consistently and significantly outperformed regular non-parental care for children prior to five years of age.

This high integrity research makes it clear that the best interests of infants and preschool children are served when they are in full time parent care. For many of us this is a "no brainer", yet current government policies give tax incentives to institutionalized care but none to parental care. It seems upside down to me. It sends a message to parents that the work they are doing has no value. That is very destructive.

• (1515)

Clearly, parent and family time is important and governments need to respect this if we are to preserve the health and happiness of our homes.

To continue with more poll information and studies that have been done, parents want to make families a priority. I am referring to a national poll conducted by a research firm known as Compass Inc. Fully 94% in this national poll of Canadians identified that lack of time spent with offspring has, at least, a somewhat serious stress on family life.

In 1991 a cross-Canada poll conducted by Decima Research was the most comprehensive poll ever taken of Canadian women. Women were asked: "If you had the choice, would you stay at home to raise your children or work outside your home and use day care?" Not surprisingly, 70% said they would rather stay at home.

In 1997, NFFRE submitted to the Government of Ontario a study it was contracted to do regarding child care. By more than a 10 to 1 margin, 92% of Ontarians said it is preferable for a young child to be at home with a parent than to be in institutionalized day care. They do not see taxpayer funded government programs as being the answer for child care or the child poverty question.

Of parents who had put their children in non-parental care, 77% in this same study indicated they would have preferred to have provided parental care in retrospect.

Let me be clear. No one is proposing that parents have to stay at home to raise their children. That is not what I am saying. But surely the government should not penalize them when they do and that is the reality we are living with today. This is doubly tragic when the polls underline the fact that parents want to stay at home and the research indicates that it is a good idea for the health of the child. Why does our government policy so stringently work against something the people want, which makes so much sense?

Reform wants parents to be allowed to make the choice which best meets the needs of their family without tax unfairness. Unfortunately the government does not seem to get it. In the last budget, for example, it increased the inequity stay-home parents suffer by raising the child care expense deduction by 35%, refusing to recognize any value for stay-home parents. It is tragic. It is actually destructive. It works against families and some children.

I would like to point out that the Bloc motion deals with child poverty in terms of material wealth. As I have indicated, what many Reformers are concerned about is another form of poverty which many children are suffering, the poverty of lack of time with their parents, the lack of a consistent caregiver. I could quote studies of the damage that does and the psychosis that develops in children when caregivers are constantly changed.

Government has done much to add to this kind of poverty by the mega-government, tax and spend, government will fix everything philosophy that this motion subscribes to. We need to focus on the well-being of the family and the whole child within the family; not just the material child, but the child who needs to spend time with their parents; not just the child alone, but the child and the family.

Strong families pass on our culture, language, heritage and values. Strong families train future citizens. In this context let us get it right and always remember that governments make poor parents, but strong Canadian families create good governments.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 1996 national longitudinal survey on the health of children reported that some 25% of all children in Canada have some sort of health, educational or social problem. The member is quite right when he identifies the need for us to invest in children.

He talked about the possibility of extending the child care expense deduction to families who provide care in the home to preschool children and the possibility of a caregiver tax credit which would provide a similar benefit.

• (1520)

There is a bill coming forward on Thursday which deals with splitting income between spouses. There are many ways to deliver these kinds of things.

The member did not touch on probably one of the single largest reasons there is child poverty in Canada and that has to do with the breakdown of the Canadian family. The Vanier Institute reported that lone parent families account for about 12% of all families, but they also account for about 46% of all children living in poverty. I think the numbers are quite prevalent.

It is interesting to note that we talk a lot about child poverty when in fact the real issue is family poverty. Child poverty is a political term. Family poverty is the reality. The family is in crisis in Canada with a 30% divorce rate and over a million common-law relationships which break down 50% more than married relationships. This is leading to broken families and creating a most dangerous environment for our children.

Supply

I ask the member whether he has any comments about this other important dimension concerning the manufacture of poverty in Canada by the breakdown of the family.

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the hon. member across the way. I agree that the focus on child poverty is misplaced. We are better to focus on the situation of the Canadian family overall if we really want to improve the lot of children. They are not disembodied entities. They are part of families.

Certainly the Reform Party shares the concern about the stresses of the economy on families. It is part of the reason that we see one of our critical mandates as being one of job creation. The head of the family, whoever it may be, must be able to find a job. We do not see increased government spending as the road to job creation, but lowering taxes and decreasing the bureaucracy on many of those small business people and others who provide jobs for people. That is the road to a healthier economy which in turn will benefit the children within these families.

I want to make one other point that we sometimes gloss over on this debate about the tax credit and recognition that is given to institutionalized care, but not to those who choose to care for their families at home. More critical than the financial impact on these families is the subtle message that this sends to them if they choose to stay at home and care for their children. There are some sacrifices involved in that. I realize not everybody wants to do it. However, if they choose to do it the message they are getting from the policies we have today is that there is absolutely no value in it. The government will not recognize it.

When we send these subtle messages they serve to undermine the strength of the families and they serve, in part, to cause some of the family breakdown we have had. That is why I think it is so critical that we not only worry about the financial impacts, but the message we are sending as far as the value of the parent-child bond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, there were discussions during question period and I would now ask for unanimous consent to have this motion made votable.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Repentigny has asked that this motion be made votable. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Reform member who spoke to the motion and refused to make it votable.

Supply

In view of the lack of compassion shown by Liberal members who have turned us down four or five times today and their lack of compassion with regard to compensation for victims of hepatitis C, I would like to ask a question of my Reform colleague who is telling us how to raise our children after his colleague told us there were too many divorces.

Are these sterile, senseless, pointless discussions not proof enough it is necessary and urgent to set up a parliamentary committee to discuss the gap between rich and poor in the context of globalization, in a less partisan and more thoughtful manner?

• (1525)

[English]

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I have one correction to make. I did not vote no. It was the member across the way. I am always supportive of free votes in this House. I recognized the question, so I wanted to clarify that.

As far as the parliamentary committee is concerned, these things cost a lot of money. I know, as do many hon. members, that there are some straightforward things we can do to correct current policy, things that do not cost anything, that can save taxpayers and that can impact immediately the family and the children in a positive way without incurring more taxpayers' money on more committees and that type of thing.

[Translation]

Hon. Gilbert Normand (Secretary of State (Agriculture and Agri-Food)(Fisheries and Oceans), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me, first, as a good Liberal, I would ask for permission to share my time with my colleague, the member for Abitibi.

Our opposition colleagues do not seem to recognize the government's commitment or its previous record of improving the economy and giving our young people more job opportunities.

As we said in our initial action plan for renewing the federation, entitled "Creating Opportunity" and repeated in the document "Securing our Future Together", the future belongs to societies that have a dynamic economy, that look after public health, that promote child development and that invest in knowledge, education and innovation.

The Government of Canada has clearly indicated that these are our values and priorities. Moreover, we are making progress in each of these sectors. My colleagues have already outlined some of our outstanding achievements in this regard, our exceptional results in putting our fiscal house in order and our increased investments in health care and in programs designed to reduce child poverty.

My remarks will then focus first and foremost on the efforts made to help Canadians acquire the skills and knowledge that they

will need to support competition in an ever changing world. We should not delude ourselves; the world is changing very rapidly.

The technological revolution, the information society and the world economy are modern realities that go beyond our borders and over which we have no control as a country.

Canada's economic opportunities increasingly depend on the skills and strengths of our labour force. As well, our quality of life depends on our ability to think, innovate and create in a world transformed by information and technology.

Those who question this fundamental fact in the new economy only have to look at the present job situation. Since 1981, the number of jobs for Canadians with only a high school diploma has fallen by 2 million, while the number of jobs requiring more advanced skills has risen by more than 5 million.

Obviously, Canadians with higher education levels have better job opportunities, better job security and higher-paid jobs. The unemployment level for people without a high school diploma stands at 15%, while it is only 5% for university graduates. Training will help to reduce the gap between these two groups.

This is why the cornerstone of the new Canada opportunities strategy is the Canada millennium scholarship program. I want to point out that more than 100,000 scholarships, funded through an initial endowment of \$2.5 billion, will be granted each year to full—and part-time students during the first 10 years of the next millennium.

The Canada millennium scholarship program will invest in the knowledge and creativity of young Canadian and improve their access to post-secondary education. The scholarships will average \$3,000 a year per student.

Whether they choose to attend a cegep, a community college, a professional or technical institution or a university, students will be eligible to receive up to \$15,000 over a four-year period to complete their education and get a diploma or a certificate.

The Canada opportunities strategy will help Canadians still in school or already in the workforce to increase their knowledge and their skills in order to improve their career opportunities.

• (1530)

The number of adults who choose to go back to school full time is three times higher than it was 20 years ago. Most of them have made that decision because of work related reasons. The strategy will make this easier for a greater number of people. Starting on January 1, 1999, Canadians will be allowed to withdraw funds from their RRSPs tax free in order to go back to school.

For those who have completed their education but are facing financial difficulties and find it hard to pay back their student loans, the Canadian opportunities strategy provides for more flexibility as well as interest relief. Interest relief on Canada student loans means that the Canadian government will make

interest payments for up to 30 months after the completion of the student's education. The income threshold to qualify for relief is \$20,460.

Families are encouraged to save a little bit of money each month for their children's education. The Canada education savings grant will help them. Families that contribute to a registered education savings plan will receive a 20% grant from the Canadian government for the first \$2,000 in contributions. Small savings today could pave the way to a brilliant future in post-secondary education.

All these measures will bring about sustainable and meaningful improvements and will be a very effective and tangible way to fight poverty. The Canadian opportunities strategy will be a great contribution to the fight against poverty.

The strategy will make post-secondary education more accessible by helping needy students overcome the problem of higher education costs. We will be giving more help to students who have to support dependents, to part-time students and to those who conduct advanced research or go pursue graduate studies

We will help students pay back their student loans. We will help families save money for their children's education. We will encourage employers to hire young people, and we will help a greater number of students take advantage of information technologies.

Our Canadian opportunities strategy introduced in the last budget and our employment insurance system are two good examples of how the federal government devotes its energy to helping Canadians adjust to changes on the job market in the 1990s and take advantage of opportunities in the new economy.

Our goal is to create more opportunities for Canadians, and young Canadians in particular, to succeed in the new knowledge based economy. I therefore urge the hon. members to recognize the action taken by this government to help reduce the income spread between Canadians and fight poverty.

It was Theodore Roosevelt who said that those who build the future are the ones who do something, not those who complain about how it should have been done.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to direct my question and comments to the hon. member who recycles speeches on the budget.

I will first remind him of a few statistics, then I will have a very simple question to ask him.

According to the National Council of Welfare, there were 900,000 children living in poverty in 1989. When the Liberals took

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office in 1993, there were 1.4 million of them. In 1996, after three years of Liberal government, the number had risen to 1.5 million.

I need not read today's motion over, but I listened carefully to what the hon. member said and I do not think he got the point. So, my simple question is the following. What should we be discussing in this House today?

Hon. Gilbert Normand: Mr. Speaker, I think we are talking about the sharing of wealth. I must tell the member opposite that, personally, before entering the political arena, I worked in the area of social development. I was then one of the organizers of the summit that is taking place right now in Quebec City and I certainly know what I am talking about.

The sharing of wealth is essential to the fight against poverty and it is the federal government's responsibility. However, the federal government is not solely responsible for everything that goes on in the community. There are other levels of government, and we want to work with them, especially the Quebec government.

I can even tell the member that I personally asked the organizer of the summit that is taking place at this very moment in Quebec City if the federal government could participate in this summit, but he refused.

• (1535)

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the provinces have so many problems, it is because of the cuts in transfer payments that they have been subjected to for several years. The government has imposed these cuts on all the provinces.

I would like to ask the member opposite—his riding must resemble any other riding—if, in his riding, there are soup kitchens and shelters for poor people. Have their numbers not increased over the last few years? Does he not feel that wealth is not distributed equally everywhere?

Maybe the member could comment on that, unless his riding is so wealthy that people there do not need these services.

Hon. Gilbert Normand: Mr. Speaker, I will not talk about wealth and poverty. I will simply say that in my riding of Bellechasse—Etchemins—Montmagny—L'Islet, of which I am very proud, people have decided to take control of their own destiny.

The fact that people decide to take control of their own destiny in our communities often leads to success. The role of governments, including ours, is to help communities. I always tell my constituents to bring forward their projects and that we will be there to help them and to support their development.

That is why things are going well in the riding of Bellechasse—Etchemins—Montmagny—L'Islet. Yes, there are soup kitchens, but I can tell you that people in that riding have taken control of

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their own destiny. They want to develop and they want to broaden their horizons because a growing number of our industries compete in international markets. It is precisely by helping them do that that we fight poverty.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, in his answer to a question put by the hon. member for Laurentides, we got a slight hint that the hon. member for Bellechasse—Etchemins—Montmagny—L'Islet was beginning to understand what we are talking about.

I will gladly read to him the motion before the House, because he has not read it. He talked about a lot of things, but forgot the subject of our debate today. The motion is as follows:

That this House reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000, urge the government to act, and strike an all-party Special Parliamentary Committee—

We are not blaming anyone here. We just wanted to address this issue and we did not need the Liberal budget to do so. Is the member in favour of striking an all-party committee to discuss the gap between the rich and the poor in this era of globalization?

Hon. Gilbert Normand: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the hon. member, I would point out that I have read the motion. I do not think that the federal government can, all by itself, fight poverty. A people's summit would be far better than any parliamentary committee.

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have risen in this Parliament to speak on poverty.

The Bloc Québécois' motion reads as follows:

That this House reiterate the 1989 commitment to eliminating child poverty by the year 2000—

I want to take a look at the first point of their motion, which provides:

(1) despite the economic growth of recent years, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen;

We all know that most Canadian and Quebec women spend at least part of their life at home full time. Nearly half of them are not in the labour market and fewer than half of those who have preschool children have a paid full time job.

Canadian and Quebec parents seem to have the best of intentions about sharing the job of raising children. However, for better or for worse, the job of raising them still falls to women. Genetically speaking, there is nothing that says women should look after the home. However, in practice they are the ones to look after most of the domestic duties. That is why I am talking about women at home, which means in fact women at home raising children.

In Canada and Quebec, women at home work full time and even do overtime. Studies have shown they work between 41 and 60 hours a week, according to the number and age of their children.

Women at home are on duty 24 hours a day seven days a week. See if you can come with a more demanding job. This is our focus in the discussion on poverty. We have to start with the family. We also know that women at home work essentially in the home. Their husbands, children and other members of the family benefit most directly from their work.

However, others benefit as well. This is why paying women at home would stimulate the economy. They would be spending the money for essentials such as more appropriate food and more long lasting clothing.

● (1540)

Employers also take advantage of homemakers in other areas. Since women manage the home and take care of the other family members, it becomes easier for the husband to dedicate himself totally to a paid, full time job outside the home. I see the opposition before me today and the member for Repentigny smiling because I am talking about paying stay-at-home women. We are talking about families and children. I can say that, if women still stayed at home to look after their children, there would be less poverty.

Finally, if we take a more general perspective, homemakers are responsible for the future to the extent that they take care of the next generation. To carry on from one generation to the next, we need a dynamic and healthy population. What exact value must be placed on the work of these women who are on duty 24 hours a day to do everything in the home? According to some estimates, housework would amount to between 35% and 40% of Canada's GDP, which represents at least \$136 billion in Canadian dollars. This is a significant amount, but stay-at-home women have no access to this money to help their children get out of poverty.

Unlike other workers in our society, homemakers do not receive a salary. And because they are not paid, they do not have annual leave, employment insurance and compensation for accidents, disabilities or illnesses. What is more serious in the long term is that they do not have a pension plan. Yet, like all other workers, homemakers eventually reach retirement age.

It is unacceptable that stay-at-home women have to face financial insecurity throughout their lives, even in their retirement years, after spending so many years working for the well-being of their families and of society as a whole.

Mothers often decide to go and work in mediocre conditions, and this is when we start talking about poverty. Women who have large families and who work for \$3 or \$4 an hour are not getting a decent salary. Some stay at home to raise children and do all the related

chores. For those who work outside the home, it is extra work, since they must do household chores in addition to going to work, sometimes for \$3, \$4 or \$5 per hour for washing floors.

Mothers belong to one of two groups: working mothers and mothers who stay at home. Even these expressions have a certain connotation. If some women are working mothers, what is a mother who stays home? If there are full time mothers, does it mean that those who have a career outside the home are only part time mothers?

Women at home, whether they are married or not, do not get any personal benefit from the Canada Pension Plan or the Quebec Pension Plan. Proposals to share pension credits between spouses are fine, but they do not take into account the value of the work performed by women at home, since the couple's total pension is not increased.

In 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women concluded that women who stay at home produce as many goods and services as those who are gainfully employed, and that if they were paid, it could help children and eliminate poverty in certain regions of Quebec and Canada. We can re-examine our approach and create legislation that is, above all, fair to families, and gives parents the primary responsibility and the freedom to select the formula they judge is best for rearing their children.

The following are some reflections on the legal aspects. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that every individual has an equal right to protection and benefit under the law, without discrimination. The present day taxation legislation does not afford equal treatment to mothers. Some get special treatment while others do not, which is contrary to the democratic principles of equal opportunity.

If we look at the House Debates from 1983, the NDP member for Kamloops said he would continue to call upon the minister to reform the taxation system so as to treat all family situations equally. What we need is a system which takes into consideration all of the costs and efforts involved in raising children, regardless of marital status or income level, a system which gives women who choose to stay at home the same status and recognition as those who are in the work force.

In 1984, a national survey reported that 81% of Canadians were in favour of stay-at-home parents being included in the Canada and Quebec pension plans. But they still are not entitled to this pension.

• (1545)

I say to people, I say to members from every party in this House: Let us work together, let us try to find a solution to pay a salary to mothers who stay at home, to help children and their families escape poverty.

Supply

Nowadays when we talk about poverty, we talk a lot about programs, all kinds of federal and provincial programs. The problem with the Bloc's motion as it stands is that it suggests a parliamentary committee. I would prefer a royal commission that would study poverty and the possibility of paying a salary to women at home, mothers who stay at home to raise one or more children.

I want to thank everybody in the House today and I wish all the best to women. I also say to men who want to help us to write their MPs. They do not need a stamp. All they have to do is write a letter to their MP suggesting that a royal commission look into how to help families escape poverty. All they have to do is get in touch with their MP, regardless of his or her party, to get their message across. Even if it takes months, we have to keep trying. We must win for the sake of the men and women who stay at home to raise their children, and help them break the cycle of poverty.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member for Abitibi that there is no such thing as a part-time mother or father. When we become a mother or a father it is for life. We are and always will be there no matter what.

I am a mother. I am a single mother. Is the member telling me all mothers should stay at home and should be paid to stay at home? Is the member telling us his government is willing to pay women who stay home to raise their children?

I would like the member for Abitibi to answer with an unequivocal yes.

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Mr. Speaker, I had some difficulty hearing the hon. member's question. In the context of this Bloc motion on poverty, let me go back to the Quebec Liberal minister who said in 1994 that we should reform the whole of society, bring in a new guaranteed income supplement, abolish welfare and certain other programs, and take the money and invest it.

Coming back to the hon. member's question dealing with poverty, I remember that in October 1997, the Quebec government got a booby prize for its performance against poverty. This prize was awarded last October at a gala in Alma. I have this all here in my notes. A coalition of community groups from the whole area met in Alma and awarded the booby prize for the fight against poverty to the Quebec government and Lucien Bouchard, and that happened on his own turf. We should start by finding solutions at home.

They talked about world-wide poverty. Let us talk about poverty at the provincial level and about family and child poverty. Why did the Quebec government get this booby prize in Alma, in the riding of the member who took his chair out of the House? Think about that, and start by cleaning up your own backyard.

Supply

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the member opposite said just now. First of all, it is important that it be said, because there is a lot of confusion. I did not clearly understand where he was headed with the idea that women should go back to staying at home.

Like my colleague, the member for Laurentides, I find it offensive when people speak this way. I am expecting, I am going to have children, and I do not necessarily want to stay at home.

I will give the member a chance, however. Perhaps he meant the unseen work done by women. If he recognizes unseen work, I urge him officially to speak to the Minister of Finance about seniors benefits. But he is speaking about poverty. Does he agree with the idea of a committee, yes or no?

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to reply to the Bloc Quebecois motion calling for a parliamentary committee.

This is incorrect. What is needed is a royal commission on poverty in Canada, on paying a salary to women who stay at home, not just a small parliamentary committee that will visit towns and cities designated by members, or a parliamentary committee that will do its work behind closed doors in the House of Commons and conduct hearings all over the place. They cannot cover all the towns and villages in Quebec, all the major regions.

• (1550)

I prefer a royal commission. I made it clear in my speech that there are two categories of mother: those who work and those who stay at home full time. These expressions are emotionally charged. If certain women are working mothers, what is a woman who does not work?

If there are full time mothers, that means that those who work outside the home are part time mothers only. There is nothing wrong with women working. It is an honour for a woman to work, but I can guarantee you that, rather than work for \$7.40 an hour, 40 hours a week, many women would stay at home to raise their children. There would be less poverty. Right now, in Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec, women are washing floors for \$3, \$4 or \$5 an hour. What we want is a royal commission.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Rosemont.

I am very pleased to take the floor today in support on my party's motion. If members read the motion carefully, they will realize that it raises fundamental questions.

As elected representatives, parliamentarians and democrats, it is our duty to deal very seriously with fundamental issues such as poverty, precisely because of the global phenomenon of the gap

between rich and poor that is growing wider and wider despite the prosperity Canada and many countries are experiencing right now.

On the eve of a new millenium and in the context of market globalization, all these issues have become fundamental stakes in philosophical debates in our society and political life.

The issues and challenges which my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean raised on April 20 deserve more serious consideration. That is why the Bloc Quebecois is pursuing this debate today by calling on members of all stripes to discuss and find different approaches to these problems and to the changes flowing from globalization, a process that sometimes goes much too fast and creates problems such as greater social disparity.

Since it is very difficult to foresee with any degree of accuracy the impact of globalization, the Bloc Quebecois agrees with the idea of the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean that we should strike a parliamentary committee.

It is important to have an in-depth discussion. The Bloc Quebecois thinks that this could help us better understand the impact of globalization.

The task my party and I are ready to undertake is not easy, but it is very exciting. Our whole society must rise to meet the challenge of globalization. As a responsible political party, the Bloc Quebecois has chosen to publicly launch this debate in the House of Commons.

Before going further, let us examine what globalization really means. How can it be defined? According to the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, which brings together 182 members states, globalization is:

—the increasing economic interdependency of all the countries of the world, due to a rise in the volume and variety of cross-border goods and services transactions and in the international monetary flows as well as the accelerated and widespread use of technology.

Why have so many governments opened up, willingly or not, to the world economy? Because world trade can benefit all the countries that take part in it.

Hence, the countries are changing their economic practices and specializing in areas where, comparatively, they have an edge. They also trade with other countries, which increases their standard of living compared to the situation they would find themselves in if they had to produce all the products they need.

That being said, world trade often has a tremendous impact of the redistribution of income within a country, so that there could be winners and losers. In order to try to alleviate the problems associated with globalization, it is important to implement compensation and adjustment programs.

This is why it was agreed that a multilateral investment agreement should be negotiated under the auspices of the OECD, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

• (1555)

Even though the Bloc Québécois supports the principle behind the MAI, which is designed to clarify the rules in the area of investment, thereby promoting freer investments and freer trade in general, the agreement, in its present form, contains significant flaws that will have to be addressed if the government wants to have not only the support of the Bloc Québécois, but also the support of Quebec.

As international cooperation critic for the Bloc Québécois, I deplore the fact that the majority of countries, particularly developing countries, were excluded from the negotiations, which will end today, because they took place within the context of the OECD. It is unacceptable that only 29 member countries, the wealthiest in the world, can have their say and not the others.

The Bloc Québécois would rather see these negotiations being pursued within the context of the World Trade Organization.

As of October 22, 1997, 132 countries were members of the WTO, and 34 countries and seven organizations had observer status. That means that a larger number of countries affected by such an agreement would have the opportunity to express their views about the agreement at the development stage.

It is obvious that the federal government, through the Minister for International Cooperation, seems more and more to enjoy thumbing its nose at developing countries and non-governmental organizations.

I want to warn the government opposite. The globalization of markets and the MAI will not solve every problem on the planet.

As a matter of fact, since the present government has taken office, we have been witnessing an important change not only in its attitude toward development assistance, but also in its attitude toward the role of the state with regard to world misery. The United Nations world report on human development says that inequalities are growing everywhere. While the poorest 20% of the population on the planet shared 2.3% of the world income in 1960, their share barely reaches 1.1% today.

Meanwhile, the wealthiest 20% of the population have become even wealthier. Their share went from 70% in 1960 to 86% today.

In Africa, incomes have dropped by 30% in just a few years. Some countries are becoming even poorer while others are slowly getting back on the road to economic growth. This slow change is very disturbing and is happening everywhere.

Supply

In 1989, there were 3.5 million people living in poverty in Canada. In 1995, this number went up to 5.1 million, a 45 % increase. During that same period, the number of poor children rose by 54 %, from 934,000 to 1,441,000 between 1989 and 1995.

In my riding alone, the Laurentides, soup kitchens, community groceries and other organizations of this type are mushrooming. I recently attended the opening of the Club des petits déjeuners, an organization that provides breakfasts for young children in schools in my riding, children who do not eat breakfast in the morning because their parents cannot afford it.

These associations are still necessary in my riding, which undoubtedly indicates an increasing level of poverty in my riding.

Considering these dismal statistics, how can we explain that Canada went from fifth to eleventh place among OECD countries for development aid expenses?

According to the United Nations, developed countries such as Canada should allocate at least 0.7 % of their gross national product to development aid. Since the fiscal year 1993-94, the federal government has literally axed the budget envelope for international assistance by taking more than \$617 million out of it, which means that it allocates only 0.29 % of the gross national product to this purpose in 1997-98.

By acting in this way, Canada is evading its international responsibilities towards the poorest in the world and is doing nothing to reduce the gap between rich and poor countries.

The government could act otherwise, but it will not. It would rather spend millions of dollars, among other things, on buying new submarines.

• (1600)

In light of these facts, it is clear that, for the federal government, the problem is not one of means, but one of priorities.

The debate has now started and the federal government has the duty to seriously consider the Bloc Québécois motion. This is for the well-being of the people of Quebec, of Canada and of the entire world.

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have one comment and one question for the member for Laurentides.

For months now, the member has been traveling across her riding and the province of Quebec telling people she represents the Parti Québécois and Quebeckers in Ottawa. Lately we saw several of them playing Santa Claus in Quebec, distributing cheques on behalf of the Quebec government. They did not give them to poor families, but to rich ones.

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Does the member know why in October 1997, the Groupe de solidarité populaire du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean gave the golden raspberry award for poverty to the government of Lucien Bouchard for being the one institution which had contributed the most to increasing poverty among Quebecers?

Earlier I was listening to the member speak about globalization and all the other countries in the world. Could the hon. member tell me right now whether a royal commission on poverty or on remuneration for homemakers would not be better than a parliamentary committee operating behind closed doors?

Mrs. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, those who have nothing to say say stupid things. If the federal government had not cut transfer payments to the provinces so drastically, the provinces might not have so many problems.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the member for Abitibi is a conscientious and honest man, he should stand up and repeat the derogatory comments he made to my colleague from Laurentides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): This is not a point of order. The member for Laurentides.

Mrs. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, if you could ask him to be quiet and listen, it would be interesting, because I do not think he even knows the difference between a royal commission and a parliamentary committee.

So, I am talking about international aid because it is important for a developed country like Canada to help on the international scene. But we still see poverty in our ridings. If the government took the money in the employment insurance fund—there will soon be \$20 billion—and transferred it to the provinces, we would solve our problems at home.

I even heard the member for Abitibi—and I am amazed that we have such parliamentarians—say that social assistance had to be cut. Really. It is women with children who are suffering for the most part and who receive social assistance. Yes, programs must be set up for them and they must return to the labour market. He however is talking about women remaining at home and being paid to do so. Oh, boy. That makes no sense.

I think the members of the Liberal Party should look at the motion today, support it and vote with us in favour of a parliamentary committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again I rise with pride to speak on this motion. It is a very important motion. The whole question of the gap between the rich and the poor which we see increasing daily is very important.

• (1605)

I would like to comment on the remark made by the member which I agree with. Governments have to get their priorities straight if we are going to deal with this issue. Lots of times we see priorities being made and moneys being directed in the wrong direction.

I was also concerned about remarks made by the hon. member for Abitibi with respect to women being paid to stay at home. Unless I was misreading it, I got the impression that he felt it was exclusively women who would be working at home. I hasten to point out that today many men head single parent families. In two parent families many men choose to stay home to look after their children and to attend to the concerns of the home.

It is important that we speak about families and that we be careful that we do not discriminate against women with respect to roles and responsibilities in the family.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the NDP member for his support. I totally agree with him. We cannot discriminate. It is important for the women who choose to be at home. I think as many men as women are responsible for child care. I do not know why we would discriminate.

I again call for support. We are not asking for the moon. We simply want a parliamentary committee to look at this whole issue. It is good for all parties. It is non-partisan and it would serve the needs of this fine country they keep bragging about—Canada and its provinces.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to rise in this House after hearing such a disgraceful and demagogic speech from the hon. member for Abitibi, but I will still exercise my right to speak.

First of all, I would to point out that, last week, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean made quite an impression when he took his seat out of the House. He did so to stress the social inequities that keep increasing despite major improvements to our economic performance. He walked out with his chair to trigger a larger debate on what it means to sit in the House of Commons.

What political power can we use to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor? As elected representatives, are we not the first ones to be asked this question? Yes, I think so, which is why I am glad today to speak on the impact of the globalization of markets and the proliferation of international agreements on the sovereignty of states and, therefore, the real powers we as elected representatives have in this House.

We have to have this debate here, because it deals with an issue that directly concerns all of us. We are here to represent the people who have elected us democratically. Therefore, every time we lose some of our power, some of our authority as legislators, it reduces the ability of our fellow citizens to shape their collective future,

according to their own values. This is why I support the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, who wants to see this debate go beyond the walls of the House of Commons.

After I was elected to this House, it did not take long for me to notice how globalization has an enormous impact on the work we do here, in Ottawa. My colleagues have already talked about its impact on many major issues. There is certainly an area in which the effects of globalization on national democracies cannot be denied, namely the environment.

Indeed, through the past generations, the ability of the human race to modify the world ecosystem has increased dramatically. This is due to our exploding population and our rapid technological progress. For instance, economic activity throughout the world is more than 20 times what it was in 1900. Consequently, many human activities are exhausting the planet's non-renewable resources.

Every day, our excessive production and consumption cause the extinction of at least 100 different species of plants and animals. Needless to say, this worrisome problem goes beyond national borders. We must find ways to solve it that are as international as the nature of this challenge.

Every year, we dump in the atmosphere billions of tons of CO₂, the product of our energy consumption, and we use over 40% of the planet's organic matter.

• (1610)

In one year we burn as much fossil fuel as the earth was able to produce in around one million years. Poverty and misery are still rampant around the world.

The city of Montreal, where I live, is more and more frequently smothered in smog. Many Montrealers are getting organized to find solutions to this problem which affects our quality of life, but they will not be able to do it alone because half of this pollution comes from our neighbours in Ontario and New England.

Still they refuse to be defeated by the scale of the problem. Together we must find solutions to meet the challenges we face due to the deterioration of our environment and the multiplication of substances dangerous to human health. To do so we cannot keep our eyes on the short term. What is needed is a fundamental change in the way we make decisions at every level of society.

We must start integrating environmental concerns in the everyday decisions we make as individuals, managers and lawmakers.

Let us not fool ourselves: the precarious condition of our environment is the result of nearly two centuries of abuse. There is no easy solution. We can expect more crises, more environmental

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accidents. What is needed is for the ecological balance, which has been gradually destroyed over the course of centuries, and particularly over the past century, to be restored.

This is a long term undertaking, which will require the commitment of each and every one of us, from the various governments down to the last individual and, above all, a serious response to the environmental challenge which will lay our present lifestyle open to question.

Indeed, the environmental issue is more than just pollution, the build-up of domestic and chemical waste or land use management. These are just symptoms of a larger problem, and that is mainly the way we approach our relationships, define our prosperity and select a lifestyle.

In this respect, we are witnessing a real revolution in attitudes. Recent polls, open-line programs, radio hot-lines and television reports all agree. My fellow citizens, and young people in particular, agree on the value they put on their quality of life as compared with the mere accumulation of consumer goods.

They choose health over the pursuit of economic expansion at all cost. These new values are priorities. They should be used as the basis for the political will to allocate sufficient resources to the preservation of our environment, which we all care about.

It is paradoxical that this government repeatedly drew upon this widely held public opinion to finally come up short in terms of a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases and protect the collective scientific tools used to assess our environmental situation.

This government cannot be satisfied with reacting to environmental crises. Never has the government developed a long term action plan which takes into account the collective diversity of the territory for which it is responsible.

Never has the government seriously considered where it wanted to be in five, ten or more years from now. In order to have a political will, governments must be able to set out the goals they wish to achieve through the action they take. Unfortunately, for the moment, we have to express our concern about this government's lack of vision with regard to environmental issues in today's context.

Canada's failure in the area of greenhouse gases reduction says a lot about that. Only Quebec is on the way to meeting its international commitments in this regard. How can the federal government limit itself to feeble symbolic and optional measures to reach these ambitious targets when it is obvious they will lead nowhere unless they are accompanied by active measures and research budgets. It so happens the Liberal government, that claims to be concerned about the environment, has a budget for the reduction of

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greenhouse gases that is 10 times less per capita than that of our neighbours to the south.

Yet the situation is so alarming that many predict that environmental protection will become the main public concern in the near future.

However, during the same year, the same 150 countries that met in Kyoto, Japan, to agree on international targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases negotiated the multilateral agreement on investment, which is designed to reduce investment barriers.

• (1615)

These dual reduction targets are crucial to the preservation of our quality of life. But do the countries sitting at the table have the necessary powers to meet all these commitments? How can the globalization of markets affect our ability to respond to environmental threats? Which agreement will have precedence over the others in case of conflict? That question remains unanswered here, in Canada.

So far, the only general exception contained in the MAI relates to national security issues and law enforcement. There is no reference to important international agreements such as the Kyoto agreement or the Montreal protocol on CFCs. That is why, before giving our final approval for this agreement, we want the right of countries to take or maintain environmental protection measures to be explicitly preserved.

In conclusion, like all those around me in this House, I am concerned about the state of our society and our environment in the next 20 or 30 years. If we can agree on the principles of sustainable development that I just set out, we must promote these principles abroad both in trade and environmental negotiations. That is the role I have set for myself as elected representative of the people of Rosemont, and I will use all the means available to me to fulfil that role.

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment and ask a question. I listened carefully to the hon. member for Rosemont, who made a very good speech. He started by saying I was a demagogue, an accusation I find strange and cannot accept.

I learned how to read when I was very young, and I did read in a major newspaper in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area, on October 31, 1997, a report that said: The fight against poverty: Quebec gets a booby prize. The Quebec government was awarded this booby prize in Alma, during a citizens solidarity gala in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

Other members chuckled at my remarks. I made the same speech in this House on June 3, 1993, and it was very well received by Conservative, NDP and Liberal members. I will give you the answer later on.

Here is my question: Does the hon. member for Rosemont think that the Quebec government will start fighting poverty in the Lac-Saint-Jean area because it got that booby prize? On June 3, 1993, when I made this same speech in the House, the Bloc Québécois was not here.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, if we have to raise fundamental questions such as these today, it is perhaps because of the empty rhetoric we hear from my colleague opposite.

As far as poverty is concerned, the hon. member should know that his own government has made cuts and reduced transfer payments to the provinces. I think he could have seen the first moves in that direction.

I remember the Axworthy reform and various things that have happened and are due mostly to what this government has done or failed to do.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Vancouver East. I would ask her to keep it short.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will keep it very short. I would like to thank the hon. member for Rosemont for his comments. I think he drew a very good parallel between the state of our environment and the multilateral agreement on investment and globalization.

I would ask the member if he concurs that one of the real dangers of the MAI is that it will have a huge impact on developing countries and will, by increasing foreign investment and the power of multinational corporations, not only have an impact on deepening poverty in those countries, but will also have a huge impact on the physical environment because it will allow greater power to those corporations to plunder the natural resources not only of our country but also of those countries in the developing world. That is one of the real intents of the agreement that is being negotiated by the wealthiest nations of the world.

I would ask the member if he would agree that is one of the dangers of the agreement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I believe the Multilateral Agreement on Investment will fundamentally change the picture. This is why the Bloc Québécois has expressed several concerns about this agreement as regards cultural, social, labour and environmental issues.

• (1620)

I think we have to listen to the requests made by the different interest groups. There is indeed a risk in lowering environmental standards on the national level and also in Quebec. We must ensure

that this opening of markets will not have the effect of reducing the quality of our environment.

I think that, to this end, we must ensure there is a good debate in this House, instead of listening to the member opposite, who has been uttering platitudes from the start.

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member says that I have been saying all kinds of platitudes, but I will ask him a good question.

We know that, in February, the member for Rosemont received a salary raise under Standing Order 67 of the House of Commons. If he wants to help reduce poverty as he claims, did he refuse this raise?

I have the honour of telling the member for Rosemont that I refused that raise. This is in the records of the House of Commons. The money I refused will go toward paying the public debt. Did he do the same thing? Shame.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I would ask hon. members to address each other through the Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is confusing the debates.

The important thing to consider is what leeway his government and other countries are able to give their citizens to improve their situation. The issue is not to draw conclusions.

The important thing is to give citizens room to maneuver so they can improve their situation, instead of throwing stones at everyone in this House.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to stress the importance for Canada to meet the challenges of globalization. Our country is well known for its active participation and for the leadership it has often displayed in the development of an international trade system.

Canada's vitality is quite impressive. Our country is among those that rely the most on foreign trade. Indeed, foreign trade accounts for more than 40% of our gross domestic product, the highest percentage among all G-7 members. Our favourable trade balance increased from \$7 billion in 1991 to \$41 billion in 1996. The total value for Canadian exports of goods and services was a record \$280 billion in 1996, almost twice as much as in 1989.

Through its trade policy, Canada seeks to promote the constant improvement of the quality, accuracy and scope of international rules on trade and investment.

Supply

Over the past 50 years, our country has been a leader in the development of rules for international trade. We contributed to the establishment of GATT, in 1947, and to the gradual improvement of these rules during successive negotiations rounds that led to the Uruguay Round, in 1994. Canada can be proud of the rules that now exist under the World Trade Organization for goods and services.

It is only natural that we would support changes to include something as critical as international investment. In the current context of globalization, direct foreign investment goes hand in hand with trade. The two cannot be dissociated.

The government's role in developing trade is to support Canada's businesses in such a way as to maximize their chance of success in foreign markets and thus to help create and maintain jobs everywhere in Canada.

For Canadians, there has never been a better time for exports and for taking advantage of international investment opportunities. Markets are opening up, trade barriers are dropping, and goods and services are moving freely between countries.

Foreign investment in Canada triggers employment and growth. Too often, too much attention is paid to the heavy impact of direct foreign investment on Canadian employment and prosperity. Three out of ten jobs in Canada are directly or indirectly linked to direct foreign investment in Canada. More than 50% of exports and 75% of manufactured exports are directly linked to direct foreign investment in Canada.

• (1625)

Every \$1 billion in investments contributes to the creation of over 45,000 jobs over five years.

Direct foreign investments bring new technologies to Canada and bring new production processes on line more quickly. New technologies make it possible for Canadian businesses to maintain or even increase their competitive edge, both in world and domestic markets.

Finally, the liberalization of financial markets and the relaxation of restrictions on foreign investment no doubt explain the remarkable vigour of Canadian direct investment abroad in the 1980s.

This investment provides an increasingly vital contribution to our economic prosperity. Since 1996, the value of Canadian direct investment abroad has surpassed the value of foreign direct investment in Canada.

Canadian direct investment abroad has tripled since 1986, reaching a figure of \$194 billion in 1997. The growth of this investment also reflects a new approach to emerging economies.

These investments are a source of substantial revenues and dividends for Canadians and allow our businesses to compete

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internationally. Canadian investment abroad produces benefits at home for research and development activities, growth and export opportunities, thus creating jobs in Canada.

By investing their own resources in target countries, Canadian companies are displaying confidence and thus positioning themselves favourably to take advantage of potential trade opportunities.

An increasing number of Canadian competitors are very actively promoting and expanding their businesses worldwide.

Canada would like a set of internationally accepted rules on foreign investment, just as there are rules on foreign trade.

Our objective is very clear. The Government of Canada wants to conclude a good deal at the right moment. We do not want to sign just anything at any old time. Therefore, if OECD countries reach an agreement that serves the interests and respects the values of Canadians, in keeping with our specificities and the exceptions we put forward, we believe such an agreement would be beneficial to Canada. But our commitment goes further than that. Our government has been consulting Canadians since the negotiations started and will continue to do so.

We have consulted the provinces, the NGOs, and of course Parliament. In this regard, I will remind members of the House of Commons that last November, at the request of the Minister of International Trade, the Sub-committee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade held public hearings on the MAI. In December, the committee tabled its report with as its main recommendation that we continue to participate in the MAI negotiations.

The Bloc Québécois concurred in the report. Last week the government tabled its response to the report. In short, the government accepts all 17 recommendations. At the recent annual meeting of OECD ministers, the Minister of International Trade unequivocally restated Canada's basic position in these negotiations. The ministers agreed to keep on negotiating without setting any specific deadlines. This is in keeping with Canada's position to take the time to negotiate the best possible agreement.

The government will keep on consulting as many groups as possible to ensure that Canada's positions reflect the interests of all Canadians.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is particularly nice to hear a Liberal making sense, after what we heard earlier, and I would like to congratulate the member.

We cannot agree with everything that was said because, for one thing, it was a bit general. At least it made sense. There was a beginning, an end and a middle to this speech. I would like to congratulate the member. There are perhaps other Liberal col-

leagues who could take lessons on speech-making, or at least read this one to learn a few things. It might be instructive.

Now that we have listened to our colleague, the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, expressing his agreement with the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, the rate of growth, our Canadian businesses, which are flourishing all over the place, and telling us how everything is just peachy and how everyone is so nice and so wonderful, I think we have to be honest and admit that there are a few problems somewhere.

• (1630)

Since the Liberals have been in office, the figures show that child poverty, and the poverty of families by extension, has increased.

The question is not who are the bad guys and who are the good. The question is whether there is not some way to create a special parliamentary committee to discuss in as non-partisan a way as possible, even if it is difficult—my colleague said so—the problem of the gap between rich and poor.

I have a question for my colleague, the member for Pierrefonds-Dollard, if I can be heard over the inanities of the member for Abitibi, whom it is my misfortune to also have to call a colleague, and who may have learned to read when he was young, but picked up nothing in the manners department.

You would have had trouble learning to do two things at the same time, at the rate you are going. One day, maybe.

My question to the member for Pierrefonds-Dollard is this. Why are you opposed to the Bloc Québécois motion? And I ask you to put it in your own words. What is it you do not agree with?

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Before the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard responds, I ask members to direct their questions to each other through the Chair and we will get through the day.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Repentigny. I am sure he does not want to involve me in his argument with my colleague from Abitibi.

I just want to point out to the hon. member for Repentigny that the government has already started to fight poverty. If you had gone through the previous budgets brought down by the government, you would have noticed that the first step to take is to reduce the deficit, which is what the current government has done.

But even in its attempt to reduce the deficit, the government decided to start by helping the poorest of the poor, the unborn child. In our minds, poverty starts with pregnant women who do not have the means or the money to eat three meals a day. We started by creating a fund to help those mothers. That was a start. It is very

interesting to note that, for young people living in poverty, the first years are the most crucial.

The first thing we did was to help pregnant women to ensure that their children, the future generation of Canadians, were born healthy.

Then, in the last budget brought down by the government, you must have noticed that we have taxable and non-taxable benefits that are handed out to the poorest members of our society. Unlike the Reform Party, which wants to reduce taxes for everyone, our government has decided to help out the most needy, the poorest of the families.

In a family earning \$20,000 or less, the mother would get \$1,600 for her first child and \$1,400 for her second child, for a total of \$3,000 or 15% of her family budget.

We have chosen to fight poverty by helping out the poorest members of our society, which we did in the last budget. We had set aside \$850 million for 1998, and we will add \$425 million for 1999 and another \$425 million for the year 2000.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for his wise, logical and factual speech. It contained a lot of good points.

I simply want to remind the House that, if we really want to examine the issue of globalization and its benefits, we need only ask people in Malaysia, Indonesia and India what they think about it. They can tell us clearly that globalization helped not only the people of these countries in general, but also their economy.

I would ask my colleague if he could give us other examples where globalization has helped people all over the world.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

What is important is not really the word “globalization”, but the fact that, for a country like Canada, it means an increase in our exports.

• (1635)

One must not forget that here, in Canada, almost one job out of two is related to the export trade, especially in the province of Quebec.

Therefore, for us, globalization means access to various markets. When we finally have access to these markets, jobs will be created in Canada. Then the government will be in a better position to give more money to CIDA and to help other countries in the world. I think it is very important.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard for his reply to my question as to why he was opposed to our motion. When he said that the

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Liberals had solved all the problems, I was somewhat satisfied but nevertheless surprised.

If I am not mistaken, the Liberals have been in office for five years. This is not a question for the hon. member, because I have the answer. Statistics show that since 1993, when the Liberals took office, the number of children living in poverty rose by 100,000, from 1.4 million to 1.5 million.

Given the hon. member's reply, are we to understand that, during the first four years, the Liberals merely looked at the situation and only took action last year? Were they inactive during four years and active during one year?

Also, does this mean we no longer have to raise this issue because it is solved? What we are saying is if the issue is not solved, we simply want to discuss it with representatives from the various parties and with Canadians and Quebecers.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Repentigny for his question.

When I looked at the wording of the Bloc Québécois' motion today, I asked myself a question. The Liberal Party of Canada held its convention last March, here in the national capital, and there were observers from the other political parties, including two from the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc Québécois must have looked at the priority resolutions passed by the Liberal Party of Canada. One priority resolution was from Quebec and I will be pleased to send it to the hon. member. That resolution dealt with the issue of poverty.

[*English*]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

It is with pleasure that I rise today to support the motion of the member of the Bloc Québécois. The motion put forward today is a very good one. It shows very clearly the links between growing poverty in Canada and globally and the phenomenon of globalization now characterized through the multilateral agreement on investment. This is an important motion because these are two key issues that face the country, both of which emanate from policies that have been adopted by the Liberal government.

We have heard many times in the House that the Liberal government is tackling the issue of poverty. When we look at the evidence and what has happened not just in the House of Commons but in terms of government policies since the resolution was passed unanimously in 1989, we begin to see the real picture that emerges is of government policies that have systematically oppressed and increased the number of poor families, of unemployed people and of people living under the poverty line in Canada.

Since 1989 the number of children living in poverty has grown by 538,000. That is a shocking number. The number of food banks

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has tripled. The number of poor children has grown by 47%. The number of low income persons in 1996 was 40% higher than in 1989 when the resolution was passed.

The reasons for the growing inequality are very clear. The blame lies at the feet of the government that has adopted a corporate agenda of massive cutbacks to our social programs and \$700 billion in cuts to transfer payments that have harmed the people of Canada, particularly low income Canadians who depend on transfer and social programs in terms of health care, education and social welfare.

We have seen the Liberal government refuse in the House to fully index the child tax benefit.

• (1640)

This is yet another reason for growing inequality in Canada. We have seen the gutting of our UI program. Whereas 80% of the unemployed workers who have paid into the program used to collect benefits, it is now down to a measly 30% or a little more.

We have also seen the gutting of our federal housing program. Is it any wonder we have growing poverty and growing inequality since the federal government abandoned social housing in 1993?

In my own province of British Columbia the loss of federal dollars for social housing alone has meant a decline of 8,000 units that would have been built had the program continued. To families where housing is a key determinant of health and well-being that means many more singles, couples and children are living in very substandard housing as a result of government policy.

If we want to look at the living standards in Canada, it is shocking to note that Canada is the only major industrialized country where living standards actually fell in the 1990s. Between 1989 and 1996 the average family income for Canadians, adjusted for inflation, fell by \$2,300 or 3.9%. That can be compared to the average real income per person in the United States which grew by 6.2% or the real income per person which grew in western Europe by between 6% and 13% over the same period. That shows how drastic things are in the country.

This has meant that in 1996 the income of the poorest 20% of families in Canada fell by 3% because of lower earnings, cuts to UI and social assistance, but we have to point out that in 1996 the income of the most affluent 20% of families rose by 1.8%. Those statistics speak to the growing disparity and the growing inequality that face us.

Even the government admits things are failing. A huge government report conducted by an interdepartmental committee was comprised of 27 top civil servants in 1996 whose mandate was to

identify pressure points facing the Canadian government over the next 10 years. This is what they said in their report:

—the primary obstacle standing in the way of a new national dream is a perception among many Canadians that Canada is no longer a land of opportunity—a society where they can realize their aspirations and be treated with dignity and fairness. Unhappily, much of the research done by federal departments over the past few years tends to confirm the existence of a growing class of (excluded people). It would appear that these trends will continue—

Even when the Minister of Human Resources Development was minister for international co-operation in 1996 he had this to say about globalization:

—the sunny promise of globalization has a dark side. They counterpoise a more integrated world economy and boundless prosperity against the risk that most of the world's people will fall by the wayside, impoverished and disgruntled spectators to the global revolution.

The federal government is not listening to its own Canadian Human Rights Commission which has pointed out that poverty is a human rights issue. Instead of addressing these issues the Liberal government has for three years worked in secret to defend the interest of the most powerful people in our society, those who own and control multinational corporations.

There is no question the MAI is a threat to our democracy. It will have a tremendous impact on our social policy and the ability of democratically elected government to formulate social policy in the public interest.

The government has failed on the score of poverty not only by going ahead and negotiating agreements like the MAI. It has also failed to deal with issues like bank mergers where we have seen profits of \$7 billion and the concentration of corporate capital that does not serve the interest of Canadians.

In the B.C. legislature a couple of days ago a resolution was passed calling on the federal government to ensure that Canadian medicare and social services were fully excluded from the provisions of the MAI and calling on the Government of Canada not to sign the draft multilateral agreement on investment.

• (1645)

These issues are linked in terms of globalization and poverty because there is not a shred of evidence that the MAI will benefit Canadians. It will only benefit large corporations and will only increase growing inequality in Canada.

We call on the government to reverse its priorities, to stand up and acknowledge this is a wealthy country where wealth can be distributed so that the lowest income people of Canada can have better housing, health care, social programs and education. Those things can be realized if the priorities of this government are reversed and it stops defending the interests of those multinational corporations through the MAI.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to make this a votable motion.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the motion put forward by the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie concerning globalization and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

First of all, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on his dedication to bring this very serious problem to the fore. Sometimes non conventional approaches must be taken to make oneself heard; there is nothing wrong with wrecking a little havoc to put an important message across.

The message the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean wants to send is indeed important. We are told that all G-7 nations are jealous of Canada's economic indicators, but that is to forget the cost attached to globalization.

I represent a part of the country where unemployment is frighteningly high. It is more than 22% in the Acadian peninsula. This is not just a figure, it represents entire families experiencing hardship because the economic market is impervious to human suffering. This 22% figure means that one out of every five people is looking for work but not finding any. This 22% figure reflects a kind of suffering that Canada should never tolerate.

We are living in a world in which multinationals have turned substantial profits in recent years. It is important to understand that I have nothing against companies turning a profit. It means jobs. But we must take a good look at the price to pay for this profit.

It is unacceptable for these profits to be made on the backs of workers. It is unacceptable for these profits to be used to fill someone's pockets when most Canadians cannot make ends meet. It is unacceptable that these profits are giving rise to poverty in a whole section of the population. It is unacceptable that these profits are being made at a cost to children, who are the most directly affected by this poverty. It is unacceptable that these profits are damaging society and not improving it.

Throughout the world people recognize the serious problems attached to the phenomenon of globalization. We recognize that the

world market left to its own devices increases social inequality and sets countries on the road to ruin.

[*English*]

We talk about the race to the bottom. I do not know if we truly understand what it means. The race to the bottom means lower wages for workers. It means poor working conditions. It means that an employee cannot go to the bathroom because his supervisor controls his every move.

[*Translation*]

We must ensure that globalization benefits all Canadians. Why should company CEOs earn a million dollars in salaries when their employees are facing salary cuts or layoffs?

• (1650)

Over the past seven years, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. Let us take a look at General Motors as an example. CEOs' salaries increased by 250%. Employees' salaries increased by 33%, and 25% of jobs were cut. Why are the benefits not more equitably shared?

A balance should be struck so that the profits of one do not signal the misfortune of the other. Canadians want their government to assume its responsibilities and ensure that globalization serves democracy, equality and human aspirations.

We are living in a world that wants to transfer the balance of power from the hands of elected parliamentarians like us into the hands of multinational corporations.

A reminder to my colleagues in this House. We must not hand over all our powers to the multinationals, which are interested only in their own profits. Canadians will suffer the most if we do. Our constituents will suffer in the race for profits. They will be the victims of the growing inequality.

As parliamentarians, we have a lot to contribute to putting a stop to the ever growing inequality. Government can commit to setting objectives for the reduction of unemployment.

This growing inequality is the result of government policies that refuse to help Canadians when they are at their most vulnerable.

Thousands of Canadians today are jobless. However, 64% of them are not eligible for the benefits intended for them. This situation is even more ridiculous considering the fact that there is more than \$20 billion in the employment insurance fund at this moment. The gap between the rich and the poor is due in part to the fact that the government refuses to take its responsibilities and to give workers the EI benefits they have paid for.

This Parliament can honour its 1989 commitment to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. That commitment was made thanks to the efforts of former NDP leader Ed Broadbent. Is it not sad to

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realize that, ten years later, we are not any closer to the desired objective?

We can do what is fair and equitable. Let us work together to make sure that this growing inequality ceases immediately. Let us work together so that all Canadians can benefit from living in a fair and equitable country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Questions and comments. The member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok.

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that the name of my riding is quite a mouthful, but it is one of the loveliest regions in Quebec. The full name is Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok. These are the names of the four RCMs around the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands directly opposite.

I am pleased to take part in today's debate in the House on the distribution of wealth between the rich and the poor, mainly in the context of globalization of markets. I am also very pleased to be speaking after my colleague, the member for Acadie—Bathurst, because I know that the region he represents is experiencing some of the same things as we are in the Gaspé.

I heard my colleague mention an unemployment rate of 22% in his riding. My constituents are in pretty much the same boat, if not a little worse off. Even if I look beyond our region, the situation is the same in New Brunswick, showing the relevance and importance of the issue. Those of us from the regions must raise these issues.

People often say that the population in the regions is small, but we export. We are therefore hard hit by the globalization of markets. What tools has the Parliament of Canada put at our disposal? We do not see any. Our colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, initiated this debate, and that is what should be borne in mind.

• (1655)

When I speak of exporting regions, such as mine in the Gaspé, in the Magdalen Islands or in Acadie—Bathurst in New Brunswick, the crab fishery is very important. I mentioned it earlier. I think that the only person not aware of the problem is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. We rely heavily on exports. The Japanese are our main buyers.

But what is there to help this industry if ever Asian prices were to drop? We are just as dependent on exports as the riding of my colleague, the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. His riding would also be affected if anything were to happen to Asian pork markets. This is what we want to discuss. What are the available tools?

Second, we talk about the distribution of wealth, but what does the Parliament of Canada put at our disposal? What are the tools available to help the needy and those who are searching for work? How can we improve the situation?

In the context of globalization, what are the tools provided to fishers who rely on the TAGS program? These people need tools to cope. They export their fish, because there are not enough of us in Canada to eat it all. They would like to retrain, but to do what? These are all issues that need to be discussed.

I will conclude, for I want to give the last word to my colleague, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. But first I want to congratulate the Ralliement madelinot-gaspésien. This organization from the Gaspé Peninsula drafted a social contract to make people think about the distribution of wealth. The hon. member for Québec referred to it in this House, and I am prepared to give a copy of this social contract from the organization to all members of the House. This group of people representing the various regions of the Gaspé Peninsula also wants to launch a debate on the distribution of wealth.

I now give the last word to the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok.

This is precisely the problem in our country. It all started with free trade and then NAFTA. In fact, the purpose of these trade agreements was to protect what we had and to improve the situation in other countries. However, the opposite is happening. This is why, two weeks ago, we had to file complaints with Canada's labour board, because these agreements were not being complied with.

So, you can imagine what will happen with the globalization of markets. Again, we have a problem in this country, and until the government takes its responsibilities and addresses these issues, there will be hungry children in Canada. In the Atlantic region, the government is prepared to close down TAGS.

[English]

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with my colleague from Mississauga South.

I do not know why my colleague has to lose his temper. A little earlier he was speaking in the House and was worried and concerned about the fact that if the MAI were to be implemented or if globalization is to take its course workers could not go to the bathroom. I am really surprised that the debate had to come to this level of argument.

Things are not as bad as my colleagues in the NDP would have us believe. We still are considered the best country in the world in which to live. For three years in a row the United Nations has

identified Canada as the best place in the world in which to live. We rank number one, ahead of the United States, Japan, Netherlands, Norway and other countries.

• (1700)

We still have a quality of life which is higher than any other country in the G-7 which makes it the highest quality of life in the world. It is ahead of Germany, France, the United States, the United Kingdom and Italy. Canada also has the highest level of enrolment when it comes to higher education than any other country in the G-7. Things are not as bad as my colleagues like to make them look.

I do not want to say all these things are because of the government's action. All these good things have been achieved collectively by Canadians at every level of government, municipal, provincial and federal. All those things are happening because the government was able to collect taxes from people and corporations in order to spend on our wonderful social programs which are the finest in the world.

I want my colleagues to know that money does not grow on banana trees. It is not planted in backyards. We have to work and produce in order to generate money. That money would not be in the amount we see here in Canada if it were not for corporations that are investing in research and development and in products that are selling here and more importantly are being sold abroad in markets in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the United States and elsewhere.

I hope my colleagues are not suggesting that we should close our borders, bury our heads in the sand and wish for a sunny day because it is not going to happen.

The motion before us today is trying to blame everything on globalization. There is no way out. Either governments around the world will have to move into the next century smiling and co-operating or governments will move into the next century kicking and screaming. Simply put, the world is changing. All we have to do is to look at the past few years to see the revolution and the evolution which have taken place when it comes to information technology.

Governments are scrambling to catch up. In the past few years we have been able to unleash the intelligence of our people in Canada and in the United States. That is why today we have the most sophisticated mode of communication in the world, which is the Internet. Tomorrow we will see other technologies coming on board which will eventually render governments pretty well obsolete.

My view is that the government which is the fastest to move toward not becoming obsolete in the new world order is the government that will be serving its people the best. The government that is capable of coping with what is taking place around the world and establishing standards that suit the people of the world is the government that will be meeting the needs of its people.

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The multilateral agreement on investment is not the end. It is the beginning. It is the beginning of something wonderful. No member of the World Trade Organization is biting the butt or chopping the head of another member. Everything is going fairly well. We finally have a world order and rules which govern the whole world when it comes to trade between the economies of countries. We finally have a mechanism in place where if one country is in dispute with another country there is a forum where they can resolve their dispute.

When we talk about rules also governing investment there is nothing to worry about because nobody is robbing anything from anyone. All we are saying is that we want to have a level playing field all over the world when it comes to countries that presently are or eventually will be members of the World Trade Organization and the OECD.

We want to have a proper level playing field so that we know what we are talking about. Billions of Canadian taxpayers' dollars are invested abroad, in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere. We want to make sure these investments are protected.

• (1705)

I am not fearful. We have one of the most open economies in the world. We are not afraid of a takeover because our country is wide open for investment. We welcome investment. Investment creates jobs.

There is no fear here because simply put, with the multilateral agreement once and if it is signed, there is no need to change anything when it comes to existing Canadian laws. Canadian laws will not be affected. It will not take anything away from the Government of Canada when it comes to its ability to introduce new laws or to change existing laws, providing it treats everyone on the same basis with equality. There are exemptions. A lot of our industries are exempted.

I do not know what this is all about, trying to blame the poverty of the world on the multilateral agreement on investment or blame world poverty on globalization. Ask the people in Malaysia. They will say that thanks to investment in their country the level of income and the gross domestic product have multiplied many times over. Speak to the people in Singapore, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Latin America and elsewhere in the world. They will say one by one that thanks to trade and thanks to our investment in their countries and their investment in our country, there is a much better world. We have to bring down barriers, not build them up. Protectionism could kill an elephant.

Madam Speaker, you bet your life if this motion were ever to become votable I would be the first one to vote against it and I would not be blushing because it is a ridiculous motion. It is not a thoughtful motion.

No one has done anything substantial in order to convince me that as an elected official I should be voting for something that is

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against the interests of the people. A multilateral agreement on investment and globalization will work eventually in the best interests of the people.

Somebody told me a story about a company that went to India and invested in toothpaste, Colgate or whatever. As a result of that investment the quality of life of the people who work in the surrounding area has dramatically improved. As a result of that particular investment, another nail has been put into the coffin of poverty.

That is one example. There are hundreds of other examples across the land where foreign investment has helped to improve the quality of life for people in countries where they live and eventually narrowed the gap between the poor and the rich.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder why my colleague from Ottawa-Centre is getting so upset. He does not need to get angry. He looks mighty serious and angry. I want to throw the ball back into his court. When I look at where the hon. member for Ottawa Centre is coming from, I understand why he is so vigorously defending the interests of the government. I am sure that he does not have the same problem in Ottawa Centre that we have in Acadie—Bathurst, which is why my predecessor, Doug Young, was shown the door.

I invite my colleague opposite to visit Newfoundland, since his government wants to abolish the TAGS program. He does not need to go outside the country to see people living in poverty and children going hungry.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this and the fact that more and more people in Atlantic Canada and in downtown Montreal can be seen begging in the streets. Even here in Ottawa, there are people begging, which we never used to see before. The same thing goes for Vancouver. This is the real problem.

It started with the Free Trade Agreement, then NAFTA and now the MIA. This is where the problem lies. We cannot bury our heads in the sand, we have to look up and see what is going on in our own country.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Mac Harb: Madam Speaker, my colleague is from New Brunswick. I am surprised he does not have enough faith in the people of New Brunswick who with their government have changed the course of things.

I commend the Government of New Brunswick, a Liberal government that came to power at a time when there was a big gap between the rich and the poor. There was not enough economic growth in that province. In a matter of a few years the sensibility,

sensitivity and vision of that Liberal government enabled it to map out a strategy whereby the province of New Brunswick was able to attract businesses and investment. I repeat investment. I know my colleague in the NDP hates the word investment. He is allergic to the word investment.

There was economic growth in New Brunswick. New Brunswick is now more equipped than ever before to meet the challenges of the next century.

The member should not look at it as a negative thing. Investment has helped his province and it will continue to help his province. He should stand and say that he wants more investment, that he wants to encourage more businesses to be established in his province, that he wants it to do more trade not only with the rest of Canada but with the rest of the world. The world is his market.

Globalization means bringing down borders. It allows us to sell to five billion people versus selling to only two million or three million people. It gives us more opportunities. There is no need for fear. The world is better today than it was yesterday or the day before.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): We have 30 seconds left for a question. The hon. member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok.

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the 30 seconds I have, I want to say that I agree with the comments made by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, about the astonishment shown by our colleague who lives in a more central riding.

I think it is a bit contemptuous for a member to say during today's debate that money does not grow on trees. What the people of our region are asking for is tools to work with.

I also want to remind the House that Canada was built from east, from Gaspé and New Brunswick, to west, and that we would not have a country if it were not for us.

Our industry is agonizing. We want tools. Wake up.

Mr. Mac Harb: Madam Speaker, first of all, old battles must not be dragged back into this House. All there is to say is that now we are all part of a civilized society, and life in a civilized and democratic society requires everyone to work together to develop the economy of that society. The way to do so is through free trade.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in this debate on the subject of elimination of poverty.

Child poverty is an issue which has seized Canada for many years. Most notably the House of Commons passed a motion to

eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Child poverty is a political term. That term was coined to elucidate some sympathy for a cause or an issue. Child poverty is really family poverty which is the aspect I will discuss.

A Bloc member raised the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor recently in the House.

• (1715)

Most Canadians would agree that in Canada we should have an environment in which we can be as successful as we possibly can be, in which we can earn economic returns based on the amount we contribute, our abilities and the opportunities we create for ourselves, and in which we can be as successful as we want to be.

In terms of narrowing the gap between rich and poor I suspect we are not so much concerned about how much rich people might be getting through their efforts. Our interest is more in terms of how we deal with those who are in need in society. Many members of this place share a value system which says that we should help those most in need first.

Just as a point of reference I would like to share with the House what an LICO is, a low income cut off. In Canada we do not formally have a poverty line. However as a reference point we use the Statistics Canada low income cut off threshold.

To give members an idea of what these numbers would be, in a city such as Ottawa one person with an income below \$16,874 would be deemed to be living in poverty according to Statistics Canada. Two persons would increase to \$21,092. Three persons would increase to \$26,232. Four persons, for instance a mother, father and two children, with incomes below \$31,753 would be living in poverty. That is a point of reference. I will not make any judgment on whether those levels of income are significant in terms of our understanding of the concept of poverty in Canada.

There are many reasons for poverty in Canada. Most would agree that one of the key elements has to do with jobs and the strength of our Canadian economy to deliver jobs for Canadians who want to work and want to earn incomes to take care of their responsibilities and to enjoy the fruits of Canada.

Canada has come through a very traumatic fiscal period over the last 25 years in which deficits increased annually. Our national debt has a substantial annual financing cost. In 1993 we had a \$42 billion deficit. Obviously it was very difficult for any government to produce the kinds of initiatives that would deal with that fiscal situation and with issues such as jobs in the absence of dealing with the fiscal health of Canada. All members know that for the first time in a long time Canada will have a balanced budget for the year ended March 31, 1998.

Supply

In the budget presented to this place the finance minister outlined a number of initiatives. It was not a lot but it was a clear start with things like education of our children, ensuring accessibility to schools so that they could get the skills and the training they needed to get the jobs they needed.

We also have a scenario where the interest rates in Canada came down and have been the lowest in 10 years. We are still two or three percentage points below those in the United States. This means we are able to invest capital and that jobs are flowing from that capital investment. It means we have a very stable fiscal situation which has increased exports, and exports create jobs. In that aspect things are starting to happen but not quickly enough.

Canadians need tax breaks. They need to pay less in taxes so they have more disposable income, can continue to be consumers in the economy, generate more growth within our system and provide more jobs so that the synergy and ripple effect will take place.

• (1720)

Certainly poverty has to be discussed in the context of economic realities, but I want to talk about poverty in the context of social realities. The Vanier Institute of the Family stated that lone parent families represented about 12% of all families but accounted for 46% of all children living in poverty.

Lone parent situations do not very often statistically occur naturally in terms of an unmarried mother, for instance. It is about 3%. Actually the preponderance of the lone parent situation in Canada has to do with the breakdown of the family. It has to do with the fact that in Canada today 30% of all marriages end up in divorce. It has to do with the fact that we now have over a million family relationships in Canada which are common law relationships.

Common law relationships break down twice as frequently as married relationships within the first five years of such relationships. Some 60% of common law relationships break down within the first five years. Some 60% of all parental relationships, whether they be married or common law, involve children. This is one of the most significant reasons we have child poverty and so-called family poverty.

It is a very important area for us to deal with and there is no simple solution. It is very complex in terms of the social dynamics and the strength of the Canadian family. Economics have something to do with it. Stress in family life, stress in business life and stress in life generally have a great deal to do with how society is at peace with itself and how we grow and develop together. There is a complexity here that is very important.

I am working on a bit of research about children's outcomes. We know if children are healthy we have healthy families and obviously a healthy country. Healthy children are a very important part of the strategy dealing with the elimination of poverty and the

Supply

narrowing of the gap between rich and poor. This means we have to understand how children develop.

One of the most significant pieces of research done in the last few years by the Carnegie Foundation was called "Starting Points". It indicated that the quality of care in the first three years of life was the most significant determinant of the physical, mental and social health of children. Brain development occurs so rapidly during that period that the foundations for abstract reasoning, logical thinking and general logic are all established by age one.

There are many elements to this issue, but early childhood development represents an area in which we must make a major investment. We must invest in children and over the longer term we will have not only healthy children but also healthy families and clearly a healthier country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have listened to my colleague take a rather roundabout way before getting to the motion we have introduced today, which merely dealt with the striking of a parliamentary committee to try and seek some solutions to the poverty we have today.

He spoke of the 1989 commitment to eliminate poverty by the year 2000. It must be admitted that they have totally missed the boat. We have recently been given a figure of 1.5 million poor children in Canada.

He referred to common-law couples. I fail to see what this has to do with poverty. For me, poverty equals joblessness. Instead of talking about the deficit, he should have talked of the debt. The reason for poverty is the \$600 billion in accumulated debt that has been run up in past years, because of needless national spending. This \$600 billion cost us \$50 billion in interest annually.

• (1725)

If we had \$50 billion to invest in jobs every year, there would be far fewer poor people now.

I would just like to return to the opposition motion. I would like to hear whether the hon. member is really in agreement with this proposal to strike a parliamentary committee in order to find ways to eliminate poverty as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, I understand the member's concerns and I will answer his question directly.

The member wants a parliamentary committee to assess how we can deal with the issue. In my experience as a parliamentarian, parliamentary committees do not often have the opportunity or the resources to do the job that is necessary. In fact I do not believe we

require a royal commission on the family or children. I do not believe we need a parliamentary committee. I think we need to act.

Everyone in this place should understand that economics has a significant role to play in terms of eliminating child poverty. Restoring the fiscal health of the country will play an important role in improving our economy, expanding the economy, creating jobs, providing greater disposable income for Canadians and being able to deliver tax breaks to families so they have less stress in terms of their financial affairs. Those things will help.

Perhaps the member did not hear the part of my speech in which I talked about the breakdown of the Canadian family. Divorce and breakdown of common law relationships with children are causing a very significant problem in that although only 12% of families are single parent families they account for 46% of all children living in poverty. This is not an insignificant portion of the problem which the member seeks to address.

I suggest to the member that if it was simply a matter of giving money to poor people eventually we would get to the point where there would be a disincentive or no incentive to work or to contribute. In fact we would approach a level at which they would effectively have, with all of the benefits provided directly or indirectly by various levels of government, a guaranteed annual income.

A guaranteed annual income is a simple solution but it will not deal with the problems. That is why, when we deal with things such as how to help those in most need, increasing the child tax benefit by \$850 million this year and another \$850 million the next is a start. Is it enough? No, not at all.

It is a start. It represents and reflects the commitment of the government to restoring fiscal health to relieve Canadians over the longer term of the tax burden they are feeling and to ensuring that, most important, we invest in children who are our future and represent our best opportunity of investment for long term sustainable returns.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It being 5:30 p.m. it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired.

The House will now proceed to the taking of several deferred recorded divisions.

Call in the members.

• (1750)

And the bells having rung:

ALLOTTED DAY—HEPATITIS C

The House resumed from April 23 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today the first recorded division deals with the motion on the business of supply.

Pursuant to the same order made earlier today the question on the amendment relating to the business of supply is deemed defeated on division.

The question then is on the main motion.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 129)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Alarie	Anders
Asselin	Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Borotsik
Blaikie	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Brison
Brien	Canuel
Cadman	Casson
Casey	Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Chatters	Cummins
Crête	Davies
Dalphond-Guiral	Debien
de Savoye	Desrochers
Desjarlais	Doyle
Dockrill	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dubé (Lévis)	Dumas
Duceppe	Earle
Duncan	Epp
Elley	Fournier
Forseth	Gauthier
Gagnon	Girard-Bujold
Gilmour	Godin (Châteauguay)
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Gouk
Goldring	Grey (Edmonton North)
Grewal	Guimond
Guay	Harris
Hardy	Harvey
Hart	Hill (Macleod)
Herron	Hilstrom
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Jaffer
Hoepfner	Jones
Johnston	Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)
Keddy (South Shore)	Konrad
Kerpan	Lalonde
Laliberte	Lebel
Laurin	Lill
Lefebvre	Lowther
Loubier	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Lunn	Manning
Mancini	Marchand
Marceau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mark	Matthews
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
Mayfield	Ménard
McNally	Meredith
Mercier	Morrison
Mills (Red Deer)	Nunziata
Muise	Obhrai
Nystrom	Penson
Pankiw	Picard (Drummond)
Perron	Power
Plamondon	Proctor
Price	Reynolds
Ramsay	Ritz
Riis	Sauvageau
Rocheleau	Scott (Skeena)
Schmidt	Solomon
Solberg	Stinson
St-Hilaire	
St-Jacques	

Stoffer
Thompson (Charlotte)
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
Vellacott
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)

Supply

Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vautour
Wasylycia-Leis
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams—140

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Chan	Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clouthier
Coderre	Cohen
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Dromisky	Drouin
Duhamel	Easter
Eggleton	Finestone
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Hubbard	Ianno
Iftody	Jackson
Jennings	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knudson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Longfield	MacAulay
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marchi	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
McCormick	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McTeague	McWhinney
Mifflin	Milliken
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Murray
Myers	Nault
Normand	O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Kent—Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Proud
Provenzano	Redman
Reed	Richardson
Robillard	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora	Serré
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
St-Julien	Szabo

Government Orders

Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan
Wood—155

Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Wilfert

Bevilacqua
Blaikie
Bonin
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Brison
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Canuel
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Coderre
Collenette
Copps
Cullen
Davies
Debien
Desrochers
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Doyle
Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duhamel
Earle
Eggleton
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Gagnon
Gauthier
Godfrey
Godin (Châteauguay)
Graham
Grose
Guay
Harb
Harvard
Herron
Ianno
Jackson
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lalonde
Laurin
Lebel
Lefebvre
Lill
Longfield
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
Marchand
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Matthews
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Ménard
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
Nystrom
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Phinney

Bigras
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Brien
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Caplan
Casey
Cauchon
Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Clouthier
Cohen
Comuzzi
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
de Savoye
Desjarlais
De Villers
Dion
Dockrill
Dromisky
Dubé (Lévis)
Duceppe
Dumas
Easter
Finestone
Folco
Fournier
Gagliano
Galloway
Girard-Bujold
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hardy
Harvey
Hubbard
Iftody
Jennings
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keys
Knutson
Laliberte
Lastewka
Lavigne
Lee
Leung
Lincoln
Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Mancini
Marceau
Marchi
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Massé
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Mercier
Milliken
Minna
Muisé
Myers
Normand
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patty
Perron
Pettigrew
Picard (Drummond)

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

NUNAVUT ACT

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-39, an act to amend the Nunavut Act and the Constitution Act, 1867, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Wednesday, April 22, 1998, the next deferred recorded division is on the motion of the second reading stage of Bill C-39.

● (1805)

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion, with the exception of the chief government whip, be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yea.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: No.

● (1815)

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

(Division No. 130)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Alcock
Assad
Asselin
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Baker
Barnes
Bélair
Bellehumeur
Bennett
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Alarie
Anderson
Assadourian
Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bellemare
Bergeron
Bertrand

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT**

The House resumed from April 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-216, an act to amend the Access to Information Act (Crown corporations), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, April 21, 1998, the next deferred recorded division is on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-216 under Private Members' Business. The question is on the motion.

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. 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 called in the same order.

• (1825)

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

*(Division No. 131)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott
Alarie
Anders
Asselin
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)
Bigras
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brien
Bryden
Canuel
Casson
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Cummins
de Savoye
Desjarlais
Dockrill
Dubé (Lévis)
Duceppe
Duncan
Elley
Forseth
Gagnon
Gilmour
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goldring
Grewal
Guay
Harris
Harvey
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Kerpan
Lalonde
Lebel
Loubier
Lunn

Ablonczy
Alcock
Assadourian
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Benoit
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Borotsik
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brisson
Cadman
Casey
Chatters
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Debien
Desrochers
Doyle
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dumas
Earle
Epp
Fournier
Gauthier
Girard-Bujold
Godin (Châteauguay)
Gouk
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guimond
Hart
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Jones
Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)
Konrad
Laurin
Lefebvre
Lowther

Pickard (Kent—Essex)
Plamondon
Pratt
Proctor
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Rocheleau
Saada
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
Solomon
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
St-Hilaire
St-Julien
Szabo
Thibeault
Torsney
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wasylucia-Leis
Whelan
Wood—236

Pillitteri
Power
Price
Proud
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Rock
Sauvageau
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
St-Jacques
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thompson (Charlotte)
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
Valeri
Vautour
Wappel
Wayne
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Cadman
Chatters
Duncan
Epp
Gilmour
Gouk
Grey (Edmonton North)
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)
Konrad
Lunn
Mark
Mayfield
Meredith
Morrison
Obhrai
Penson
Reynolds
Schmidt
Solberg
Strahl
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

Ablonczy
Benoit
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Casson
Cummins
Elley
Forseth
Goldring
Grewal
Harris
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Kerpan
Lowther
Manning
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McNally
Mills (Red Deer)
Nunziata
Pankiw
Ramsay
Ritz
Scott (Skeena)
Stinson
Thompson (Wild Rose)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams—56

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Private Members' Business

MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Marceau
 Mark
 Matthews
 McNally
 Mercier
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Muise
 Obhrai
 Penon
 Picard (Drummond)
 Power
 Ramsay
 Riis
 Rocheleau
 Schmidt
 Solberg
 St-Hilaire
 St-Jacques
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
 Vellacott
 White (Langley—Abbotsford)
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Manning
 Marchand
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Mayfield
 Ménard
 Meredith
 Morrison
 Nunziata
 Pankiw
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Price
 Reynolds
 Ritz
 Sauvageau
 Scott (Skeena)
 Solomon
 Stinson
 Strahl
 Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
 Turp
 Wayne
 White (North Vancouver)

Leung
 Lincoln
 MacAulay
 Malhi
 Mancini
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan (Edmonton West)
 McWhinney
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
 Mitchell
 Myers
 Normand
 O'Brien (Labrador)
 O'Reilly
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Proctor
 Provenzano
 Reed
 Robillard
 Saada
 Sekora
 Shepherd
 St. Denis
 Stewart (Brant)
 St-Julien
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Volpe
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Wilfert

Lill
 Longfield
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Manley
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 Massé
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McTeague
 Mifflin
 Minna
 Murray
 Nault
 Nystrom
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Peric
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Kent—Essex)
 Pratt
 Proud
 Redman
 Richardson
 Rock
 Scott (Fredericton)
 Serré
 Speller
 Steckle
 Stewart (Northumberland)
 Stoffer
 Telegdi
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vautour
 Wappel
 Whelan
 Wood—162

NAYS

Members

Adams
 Assad
 Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
 Bakopanos
 Beaumier
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bevilacqua
 Blondin-Andrew
 Bonwick
 Bradshaw
 Bulte
 Caccia
 Cannis
 Carroll
 Cauchon
 Chan
 Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
 Coderre
 Collette
 Copps
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Discepola
 Drouin
 Easter
 Finestone
 Folco
 Fry
 Gallaway
 Goodale
 Gray (Windsor West)
 Guarnieri
 Hardy
 Hubbard
 Ifody
 Jennings
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Laliberte
 Lavigne

Anderson
 Augustine
 Baker
 Barnes
 Bélaire
 Bellemare
 Bertrand
 Blaikie
 Bonin
 Boudria
 Brown
 Byrne
 Calder
 Caplan
 Catterall
 Chamberlain
 Charbonneau
 Clouthier
 Cohen
 Comuzzi
 Cullen
 DeVillers
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Duhamel
 Eggleton
 Finlay
 Fontana
 Gagliano
 Godfrey
 Graham
 Grose
 Harb
 Harvard
 Ianno
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Karygiannis
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lastewka
 Lee

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that my name was called as voting with the government on this issue.

The Speaker: We did not call your name but you will be registered. I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Ottawa Centre said that he wanted to vote with the government on this issue. I would remind the member that the government should not have a position on this issue. It is Private Members' Business.

* * *

LABELLING OF TOYS

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, April 21, the next deferred recorded division is on Motion No. 85 under Private Members' Business.

I have already explained the procedure for private members' bills.

Private Members' Business

● (1840)

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

*(Division No. 132)***YEAS**

Members

Alarie	Asselin
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bélanger	Bellehumeur
Bellemare	Bennett
Bergeron	Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Bigras	Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Brien
Caccia	Cadman
Canuel	Casey
Casson	Chatters
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	Crête
Cummins	Dalphondu-Guiral
Davies	de Savoye
Debien	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Dockrill
Doyle	Dubé (Lévis)
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Dumas
Duncan	Earle
Elley	Forseth
Fournier	Gagnon
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Godin (Châteauguay)
Goldring	Gouk
Grey (Edmonton North)	Guay
Guimond	Hardy
Harris	Hart
Herron	Hilstrom
Hubbard	Ianno
Jaffer	Kerpan
Konrad	Laliberte
Lalonde	Laurin
Lebel	Lefebvre
Lill	Lincoln
Loubier	Mancini
Manning	Marceau
Marchand	Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	McDonough
Ménard	Mercier
Mills (Red Deer)	Muise
Nunziata	Nystrom
Obhrai	Pankiw
Paradis	Penson
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Power
Price	Proctor
Riis	Ritz
Rocheleau	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Serré
Solomon	Steckle
St-Hilaire	Stinson
Stoffer	Telegdi
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Turp
Vautour	Vellacott
Wasylycia-Leis	Wayne
Williams—112	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablończy
Adams	Alcock
Anders	Anderson
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes

Beaumier	Bélar
Benoit	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Chan	Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clouthier
Coderre	Cohen
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Dromisky	Drouin
Duhamel	Easter
Eggleton	Epp
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Gilmour	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Grewal
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Johnston	Jones
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Longfield
Lowther	Lunn
MacAulay	MacKay (Picou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
Mayfield	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McNally
McTeague	McWhinney
Meredith	Miffiin
Minna	Mitchell
Morrison	Murray
Myers	Nault
Normand	O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Kent—Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Proud	Provenzano
Ramsay	Redman
Reed	Reynolds
Richardson	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Scott (Skeena)
Sekora	Shepherd
Solberg	Speller
St. Denis	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	St-Jacques
Strahl	Szabo
Thibeault	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Wappel	Whelan
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	Wilfert
Wood —171	

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

Government Orders

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1998

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, an act respecting pollution prevention and the protection of the environment and human health in order to contribute to sustainable development, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The next deferred recorded division is on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-32.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the House would agree I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that the members who voted on Bill C-39 be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House with the Reform Party members present voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

• (1850)

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

(Division No. 133)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Adams
Anders
Assad
Augustine
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Bevilacqua
Bonin
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)

Ablonczy
Alcock
Anderson
Assadourian
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Baker
Barnes
Bélaïr
Bellemare
Benoit
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brisson
Bryden
Byrne
Cadman
Cannis
Carroll
Casson
Cauchon
Chan
Chatters
Clouthier

Coderre
Collenette
Copps
Cummins
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duncan
Eggleton
Epp
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Galloway
Godfrey
Goodale
Graham
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guarnieri
Harris
Harvard
Herron
Hilstrom
Ianno
Jackson
Jennings
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Kerpan
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Konrad
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
Lowther
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Manning
Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McNally
McWhinney
Mifflin
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Muisse
Myers
Normand
Obhrai
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Kent—Essex)
Power
Price
Provenzano
Redman
Reynolds
Ritz
Rock
Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)
Serré
Solberg
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Stinson
St-Julien
Szabo

Cohen
Comuzzi
Cullen
DeVillers
Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Easter
Elley
Finestone
Folco
Forseth
Gagliano
Gilmour
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal
Grose
Harb
Hart
Harvey
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hubbard
Iftody
Jaffer
Johnston
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary-Sud-Est)
Keyes
Knutson
Kraft Sloan
Lavigne
Leung
Longfield
Lunn
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Manley
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Massé
Mayfield
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McTeague
Meredith
Milliken
Minna
Morrison
Murray
Nault
Nunziata
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pankiw
Parrish
Penson
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Pratt
Proud
Ramsay
Reed
Richardson
Robillard
Saada
Scott (Fredericton)
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
St-Jacques
Strahl
Telegdi

Thibeault
Torsney
Valeri
Véllacott
Wappel
Whelan
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

Thompson (Wild Rose)
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Wayne
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Wilfert
Wood—224

NAYS

Members

Alarie
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar)
Bellehumeur
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)
Bigras
Brien
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Dalphond-Guiral
de Savoye
Desjarlais
Dockrill
Dumas
Fournier
Gauthier
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Guay
Hardy
Lalonde
Lebel
Lill
Mancini
Marchand
McDonough
Mercier
Perron
Plamondon
Riis
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St-Hilaire
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
Wasylycia-Leis—62

Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron
Blaikie
Canuel
Crête
Davies
Debien
Desrochers
Dubé (Lévis)
Earle
Gagnon
Girard-Bujold
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guimond
Laliberte
Laurin
Lefebvre
Loubier
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Nystrom
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Rocheleau
Solomon
Stoffer
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vautour

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: It being 6.50 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary steps to ensure the continued viability of housing co-operatives administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, in 1884 Abraham Lincoln said: "Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built".

It was in that spirit of citizens supporting one another and by extension the community that the co-operative housing movement in Canada was born in the 1930s. Sixty years later, the viability of co-op housing is being seriously threatened through government neglect.

I want to take a few minutes to explain how this has come about and what can be done to repair the situation. I will start by outlining a brief history of co-op housing in Canada and show why it has been such a success story compared to other forms of social housing. I will then proceed to talk about the current move to devolve social housing to the provinces and the negative effects this will have on co-ops. Finally, I will outline an alternative solution that has the potential to not only save the federal government money but also save the co-ops.

The co-op housing movement began in the 1930s when Canadians in the maritimes, Quebec and Ontario built houses collectively for private ownership. It expanded with the construction of student co-operatives in the 1940s and family co-ops in the 1960s. The federal government got involved by supporting co-operative housing financially in Canada in 1970 through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. CMHC has called co-ops one of the great success stories in Canadian housing. Its record is especially enviable when we compare it to the federal government's track record on other forms of social housing.

● (1855)

Let me explain how co-ops work. Co-operative housing is affordable, not for profit housing owned and operated by its members. Residents pay housing charges and have the right to permanent residency as long as they respect the obligations of membership which they have a say in setting.

Joint ownership eliminates the insecurity of the rental market by putting control of the housing in the hands of the members. Each member has one vote in making decisions on important matters such as housing charges, the election of directors and the rules and regulations members will be expected to follow.

Members share common goals in the management of their co-operatives and a sense of community arises from working together. Members of housing co-ops often assist each other in ways beyond their housing needs. Housing co-ops have helped maintain or rebuild communities threatened by decay or urban renewal.

Within budget limits co-ops seek to provide high quality housing both in initial construction and through continuing maintenance.

Private Members' Business

Co-ops are required to maintain capital reserves for the replacement of worn out buildings and equipment.

As I have mentioned, co-ops are radically different from other types of assisted housing providers. Only co-ops are committed to hiring and empowering ordinary Canadians to manage their own housing. Members learn skills that help them break the poverty cycle, enabling them to reduce dependence on government support.

Co-op members do not live in low income ghettos but in mixed income communities. Just over half the nearly 90,000 households receive rent geared to income assistance from the federal or the provincial government. In federally sponsored co-operatives assistance is provided to more than twice as many households as required by their operating agreements with CMHC at no extra cost to taxpayers.

Members manage subsidies economically on the government's behalf. CMHC says: "Co-operatives have been highly successful at achieving income mixing without polarization of income groups. Income was basically a non-issue for members".

Not only have co-ops been successful in social integration, they are also the most inexpensive to operate of all forms of social housing. Operating costs are 19% less than municipal or private not for profit housing and 71% less than government owned and operated public housing. These cost saving benefits are shared with taxpayers since lower operating costs reduce the government's rent geared to income subsidy bill. Because they spend less than other housing providers and reinvest their operating surpluses, housing charges stay low. As time passes co-ops need smaller and smaller government subsidies.

However, despite all their success housing co-operatives in Canada now face a serious threat to their continued existence: devolution to the provinces. In March 1996, with very little public discussion, the government announced that it would make an effort to turn over the management of existing federal social housing resources to the 12 provinces and territories. In the two years since, agreements have been signed with Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories which would see these governments assume responsibility for public housing, private non-profit housing as well as co-ops.

In general I support the devolution of social housing administration to the provinces. I have always believed that the level of government that can best serve the needs of its clients should be the one to manage that program. But the inclusion of co-op housing in this devolution creates some serious problems for co-operatives and their members.

The two main issues for co-op members are loss of control and loss of financial security. At present members manage their own

affairs, which helps to foster community pride and a sense of ownership. The new agreements threaten that control in five ways.

• (1900)

First, existing contracts between CMHC and the co-operatives are not protected under the new social housing agreements. According to law professor Patrick Monahan of Osgoode Hall Law School, while the agreements address the issues and concerns of the provinces and CMHC, they fail to offer legally binding protection for the co-ops that actually own and manage the housing facilities. This effectively gives the provinces complete control over the programs.

Second, the provinces can unilaterally alter the operating agreements between the co-ops and the governments. Professor Monahan found that if any of the provincial legislators were to enact legislation overriding or amending the terms of such project operating agreements, the provincial governments would not be in breach of their obligations under the new social housing government agreements.

Third, co-op residents were neither permitted to sit at the negotiating table as these deals were made nor were they even consulted in the discussions. Agreements that have been signed to date and those currently under negotiation have been worked out behind closed doors. This excludes a significant group of stakeholders: the women and men who live in, own and manage this housing. These groups are the primary partners in the successful delivery of these programs but they have not been consulted.

The new agreements could also affect the character and quality of federally funded co-ops. There are real concerns among co-operatives that the new agreements will lead to the erosion of their autonomy as property owners, especially when it comes to day to day management decisions.

The failure to protect the existing contractual rights of co-operatives makes these concerns very real. What the provinces view as flexibility in the agreements, co-op members see as an invitation to intrude. Any careful reading of the history of co-op housing will show that the greater the degree of government intrusion the less efficiently co-ops operate.

Finally, lumping co-ops in with other forms of social housing which are being downloaded to the provinces will increase costs. Consolidating the control of shared cost programs such as public housing with one level of government will reduce program administration costs.

However very few co-operative housing units receiving federal support were initiated under these shared cost programs. The remainder are unilaterally federally funded. The transfer of management of these programs to 12 provinces and territories will increase wasteful duplication and government involvement, not lessen them.

Provinces taking over these co-op programs will have to add to their bureaucracies and invest time in learning to administer programs that CMHC will continue to oversee. In Ontario the province intends to download those programs to yet a third level of government, the municipalities. In that province three levels of government would be involved.

As if that were not enough, co-ops face another threat from these new agreements, the loss of financial security. CMHC only guarantees funding to co-operatives to the end of their current agreements. The \$1.9 billion the federal government currently spends on social housing are not guaranteed because the dollars are not tied to existing programs and projects.

The provincial agreements promise a steadily shrinking federal contribution. As existing programs and projects reach the end of their funding cycle, federal funding will cease and there are no assurances that anyone else will step in. The agreements reveal a slow but definitive withdrawal of federal financial support for Canadians with housing needs.

The new social housing agreements also do not require the provinces to replace the funding. There is nothing in the agreements that directs the provinces to assume that responsibility or, for that matter, that obliges them to continue spending the money they contribute now under the shared cost housing programs. In fact the agreements give the provinces and territories an incentive to reduce the number of social housing units in their jurisdiction.

Clause 7(e) of the Saskatchewan agreement states:

—for greater certainty the removal of Housing from the Portfolio of programs covered by the agreement (whether by disposition, destruction, no longer being within a program in the Portfolio or otherwise) will not entail any reduction of the total amounts of CMHC funding—

There is however another solution. Next week, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, CHF Canada, will meet with the minister responsible for CMHC and propose that a new non-profit, non-governmental organization be set up to administer co-op housing agreements.

• (1905)

If implemented, this new agency would save governments a minimum of \$2 million a year plus \$50 million over the next 20 years by reducing program administration costs and would lead to a more efficient use of federal subsidies. It would also meet the federal government's goal of devolution of administration while preserving the keys to the co-op housing success story: member control and decentralized management.

The proposed agency will adhere to the goals and principles of current programs and will operate within a strict accountability framework. As important, the CHF Canada proposal will ensure the continuing success of a housing system that many thousands of

people have worked very hard to build, an effective unifying system working in every province and territory.

Recently an independent study commission jointly funded by CMHC and CHF Canada examined a new draft of the co-operative sectors proposal and compared it to CMHC's current operation with improvements suggested by CMHC.

The consultant found that compared to CMHC's approach the CHF Canada proposal would generate savings for government in program administration costs and would assist co-operatives in increasing the effectiveness of their operations. When a co-op saves money in this operation it means more money to house people in need either in that co-op or through other housing programs.

In closing, let me restate that I agree with most of what the government has done in the area of social housing. Lumping housing co-operatives with all other social housing and downloading them to the provinces threaten to destroy what has become a unique Canadian success story.

This debate is about optimizing the structure of government so that it can best serve the needs of Canadians. There is a ready alternative to the current round of provincial and territorial grievances. I suggest the government take a good, long, hard look at it before going any further.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I participate in today's debate to urge the government to take steps to ensure the viability of housing co-operatives.

I want to thank my colleague from the Progressive Conservative Party for giving us this opportunity to debate this issue.

I should remind the House that, in the riding of Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, which I have been representing since 1993, there is a deeply rooted tradition of co-operative housing, with more than 2,000 units.

I think it is our duty as parliamentarians, as our colleague suggested, to outline the merits of co-operative housing. Co-op members are involved in their community. They are involved in a managerial capacity. Because they take their responsibilities, they look after the well-being of the co-op, and this can only reflect positively on the entire environment.

We cannot talk about co-ops, about ensuring their viability, by allocating the necessary resources so that 20, 30 or 35 years from now, co-ops are still a viable reality both in terms of upkeep and subsidized housing, without mentioning that the governments that have succeeded each other since 1992 have systematically withdrawn from the co-op program.

Private Members' Business

I think that the more militant among us, the staunchest advocates of social housing, will recall that when times were good, there were three separate federal programs under which housing could be built, operated and subsidized for members of a co-operative. But after 1992, the government, following the trend and figuring that subsidized housing should no longer be subsidized, cruelly withdrew from that area.

I want to point out that 29% of Canadian households with the greatest needs are found in Quebec, a province which has always been very supportive of co-ops. This means that, with 25% of the population and 19% of the funding for social housing, Quebec has more families in need of assistance for co-operative housing or any other form of social housing.

• (1910)

Unfortunately, in this case as in others, the list could be long. The Government of Quebec, the people of Quebec and the taxpayers of Quebec have not had the support they were entitled to expect.

It is important to say that the government announced a few months ago in the Speech from the Throne it wanted to withdraw and negotiate with the provinces the full transfer of all matters relating to public housing.

Sovereignist that I am, I would see this as a matter to celebrate, since the whole area of public housing is more a matter for the Government of Quebec and, to some degree, for municipal governments. There is, however, cause for concern, because the government wants to transfer, to all intents and purposes, nearly \$2 billion.

Governments that signed agreements with the central government—including Saskatchewan, and I will come back to it, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories—signed at a loss. For negotiations to be fair and to make it worthwhile to the provinces to sign, there must be money to ensure the continued operation and upkeep of co-operatives.

The co-operative housing movement got started in the 1970s. We will therefore be looking at co-operative housing that will require important investments for maintenance, renovation and repair in the year 2000, 2005 or 2010.

What the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and its counterpart in Quebec are asking is not just that the federal government negotiate the transfer of responsibility with the provinces, but that it have the generosity, the conscience, to provide, in the negotiations to follow, for funds to be transferred as well, so that the provinces that become responsible for this co-operative housing are also given the money to maintain and repair it.

But the government opposite is short-sighted and lacking in vision, and governs by trying to offload its responsibilities onto the provinces. The \$2 billion they are trying to negotiate will not be sufficient to allow us to plan long-term projects for the housing stock.

It is a strange thing. On the one hand, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, a fairly easy-going fellow, is not all that worked up about it. The Government of Quebec has broken off negotiations. The federal government is letting things drift along and, right now, there are no negotiations taking place between the Government of Quebec and the federal government.

Why are there no negotiations between these two levels of government? Because the offer on the table is unrealistic and ridiculously low, because there is no desire to right the historical wrong done to Quebec, which has, I would remind you, 29% of the neediest households within its borders. In the best years, it receives 19% of subsidies.

Of course the Société d'habitation du Québec and the minister responsible for housing in Quebec, Rémi Trudel, have calculated the shortfall the Government of Quebec has experienced in recent years by not receiving its fair share. The figure is in the millions.

It is our responsibility to remind the minister that he must give clear directives that negotiations with Quebec are to be resumed.

• (1915)

We are in favour of the Government of Quebec being able to regain control over this area of jurisdiction, like all governments wishing to do so, but not by selling out.

I wish to speak of a proposal to which my colleague has already alluded: an agency. Where social housing is concerned, there is already the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which administers a certain number of operating agreements in conjunction with the co-operatives.

It carries out real estate market studies. It carries out analyses and tries to understand the major trends in the housing market, not only construction, not only the private housing market, but also the co-op market.

The Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada, which is certainly the movement with the greatest expertise anywhere in Canada, has made a proposal, and I believe they wish to meet with the minister at the earliest possible opportunity. If adopted, their proposal would save billions of dollars, as it would make a community partner such as the federation the major administrator of operating agreements.

I believe that, where English Canada is concerned, this is a proposal worth considering. Once Quebec will have regained this

responsibility, along with the related budgets, and once there can be a true housing policy—because the appropriate resources will be available—it will be up to the Quebec government to decide whether it wishes to have this type of partnership with a community agency such as the one that is proposed.

I will conclude by saying that, out of all the provinces, Quebec is the only one that allocated budgets for the maintenance of co-operative and social housing, and our province is also the only one that earmarked \$40 million for development purposes. This shows the degree of support for the co-operative movement in Quebec, and I hope such support will continue in the future.

[English]

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Tobique—Mactaquac who brought this motion before the House. The motion directs the government to take all necessary steps to ensure the continued viability of housing co-operatives administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Housing co-operatives play an important role in providing affordable housing in my riding and in this country. Over 250,000 Canadians are members of nearly 2,200 non-profit housing co-operatives located in all parts of Canada. The people who live in housing co-operatives are often more satisfied in their accommodations than those who rent privately or who live in other kinds of social housing.

Turnover rates are about half those in the private rental market. About one-third of renters say they would move into housing co-operatives if they could. Forty thousand Canadian households are on co-op waiting lists. Canadians who live in co-ops are members, not tenants. They control their own housing through elected boards of directors.

Co-op housing is unique. Among assisted housing providers only co-operatives are committed to empowering ordinary Canadians to manage their own housing. While co-ops are dependent on some government support, they do in fact break the cycle of dependency enabling Canadians who need affordable housing to take control of their lives. Operating costs are below those of all other forms of assisted housing, 19% less than municipal or private non-profit housing and 71% less than government owned and operated public housing.

Co-op housing would make an important contribution even if it was not substantially cheaper than comparable forms of government assisted social housing. Co-op housing allows members to learn the skills of operating and managing the co-op. Co-ops have more than twice as many single families than are found in the general population.

Private Members' Business

• (1920)

Canadians with disabilities and other special needs live in the more than 5,000 units of co-op housing. They are counted on to participate as full and equal members. Co-ops emphasize abilities, not disabilities.

The majority of the co-op members are women and 10% of the units are occupied by women over 55 years of age. Women participate fully and equally with co-op elected leadership and staff. Nearly two-thirds of co-op units contain families with children. Co-ops help communities achieve sensible and sustainable urban development and preservation of historic neighbourhoods.

All co-ops play an important role in this country whether they be housing co-ops, consumer co-ops, farmer co-ops or financial service co-ops. Indeed at a time of mega bank mergers I believe that financial service co-ops will play an important role in providing Canadians with options.

Perhaps nowhere is co-op housing more important than in British Columbia. In the lower mainland of B.C., affordable housing is often not available. Even modest housing can be extraordinarily expensive. There are close to 15,000 people on waiting lists for co-op housing. Housing co-operatives play an important role. Co-op housing in B.C. fills the need for affordable housing for families, seniors and low to moderate income households. I think particularly of the housing co-ops in Steveston in my riding of Delta—South Richmond.

Co-ops are adaptable and resourceful. They will seek to respond to reasonable changes in government policy. But co-ops are concerned about their very existence. The current government policy designed to download or to devolve social housing responsibilities to the provinces fails to protect housing co-ops. The plan threatens to destroy a unique Canadian success story that has taken over 30 years to build. Co-op members across Canada are deeply concerned by this proposal which will affect 250,000 residents and over 60,000 co-op homes and apartments.

I call upon the government to change direction to find a mechanism to protect co-op housing in its rush to download to the provinces. The unique co-op self-management approach may well be eroded in the downloading. Co-ops are not just another form of social housing. Co-ops are the least costly form of all federal social housing programs because of the commitment and involvement of co-op members.

In future, co-op rents may rise dramatically and the buildings may deteriorate physically as a result of insufficient federal funding which may force cash strapped provincial governments to cut spending for social housing. The risks are real because the downloading agreements with the provinces do not adequately protect the operating agreements between the co-ops and CMHC

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and because federal expenditures have been capped at the 1995-96 levels.

The downloading has already taken place in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan government is currently proposing changes which co-ops believe will seriously erode their accountability and authority for setting housing changes, budgets and the number of households they will subsidize. If co-ops are forced to accept these proposals, they will be forced to operate much more like public housing.

I am impressed by the work done by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. It has proposed a viable non-governmental alternative for the country's housing co-ops. The administration of co-op programs would be contracted to a non-profit management corporation operating at arm's length from government. This approach would build on the co-op sector's decades of experience and successful cost effective self-management.

Streamlined staffing and organization would allow considerable savings in comparison with government management, be it federal or provincial. Minimum savings are estimated at \$2 million a year in the cost of portfolio administration plus \$50 million in savings on project costs over 20 years.

The proposal from the co-ops, unlike the current government policy of transfer to the provinces, would preserve the keys to the co-op housing success story: member control and decentralized management.

In British Columbia both co-op organizations support the national organization's proposal for an agency at arm's length from government. Furthermore I understand the province of British Columbia is supportive of the position taken by our co-ops and has written to the federal government to have co-ops taken off the table in the transfer talks. The federal government has not yet responded to this very critical need.

● (1925)

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to the motion concerning co-operative housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

This government understands the importance of good quality housing to Canadians. We understand the importance of helping Canadians meet their housing needs. We know that good quality housing creates sound communities and a strong country.

This government is committed to playing a strong leadership role in housing. On behalf of the Canadian government our national housing agency, CMHC, is working in partnership with the provinces and territories, municipal housing authorities and non-profit housing co-operative groups to help low income Canadians obtain

adequate, suitable and affordable housing. We are currently supporting more than 656,000 units of social housing across the country at a cost of \$1.9 billion annually.

We want to ensure that these resources are used efficiently and are targeted to Canadians with the greatest need. That is why we have offered to the provinces and territories the opportunity to manage existing social housing, with the exception of the housing programs for aboriginal people living on reserves. The decision to offer the transfer of administration of social housing resources to provincial and territorial governments was made in order to clarify responsibilities in the area where both Canadian and provincial governments are active.

The central goal of this initiative is to eliminate duplication, increase efficiency and promote one-stop shopping for social housing clients. It simply makes sense to have only one level of government involved in administering the social housing resources in this country. This approach will maximize the impact of tax dollars by streamlining the existing arrangements and facilitating one-stop shopping.

So far, agreements have been signed with Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories and Nova Scotia. Negotiations will continue with the remaining jurisdictions.

Co-operatives, like other social housing groups, are included in this transfer of responsibility to the provinces and territories. I would like to make very clear that there are sections of the new social housing agreements that require provinces and territories to carry out all of CMHC's responsibilities to non-profit and co-operative organizations and that oblige the provinces and territories to respect the rights of non-profit and co-operative organizations.

I also wish to highlight that existing project operating agreements with third parties, including co-operatives, will continue to be legally binding and can only be changed by mutual agreement of the parties concerned. CMHC's rights and obligations under these agreements are indeed covered.

The Government of Canada recognizes the close involvement of co-operative and non-profit housing groups in the management of significant portions of our federally assisted social housing portfolio. These groups also provide an important link between the government and the communities they serve.

I would like to assure my colleagues that CMHC is committed to finding solutions that will restore any social housing project, including co-operatives, to financial health where such solutions are feasible. In all cases CMHC works closely with sponsor groups and whenever possible provides the necessary assistance to these projects.

As well, over the past year CMHC has been working with the Co-operative Housing Federation to develop more streamlined and

flexible guidelines to facilitate major repairs or renovations such as the replacement of roofs. Let me give the assurance that the Government of Canada is not withdrawing from its responsibilities to provide financial support for low income Canadians with housing needs. On the contrary, we will continue to meet our substantial financial obligations to social housing, \$1.9 billion annually as I mentioned earlier.

These new arrangements are expected to bring significant benefits to a great many people. People living in housing projects will benefit far more from a streamlined management. Sponsors of social housing projects will benefit because they are now dealing with only one level of government, a level of government that will be able to better tailor programs to reflect local and regional social housing needs.

• (1930)

In essence, the people of Canada are going to benefit from the best of federal and provincial co-operation working together. This new approach to administration of social housing resources is about building on a solid partnership and working co-operatively with provincial and territorial governments for the benefit of all Canadians. It is about bringing government closer to communities and people across this country. It is about ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used in a most efficient manner, and that is good news for all Canadians.

Through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation our government is responsible for a number of programs that help ensure Canadians are one of the best housed people in the world. In addition to our significant contribution to social housing this government provides support for several short term initiatives designed to help certain groups make much needed repairs to their homes. Programs such as residential rehabilitation assistance program, the emergency repair program, and the home adaptation for seniors' independence reflect the government's commitment to involve as many quality housing projects as possible.

On January 30, 1998 the Canadian government announced a five year extension of these three programs at a cost of \$250 million. These programs will benefit as many as 40,000 households and create thousands of new jobs across Canada.

Of course, the families and individuals who have benefited from these programs appreciate the government's role, as do the partners in the housing industry. However, I am glad to mention the interest and support shown by the provincial and territorial governments. As well, they have worked with the municipalities.

The government's decision to spend \$250 million over the next five years emphasizes its commitment to stronger, safer communi-

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ties, to provide flexible federalism through federal-provincial agreements and to create jobs.

One of the primary goals of this new allocation of funds is to improve the quality of housing in low income neighbourhoods. This initiative combines good social policy and good economic policy. It also is an illustration of how well flexible federalism can work. At the moment a number of provincial and territorial governments cost share a large portion of these programs. They are invited to continue under this extension and positive responses have already been received from several provinces.

I realize that in addition to the \$250 million there is considerable more that has to be done over time. A reflection of the importance of government ascribes to housing is very clear. It is also a symbol of the success in controlling the deficit. We have always said fiscal restraint was not an end in itself but rather a means to a greater end. Our goal has always been to restore order to public finances to be able to focus more action and interest for Canadians.

I stress the government remains committed to ensuring Canadians maintain the best housing for people in the world. For Canadians housing is more than just a roof over our heads. It is the centre of our lives. It is an important form of our self-expression. It is a crucial determinant of the quality of life. Good housing is a key to better building communities as well as the cornerstone for a strong economy in this country.

It is very clear to say housing is one issue that unites us. From Victoria to St. John's, Newfoundland Canadians are coming together to make sure we provide desirable housing for all.

Let us be very clear at this point. The government will show leadership in housing and make certain that we have an enhanced way of life through good housing programs for all Canadians.

• (1935)

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we think about housing, most of us spend our entire lives or at least 20 to 25 years paying for one house. Housing is a human right. We deserve to have shelter to protect us from the elements. We bring up our families in our houses. Yet housing is becoming further from most of us as poverty grows in this country. As the gap between those who have and have not grows, more and more people will be without housing.

The co-operative housing movement has provided places for those who would not otherwise have a chance to put a roof over their heads, for those who would not otherwise have a chance for home ownership. Over the last 25 years that movement has provided an avenue for housing.

For more than 25 years the co-operative housing movement and the Government of Canada were partners in building a Canadian co-operative housing sector. The unilateral decision by the federal

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government to terminate this partnership will affect more than 60,000 co-op units and far more individuals who live in those houses.

No other housing program has created the strong sense of community so characteristic of co-operative housing. Rather than terminate such a valuable partnership, the federal government needs to develop new and stronger partnerships between Canadians and their housing co-operatives. This is one of the few supports available for urban natives. There are very strong urban native housing co-operatives across this country. They are completely dependent on it. This change will destabilize that sense of ownership, belonging and long term stability that co-operative housing has brought to senior single mothers and urban natives across this country.

The federal plan to devolve housing is threatening the future of the co-operative housing movement. Co-operative housing contributes to the alleviation of poverty and it increases living standards and develops a sense of community. The transfer of the housing co-operatives to provincial and territorial governments is threatening the stable, well maintained co-op community Canadians have built over the years and the investment the people of this country have made in this unique type of good affordable housing.

It is social housing self-managed by its members who are diverse in income, culture and education. It is a tool of national unity due to the fact that co-operative housing represents communities within communities across Canada that share the same philosophy, operating agreements and structures.

The federal government needs to recognize the uniqueness of housing co-operatives and their national position in Canada's social housing program and transfer that segment of the portfolio to the co-operative housing federation to look after it under the same contract it has had for the past 25 years to 30 years. The federal government must work with the national co-operative housing sector to find an arrangement that will preserve the successful features of co-operative housing.

This housing makes up 10% of Canada's federally assisted housing stock. The non-profit agency being proposed by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada will specialize in managing the co-operative housing portfolio. Carving out that portfolio among 12 different jurisdictions will leave the co-op housing sector divided and without countrywide links to benefit all co-ops.

They are owned by their residents who volunteer time to their communities. Their operating costs are 19% below costs of municipal and private non-profit housing and 71% below costs of housing owned by the federal and provincial governments. In 1992 the value of donated time ran between \$900 and \$1,400 per household per year. Co-ops are accountable to their members, their residents. This means built-in incentives to manage well and keep costs low.

The federal government took steps to undermine the continued viability of Canada's housing co-operative movement. The policy being implemented by the Liberal government violates its 1993 electoral promises. In 1993 the Minister of Finance wrote a letter to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the co-operative housing federation, the National Housing Coalition, supporters of non-profit co-operative housing and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. He stated: "Our platform document provides a framework for government in the 1990s. While it does not specifically address our commitment to non-profit and co-operative housing, let me make it abundantly clear that the Liberal government is committed to stable and secure funding for the non-profit and co-operative housing sectors". This has turned out to be untrue.

It is clear that the Liberal promise on social housing was like the promise to eliminate the GST and abandoning people in one million Canadian households living in need of adequate shelter. It is similar to the abandonment of those with hepatitis C, the east and west coast fishermen, our medicare system, young students struggling for an education, the EI program and those who are unemployed.

• (1940)

Canadians need housing. The co-operative movement is ready to take on that aspect and provide housing for those in need and we should support that.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is not very often in the House that we actually have a debate about the need for housing. I thank the hon. member from the Conservative Party for bringing forward this motion so that at least there is some discussion in the House of Commons about what really is a most fundamental and important aspect of people's daily lives, the right to adequate, safe, affordable shelter and housing in Canada.

Like my colleague from the NDP for Yukon, I believe housing is a fundamental human right. If there is no adequate safe housing there is very little else in life that can be dealt with because it is such a fundamental issue.

I have listened to other members speaking on this motion and actually have been very interested, quite surprised and dismayed to hear the government member talk about how the government has shown such leadership on this issue. If there is such leadership on the question of housing then why is it that the federal government abandoned social housing in 1993?

In my province of British Columbia if the federal government were still continuing with its program of funding and developing social housing, we would have another 8,000 units built since 1993.

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In my riding of Vancouver East there are numerous very well built, very well managed, very good local neighbourhood projects that are social housing projects and co-operative housing projects. I do not think we can place a financial value on the kind of stability those housing projects and co-ops have produced in a local context. Housing co-ops and social housing generally do help provide great stability in local communities.

In my riding of Vancouver East, particularly in a neighbourhood like the downtown east side where there are still 6,000 people living in substandard slum housing, in single occupant rooms, the fact that the federal government has refused to fund social housing, has refused to provide funds for co-operative housing of which we have many in my riding of Vancouver East, is really another indication of the failure of the government to address the real priorities and the real needs ordinary Canadians have in terms of housing.

In B.C. alone there are something like 20,000 on waiting lists for social housing. B.C. is one of only two provincial governments left providing social housing, but we could do a lot better if the federal government were still a financial and committed partner to the provision of co-operative housing.

The devolution of housing has had a devastating impact for people who live in poverty and has contributed to the growing inequality we see in Canada, the growing gap between the rich and poor.

The federal government is devolving housing to the provinces and what has been very interesting is that the co-operative housing movement has shown a lot of initiative in coming forward and saying to the federal and provincial governments it wants to be involved in self-management and in the administration and maintenance of co-operative housing projects.

It has been very disappointing to see the lack of response from the federal government to this very positive initiative that is financially sound, socially responsible and will ensure local accountability, local management and a sense of national standards and guidelines, something that has really been lacking since the federal government has devolved housing to the provinces. We want to call on the government today to be very clear that if it means what it says about showing leadership in this area it should be clear with the provinces that the federal government is willing to negotiate an option with provincial governments which will allow the CHF to bring forward the proposal that it has and to provide for the management of co-operative housing. This is something that has a lot of support in my province of British Columbia, which our provincial government is seriously considering and is willing to look at. But we need the federal government to be part of that negotiation and to say that it is committed to allowing this initiative from the CHF to be successful.

• (1945)

I have already received many messages and cards from my constituents who are fortunate to live in co-op housing and who are writing to me as their local MP to say they support the co-op sector's proposal for a non-profit agency to administer co-op housing. I have had cards, for example, from the Paloma co-op in my riding. A member of that co-op wrote "I love my co-op because as a middle-aged woman living alone I feel safe and secure and can go to university and get a degree and improve my employment". That is as a result of having a stable, secure, neighbourly, protected housing environment which has come about as a result of living in a housing co-op.

I would like to encourage the government to review its position and to demonstrate an understanding that housing is a human right. I believe that the government has to review its abandonment of social housing. It has to go back and renegotiate with the provinces to find a way to ensure that there is provincial involvement but, critically, federal involvement to ensure there is further development in social housing and co-operative housing in Canada.

There is no question that co-op housing in this country has been a Canadian success story. But that success story has now partially been dashed by the abandonment of the federal government in the devolution of co-op housing.

We are glad to have this debate today. We need to have more debates on co-op housing and social housing. I want to say to the government that in my riding of Vancouver East we have a desperate need for more co-ops. We have a desperate need for more social housing. We have people who are one step away from homelessness. We have people who are living on the streets because the federal government has abandoned its role in social housing.

I want to call on the government today to reaffirm its commitment to house people, to provide the funds, to negotiate with the provinces and to say yes to the proposal from the Co-op Housing Federation to ensure that the option that it has brought forward is something that can actually be realized.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac. The intervention of the hon. member will close the debate.

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Reform Party, the NDP and the Bloc for supporting my private member's motion because this is a very important issue for co-op housing.

I wish I could say the same about the parliamentary secretary on the government side. It is typical that when we have a program that works well, the Liberals want to destroy it.

Government Orders

I heard what my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, said. I just do not agree. I believe there will be a devolution of social housing which will threaten co-ops. What we are saying is that there will be a loss of control.

I put forth five points.

The first one is that existing contracts are not protected under the new social housing agreements. Second, the provinces can unilaterally alter the operating agreements. Third, the co-op residents were not consulted on these agreements. Fourth, agreements do not protect the co-ops' autonomy. Fifth, co-ops can be lumped in with other social housing programs. A sixth point is that there will be a loss of financial security.

• (1950)

I will outline two points: federal contributions will dwindle as current funding expires and, two, new social housing agreements now require the provinces to replace funding.

A new independent, regionally based, non-profit co-operative housing agency will offer the federal government an affordable way to protect public investment in co-op housing and to ensure that public funds directed to co-op programs are spent as intended and properly accounted for.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and this item is dropped from the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BOSNIA

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.) moved:

That this House take note of the intention of the Government of Canada to renew its participation in the NATO-led stabilization force (SFOR) in Bosnia beyond June 20, 1998, in order to maintain a safe environment for reconstruction and reconciliation and a lasting peace for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be in the House this evening to share with my colleague the Minister of National Defence a presentation on this take note debate on the future extension of the Canadian contingent in Bosnia.

First let me recognize and express my appreciation to members of both the foreign affairs and defence committees who travelled earlier to Bosnia to review for themselves their assessments and judgments about the activities in that area and to follow along not only on their recommendation that an extension be approved but

also to take full acknowledgement of their recommendation that there be a parliamentary debate. This evening myself and my colleague are very pleased to follow through on that recommendation.

The findings of the committee really confirmed what I saw for myself just a few short weeks ago when I visited Bosnia. It was really quite dramatic to see the changes that had taken place. During my first visit to that area I was told to equip myself on a daily basis with a bullet proof vest and helmet. This time I just had to wear the bullet proof vest. It feels like great progress has been made.

More importantly, there are political changes taking place, particularly in the Republic of Srpska, where there is a new government beginning to show some recognition of and willingness to conform to the Dayton Accords. We are also beginning to see some signs of economic reconstruction and, to some extent, a reconciliation amongst the population itself.

UN High Representative Westendorp has said that the situation in Bosnia has moved from the "critical list" to the "stable list". However, it is still quite apparent to most that a certain form of life support is required by way of the presence of the international community.

I still believe it is very essential to once again look at what we have been able to achieve to judge where we want to go in the future and also to look at the kind of priorities and targets we can set in the forthcoming years in order to ensure that the investment and the commitment which Canadians have made over the past several years both under the UN and NATO can be fulfilled.

In saying that I would like to express the real, good sense of gratitude that we have to our young Canadian men and women who have served there and particularly to recognize the 13 Canadian forces people who gave their lives as part of the Canadian commitment to Bosnia. It is a demonstration of the worthiness of the Canadian population, particularly those in our armed forces, to provide the honourable role of peacekeeping. In this case they can honourably say that is what they have accomplished.

I think what is important to note is that there has been quite an important turnaround in the last year or so.

• (1955)

Were I reporting to the House at this time last year, I think I might have been somewhat more pessimistic in my sense of outcome.

In the meetings last spring of both the defence and foreign ministers under NATO, the mandate was re-energized. Clear directions were given to the new high representative to take a very strong and stalwart stand to make things happen, to make the Dayton Accords a reality.

Government Orders

Since then municipal elections have been held and I think they were carried out successfully. The special police forces have been brought under control. The seizure of the TV transmitters by escort troops has, for the first time, opened up a degree of free media in that area so there can be a full expression of points of view. The SFOR troops were provided protection and security for the mass execution graves so that war crimes could be properly examined under the tribunal.

I think it is important to recognize that there are significant benefits in the world. Countries are coming together to work together. Some 34 countries are contributing. It is a model for the future.

This has given NATO a new sense of direction and purpose in providing a degree of stability and security. It has shown that the troops themselves are not there simply for the classic traditional peacekeeping purposes, but are engaged in a wide variety of activities.

As the minister of defence would properly acknowledge in his remarks, not only are the troops providing the basic security for the Dayton Accords, they are also showing a model of tolerance and co-operation.

Our troops are using funds provided by CIDA to help rebuild schools. They are helping to demonstrate civic pride and commitment. Once again they are an important factor in moving that area toward more democracy. They are showing that the use of military personnel is not just for conflict and confrontation, but can really be used in a peace-building capacity.

SFOR is a symbol of the international community's readiness to provide intervention and responsibility. At the same time we will provide, through the SFOR commitments, an ongoing role which is very crucial and which continues to provide stability as we look at other hot spots growing in that area.

I visited the Kosovo-Macedonia area when I was in the Balkans. Once again the fact that peacekeepers, including some Canadians, are on the border of Macedonia is a real deterrent to the spread of disruption and conflict taking place in that area. Once again the capacity of the international community to intervene to prevent conflict from taking place instead of only trying to resolve it is a clear demonstration of what we can do.

At the same time, I think it is important to note that there are lessons to be learned in this area. Each day that goes by, as the committees have reported, lessons have been learned.

The tasks which lie ahead are perhaps the toughest of them all. For those who think the job is about done, let us recognize that there are still very important and significant tasks to be done to

complete the work which was undertaken when the Dayton Accords were first signed.

The first and perhaps most significant task is to provide the right atmosphere and control under which refugees can be returned. The outstanding issue in the area is still the hundreds of thousands of displaced people both inside and outside the country. Without the security that SFOR has provided refugee return would not take place.

Secondly, there are still some very difficult problems. The major problem around Brcko in Bosnia is crucial in resolving and reconciling the issues between the different factions in the area.

There is an important need for a continuing presence to ensure that the general elections taking place later this year will be again conducted with no disruption or untoward interference by those who want to destroy the Dayton Accords.

It is also important that we maintain pressure on war crimes. What has been happening in a very interesting way is that indicted war criminals are now giving themselves up because they recognize they have no other choice.

Increasingly the influence of Karadzic and his control on the area has been reduced because of the presence of the SFOR. They have undertaken the Canadian notion of shrinking the area of responsibility and control and the result has been that war criminals are voluntarily giving themselves up to tribunals.

• (2000)

Finally, in terms of future tasks I would like to mention the important role for Canadians that our own forces are playing in the Canadian land mine initiatives taking place in Bosnia.

With the agreement of my colleagues, the Minister of National Defence and the Minister for International Co-operation, we announced a major \$10 million land mine initiative just about a month ago in Bosnia. That will provide an integrated approach between military, civilian, NGO and UN personnel to provide humanitarian demining that would complement what is being done by the Bosnia troops and would provide not only demining but also new space, new land and new opportunities for the refugees coming back. We are beginning to achieve multiple objectives by our involvement. Once again in this kind of responsibility the existence of our troops is very crucial.

Before I pass the floor to my colleague, I underline the importance of our continuing presence partly as a member of a broad international coalition and partly as a way of bringing to bear the kinds of special values, capacities and skills provided by the Canadian forces. They are also beginning to demonstrate that the international community is prepared to provide real assistance.

Government Orders

When it comes down to the truth the only people who can ultimately resolve the issue in Bosnia are the Bosnians themselves, but they will need continuing help. We would recommend to the House that they accept and agree to an extension.

With the kind of take note debate that is occurring tonight, my colleague and I and the Prime Minister can then go forward and make a decision about the future of this one.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to be able to join my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in commencing the discussion tonight on the future of the Canadian military involvement in the SFOR or the stabilization force NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I have had some firsthand experience with the situation in Bosnia. Last fall I visited there and saw for myself the destruction and devastation that followed six years of war. I saw how horrible it is to live in a land strewn with almost a million land mines. I learned how hard the men and women of the Canadian forces are working to help rebuild that country. I slept at Camp Holpina, a camp named after a Canadian soldier who was killed by a land mine, and I discussed with our troops how they were doing. I was very proud to be Canadian as I listened to these fine young men and women describe how they were helping the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina rebuild their lives.

Since my visit there I have spoken with many of my counterparts in NATO and I can say that they are like minded when it comes to staying the course in Bosnia. This has always been and should remain a multilateral effort. All of us have seen the benefits of acting together in this way. We know this continues to be as important today as it has been in the past.

[*Translation*]

Canada's numerous contributions to peace in the former Yugoslavia are evidence that this tradition is still strong.

[*English*]

Canada has played an active role in this region since war broke out in 1991. Canada participated first in the European Community monitoring mission and UNPROFOR between 1992 and 1995 because Canadians could not stand by in silence and witness such destruction. Nor could we be idle in the face of crimes against humanity.

Because we stayed there with our allies in the NATO led implementation force and then as part of SFOR, so much has been and is still being accomplished. SFOR has helped to guarantee that municipal elections, for example, take place peacefully.

SFOR has actively supported the UN international police task force in the restructuring of civil police, significantly enhancing the freedom of movement.

SFOR has worked diligently with the local armed forces to encourage them to increase their demining efforts. As a result some 20,000 mines have been lifted in the last year under SFOR monitoring.

• (2005)

SFOR has also participated in operation harvest, an amnesty program intended to reduce private holdings of illegal arms and ordinances. It was conducted this spring. The Canadian battle group played a vital role in this recovery effort.

Much has been accomplished but much however still needs to be done. We are still witnessing pockets of violence in places like Drvar where we have recently seen that the return of displaced persons can provoke violence.

With the expiry in June of SFOR's 18 month mandate the time has come to take stock of our involvement and the continued viability of an international military presence.

There is now enough stability to be able to put more focus on economic recovery, on more demining, on the September 1998 general elections, on police reform, on the safe return of displaced persons and on the building of common institutions. However we along with our allies believe that until such time as the many dimensions of the peace settlement are firmly in place, the secure environment provided by SFOR is the only way these and other reconstruction efforts of the Dayton accord can continue.

We can do this only by maintaining our current level of military commitment. Right now Canada has over 1,200 military personnel in the region. To continue to make a meaningful difference we need to deploy a combat capable contingent of about the same number of personnel. They would contribute to a renewed multinational force by deterring hostilities, stabilizing peace and thereby contributing to a secure environment to be able to carry out the further reforms I have mentioned.

Our allies agree that a post-June SFOR is necessary. We are not doing this alone. We are doing it in a multilateral context. We believe that we must continue to help support the return of refugees in minority areas, help install local governments and help strengthen demining efforts.

[*Translation*]

Our allies are also of the opinion that any military contribution must have clear objectives, in order to monitor progress.

Government Orders

[English]

There should be a precise mandate and a provision for regular review. That is why any Canadian renewal is only possible if there is a transition strategy which vigorously and frequently evaluates progress to ensure that we are constantly focused on our task at hand and so we can assess how best to reach our objectives. Once these objectives have been met we will be able to withdraw, secure in the knowledge that we have helped bring lasting peace to a troubled region.

Some may ask whether we are setting the stage for another Cyprus if we do not impose an end date. The situations are different. In Bosnia-Herzegovina there is a peace plan to which all the parties have agreed. Nevertheless we must assume that the problem there will take some years to resolve—we cannot simply pull out—and that for at least part of that time NATO forces will have to remain.

My visit to Bosnia convinced me of many things. It convinced me that the work we are carrying out there is essential. Our forces are making a difference to people's everyday lives. They are proud to represent Canada as a part of this international response.

It convinced me that Canadian participation in SFOR is a key component in this multilateral NATO operation. It convinced me that much still needs to be done and that Canada must be a part of that effort.

• (2010)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to talk about Bosnia again; it seems to happen every six months or so.

I believe Canadians have a lot of questions about our involvement in Bosnia. Everywhere I go people ask me to explain why we should be there. They ask questions about the history of Bosnia. They ask if it is a civil war, whether it has been going on for a long time, what it is really like there and what the people are really like there. They deserve answers to some of these questions.

I like the two ministers who have just spoken have been there. I have been on the ground, visited the people and taken pictures. I changed my point of view many times because of what I observed firsthand on the ground. This is an opportunity to express that and to get it on the record. I will take this opportunity to answer some of those questions.

It has been going on for a long time. We could go back to Roman times when they were fighting in this area. We could go back to the Ottoman empire when there was fighting in this area. We could talk about the involvement of many countries, of Russia, of Germany, of Greece, of France and of Britain. There has been much involvement. There is a history there. There was the first world war and

Archduke Ferdinand. We could talk about the Nazi occupation. Then we could talk about Tito and his rule until 1980 when he died.

Then we come to current history and to 1991. Two of the strongest parts of Yugoslavia, which had been held together by Tito, decided to opt for independence. When Croatia and Slovenia decided to separate it was the beginning of the modern day problems that would occur in this part of the world.

There is a history there. There is a history of turmoil and of trouble. At this point there is also Canadian involvement first with the UN forces. We were one of the first countries to be involved. I like the others would say that I saw nothing but dedication and great Canadians working with the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I was proud to be a Canadian and to see the Canadian flag on the tanks when they came around the corner. That made me proud as a Canadian. Talking to some of our troops made me even prouder. They told me about the little kids they had helped, the schools they had reconstructed and that sort of thing. That was real. That was something we could feel, touch and look at.

Many people thought at that point that Kosovo would have been the next place to explode but instead it was Bosnia. That is all history.

The 1995 Dayton accord supposedly ended the conflict. When I went there as an election observer on the ground last September I had the opportunity to see how the Dayton accord would work. I will use my province as an example.

It was like if during the war all the people from Red Deer had been moved to Saskatoon. Then the Dayton accord came along and said to the people in Saskatoon that in 1991 they lived in Red Deer so they should vote for the mayor and the council in Red Deer. However they lived in Saskatoon. People of a different ethnicity mix and of a different religion now lived in Red Deer and had to vote for the mayor and the council in Red Deer. Because of problems like the ones we just witnessed occurring there some of the people from Saskatoon decided to go back to Red Deer. That is why there is a problem.

How will that create peace? There is a built in conflict because the people who designed the Dayton accord were in Dayton, Ohio, and did not take into consideration the emotion, religion or ethnic mix there.

• (2015)

Yes they are all of Slavic background but they are of three religious backgrounds. There are Muslims, there are Orthodox and there are Catholics. It is very different and they feel very strongly and are very emotional. In Drvar when the Croats attacked the Serbs who were returning home it can be seen why. That is going to continue and continue.

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I wanted to find out what it was really like in that country so I hired a translator and a car and off we went to cover Bosnia. I visited schools. I visited mosques. I visited churches. I visited community halls. I talked to farmers. I went to bars. I went everywhere the people were and I talked to them.

Probably one of the most emotional feelings I got occurred when I talked to a group of kids who were 10 to 11 years old. I asked them to tell me how they felt about their country. I have pages of their comments but I will quote only a couple which I think say a lot. Remember that these kids are 10 and 11 years old.

They said they could not relax or run freely because there are mines everywhere. That is what Bosnia-Herzegovina is like now. Mines are everywhere. We found mines under Coke tins. The bottom was cut out of the Coke tin and a plastic mine was inside. It was placed on a picnic table, there for someone to pick up. Boom. In cobs of corn, on the sides of roads, there are mines. There are millions of these mines everywhere. Imagine living in that sort of an environment.

“When I see my friend without a leg or a hand it makes me very sad”. “I cannot wait to grow up”. “Suddenly there was heat. My sister fell over me. Something exploded. There was smoke. There were screams. Rivers of blood. I saw both my parents dead. I called them but they did not respond. When I wanted a drink of water I saw a head without a body. Since then me and my sister cannot sleep at night”. That is what the kids of Bosnia-Herzegovina are going through.

What about the people? The people are well educated. They are handsome, good looking people. They are friendly. They are concerned about families, about school, about education, the same things we are. Yet there is something there that is different. That something is a level of history and hate I have never experienced before.

I could talk to someone and they would tell me about a war and they described it as though it were yesterday. One person told me about a war that happened in 1536 when the Ottoman Turks were there. Another person told me about when the Nazis came in 1943. It was as if it were yesterday. That is why they hate their neighbour. Because their neighbour was involved with that action and it has been regurgitated and regurgitated and everybody remembers it as if it were yesterday. They are handicapped by their history.

I will never forget the little old lady who had gone for a loaf of bread. I asked if I could take her picture. She had a beautiful face. Her face was stressed and strained and I thought of what it had seen. She said she had to go home and change her dress so I could take a picture of her with her loaf of bread. I convinced her finally that I could take her picture without her actually changing her dress.

I will never forget the old fellow who at a polling station said “You are from Canada”. He asked me if I knew how to make slivovitz. That is plum brandy. “Come to my basement and I will show you”. He was so proud. His was the best in the community. I was also advised not to drink any of it as a person could go blind. This was a real guy. He was proud of this. He was a real person, someone that makes you say how can there be such hate here? These people have such emotions, such feelings, such beauty.

• (2020)

In the countryside as well. It is like Switzerland. The only problem is it is full of mines. We drove through some of the valleys. The houses are destroyed. The fields are mined. The graves are in the ditches. There are no birds singing in the fields. Not having lived through a war, experiencing this firsthand on the ground in a car with a driver and a translator was quite an experience.

Should we stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina? We have several options. We could leave. We could simply leave, saying that it is a long war, that it is going to be like Cyprus and might last forever. What are the problems if we do that? My feeling is that if we were to leave at 12 noon by 12.30 there would be a full fledged war again.

What would that mean? It would mean the potential of expansion. The Turks are not prepared to see Muslims die. The Russians are not prepared to see Serbs die. The Germans are not prepared to see Croats die. The Albanians and the Greeks and the Macedonians. The list goes on and on of possible future expansion of warfare in this area. Kosovo is the exact same example. What will Greece do? What will Turkey do? There are so many people involved.

If we leave, what about the CNN factor? What about the killing we would watch on our televisions? Are we prepared to do that?

These are hard questions. These are questions we need to ask as we contemplate this decision.

Another choice would be to divide the country into three units and say this is where the Serbs will be, this is where the Croats will be and this is where the Bosnians will be. I guess that is called ethnic cleansing but I do not know that that is acceptable or possible. Certainly it is not something we would be prepared to talk about.

Our third option is a short term plan in which we would do something which I consider to be so typically Liberal. That would be to simply extend our mandate and not really propose a solution. It is similar to saying that the financial problem has been solved even though there is a \$583 billion debt, but it is all solved because we balanced the budget.

My colleague is going to address the sustainability and what are the costs to our troops.

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I will put forward a fourth option tonight and hopefully the minister will get a chance to read it. That option would be to show some leadership in developing a long term solution, a plan. I am not saying I have all the answers. I am not saying how we would handle the refugee return or the war criminals. However we need to have something longer than six-month intervals. I cannot help but remember standing in the lobby in this House when the former defence minister said "We will be out of there by Christmas; there is no chance we will be there beyond Christmas". That was in 1996.

We need to look at something bigger. We need to talk about costs, about mandates, about responsibility, about length of stay, about a plan. I would like to see this government take some initiative, do some planning, show something beyond a six-month window in a problem like this one.

• (2025)

I cannot stand up here and say we should not stay there. I can now put a face on Bosnia-Herzegovina. It means people. It means caring. It means that little man and his slivovitz. It means school kids. However, we must do something better than simply say that the Dayton accord is going to do it all. It is not the answer and I have given just a brief insight into why it is not.

Finally, as far as the take note debate is concerned, I guess I was naive when I first came here. One of the first speeches I gave in this House was on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Did I ever work hard to prepare that speech because I thought it really was part of the decision making.

However, it was announced yesterday by the defence minister that we are staying on for at least another six months. It is already news. We are not informing anybody about anything. I think the huge turnout here demonstrates how many people are really interested in the take note debate. We are here so the government in a week's time can say "We had a full fledged debate on Bosnia and every party had a chance to speak. We debated the issue and came up with this decision. This is democracy".

I put to the House that tonight may be the wrong night to talk about democracy when we have just gone through what we went through with a 15 year old boy being removed by our guards, I hope not to jail. We saw the vote on hepatitis C. I feel somewhat like a hypocrite to the Canadian people when I say I am here to try to make a difference about Bosnia-Herzegovina because I want to make a difference. I want to help the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. How do we get a government that does not involve us to hear us? That is a plea I guess for the democratization of Canada. We need that.

I have a lot of disgust for this kind of procedure. Yes it is on the record, but I wish the minister could hear it or would read it.

In conclusion let us come up with a plan. Let us talk about the big picture. Let us not just do what makes us feel good. Let us show some leadership and be part of the decision making process. Let us talk about the cost of lives and the suffering. Let us really make a difference to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak this evening on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to the motion regarding the renewal of the NATO stabilization force in Bosnia.

I also have the pleasure of informing the House at the start of my presentation that the Bloc Québécois will support this motion and therefore the intention of the Government of Canada to renew the force's participation in the SFOR past June 20, 1998.

The renewal proposal follows an initial renewal of the mandate of the Canadian forces in Bosnia in November and December last year. The initial renewal had the support of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Standing Committee on National Defence. Several members of these committees, including myself, had the opportunity to travel to Bosnia-Herzegovina to view the situation there.

We saw during our visit the fragility, indeed the precariousness, of the peace process, which involves not only military personnel of NATO member countries and the OSCE Partnership for Peace countries, but also civilian and police personnel from many countries in the international community, we must not forget.

• (2030)

The events that occurred barely a few days ago, on April 24, 1998, prove this fragility. In northern Bosnia, in the municipalities of Derventa and Drvar, tensions between Serbs and Croats resulted in outbursts of violence, exchanges and altercations between people of various nationalities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Canadian soldiers were called in to put a stop to the confrontation in Drvar after Bosnian Croats set fire to buildings and attacked United Nations' vehicles in response to threats made to the life of a Croat bishop elsewhere in the country.

The continued presence of the international community is needed to provide this safe environment referred to in the motion before this House. It is especially important to maintain this safe environment since it is necessary for the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts at the heart of the Dayton accords to finally pay off.

By its presence, the SFOR will help ensure the safety of ongoing civilian activities and particularly the social and economic recon-

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struction operations identified in the three-year plan, as established by the World Bank and the European Community, operations in which mine clearance instructors from the Department of National Defence of Canada are taking part.

It is the opinion of the Bloc Québécois that the civilian activities aimed at consolidating democracy, which are placed under the auspices of the OSCE, promoting human rights and providing assistance to the great many refugees and displaced people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, could not take place without the continued presence of the SFOR. This is a force which also tends to create a climate in which other international players in Bosnia-Herzegovina can carry out their activities safely. All these players—the international police force set up by the UN Security Council, the ICRC, UNICEF, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the many NGOs such as CARE Canada which does important work in support of Bosnians—perfectly complete the work done by inter-governmental organizations in Bosnia.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the renewal of the SFOR mandate in Bosnia-Herzegovina should be accompanied by increased support for the International Crime Tribunal, a more significant support for this international court, which is playing a fundamental role with regards to the aftermath of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We believe that SFOR soldiers, including Canadian soldiers whose dedication I salute, should be given the mandate to play a more proactive role in this respect and not hesitate to arrest individuals charged with crimes and against whom the chief prosecutor, Madam Justice Louise Arbour, has issued arrest warrants.

The timid attitude of the Prime Minister of Canada in this matter, which is the result of some comments he made, without mentioning those from his government, which by the way has not yet introduced a bill to amend the Criminal Code with a view to ensuring Canada's full co-operation with the International Crime Tribunal, is unacceptable.

• (2035)

The Bloc Québécois urges the government to make amends and support more that it has so far the efforts of the tribunal to bring to justice the individuals suspected of the worst crimes, international crimes, whether they are war crimes, crimes against humanity or worst of all, the crime of genocide.

It is timely to remember, with respect to genocide, that this year, in 1998, we will be celebrating not only the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also the 50th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide that was breached by individuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the International Crime tribunal will show, if it can bring to justice the individuals charged with such crimes.

The renewal of the SFOR mandate is also important, especially as it will send a message to those in the Balkans who might be tempted to again threaten international peace and security in the area.

I am referring to tensions in the Kosovo area, tensions that are aggravated by the refusal by the Republic of Yugoslavia to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Albanians from the Kosovo area and to respond to the mediation proposal made by the international community. These tensions do not favour the withdrawal of SFOR's troops from Bosnia. On the contrary, they favour their continued presence.

The international community should consider the possibility of creating a similar force in the Kosovo area if the situation continues to deteriorate in this part of the Balkans. Last week, fighting in the region resulted in at least 23 deaths, and border tensions are increasing.

Today, SFOR's presence is more needed than ever, just as sending a protection force into Bosnia-Herzegovina was necessary a few years ago, when the UN created UNPROFOR, which was replaced by IFOR, the predecessor of SFOR, the mandate of which we want to renew today.

At that time, some people criticized Canada for having waited too long before taking action. Canada cannot repeat today the mistake it made by not taking action and by not leading the international community to take action decisively and quickly. It cannot choose the same ambivalent approach.

In closing, I also want to say how disappointed I am to see this debate taking place in the House when so very few people are present. I think an issue such as this deserves more attention. Not only should the issues of creating and setting up stabilization or peacekeeping forces be looked at seriously by the standing committee on foreign affairs, as was done in other cases involving the creation or renewal of peacekeeping forces, but it remains essential, despite the absence of members this evening, that this issue also be debated in the House.

We should probably give serious thought to legislating the creation and renewal of peacekeeping forces and requiring that Parliament be consulted and give an opinion binding on the government.

The practice in recent years seems to be lacking in uniformity. Since I joined the House on June 2, I have noticed that the issue of renewing forces is sometimes studied in committee, and sometimes by the House in plenary. There does not seem to be any real criterion behind the decision by Parliament or one of its committees to approve the renewal or creation of such forces.

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• (2040)

No doubt we should follow the example of certain countries that accord Parliament a much greater role in the renewal and the creation of such forces.

I think this issue warrants greater study since the members of the opposition lacked important information in preparing their position. The government did not deign to provide information on the real mandate it wanted to give the Canadian forces or on other terms of Canada's participation in the SFOR, which it wanted to renew.

Without real information, the opposition parties are not able to formulate positions that are as valuable as they might be to the government in making its decision.

I would like to stress that the importance of renewing this force is related primarily to the issue of maintaining and consolidating the existing but fragile peace.

I would like to quote a friend, someone I met on my trip to Sarajevo in Bosnia, a young Quebec woman who is serving as the deputy ombudsman for Bosnia-Herzegovina and who introduced me to a magnificent work I recommend you read. It is the story of a young child who contemplates and analyzes through the eyes of a child the effect of the war on the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In looking at the war and trying to understand it, the child thinks primarily of the stars on the sidewalks of Sarajevo. There are many such stars in the Sarajevo market, among other places, where the many shells fell killing so many people in one night of catastrophe for Sarajevo.

Céline Auclair, my friend, wrote me at the start of this year, January 19, 1998, and referred me to this work by a young Frenchman, Mr. Lecomte. It is a very moving work and both she and I found it overpowering. I quote her "Every time I see a star on the sidewalks of Sarajevo I smile and catch myself dreaming. Much better than before, when I stepped over the scars left by the shelling, aware that I was in the shadow of death".

The shadow of death no longer hovers so closely over Bosnia-Herzegovina. The SFOR's mandate must be renewed to keep it away from this country.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to take part in this take note debate and to consider the Government of Canada's intention to renew its participation in the NATO led stabilization force in Bosnia beyond June 1998 in order to maintain a safe environment for reconstruction and reconciliation and a lasting peace for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I agree. I think it is important that Canada maintain its force in Bosnia for the continuation of the kinds of work it has done already

to help maintain stability and ensure that Bosnians have the opportunity to move forward into a more peaceful existence in the near future, the mid term and the long term. It is important that Canada continue to perform what is regarded by most in the world including most Canadians as a critically important function in contributing to a better world.

• (2045)

Canada has legitimately and for extremely good reason become well regarded for its peacekeeping and peacemaking role around the world. It is important that we continue to do that for the benefit of those in whose country we operate, in this case Bosnia since it is important that we do our bit to ensure peace is possible there. Bosnia and all the other hot spots around the world have an impact on Canada too. In order for us to live peacefully and constructively we need to ensure we play our role around the world.

To put these supporting words into context I will make some comments about the approach the federal government and Canada has traditionally taken with regard to the role of its armed forces. The auditor general and many within the armed forces have cast considerable doubt on the ability of Canada's armed forces to do the jobs they have been set to do. The main reason is that this House and the Canadian government do not have a clear view of what functions the armed forces should provide.

Without knowing where we are going it is very difficult to know what resources need to be made available to the armed forces to ensure their priorities are met. It is not clear to many Canadians what our priorities are with regard to our armed forces. The auditor general has quite rightly pointed out the difficulties this generates for the armed forces, not only for the front line personnel but for others who make important decisions. It is not clear what place new equipment, refurbished old equipment, or modernized equipment has because we are not sure what role we want our forces to play.

The international community has gone through a dramatic transformation since the end of the cold war. The end of the cold war marked the end of close to a century of strife in which the world was repeatedly torn apart by the varying rival military alliances of the great industrial and military powers. They were rivalries which brought us the two world wars and the cold war. During such an age it was often necessary to seek security in military alliances. It was equally true that the greatest temptation of such an age was to imagine that security was exclusively a matter of military strength and of participation in the collective security of military alliances.

The NDP and the CCF before it were among those internationalists who always argued that it was important to think of security as something broader and deeper than the security associated with collective military alliances. The CCF supported the view that danger was found not only in military threats but in the social and

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international tensions created by economic exploitation and inequality, by the international arms trade and by the manipulation of smaller states by great powers in their strategic rivalries with other great powers. That criticism continues to this day.

In the 1960s the NDP built on that CCF critique by adding the nuclear arms race to the list of security threats. By the 1980s global poverty, environmental degradation and widespread human rights violations were also seen by New Democrats and by progressive people around the world as essential elements of any risk assessment that Canadians interested in security matters should take into account.

The culmination of this perspective in international relations for the CCF and NDP was a foreign policy statement entitled "Canada's Stake in Common Security" prepared in 1988. It has been the basic thrust of the NDP's defence and foreign affairs policy since. The main framework of NDP policy was articulated in it.

Common security instead of traditional collective security is to be preferred and actively sought and modelled by a Canada that no longer sees itself primarily or even at all as a stakeholder in a collective alliance. Canada's real stake is in a world run according to the rules of common security. The paper of course is a little dated now, but its essence remains the same and might be argued to be more poignant.

● (2050)

A policy of global common security is surely crucial to human survival in the post cold war era. We must not put to rest the bipolar world of the cold war only to slip back into a multipolar world of competing regional if not ideologically based alliances, or regress to the international anarchy of the international system before the First World War. Neither should we assent to a unipolar scenario that would allow the Americans to assume the role of global policeman.

At the end of the cold war many Canadians had high expectations for the possibilities of building a common security. Many hoped that with the end of the horrifyingly surreal definition of international security as a nuclear balance of terror there would finally open up some real opportunities for an authentic conception of common security. Such a common security would continue to have a military dimension.

On the one hand, systems of mutual independent surveillance, global arms reduction treaties and military information sharing all integrated into a new global security architecture preferably under the auspices of a reformed and revitalized UN would have to be developed and maintained. On the other hand, governments could spend more on international development, poverty reduction and environmental protection and engage constructively in the demo-

cratic development of developing societies as a way of achieving genuine international security, rather than propping up so-called friendly authoritarian regimes as happened so often during the cold war.

Canada's New Democrats would want to mobilize this reservoir of hope for a common security, but we realize there are fundamental changes ahead. The end of the cold war has brought us a few welcome steps back from the brink of nuclear holocaust. The decades of addiction to grotesque levels of military spending and the obscene accumulation of weapons of mass destruction have left the world with a formidable hangover.

Nuclear weapons remain the single greatest threat to the future of the planet. A flourishing arms trade, of which Canada plays a part, ensures the world is still awash with military hardware. Millions of innocent people are threatened daily with a plague of anti-personnel land mines. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has played a major role in addressing this issue. This hangover takes the form not only of deadly war materiel, but also in the social conflicts left in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and other former communist states in Europe and in the breakdown of social peace in many African states.

At the same time the international community must respond to the changing technological and social faces of war. For the militaries of industrialized countries, new information technology is leading to the development of an array of new so-called smart weapons which are dramatically changing the dynamics of warfare on the battlefield. In many recent conflicts the social warfare is changing.

It is important that Canada play a major role in helping the international community find its way through the military dangers peculiar to the post cold war era and on building a democratic world order where communities and finally the global community can contain and shape the global marketplace to make it serve the common good.

In that regard, it is important that Canada's armed forces understand their role. The first call on Canada's defence policy and armed forces, as it is for any country, must be to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country. While we share the longest undefended border in the world with the United States, Canada's geography poses substantial challenges to the tasks of guaranteeing our territorial sovereignty and environmental integrity. Thousands of miles of coastline present challenges to the prevention of illegal hazardous waste dumping and so on.

It is important that Canada's armed forces are equipped to meet these challenges. The auditor general points out some problems in this regard. Canada needs to be able to fulfil that primary role, that of defending Canada's integrity.

Because of our commitment to NATO, Canada needs to be able to play our role in the trans-Atlantic security issues. That is why we are in Bosnia in the first place.

• (2055)

Before the NDP, the CCF supported the creation of NATO and Canada's membership in it from its inception and right throughout the 1950s. In the course of the 1960s many members of my party and many Canadians became increasingly critical of American foreign policy and of NATO's first use of nuclear weapons policy. They called into question the wisdom and legitimacy of Canada's membership in NATO.

What has added to that concern in the recent past is the almost complete domination of NATO by the United States. Were it the case that Canada was participating in Bosnia under the auspices of the United Nations, we would have absolutely no reservations at all. But I think everybody is saddened by the fact that this has to take place under the auspices of NATO and is largely then seen as an American driven operation.

We have to ensure that we strengthen the United Nations. We also have to make sure that Canada works toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. We should also do our best to eliminate the international arms trade.

There are two things we have to pay attention to if we are going to focus on whether our armed forces have the tools to do the job. This comes with regard to peacekeeping in particular and also with regard to conflict prevention. I will say just a few words on each. Canadians are rightly proud of Canada's record as a leading participant in UN peacekeeping missions and want to build on past and present experiences.

The tragic incidents in Somalia show the need for vigilance and the maintenance of professionalism in the military and civilian leadership of Canada's armed forces. The government has been rightly criticized for the way in which it handled the Somalia inquiry, for cutting it short and for not carrying out all of the recommendations of the Somalia inquiry. It is crucial that as Canada works its way through this period that the Canadian public has confidence in the integrity of the relationship between the civilian and military leadership in Canada's armed forces.

As Canada fashions its military policies to support the peacekeeping missions we are so often called upon to make, it is important to distinguish between the variety of UN missions. They are often grouped together under the rubric of peacekeeping.

Often it is the case that Canadian military personnel find themselves not keeping the peace that is in place but bringing about peace among warring parties, as was the case in Somalia and which I think is a component in Bosnia too. In other situations military personnel are sent to secure food supplies and safe havens for civilians in the context of civil or international conflicts, which is

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plainly the case in Bosnia and in a number of other missions. In these situations of peacemaking and protecting civilians from conflicts in progress, the Canadian military will need to maintain armed forces equipped and trained to be combat capable.

Our military planning, so long attuned to the context of the cold war where peacekeeping was of secondary importance, must adjust to the primary importance of peacekeeping and peacemaking for our armed forces. It is important for this place and the government to make clear Canada's commitment to peacekeeping and peacemaking and following that to ensure there are the resources, the materiel and the personnel needed in order to appropriately fulfil that requirement.

Canada needs to play a stronger role in conflict prevention. Perhaps the Prime Minister's visit to Cuba this week is an indication of a commitment to that. Certainly it is an indication that we are prepared to be independent of the United States on this important issue.

As a leading contributor of personnel and resources to UN peacekeeping missions, Canada has a special responsibility to work for a just international order of common security which is geared to conflict prevention.

Preventing conflict means addressing the problems at their roots, encouraging democratic development and human rights, sustainable development to prevent resource depletion and an international economic order that will reduce inequalities and eliminate poverty. We have not done a very good job on these last matters. We have not made a major contribution in this area. Such a conflict prevention approach is not primarily a military matter but it is a question of prevention.

• (2100)

If we are to play our proper role in the world, we have to do our bit on the prevention side. We know from various issues at home, social programs, health care and unemployment, that we take prevention issues seriously. We should do that in the military too.

I have two final points to make. If we are to ask the Canadian Armed Forces to play these important peacekeeping-peacemaking roles, as I have said, we need to ensure that we have a clear vision of what those forces are intended to do. We need to back up that clear vision with resources in order to fulfil that vision.

At the moment we have neither the vision nor the resources to adequately fulfil the jobs we ask the forces to perform from time to time. That is my first point.

The second point I want to make is that it is becoming increasingly clear that the morale in Canada's armed forces is at an all time low. One of the things we surely cannot expect to do is to ask the men and women in our armed services to go into dangerous situations in circumstances in which their morale is low and in

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circumstances in which they feel they are not adequately appreciated.

A former vice-admiral, Chuck Thomas, has said “We put our troops in jeopardy when we don’t give them enough money to support their families. Soldiers have never been rich but I have never seen anything like this”.

The defence committee is crossing the country and hearing on a daily basis of how difficult it is for soldiers and their families to make ends meet. Surely we cannot expect these men and women to risk their lives for the benefit of the world in a far off place unless we treat them well, unless we treat them better.

We recognize—and indeed the Minister of National Defence appears to have recognized it—that there is a serious problem which needs to be addressed. That is one thing. It is another thing to actually address it.

We have a situation in which our armed forces personnel are not feeling very confident about their role within their organization. They do not like the way they are treated, feel they are undermined economically and socially, and have some difficulty seeing why they should do what they are called upon to do when they are not adequately appreciated. Indeed a recent internal Canadian forces poll showed that 83% of the military has lost faith in the leadership. That is not a very good sign.

The last point I would like to make is with regard to the auditor general’s report that was published today. It raises very serious concerns about the ability of our forces to function within present circumstances. He says, for example, that if the status quo persists the department’s available capital funding may not be sufficient to equip and modernize the force that national defence is currently planning. He points out the roles that have been expected of the armed forces but calls for a significant refocusing of the mission and a reallocation of resources to do the job we are asking them to do today. He talks about declining funds for equipment modernization. He talks about the Canadian forces trying to cope with equipment deficiencies and shortages. He says that the army has difficulty keeping pace with technology and that the air force is facing obsolescence.

None of these things is designed to provide any confidence in the ability of our armed forces to do the job that is asked of them. We all know that those men and women will do the job that is asked of them, but are the government and the armed forces as a whole up to the task?

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Madam Speaker, this evening I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Chicoutimi.

[*English*]

I am pleased to speak today on the issue of whether Canadian troops should renew their participation in the NATO led stabilization force or what is better known as SFOR. Indeed my party, the party that when in government first ensured Canadian troops would participate in the former Yugoslavia under the UN banner, is in favour of the present government’s intention to renew Canadian participation now under the NATO banner and beyond the current June 20 deadline.

• (2105)

Let there be no mistake about it. The debate we entered into tonight has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not the Prime Minister is interested in the opinions of the other parties. It has everything to do with optics.

After this debate and when this issue is raised in the public eye the Prime Minister will surely declare that there was a debate in the House, that all parties took part and that everyone had a say.

That is not the case. For the record I would like to read the motion put forward by the government, the one we are debating this evening:

That this House take note of the intention of the Government of Canada to renew its participation in the NATO-led stabilization force—

“Take note of the government’s intentions”. That is what we are doing tonight. This is an important debate and my party will make its voice heard.

The first point I will make is that this should not be a take note debate. If the government had courage it would make this a votable motion the way it should be. However the government has no courage and no understanding. If it had either, the Prime Minister would not have felt it necessary to make this evening’s vote on whether to compensate all victims who contracted hepatitis C because of tainted blood a vote of confidence.

The Prime Minister of Canada is not confident that his government is doing the right thing. He does not have the courage to stand behind his government’s decision. Instead he had to use the authority of the whip to put his party’s government in line. That is not a courageous thing to do.

It is appropriate that I talk about courage tonight. If the men and women who will be affected by the government’s policy to extend Canada’s participation in SFOR have only one thing, it is courage. As we represent Canadians in the Chamber they represent Canada in uniform, carrying a gun and risking their lives in a far off place that many Canadians cannot even find on the map. They are armed with courage. I am sure they expect no less from the government they are serving.

Unfortunately the current government always disappoints in the department of courage. Did it take courage to whip government backbenchers into line for tonight’s hepatitis C vote? No. Did it

take courage last week when Canada abstained from a crucial United Nations vote condemning the forced recruitment of child soldiers in Uganda? No. Did it take courage for the Prime Minister to stand beside the Cuban dictator in Havana while he compared the current American embargo to the murder of six million Jewish lives during World War II's Holocaust and not say anything, not a word? No.

The government will always make excuses after the fact but it has never shown courage at the appropriate time. The foreign minister, an individual who while highly educated has not one clue about the lessons this century has taught, has since confessed that a mistake was made when Canada abstained from the UN vote. That is simply not good enough.

This is a fearful government that celebrates easy decisions and avoids the difficult ones. In fact the only reason we are here tonight is that the Prime Minister does not have the courage to stand up to the Canadian public and say bluntly that Canadians are staying in Bosnia longer than expected because if they do not stay we risk losing all that has been achieved.

Instead the Prime Minister will appear before the Canadian public and say that parliament decided to extend Canadian involvement. Even though it was the Prime Minister's decision—and by the way it was a good one—he does not have the courage to stand and say it was his decision just in case there are Liberals out there who might not agree with him. Instead he will hide behind tonight's meaningless take note debate.

When I said that if there were one thing Canadian soldiers would be bringing with them to Bosnia it would be courage, I did not mean to exaggerate. The government has cut the defence budget by 30% in the last five years. That is taking its toll. It is taking its toll on equipment and on training. As the defence committee travelled from base to base this spring we found that it was taking its toll on the simple quality of life that my party believes soldiers should enjoy.

• (2110)

Yet, while the government expects Canada's forces to jump when the Prime Minister gives the word and while the dedicated people who make up the Canadian forces will always respond when the government calls, the government abuses the forces. The government abuses the force's dedication to the country.

I cannot think of a more disgusting waste of talent and dedicated men and women than to abuse their dedication by not providing them with the equipment, training and resources they need to do their job.

If the government continues this trend of abusing the Canadian military there will come a time when the Prime Minister says

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“okay, boys, it's time to go” and the response will come “I am sorry, sir, but we can't perform that mission”.

The answer will come, not because they will not want to perform their particular mission, not because they do not want to come to the aid of Canada, but because their government has let them down and they no longer have the equipment to do the job. That day will come, sooner than one would think unless the government begins to show the smallest ounce of courage and do its most fundamental job, protect Canadians.

I urge the Prime Minister, as I am sure the current Minister of National Defence has done behind closed doors, to stop abusing the Canadian forces, to show some courage in leadership and to give them the resources they need to do their job, this time in Bosnia.

We have already heard tonight good reasons why Canada must extend its stay in Bosnia. Good work has been started and must continue. To leave now would be to abandon all that has been accomplished, but there is another reason that has not yet been pointed out in the Chamber. It was hardly mentioned.

This issue came before the committee in November. When I mentioned it at the committee to the NATO ambassadors they were frank with me. NATO is undergoing change. There will be three new member countries and, to his credit, the Prime Minister was on the right side of the issue when it came to expanding NATO. However, to be honest, NATO's role will have to be adjusted somewhat if it is to continue being effective in this post-cold war era.

The role of NATO and whether NATO should be expanded further or at all, or whether NATO should even exist, are issues that will continue to be debated. In fact they were being debated this week on the floor of the United States Senate.

It is not my intent to enter into that debate tonight, but it is important to note that while the world debates the current usefulness of NATO all eyes are on Bosnia and the current NATO forces there.

If NATO were to fail in its stated mission of implementing the Dayton accord, the voices of those who would have NATO disband will grow louder. For that reason and others mentioned here tonight, my party supports the decision already taken by the Prime Minister to renew Canada's participation in the NATO led stabilization force beyond June 20, 1998 in order to maintain a safe environment for reconstruction, reconciliation and a lasting peace for the people of Bosnia.

My party's only concern with tonight's take note motion is that the government expects Canada's soldiers to show more courage than it ever has. We should all be thankful that the men and women who wear Canada's uniform are up for the job.

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[Translation]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Madam Speaker, I am particularly grateful to my colleague for Compton—Stanstead and my colleague for Richmond—Arthabaska for sharing time with me.

I attached a great deal of importance to taking advantage of my presence in this House to make a few comments on the renewal of our Armed Forces commitment in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

First and foremost, this was because of my respect for our young military personnel serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, of whom we are very proud. We often see them coming to our assistance when there are natural disasters. My region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean has had the opportunity to benefit from their expertise, and above all has seen their devotion, during the recent disasters, not only in my region, but also in the Greater Montreal region and in the West.

● (2115)

Yet, when we see them helping out their fellow human beings in other countries, Bosnia in particular in the past few years, we tend to forget them. The time has come for all MPs to try to see the armed forces in a more positive light than they have in recent years.

If you have listened to all the speeches within this debate this evening, they indicate, I believe, that by far the majority of Canadian MPs agree there is a very serious problem within our armed forces.

Unlike my colleagues who have already spoken, I have not had the opportunity to visit our military personnel on the battlefields of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, I particularly appreciated what these members shared with us this evening.

The common thread that runs through all these remarks, all the judgments that have been made, is that we cannot keep asking our military to do the impossible. Incredible efforts are demanded of our troops as part of NATO, both at home and abroad, to help foreign countries torn apart by terrible wars. In this context, be it only for peacekeeping, everyone agrees that it takes rather extraordinary courage to agree to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces outside Canada.

I know that the committee is currently travelling across the country. Some 25 military sites will be toured by our colleagues from all the parties represented in this House. I do hope that the committee's recommendations will not be left to gather dust on a shelf.

As my hon. colleague said, morale in our armed forces is indeed at its lowest. Unfortunately, it is not in a superficial, strictly routine debate like this one today that we will be able to make any real, significant contribution to the future of the Canadian Armed Forces. All tonight's debate is good for is to take note of the fact

that the government intends to renew our commitment to peace-keeping within NATO.

After a few briefings on various Canadian bases, I figure the government must have gained some awareness of the kind of recommendations and suggestions the military make to us through the Standing Committee on National Defence. I want to congratulate all my colleagues on this committee. They visited the base in Bagotville, and that was greatly appreciated.

My colleague said that the climate is very unhealthy and, as we know, there is severe attrition within the Canadian armed forces. This attrition has its causes, and I think the committee will be able to make a harsh judgement on our attitude toward the armed forces.

It is not normal to continue to require incredible efforts of our troops who have to work very hard with foreign forces that are a lot better equipped than they are. We know we have the best soldiers in the world. They have to make unlimited efforts to be on the same level as soldiers from several other countries within NATO because those people are better equipped.

Several NATO countries throughout the world have made an important choice. Here, in the House of Commons, we have always been reluctant to make that choice. This is one rare occasion where almost all political parties without exception agree that it is not normal that we do not pay more attention to the quality of life of Canadian soldiers.

The defence budget was cut by 30 to 40% in recent years. Everybody supports rationalization. However, I think that, if there is an area that deserves a lot of consideration, it is the area related to our Canadian troops, who must carry out mandates that are extremely dangerous.

● (2120)

Obviously, everybody agrees that the quality of our equipment is at a minimum. We all know Canadian soldiers. The major regions of this country all have military infrastructures. One must listen to what these people have to say to realize how serious a deficiency there is in this area. I do not know if it is bad purchases or if priorities are not clearly identified, but the bottom line is that our soldiers are really not equipped to be part of such international forces.

It is the same for training and for salaries. Indeed, 20%, 25%, 30% and even 40% of pilots in certain squadrons leave and go to work in the private sector, because the difference in the working conditions is simply too great. It is not that our military do not enjoy their work, but in the end the difference in the quality of life in the armed forces and in the private sector becomes too great.

I think our young military personnel have taken much abuse from the federal government—including all previous governments. The time has come to have, here in the House, a constructive discussion on how we view the important role of our armed forces and the type of contribution we are prepared to make to

allow them to be among the most effective in the world. We are currently asking the impossible from our armed forces.

During the last election campaign, our party suggested—and this was one of our major commitments—the creation of a special intervention unit, an elite corps that would have integrated members of the three branches of the forces, that is between 14,000 and 16,000 troops. This might have helped us to better prepare about one quarter of Canadian troops for international missions, and for missions in our own country.

One should make a careful reading of chapters 3 and 4 of the auditor general's report. Unfortunately, I do not have time to read the main excerpts, but the report stresses that Parliament should be able to determine whether DND's resources are adequate, given Canada's defence objectives. I took a rather close look at this report, and we should listen carefully to the auditor general's recommendations, regardless of our political affiliation. Our troops are being asked to do the impossible, both at personal and operational levels. I hope that the report of the standing committee will make all of us here more grateful to our military personnel for their services.

[English]

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your recognizing me for the debate on this motion.

I want to read the motion because I think it is important to look at something in the wording. This is a government motion by the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

That this House take note of the intention of the Government of Canada to renew its participation in the NATO led stabilization force, SFOR, in Bosnia beyond June 20, 1998—.

Here we are almost in May. We are in a take note debate because the decision was made and announced some time ago. We are here debating whether Canada will carry on its commitment beyond June 20, 1998. Clearly this is a joke. Where is the planning horizon the government works on? It clearly is not there. It really does not plan things. I think that will explain some of the problems I will bring up in my presentation.

● (2125)

I will deal with three questions. First, can Canada deliver on the renewal of this commitment for six months and beyond?

Second, what will the price be if this becomes a very long term sustained commitment in Bosnia? What will the price be to the forces and to the men and women who serve?

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Third, what must change so that Canada can deliver should Canadians choose to support it over the long term? That is what I will deal with in my presentation today.

I would like to comment on the debate itself and the fact that the debate is happening under these circumstances.

The first question is can Canada deliver. The answer is yes. Looking at a six month commitment, which is what this motion is about, and a force of 1,200 men and women then yes, Canada can deliver and it will deliver. We have men and women in Petawawa right now who have been training and preparing to leave in June. They will serve well and Canada will meet its commitment over the six month period.

If we are talking about a 10 to 20 year period which is probably what will be needed to stabilize the area then the answer is no, not with the lack of commitment the current government has shown to our forces and to the men and women who serve so well. It is no, not with the continued force of 1,200 or more which may well become what is needed if things escalate. That certainly could happen.

The answer is no, not with the current commitment Canada has in other parts of the world. The answer is no with the current lack of commitment to proper equipment that has been shown by this government. The answer is no, not with the ever reducing number of men and women in our forces.

The answer to whether Canada can deliver over the six month term, which we are debating today, is yes. It can and will. That is in spite of the level of commitment this government has to our forces, not because of it. It is because of the incredible men and women serving in our forces. That is something you learn as you travel from base to base in this country. The men and women in our forces are tremendously well equipped in terms of their personal abilities and are well trained and committed. There is no doubt about that. They will deliver because of what they are, not because of what they are given to work with.

What might the price be that our forces might pay if we end up indefinitely, six month term after six month term? Those of us who have travelled from base to base with the SCNDVA committee started to realize what the price might be.

● (2130)

The price is unacceptable in terms of what will happen to our forces and their ability to do what they should be doing, which is to defend the sovereignty of our nation, to be there in the case of natural disasters like the floods and the ice storms, and to be there to deal with civil unrest, which we have already seen in Oka and which we could well see in various parts of the country over the

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next years. I do not have the time to get into any detail on the price, but the price that we have seen manifests itself in several ways.

First, it manifests itself in terms of morale. Generally speaking, we have seen from base to base across the country that the morale of the men and women in our forces is not high. Further deterioration in morale could well be the price they pay. Families are being torn apart due to a lack of commitment, what has happened over the past years and what will happen if things do not change, if we maintain this kind of commitment overseas and here in Canada.

One thing was made clear. Men and women are happy to serve. When they are asked if they would like to go on a tour to Bosnia they say yes. They say yes for a couple of reasons. One, because they will get extra money which their families desperately need. Their pay levels are not sufficient. They say yes because they joined the forces to serve their country. This is an opportunity to do that. They say yes because they know the training they will receive in this area is second to none in making them ready to be a part of a combat-ready force which this country deserves and desperately needs to defend our sovereignty. They go for those reasons, in spite of the price that they and their families might and do pay. We have seen it.

The third concern I would like to raise is what must change so that Canada can deliver, if Canadians determine that is what should happen. Canadians have never been asked about this issue. I will talk about that when I wrap up, when I discuss this debate and the conditions under which it is taking place.

What is needed in very broad terms to change things so that Canada can deliver? Specifically, what must this government and future governments do to build a sustainable and top quality military?

First, they must show commitment to change in the structure of our forces and leadership. I am not saying that all the leadership in the Canadian forces is not good. Certainly, some of the men and women are top notch, as well as some of the leaders in our military. They must show this commitment to change, to change in leadership and to change in the structure of the forces, separating the military from the civil service branch.

Second, they must show commitment in terms of money. Spending on our forces has been reduced from about \$12.5 billion, when I started looking at this in 1992, to \$9.3 billion. It has been cut too much.

Third, the government must demonstrate two things. First, that it believes we need a strong combat-ready military. Second, that it believes the men and women who serve in our forces are doing a great job and that they are top quality. They must demonstrate that.

I would like to ask this question. When was the last time a prime minister in Canada said that our country, Canada, really needs our

military and that the very existence of Canada depends on us having a good military?

When was the last time we heard a prime minister stand in this House or elsewhere to say that the men and women in our forces do a great job?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am afraid that the hon. member's time has expired.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale.

• (2135)

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the debate in the House this evening and it is very clear that the mood of the House is strongly in favour of extending the presence of our troops for a renewed mandate in Bosnia.

There is a great challenge to the world community taking place in Bosnia at this time. As we watch what is taking place in Kosovo we know how important it is for us to ensure that the mission in Bosnia is successful, that peace in eastern Europe depends upon it and that we Canadians are playing an important role in guaranteeing that peace, that security, that development of civic society that the Dayton Accords presage.

We listened to the NDP spokesman who said that the mandate which has been given our troops and the role that the government has provided is not clear. We heard a Conservative spokesperson say that the morale of our troops is low. We heard our Reform colleague just now say no to a commitment that would be too long.

I disagree with all of those opinions. I have had the honour of going to Bosnia and the honour of speaking to our troops there. They know what their role is. They have a high morale because the challenges they face each and every day are challenges which they have chosen to face. They have enormous responsibility, requiring military ability, but also human qualities, an ability to bring people together, to deal with sensitive political issues, to demine houses, to act at the staff level, to control movements and arrangements between some troops of some 23 nations which bring into play the best qualities of all Canadians: their bilingualism, their biculturalism, their multiculturalism, their tolerance, their ability to encourage people to act together and to work together.

What we are doing in Bosnia and the role of our troops in that process is extremely important. Let me just recall a few elements. In the first place there are the Bosnian elections. As members know the international community through OSCE has invested heavily in Bosnian elections as they are the instrument for the success of the entire peace process. Municipal elections held there in September 1997 were of great importance, given the extent to which power is decentralized in that area. Elections held in the Republic of Srpska

on November 22 and 23 of 1997 established the first truly multi-ethnic government in Bosnia. In September of 1998, this year, general elections will take place, the second set to be held under the Dayton peace plan.

Canada's role in these elections has been important. We have assisted the OSCE with the technical preparations for the elections and we have committed over \$6 million to this process. Our assistant chief electoral officer has participated along with other experts in forming groups necessary to assure the success of these elections. These elections will not be successful and indeed may not even take place if it is not for the presence of our troops and those of our allies in that area.

[*Translation*]

There is a second element. There are in the former Yugoslavia close de 3.2 million refugees and displaced persons as well as persons affected by the war who need help. Current conditions in Bosnia, both in terms of security and economy, make it difficult for refugees to return home.

Canada has been advocating a concerted effort to identify those who can and want to go home now so that they receive special attention and help on a priority basis. Our country provided close to \$65 million during the war and in excess of \$17 million in humanitarian assistance to the former Yugoslavia since the end of the conflict.

The presence of our troops is essential to the success of this operation.

[*English*]

There is a third element, which is the housing and the rebuilding of infrastructure in ex-Yugoslavia and in Bosnia. An estimated 50% of all housing units in Bosnia were damaged during the war and 6% were completely destroyed. Canada provides funding to the emergency shelter and materials fund of the United Nations and has provided emergency shelter throughout the former Yugoslavia. Under CIDA, Canada has established a special facility to assist Canadian construction firms active in the Bosnian and Croatian markets.

• (2140)

We have many NGOs which are active in ensuring housing there. Our troops not only ensure conditions of stability in which this rebuilding will take place, they also personally participate.

It was very exciting and interesting for us when we were there to see and talk to our troops. They have actually helped to clean up and repaint the hospitals and schools. They had worked on the hospital that we visited. The doctors were there when the hospital was re-opened. There was a sense of tremendous dedication on the part of the troops and a sense of tremendous gratitude on the part of that local community when they saw their hospital functioning

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again, thanks to the input of our troops and their ability to work on the side, in addition to their other heavy responsibilities, to achieve that and other goals.

The rebuilding and the infrastructure that needs to be replaced in Bosnia will be assured by virtue of the presence of our troops, not only by the security they provide, but by the personal efforts they make to ensure this happens.

A fourth aspect of their presence that is equally important is the aspect of the land mine clearance. According to initial predictions it could take some 70 years to clear the three million land mines left from the recent conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Canada has taken a lead in urging increased support for demining and for greater government and donor co-ordination to help work in this area.

We consider the removal of land mines a priority for humanitarian reasons, particularly to ensure the safety of children returning to school after years of conflict and to encourage the return of refugees. Mine clearance will also allow for the reconstruction of infrastructure necessary for economic renewal. We have contributed money and are contributing men and effort to this process.

The land mines convention is one of the great prides of our recent diplomatic efforts and the area of Bosnia is one place where its success, at least in the demining aspect, will be tested. The presence of our troops is essential, not only to ensure the stability necessary to achieve that, but to also help in the technical aspects of achieving that extremely important goal.

Finally, I will turn to the health sector. It is extremely important in a community ravaged by war to re-establish decent health. We again had the opportunity when we were there to visit hospitals. We visited the hospital in downtown Sarajevo which was shelled and in which people operated under incredible circumstances during the war.

We as Canadians are contributing to community based rehabilitation in Bosnia. Queen's University is there providing a self-sustaining program of physiotherapy to an estimated 40,000 people with war injuries and is training of some 200 health workers.

There are other rehabilitation programs which are too numerous for me to name. However, I want to share with the House one example of an important program, the MAP international project, which provided some \$2 million worth of selected pharmaceuticals to Bosnia. Members of the committee were there when these were distributed. Some of them were given to the president of the Republic of Srpska to reward her and her government for the efforts they were making to ensure peace and co-operation with SFOR troops in her area.

All of these important elements, the return of refugees, the civil security, the return of decent government, assistance to the health

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sector, the rebuilding of schools and communities, depend on the presence of our troops, our young men and women who are there extending their helping hand, not only providing security, but also in a sensitive and an extraordinarily truly Canadian way working with people in these communities to ensure they can recover their lost and shattered lives.

Those troops deserve our support. I believe those troops want to stay. I believe those troops believe strongly that they want to be there to finish the job. We as members of the world community owe it not only to ourselves and to stability in Europe but also to our fine young men and women who have served and will continue to serve to ensure that they will do the job to guarantee peace and stability in a region that is very important to us all.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight I have the honour of speaking in support of the continued participation of the Canadian forces in the NATO mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina following the completion of the current mission on June 20 of this year. This follow on force will be tasked with preventing any renewal of hostilities in the unstable Balkans region. Its purpose is to provide general support to the enforcement of the civil provisions in the Dayton peace accord.

• (2145)

All our key allies and the international organizations working in the area agree on the need to extend the SFOR follow on force. The secure environment established and maintained by SFOR is deemed vital to the reconstruction effort in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I encourage my colleagues to indicate their support for Canada's participation for the following reasons. First, SFOR's work in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not finished and the work of the Canadian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not finished.

Second, Canada has a tradition of responding to the call of the international community whenever world security has been threatened.

Third, we have a long and honourable tradition of participating in multilateral operations. We have served under the flags of the United Nations and NATO and in operations involving groups of nations sharing the same interests.

Fourth, our continued participation in SFOR is consistent with Canada's defence policy. In particular we believe in the importance of collective security and we continually contribute to preserving it.

For many years now Canada has invested heavily in terms of time, resources and personnel to promote peace and security in the Balkans. We have always played a pivotal role, serving with the

European Community monitoring system, UNPROFOR from 1992 to 1995, IFOR from 1995 to 1996 and now SFOR.

However the military aspects of the hostilities are not the be all and end all of the mission. The civil ramifications of the military operations must be considered, especially in an area of such deep rooted strife.

The military plans and operations within SFOR have been cognizant of civil conditions and activities. Throughout the military operations thus far it was important to improve public security, fight organized crime and corruption, and promote balanced media. Separating the warring factions was not the only objective. That is why it is so important to continue the mission. The civil provisions of the accord must also be upheld.

For example, the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees belonging to ethnic minorities is presenting serious problems. The political struggle between the various ethnic groups continues to undermine efforts to consolidate peace. In other words the parties involved are not prepared to assume responsibility for their joint future. It is clear that they cannot count on the involvement of the international community indefinitely, but they clearly are not yet ready to go it alone.

Given the violence which erupted in Kosovo in March and which nearly led to war, and in light of the riots which took place in Drvar only a few days ago, we must acknowledge the fact that instability continues to haunt Bosnia-Herzegovina and by extension the entire Balkan region.

In short it is absolutely critical for Canada to extend her involvement in SFOR. It is consistent with the efforts we have made for many years aimed at establishing peace in this area of the world by creating the stability required to implement the Dayton accord.

If we look at the Bosnian situation within the historical perspective of Canada's role in international affairs, we can only arrive at the same conclusion. The fact is that in past years when the international community called upon Canada to preserve peace, liberty and democracy our country always answered the call. Today we intend to carry on this honourable tradition within our means.

Canada has traditionally shouldered its share of responsibilities in the world's hot spots when international security was threatened. Canada answered the call during both world wars, the Korean war, the gulf war and on many peacekeeping operations.

Canada's vast experience with multilateral operations has allowed us to make a major contribution to international security notably in Somalia, Haiti, central Africa, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and of course the Balkans.

At the same time the Canadian forces have managed to maintain their traditional commitments with NATO. During every operation they have conducted, whether in Canada or overseas, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have demonstrated their ability to fulfil in outstanding fashion any mission assigned to them.

Accordingly, continued Canadian participation in SFOR is in tune with the time honoured Canadian tradition of doing what we can to guarantee respect for life and human dignity both in Canada and abroad.

In the 1994 defence white paper Canada made a commitment to continue its active participation in multilateral efforts aimed at enhancing collective security. This attitude reflects our national interests since Canadians believe that their own security cannot be dissociated from that of our allies. However, according to the 1994 defence white paper:

Multilateral security co-operation is not merely a Canadian tradition; it is the expression of Canadian values in the international sphere.

• (2150)

In a similar vein, the 1994 report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy declared:

If we believe Canada stands for values that are worth promoting in the larger community, we must be prepared to invest resources and commit Canadian troops in defence of those values. If we are not prepared to do so, then what do we stand for as a country?

I would like to comment a little further on our participation in not only this mission but in a large number of missions in recent years. Despite a reduction in financial resources and personnel we have asked our forces to do much more with less.

I was on the 1994 Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy. I agreed then and I agree today that we should participate in international missions. I said then and I say now we must provide more resources. Our forces are conducting the missions, but at what cost?

The Standing Committee on National Defence as we heard tonight is currently studying the quality of life of Canadian forces personnel. We are hearing many stories from personnel about the poor quality of services provided for them by the Department of National Defence. It appears to me that when cuts are needed the military is a prime target, but we must consider the impact on the personnel on the armoury floor and in the field.

I am not saying we have cut too far yet, but I am saying we are dangerously close to the point of no return. We must ensure that our personnel have not only required equipment for their missions but also the support services to assist them and their families in coping with their missions.

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I encourage my hon. colleagues not only to support Canadian involvement in SFOR but our military in general. We ask these men and women to put their lives on the line not only for us but for others throughout the world. We must return that expectation by meeting theirs, which is to provide them and their families a satisfying quality of life.

Finally, we should consider the potential drawbacks of a Canadian decision to forgo the participation in SFOR. Failure by Canada to participate in the follow on force would fly in the face of those values that Canadian forces are charged with defending throughout the world.

Moreover, since Canada might possibly be the only NATO country not serving with the new force, her failure to participate would do serious damage to our reputation among our allies.

To conclude I urge my colleagues to support Canada's participation in the SFOR follow on mission.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me first to congratulate you on the daily improvement of your French. You know I am delighted to take part in the debate, because there is always a consensus in this House on matters of foreign policy.

I would remind those joining us of what we are debating this evening in the special debate, since the House does not usually sit beyond 7:30 p.m., and that is the need for Canada to continue its involvement in peacekeeping in Bosnia.

You will agree that looking back on this century's history, we will recall the Armenian genocide, the first world war, the second world war, the Korean war, the Vietnam war and especially the heightened tension that led to the break up of the Republic of Yugoslavia. People in my generation, especially those who studied political science as I did, automatically associate Tito and Yugoslavia. There was a belief that the Yugoslavian model was a model of a revolving confederation, one that managed a potentially explosive balance of various national communities. Time has shown us that the Yugoslav model was very fragile indeed.

I would point out that the Bloc Québécois, since its arrival in the House in October 1993, has always enthusiastically supported all peacekeeping operations—in Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda and the Central African Republic.

• (2155)

We thought it was a generous way to deal with international relations, an alternative way to use our armed forces, where troops are sent as peacekeepers.

Of course, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation was a bit different. Things started to escalate in 1992. First, we had UNPRO-

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FOR, then a stabilization force. It was only at the third level of operation, in 1995, that we sent peacekeepers over there.

Those who take an interest in foreign policy understand full well that Canada has some expertise in peacekeeping. Despite our sovereignist aspirations, we are very proud to remind people that Lester B. Pearson, a former leader of the Liberal Party who received the Nobel Peace Prize in the late 50s, was the first one to suggest, always under the auspices of the United Nations, that armed forces be deployed after a ceasefire has been reached in a region where tensions run high.

Among the people watching the debate tonight, some might wonder why a country like Canada, with no military engagement tradition, where military service is not compulsory, a country that was never directly involved in the war, that has no warring tradition, would take an interest in what is going on outside its borders?

When my constituents ask me that question, I simply give them the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country that has produced, since the early 90s, 3.5 million refugees spread around the world. Of course, in an era of globalization, when refugees look for a new haven, when wars produce political refugees, it all has an impact on our nation.

It is countries such as Canada, France, Italy and Germany that have welcomed these political refugees. Our party believes that it is important to make an additional effort in terms of equipment, because, as you will remember, Canadians were mobilized from Europe and North America for the Sarajevo airlift. A *Hercules* was used to carry supplies. So, there was a Canadian contribution in terms of material, troops—about 1,300—and international assistance.

Since the early 90s, close to \$80 million in taxpayers' money—because Canadians pay taxes and because the government and Parliament agreed to humanitarian assistance—was sent through CIDA and various international co-operation agencies.

If we needed an illustration of how fragile the situation really is in Bosnia, how things are not settled yet, how important it is for NATO to continue its efforts under the supervision of the United Nations, since this is what we are talking about, all we would have to remember is that since 1992, 50% of homes in Bosnia have been destroyed.

According to an assessment by the United Nations, it will take US\$4 billion over the next few years to complete the construction and reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

True, the peace is real, but it is fragile. It is fragile for a number of reasons. First of all, the Dayton accord, which was negotiated under the auspices of the Americans in Ohio, turned Bosnia-Herzegovina into a federated republic made up in fact of two states: Serbia and the Serbo-Croatian Republic. This unification has not

been completed yet and they still need to establish national institutions.

• (2200)

Right now, there are a number of signs telling us, as foreign observers, that the peace, however real, is fragile.

I will give a few examples. First of all, of course, there are the Bosnian Croats. Although they openly, formally, officially and publicly supported the Dayton accords, they did so with this no doubt legitimate hope that could reach extreme proportions and threaten peace efforts.

The Bosnian Croats, who supported the Dayton accords, still dream, maybe somewhat secretly, of being reunited with Croatia. This shows just how fragile the peace is.

There is, of course,—as you know, Mr. Speaker, because I know that you are a keen and vigilant observer of the international scene,—the whole question of Kosovo. Kosovo is a republic of Serbia that was for a very long time an independent province and that unfortunately saw this status challenged to the point that the central government deployed troops there.

Kosovo is a hotbed of unrest, because 90% of the inhabitants are Albanians who understandably have more affinity with Albania than with the state to which they have been attached.

When all these factors are taken together, we are well advised, as parliamentarians, to seek an extension of the participation of NATO, under the auspices of the UN, with a high command. I believe that the NATO and UN mission is very clear. It is a preventive mission to ensure that the slightest potential for hostility is nipped in the bud.

The seeds of potential conflict must be suppressed in order to ensure that the situation that has prevailed since 1995 can become more permanent and that all those, such as Canada, Quebec, France and Italy, who believe in peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans for the end of the century, can continue to invest resources in international co-operation and humanitarian aid so that the experience of the former Yugoslavia will never be repeated.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is late in the evening. There has been comment on the length of the debate and on the opposition side some disparaging comments on the quality of the debate. I will not enter into that but I would take issue immediately with the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry who made the comment that parliament did not have a big enough role in this debate and in these general questions.

Parliament has taken a very dramatic step forward in the life of the present government, although it began in the last parliament under the present government, that is to say the commitment made by the government that when Canadian forces would be involved in military style activities abroad under the United Nations or

otherwise, parliament would get an opportunity to debate. It is not a decision making role but it is an unprecedented step to allow parliament to debate.

This has been honoured by the government since that undertaking was first given in, I believe, 1994. It has been refined to the point where if there is an issue of urgency such as when the matter arose during the summer recess with the extension of our mandate in Haiti I as parliamentary secretary contacted the official spokespersons for all opposition parties and asked for their interim approval. It was given.

We have made a step forward here. There is an involvement of parliament and I think the debate tonight reflects that.

• (2205)

It is worth noting of course that the present government inherited the obligations to the United Nations in lineal descent from obligations entered into by the preceding government, the Mulroney government. That was in response to a request by Boutros Boutros Ghali, the then secretary general of the United Nations.

Although SFOR is a different type of operation from the one the Mulroney government engaged us in, the lineal descent is clear and I think one of the large oversights was on the part of the Mulroney government in not insisting in Canadian involvement in the decision making group. We have not been part of the contact group. We were not at the original time and we have not been since, and so in a sense we are carrying out macro decisions that others are making. It is not something one would recommend to governments in future situations.

Going back to history which was referred to by the member for Red Deer in a somewhat general way, of course we also inherit past history. In Santayana's terms, we also inherit the non-observance of history, in his famous aphorism. The lessons of the past were not applied, were not understood and so wise decisions were not made. But they were not our decisions.

The present grand lines of the Balkan Peninsula, with the disintegration of the Ottoman empire, were created at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and through two world wars and two Balkan wars which were even bloodier in a limited environment they were confirmed in their large lines. Everything else has represented incremental changes or territorial adjustments.

There was Bismarck in 1878. There was not an equivalent Bismarck in 1989-90 when the Berlin wall was falling down and the cold war was ending.

One of the problems in a certain sense is that the European statesmen in 1989-90, it has been said by historians, rushed to a premature recognition of successor states to the old Yugoslavia.

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I think their error was not in their recognition of the new successor states for it was very clear Slovenia and Croatia had to be independent. But they followed Tito's internal historical boundaries which he had created through successive constitutions from 1944 onwards, which were really designed to give population and geographical balance but which ignored much more the previous historical boundaries under Austria-Hungary and under Serbia, and ignored ethnocultural concentrations.

To a very real extent one had sown the seeds of later conflicts in 1991-92, the problem of either exchange of populations or radical constitutional adjustments for which nobody was prepared. It was an example of the doctrine of *uti possidetis* being misapplied and I think we are reckoning with some of the consequences of that.

This is not to say, however, that facts cannot themselves acquire a normative quality and I think one of the interesting facts is President Chirac and his visit to Sarajevo earlier this month. President Chirac is one of those who had the most reservations about the dispositions made in 1989-90 in diplomatic terms, but he is referring in essence, echoing German legal philosopher Mr. Jellinek, to the normative force of facts. New frontiers have been created and it is time now with eight years of experience to try to make them work. We enter in that context.

As we go into Bosnia again and the mandate is extended, we must recognize this is not a Canadian classic peacekeeping mission under chapter 6 of the charter; nor, however, is it a chapter 7 mission, the peacemaking mission with all the legal powers under chapter 7 to apply armed force. It is in between, so it creates problems in deciding the limits of competence of our troops.

We have to tread carefully because in a certain sense the peace building role is not defined in terms of what can and cannot be done.

We are subject to the general laws of war but we have a mandate essentially to help in limited aspects of matters, maintaining elections, trying to get the cities running again, and this is something we do very well. I think it is probably the biggest justification apart from historical continuity. We have been there and we do not leave a job in the middle before it is completed. That is the biggest justification for going on.

• (2210)

I would note here with great pleasure, as I think some earlier speakers have, that there will be a massive role for our limited number of Canadian forces in mine clearing. We all remember the land mine treaty to which Canada contributed so much. We took the initiative. We went ahead in spite of the reluctance or opposition of superpowers and big powers, and 121 countries have signed. There are 300,000 to 1 million mines remaining in Bosnia in 18,000 mine fields. At the moment SFOR is clearing 22,000 mines a year. We hope to bring it up to 100,000 but it is quite a challenge. I think all

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Canadians will feel great pride that this is one of the responsibilities of our force in Bosnia at the present time.

In suggesting to the House that it approve, not in the legal sense the decisions made, but that it give its enthusiastic backing to this extension, we entered in the task in good faith. There were conditions that we would not have created if we had been in the decision making at the beginning. But we continue in good faith. We have a mission to fulfil and I think we are very proud of what we are doing.

Mr. John Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to discuss the role the Canadian forces have played in the former Yugoslavia.

As Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and a member of the national defence committee I have had the opportunity to visit the war torn Balkans on two previous occasions. I have seen firsthand the excellent work of our troops.

Everyone in this Chamber knows of the former Yugoslavia, a country torn apart by war, families broken up, human rights violated on a massive scale.

They know about the Canadian forces, a military organization with an international reputation of excellence. I have no doubt the international respect for the Canadian forces has increased as a result of their operations in the former Yugoslavia.

Since 1991 Canadian forces have done their best to assist the international community in dealing with the conflict in the Balkans. Indeed they have been at the forefront in that regard.

Canadian military personnel have helped prevent the fighting from spreading to other parts of the region and becoming even more brutal. They have also accepted to save countless lives in assisting in the delivery of humanitarian supplies and preventing more massive assaults on civilian populations.

Our military contribution has included a broad range of capabilities, at sea and in the air. As the mandate of the UN and NATO forces evolved over the course of the conflict, so too did the task performed by Canadian personnel. Duties ranged from traditional peacekeeping functions such as monitoring ceasefires to more challenging roles that test the skills and training of our troops.

In June 1992 when the mandate of the UN protection force, UNPROFOR, was expanded a Canadian battalion performed the dangerous task of opening the Sarajevo airport. That was the beginning of operation airbridge, the largest humanitarian airlift ever. The air force made some 1,900 flights into Sarajevo between 1992 and 1996 with almost 30 million kilograms of food, medical

supplies as well as 1,100 medical evacuations, all under difficult and frequently dangerous circumstances.

Canadians were also the first troops to be deployed to the former Yugoslavia and the republic of Macedonia. In the spring of 1993 Canadians were sent to the tiny enclave of Srebrenica in Bosnia, the first attempt at creating a UN safe area. In the Medak pocket in September 1993 Canadian soldiers became caught in a fire fight when they attempted to establish a buffer zone between the opposing forces.

Operations in the former Yugoslavia have presented our military leaders with many new and difficult challenges but they have responded in magnificent fashion. Four of our soldiers served as deputy force commanders in UNPROFOR and one, Major-General Lewis Mackenzie, served as the force commander's chief of staff. They have all received praise from the international community for their courage and commitment.

I have talked most about our ground forces, but the air force and the navy have also played a part in the instrumental role in the former Yugoslavia.

• (2215)

From 1992 to 1995 as part of the UN's operation deny flight, the Canadian forces provided air crew for surveillance aircraft monitoring the UN embargo over Bosnia and Hercegovina. Today our air personnel play an important role in NATO's aerial surveillance missions. As part of the ongoing operation bison, they assist in the control of tactical intra-theatre airlift for the NATO stabilization force.

Last year six of our CF-18s flew an air umbrella over Bosnia and Hercegovina enforcing the no-fly zone and prepared to support the troops on the ground if necessary. I understand that Canadian soldiers found great comfort in knowing that there were Canadian fighter aircraft patrolling up above.

The Canadian navy has also done yeoman service. Between 1992 and 1996, 11 Canadian warships and four Aurora maritime air patrol craft patrolled the Adriatic Sea enforcing the military embargo and economic sanctions imposed by the UN. That is a significant commitment of Canadian sea power maritime capability.

The success of the Canadian operations in the former Yugoslavia has not gone unnoticed by the international community. When the implementation was first established in 1995, the Canadian forces were called upon to establish a brigade headquarters in the British sector, a clear indication of the respect they have earned among our NATO allies. Their British commander later said he had nothing but praise for the efficient, professional approach adopted consistently by Canadians.

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Civil officials with the UN have also had high praise for the men and women in the Canadian forces. In a letter to the *Globe and Mail* last July, the former leader of the World Health Organization's humanitarian mission to Yugoslavia wrote that the conduct of the Canadian army was highly professional and at all times combined discipline with humanity, tact and—is it necessary to say—courage in an extremely exacting situation.

We currently have 1,200 personnel in Bosnia and Hercegovina as part of the NATO led stabilization force, or SFOR. Their mission is twofold: to ensure compliance with the military aspects of the Dayton accord and to help preserve the secure environment necessary for the consolidation of peace.

Their operational responsibilities include providing local security of vital points, deploying forces on both sides of the ceasefire line and identifying the dominating potential flashpoints. This is difficult, dangerous work but they carry it out with a professionalism that has traditionally been the earmark of the Canadian forces.

I would be remiss if I did not make reference to the humanitarianism of the men and women of the Canadian forces serving in the former Yugoslavia. During their time there, they have participated in a wide range of activities including repairing schools, hospitals and roads and providing medical care. Let me mention one specific example.

In the summer of 1994 the crew of the frigate HMCS *Halifax* provided much needed aid to a refugee camp in Slovenia. Sailors donated 50 bags of toys and clothing for the camp residents. Eight sailors conducted general maintenance around the camp including plumbing, carpentry, roofing and painting.

What most Canadians do not realize is that much of the humanitarian work done by the members of the Canadian forces, including that done by the sailors of the HMCS *Halifax*, is done during their off duty time. They do not have to do it. They choose to do it. They choose to help out. That is the measure of their compassion and dedication.

Canada's military personnel have faced difficult tests in the former Yugoslavia including bad weather, relentless sniper and artillery fire and have been taken hostage. Thirteen have made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the cause of peace. They have persevered and in many cases have gone beyond the call of duty to perform acts of bravery.

In July 1992 Sergeant J.S. Forest of the Royal 22nd Regiment rescued two seriously wounded women while under heavy sniper fire. As Captain Joseph Bélisle took aim at the snipers, Sergeant Forest crawled up beside the two victims and carried them to safety. While still under heavy fire, the two soldiers helped the

women into a military vehicle. Both men were awarded the Medal of Bravery.

Then there is Sergeant Thomas Hoppe. Sergeant Hoppe received the Meritorious Service Cross for his command under fire of a key observation post located between Serb and Muslim forces in Bosnia in July 1994.

• (2220)

A month later Sergeant Hoppe performed another act of extreme bravery. When he realized that snipers were firing on three young children playing in a cemetery in Sarajevo, Hoppe dashed out from behind cover to rescue the boys and hustle them into a waiting armoured personnel carrier. For this action he received the Medal of Bravery. Sergeant Hoppe is the only Canadian forces member since the second world war to have won both these medals.

Canada has earned a well-deserved reputation for being there when it counts. If Canada is to continue to play an effective role on the world stage, it is critical that we maintain that reputation. That means contributing to international efforts aimed at enhancing global security efforts like SFOR.

The Canadian forces have done a lot of good in the former Yugoslavia since they first went there in 1991. They have made a real difference. In Bosnia and Hercegovina they continue to make a difference. Although much has been accomplished, the situation is not yet stable. Let us do the wise thing and keep the Canadian forces there as part of SFOR until it is stable.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on this debate. It harkens back to what we were doing four years ago at the beginning of our first term in Parliament. Many of us made our first speech in the House of Commons in an emergency debate concerning the crisis that was taking place in Bosnia.

Although many people in the House spoke eloquently about the issue, we failed miserably. Despots were prepared to rape, murder, pillage and use their power as leaders to pit brother against brother and cause the worst genocide that Europe and in fact the world had seen since World War II. The bloodletting has not finished.

The Dayton peace accord ensured that the former Yugoslavia would fracture. It ensured that Bosnia would exist.

Through force we have managed to keep the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Muslims together. It is only by force that we have managed to do this. One thing we have to realize in this House is that Bosnia only stays together through the power of international intervention by force. If that force is removed, Bosnia will descend into the same bloodshed which existed four years ago. The killings will continue. At the highest levels of

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policy making in the world, leaders recognize that. We have to recognize that.

I support completely the use of our soldiers in Bosnia at this time. However unless we want another Cyprus in our midst, because that is what Bosnia is going to be, we have to recognize that the only long term future for Bosnia is for Bosnia to fracture peacefully.

The Dayton peace accord was the proverbial finger in the dyke. It served to prevent further conflict at that time and through force we have prevented that. We have largely prevented further bloodshed. In the future no conflict is going to be prevented in the long term unless Bosnia fractures into two or three separate groups and unless we are prepared to sit there for time immemorial. So much blood has been spilled under the bridge that people there will never forget that. As a result if we leave, SFOR leaves and the killings will resume.

We can see it happening now. Again Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo has started a war against the ethnic Albanians. He started a war against the Serbian president in Bosnia. He has also started to stir up problems and is in a cold war against the leader of Montenegro. This is only an example of some of the future conflicts that are stirring in this pot we call the Balkans and which we have barely managed to keep a lid on.

Unless we are prepared to stay there forever, we have to enter into peaceful negotiations to ensure that Bosnia fractures through negotiations and not at the end of an AK-47. There is much we can do.

• (2225)

If we accept the fact that Bosnia has to fracture peacefully for long term peace, then I challenge the minister to work with his compatriots in the OSCE, in the UN and the members of the contact group to accept that realization. Work toward a negotiated split of Bosnia and separate the ethnic groups peacefully forever.

We also have to realize there are other issues taking place. Yugoslavia represents the most egregious example in Europe in recent memory. Conflict such as that in Yugoslavia sits under our nose like a ticking time bomb for years before it blows up. The genocide that took place in the former Yugoslavia represents a very clear realization that we have learned nothing from the concentration camps of Dachau and Auschwitz. We have proven once again that we are impotent in dealing with impending conflict when it is in our face. We have tools that can solve this problem.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has developed a great deal of capital over the last two years through his work in banning land mines, through his work on human rights in China and through other foreign policy initiatives he has produced. With that capital he can work with other countries to deal with the larger problem of conflict prevention.

There is a saying in medicine that prevention is a worth a lot more than a cure. Preventing conflict is a lot cheaper, a lot more effective and infinitely more humane than managing the conflict after it has occurred.

I have presented a private member's motion in the House of Commons. It calls on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to bring like-minded nations together, as we did on the land mines issue, in Ottawa or wherever to identify the precursors to conflict and to put in the tools to address them. If we can build this nucleus of like-minded nations, other nations will come on board.

Clearly it is in the best interest of any nation not to sit beside or have conflict within their sphere of influence. Indeed a conflict that may occur halfway around the world will come to roost within our own borders either through the egress of refugees and demands on our own social policies or demands on our defence and aid budgets.

It is also important to realize that if a conflict blows up, all the incredibly valuable work our Canadian soldiers are heroically doing will be washed away within a period of days, weeks or months when war breaks out.

If we revamp the International Monetary Fund, it can be used as a tool, not only as a carrot but also as a stick. Wars need money. If we choke off the supply of money then we choke off the ability of a despot to engage in war. Most of the countries today that are under the threat of war rely on money from the IMF. The IMF can prevent despots from using that money. It can freeze their assets.

The IMF can use its power as a carrot to supply money to moderate groups that are prepared to work together with disparate groups to build bridges of tolerance and understanding. It would reward those who are engaged in peacemaking. It would reward those individuals who would face despots and say "No, you are not going to turn my country into a hell-hole. You are not going to turn this into another civil war. You are not going to pit brother against brother. You are not going to cause my people to be killed".

We are in an unusual position as a nation. Canada has an unusual role to play in the international community. We have the ability to act as negotiator to bring countries together to work through multilateral measures to change the IMF and use it as a tool for peace.

The United Nations needs a renaissance. It was effective when it was put together at the end of World War II but it does not have the ability to address the security threats that we as a country and the international community face in the future.

• (2230)

The UN needs a renaissance. Many countries feel the same way but they are looking for a leader. We can be that leader. There are very potent, cogent, economic, reasonable and pragmatic reasons for getting involved and changing these institutions. War hurts

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everybody. It costs us. It costs the countries involved. It costs everybody and everybody loses.

I ask the government to work with other members of the House so that we can use Canada's power as a force in changing these multilateral organizations into tools of peace to address security threats, be they military, environmental or otherwise.

In closing, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Burundi, Burma, India, Kenya and Indonesia represent security threats in the future. We need to deal with them now for everybody's sake. I challenge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to work with us in doing just that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to this House in support of Canada's continued participation in the stabilization force, or SFOR, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I am particularly delighted, because in my capacity as the chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, in November 1997, I had the privilege of heading a delegation of eight members of the defence and foreign affairs committee on a visit to Bosnia.

We saw with our own eyes the components of the peace process in Bosnia and Canada's contribution to its implementation. Our military participation in the stabilization force headed by NATO ensures peace is maintained.

Reconstruction is taking place with the help of the Canadian International Development Agency, non-governmental organizations and the Canadian Forces. Efforts at establishing democracy are being carried out in co-operation with the Organization on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the international police group and other organizations.

Based on all we saw, we concluded that considerable progress had been made in Bosnia in nearly two years, that is, since the signing of the general peace accord known as the Dayton agreement.

We were very proud to see and learn that Canada had played a major role in military and civilian aspects of this peace agreement. Since considerable effort had been expended and progress made, all members of our delegation felt the need for a continued international presence in Bosnia after the expiry of SFOR's current mandate in June 1998.

[*English*]

There was a consensus in our group that Canada should remain among the forerunners in this international effort.

Let me tell the House what we saw and how this led us to our conclusion. Our first stop was in Aviano, Italy. This U.S. air force base was the location from which six Canadian CF-18 fighter aircraft flew over 250 operational missions, enforcing the no fly zone over Bosnia last year.

From Aviano we proceeded to Bosnia where over the next three days we visited all four major Canadian military facilities. We started at Black Bear Camp in Velika Kladusa where we received detailed briefings on military operations in the Canadian area of responsibility which is roughly the size of Prince Edward Island.

Coupled with the difficulties presented by the very mountainous terrain in this area, the challenge of communication and travel for our Canadian troops is immense.

• (2235)

[*Translation*]

It is not easy to describe the pride we felt to see our Canadian soldiers successfully meeting these challenges. We were struck by the high degree of professionalism and the great pride among the Canadian military personnel serving in the region. We were impressed as well by their understanding of the mission and their commitment to it.

We were all convinced that, if more Canadians had had the opportunity to see what we saw over there, they too would feel great pride in them.

We were also struck by the danger they were facing in this mission. One of the first briefings we attending was a mine awareness session. We saw mines that were virtually undetectable, buried in a small mine field used for training purposes. We were shown the equipment the mine removal crew wore. We were given explanations of how to avoid or to deactivate mines, and this gave us considerable food for thought.

It was not merely a matter of learning to detect or to deactivate mines, but also of learning to live with this insidious and ever-present threat.

[*English*]

We were told not to leave the paved area of a road when getting out of a vehicle. We were told not to walk on the grass surrounding local villages. We were told that farmers fields were sowed with mines and not crops. We saw miles and miles of yellow tape stretched throughout the land marking potentially mined areas.

We were also told that there were probably one million mines left in Bosnia. We were moved by the horrendous impact that mines can have on day to day living. It is difficult for Canadians living in such a rich and free country as Canada to understand such a horrible situation.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

After this trip, we were convinced that Canada had to maintain its participation in SFOR in Bosnia. I was also very proud of Canada's efforts to rid the world of antipersonnel mines.

I will tell you what else we saw in Bosnia. In Drvar, we visited a school that Canadian field engineers helped rebuild under one of our restoration projects. We also took note of the enormous task of reconstruction that will have to be undertaken to repair that country's infrastructure, to restore what the war destroyed: hospitals, electric substations, bridges and roads. It will take years.

Everywhere we went, people told us how important these projects are. They also asked us to thank the Canadian people and to convey their gratitude for what Canadians have done to help rebuild their country.

[English]

The military aspects of Dayton have been a clear success. The fighting has stopped as far as help to guarantee that municipal elections take place peacefully and as far as actively supporting the UN international police task force in the restructuring of the civil police are concerned. SFOR continues to monitor weapon storage sites and SFOR is also engaged in many other projects to help recovery.

[Translation]

However, the democratization process in Bosnia has been more than slow. The main issues yet to be settled are the inability of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees to go home and the presence of individuals accused of war crimes.

We saw why it is so hard for people to go home. Despite minor reconstruction work in some areas, houses in ruins can be seen everywhere in the countryside. In village after village, we saw houses that were destroyed by bombings during the war and others that were destroyed to prevent their rightful occupants to come back to them.

For all these reasons, I will be glad to give my unconditional support to the continuing presence of the Canadian armed forces in Bosnia.

- (2240)

[English]

Mr. Jim Gouk (West Kootenay—Okanagan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was trying to examine, as I was sitting here listening to the last speaker, why exactly I am here tonight. I was at home. I was ready for bed. I have had several late nights. I am one of those MPs who has to travel from the west so it does get very tiring when one goes back and forth on a continued basis.

I think I am here to speak in part out of guilt and the guilt has nothing to do with the military. The guilt links to something else that occurred tonight. Yet it all ties together into why we are having this debate right now.

My guilt is because tonight we had a vote on a different matter. We had a vote on compensation for people who have had a tragedy enter their lives. We lost that vote and they lost. I left from here and I went to a reception. I had a drink. I had some good food. Then I went home. As I was sitting there getting ready to go to bed I started thinking how unfair life was. Here I am. I had my reception. I had my good dinner. Life goes on, but for those people their lives do not go on. They have suffered a tragedy and they got no help from parliament tonight.

I was about to turn off the TV but I changed a couple of channels and happened to fall on CPAC to see a bit of this debate. I thought how ironic it was for us to debate such an issue tonight after the vote that took place. I started thinking why we were talking about Bosnia.

Is that what we are really doing? The decision is already made. It is not like the government is coming in here and saying this is what it is thinking of doing and asking whether it should. The government made that decision, so why are we here?

The decision to have the debate on Bosnia, this take note speech or whatever it is called, is a simple diversion because of Liberal embarrassment about the vote we had in this place tonight. This is an opportunity for them to stand after having done that and say "Aren't we good? Can't we be proud? Can't we reflect the pride of our military, of our peacekeepers back on us by the great thing we have done of simply authorizing them to be there?" The answer is no, they cannot do that. I could not go to bed and allow them to do that.

We heard the justice minister talk in the House about why there was no compensation for people who contracted hepatitis C prior to 1986. He said there was no way that government should be compensating people, that it had no obligation to pay for people who had a problem that was not the result of government negligence.

Bosnia is not the result of the government's negligence. Hate is not the result of the government's negligence. Cyprus was not the result of the government's negligence or any of the other places we went. Desert storm 1 and the almost desert storm 2 were not the result of government negligence, but when people were in need the Canadian government responded.

Tonight people were in need and the Canadian government did not respond. It responded to the flood in the Saguenay. Was that the fault of the Canadian government? It responded to the flood in

Manitoba. Was that the fault of the Canadian government? How about the ice storm?

It is despicable that the Liberals have the temerity to raise this subject in the House tonight as a deflection of the vote that took place. It demeans the good name of our Canadian military. It is absolutely disgusting.

I have a reserve unit in my riding, the 44 field squad, an engineer squadron. It has served in Bosnia. It has helped when there have been natural disasters. It has done an infinite number of good and meaningful deeds in my riding and around the world.

• (2245)

I received a letter recently from someone in my riding who is a conscientious objector. She objects to the military and to her tax dollars going to the military. She wanted to know whether there was some way she could have her taxes go to some special fund instead.

I wrote to her and suggested that I understood her position, her abhorrence of war, and would hope we would all abhor it but sometimes have to stand up for people who through no fault of their own were being victimized. I suggested to her that our military had a strong tradition of things other than violence such as peacekeeping and helping when disasters hit the people of this country. That is what we should be focusing on. We should not be using that to deflect what happened in the House tonight.

Perhaps we should truly help the military and do something good for it instead of pontificating about its role over there and how proud we are that we sent the military there. Somehow it is suggested that it makes us greater than them because after all they are just the grunts who went there; we are the wonderful people who sent them. Instead, maybe what we should be doing in the House is looking at their lack of equipment, at their lack of training and at the bases that have been shut down.

Some of the best bases in Canada have been closed. An almost new base in Chilliwack was rebuilt, almost completely overhauled. It was closed and the people were transferred to a base in Alberta that does not have enough room for them and they have to start adding additional facilities there.

What the government does to the military makes no sense. Yet it somehow feels it is right that its members should come to the House and suggest that they are good because they have sent troops over to Bosnia.

Government Orders

I do not know if it does any good to speak tonight. Maybe I would have done myself more good had I gone to bed and caught up on my sleep, but I just could not do that. It seemed somehow important to me to get this off my chest.

I did not expect any more of the justice minister. I did not expect any more of the Prime Minister or of the government whip. However I expected more of some of those backbenchers. I know they were opposed to the government's bill. I know some of them are people of integrity.

I have often said to people in my town hall meetings that Ottawa is not what they think: "As I stand tonight as a Reform member of parliament I will say something that will seem strange coming from me. There are a lot of good Liberal MPs in Ottawa. It is not the people. It is the system". I am not going to say that again because it is not true. Tonight, wipe that out. Tonight, completely wipe that out.

I saw people on those backbenches who were opposed, who felt that the victims of hepatitis C, of tainted blood were entitled to compensation, and yet they knuckled under. They ignored the victims. They ignored their constituents. They ignored their duty to the country.

They had the temerity to come here and suggest that they were good and wonderful because they sent our troops to Bosnia. Is that timing not just a little curious? It was right on the heels of the vote they knew was coming on which they were going to take a lot of heat. What unbelievable timing. What an uncanny coincidence that it should happen tonight.

I do not believe it. I do not think the Canadian people believe it. I hope it took a lot of soul searching by the Liberals in terms of this incident. If they truly feel what they have spoken tonight about the military, I hope they will do something meaningful in terms of equipment, in terms of bases and in terms of training.

If they want to send them into harm's way, they should give them the proper tools to do it. If they want to take pride in something, they should make sure that notwithstanding the vote tonight they do something for those victims, the people who relied on them and whom they let down.

• (2250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There being no further speakers, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10.48 p.m.)

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